Published in final edited form as:

Past Present. 2014 ; 222(Suppl 9): 61–80. doi:10.1093/pastj/gtt029.

‘Tuned Out or Tuned In’: Spirituality and Youth Drug Use in Global Times

Karen Joe-Laidler*, Geoffrey Hunt^{#,+}, and Molly Moloney⁺

*Department of Sociology, University of Hong Kong

[#]CRF, Aarhus University, Denmark

⁺Institute for Scientific Analysis, San Francisco

I Introduction

I would tell my friends, ‘let’s go to dance!’ I could dance for the whole night and not return to my seat...I would get this feeling that I even forgot that I’m in fact a human being. Everything I saw was beautiful. That was weird.... When it’s time to leave, you don’t feel like you’ve taken drugs but would have a feeling of being really free.

(Man, Chinese male in Hong Kong, age 18)

The first time I tried ecstasy... I just really wanted to dance and after awhile, I danced quicker to the beat. I was with friends chilling... I became more loose and wanted to hug people... I was really awake. It feels better than alcohol... if you’re drunk you don’t know what you’re saying and it really feels bad... and you feel full. But having ecstasy, you won’t feel full... The feeling I had was happy... Once I lose that explosion feeling, I still feel very excited and dance wildly.

(Kitty, Chinese female in HK, age 26)

When I’m on ecstasy, I wanna dance, and it’s about being with friends. It’s about me and my friends having a good time and losing ourselves for a few hours. And then not having the effects of alcohol. I get tired of wasting a Sunday recovering from alcohol, whereas with E, I get to sleep and then I’m fine.

(Leticia, Hispanic female in San Francisco, age 20)

At a rave... people are just there to have fun, meet other people... it’s a good environment to do ecstasy in, because it’s kind of the same way the drug is. It just makes you wanna do all those things anyway

(James, white male in SF, age 21)

At first glance, one might interpret these youth narratives as a form of youthful abandonment to a good night out—the fun and pleasure derived from being with friends and dancing to high energy music, all enhanced by psychoactive drugs. However, the fact that these young persons living in two very different cultural locales—Hong Kong and San Francisco—share similar emotions and understandings from their night out suggests that there are deeper issues at hand. On the one hand, these accounts attest to, what has become

in modern times, a global youth cultural phenomenon—the dance drug scene. Starting in London and New York in the 1980s, a distinctive youth dance drug culture emerged center stage as a global phenomena.¹ With its distinctive and fluid lifestyle in dress, music, setting and drug use, this youth cultural form began to flourish across the world from Europe to the Americas, to Australia and Asia throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium. While observers might interpret this as part of a globalizing, homogenizing youth consumer culture, the dance drug culture developed beyond the rave, diversifying and moving in many different cultural directions within and across societies.

On the other hand, while this global youth cultural form appears to be distinctive to modern times, it has a connection to other times and places through intoxication. Intoxication, here defined as the use of substances to alter consciousness, has featured as a ‘universal human theme’ from the early Bronze Age’s affinity with alcohol to the Neolithic period’s cultural use of cannabis and the classical epoch’s rituals with opium to today’s youthful fascination with dance drugs like ecstasy.² A distinguishing feature of intoxicants across time and place is the pleasure and enjoyment associated with the consumption experience—the chemical and physiological reactions and the users’ interaction with others in particular milieus. Pleasurable descriptions of altered states—happiness, freedom, euphoria—from psychoactive drugs have been recorded since prehistoric times.³ Yet despite pleasure being so integral to drug intoxication, it is a contentious matter for which there has been much silence in the academy and in public discourses.⁴ As observers⁵ have noted, from Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment through to modernity, the governing principles of reason and rationality that link these periods demands moderation and a concern for self and society. Consequently the pursuit of pleasure through intoxication—an alteration of consciousness and reality—becomes moral evidence of one’s lack of self restraint and sensibility and the need for government regulatory or prohibitive controls.

The recent history of psychedelics is an example of this tension between the desire for altered states and the modern governance dictates of rationality and responsibility. The altered states associated with psychedelics have long been revered for their religious, medical and social associations in Aztec, Toltec, Navajo and many other native cultures.⁶ Wild and cultivated substances like cannabis and magic mushrooms have been described as mood and emotional enhancers, but the effects are dependent, more so than stimulants or depressants, on the emotional state of the user, the dosage, and the context.⁷ Scientific experimentation led to the development of a range of synthetic psychedelics, particularly in the 1950–60s as scientists sought to discover how drugs like LSD and MDMA could be used in therapeutic settings to unravel the spiritual self.⁸ These psychedelics were initially used in controlled settings, and soon extolled by prominent public figures like the science fiction writer and Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, the Hollywood star Cary Grant, and the writer Aldous Huxley. As the 1960s progressed, LSD became increasingly available outside of controlled settings with the likes of LSD follower Timothy Leary promoting its use to ‘turn on, tune in, and drop out,’ first in his work with students in the Harvard Psychedelic Research Project, and later, upon being terminated from his academic post, in the mix with the hippie generation. Here psychedelic intoxication was more than just about pleasure; it was also about the spiritual awakening of the self and society.

‘Turn on’ means to contact the ancient energies and wisdoms that are built into your nervous system. They provide unspeakable pleasure and revelation. ‘Tune in’ means to harness and communicate these new perspectives in a harmonious dance with the external world. ‘Drop out’ means to detach yourself from the tribal game. Current models of social adjustment—mechanized, socialized, televised—make no sense to the new LSD generation, who see clearly that American society is becoming an air-conditioned anthill. In every generation of human history, thoughtful men have turned on and dropped out of the tribal game, and thus stimulated the larger society to lurch ahead.

Timothy Leary, *Leary on Drugs* (2008)⁹

Irrespective of his motives for using and promoting LSD, his call to ‘turn on, tune in, and drop out’ aptly characterized the younger generation’s questioning views about broader social political changes at the time—capitalism, war, community, peace, and the role of the self in modernity. But as many within the hippie generation took pleasure in the intoxication and spiritual awakenings from LSD beyond the medical setting, moral condemnation quickly followed as with *Life* magazine’s lead article on 25 March 1966, ‘LSD: The Exploding Threat of the Mind Drug that Got Out of Control.’ Within the next year, prohibitory laws banned the possession of LSD in several American states and later nationally.

As we will return to, Leary’s call to realize pleasure and spiritual awakening through intoxication is relevant to the youth narratives that have emerged in more recent times around raves and subsequently a dance drug culture. The expansion and diffusion of today’s dance drug culture is related to an ever-changing and fluid range of cultural forms, from those events associated with alternative spiritualities like raves, free festivals, out-door parties, underground events to those of an entrepreneurial nature including organized fee-paying parties to permanent licensed discos, clubs and lounges. This diversification is partly in reaction to governmental restrictions and ordinances but it is also related to the rise of corporate opportunities with a homogenized and domesticated dance music experience, featuring a sleek postmodern feel with chrome furnishings, sophisticated sound systems, and well accessorized attendees.¹⁰ These ‘pleasure prisons’—with their regulations, licenses, security systems, appearance and conduct codes—have been one way to contain, control and shape, in the state’s view, young people’s uncontrolled hedonism.¹¹ Yet under-ground raves have not disappeared altogether. Recently the UK witnessed a repeat of the late 1980s second summer of love as underground ravers rallied at abandoned buildings in London and observers pointed to the increasing disenchantment with the state, amidst rising tuition fees and economic recession.¹²

Generally speaking, this diversification has meant that the dance drug scene has become accessible to a larger and broader youth audience. But along with this diversity has come social distinctions.¹³ Raves and free festivals represented a youth driven cultural form where solidarity and social inclusion were paramount.¹⁴ Those who experienced the ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ rave spirit of PLUR—peace, love, unity, and respect—found themselves increasingly distanced from the younger generation. From the perspective of ‘original’ ravers, newcomers to the dance drug scene were driven less by the spiritual aesthetic of

raves and festivals, and more by corporate intervention and mainstream entrepreneurialism—with its commodification and packaging of pleasure through intoxication and dance. These cultural distinctions and divisions have been further reinforced through constraining social access through spatial segregation of venues, doormen and security, and costly entrance and beverage fees. The end result is layers of class and cultural distinctions within and across the scene.¹⁵ These two processes at the micro and macro level have produced cultural elites and consumer elites, further marginalizing working and lower class youth.

Although many youth and cultural studies scholars focus on the process of social exclusion emerging in youth cultures within a comparative framework,¹⁶ drug researchers, with few exceptions, have restricted their enquiries on drug use patterns and the dance scene to single cultures and locales, and have not examined the role of pleasure and its connection to intoxication.¹⁷ Alongside these two streams of studies are religion scholars who seek to understand events like raves, free festivals, conscious partying movements as sites for spiritual transformation.¹⁸ Can dance music culture, specifically in its ‘authentic’ form, be a source for spirituality and identity for young people in modern times? While some studies, adopting a Durkheimian frame, view these events as facilitating a sense of community and transcendence for ravers, others have connected it to the youthful pursuit of a re-enchanted world where young people’s private concerns can be shared through a collective identity to counter the demands of the modern world’s emphasis on independence, responsibility and autonomy.¹⁹ Spiritual narratives feature prominently among rave goers, although less in religious terms than humanistic expressions such as personal growth, acceptance, communality, oneness, energy, and immediacy.²⁰ Importantly these spiritual narratives are articulated in relation to the pleasure of intoxication as well as the collective event. Yet as we have noted, there are many other settings like the commercialized club scene which attract young people. Does the commercialized club scene offer more than the immediate pleasure of intoxication? Can spirituality play a role within the commercialized club scene?

Drawing from these different frames of reference on the emergent dance drug culture, the following discussion is inspired by a curious issue raised by party goers in two cosmopolitan locales, that of San Francisco and Hong Kong. On the one hand, San Francisco dance party goers described how using ecstasy (MDMA), the drug of choice, mainly at raves but also other dance settings there, facilitated their ‘tuning in’ in terms reminiscent of Leary’s observations of the LSD experience. On the other hand, Hong Kong dance party goers emphasized how ketamine, the drug of choice in that locale, was a vehicle for ‘tuning out.’ This raises the question as to how to account for ‘tuning out’ and ‘tuning in’ in the dance drug setting. Are these two competing narratives of young people who engage in similar cultural practices? If so, how do we explain this? Are they solely related to pharmacological differences in ecstasy and ketamine? Are they dependent on the setting—the ‘authentic’ rave or the commercialized club? Are these different narratives connected to glocalization—where global movements are articulated with differential effects locally?²¹ Alternatively, are these narratives expressing similar experiences but in culturally defined ways?

To examine this paradox, we draw from in-depth interviews conducted in two parallel studies on club drug use, one in San Francisco from 2002–04, and the other in Hong Kong from 2003–04.²² We examine the interaction of young people and the meanings they ascribe

to drug use in particular settings, focusing on their narratives of pleasure through intoxication and its' connection to spirituality. The pleasure derived from intoxication involves more than simply a physiological reaction, but an opportunity to lose oneself momentarily from the normal routine of everyday life. In this process of stepping outside of oneself, one may develop a spiritual awareness—a heightened sense of self, of others, and of oneness with the collective. Here we suggest that 'tuning in' and 'tuning out' are culturally comparative notions. Spirituality lies at the core of the experiences of young people in both locales, and thus, at another level, raises questions about why young people in different locales, most of whom have limited religious backgrounds, are seeking a different spiritual journey. What do these journeys mean in the broader context of being a young person in modern times? We begin with a brief sketch of the development of the scene in both locales and then turn to the meaning of drug use in different cultural settings.

II Dance Drug Scenes: San Francisco and Hong Kong

San Francisco and Hong Kong share a similar vibrant nightlife, and the rise of the dance drug culture in each locale presents an insightful comparison on intoxication and space. Intoxicants have long been embedded in San Francisco's nightlife, with the hippie generation's psychedelic experiences at acid rock festivals in the 1960s shifting, in the 1970s and early 1980s, to a disco fever among an eclectic mix of the city's population, particularly young urban professionals and gays, who consumed cocaine, along with alcohol and sometimes, tranquilizers at established high energy discos, dance palaces and organized mega-parties. While some observers describe these distinct scenes as uncontained youthful hedonism, others have noted the spiritual connections to a collective and to the disc jockeys.²³ By contrast, Hong Kong's nightlife throughout the 1960s into the early 1990s was of a very different nature, which largely involved the use of alcohol in a range of nightspots fashioned for sophisticates in the Central district to the workingman in local pubs in Wan Chai and working class youth in public parks and housing estates scattered around the colony. With the exception of heroin, other intoxicants were not readily available or in demand in Hong Kong. Although marijuana use occurred among young people in throughout the 1960s and 1970s, its use was relatively limited. Psychedelic use was a rare occurrence, perhaps because its' hallucinogenic effects were culturally linked to mental illness.²⁴ Cocaine use was largely restricted to the wealthy class, as this was a highly expensive and inaccessible intoxicant to most citizens. Heroin use has been culturally understood as part of a male older generational experience, for which young people have distanced themselves from. Although these two locales offered different intoxicants and nightlife settings, the intoxicant, ecstasy, became one key link in the dance drug scene that emerged in San Francisco and Hong Kong.

In both locales, British rave culture had a hand in shaping the distinctive spaces for youth intoxication. The rave scene in San Francisco emerged in the early 1990s, later than in other US cities, and was at least initially in the form of underground parties held in warehouses, clubs and lofts where ecstasy was part of the experience and alcohol was banned. Rave promoters and organizers regularized these nights out at various clubs and rented locations in the city. The British rave culture's emphasis on spirituality also made San Francisco distinctive from other US cities. Wicked, the British music collective, with their nature

worshipping through neo-Pagan rituals attracted thousands of youth to the legendary Full Moon Raves at the beach.²⁵ In 1991, a group of British ravers, fed up with the commercialization of the UK scene, formed the promotional company, ToonTown. Noted for their techno-sophisticated psychedelic lighting and shaman-like disc jockeys, they attracted thousands of San Francisco ravers keen on a sensory experience of ecstasy and dance at underground raves. The ToonTown facilitated the city's distinctive cultural production—with children's clothing, detachable wings, psychedelic colors, and wrap around glasses. This British style was popularized, spreading to other nightlife events and mainstream clubs. But by the mid 1990s, this period slowly waned with internal conflict among promoters and supporters, diversification of musical tastes and styles, and police raids on unlicensed events, and led to fewer events or moving to the suburbs.

Although underground raves had diminished by the late 1990s, massive commercial raves took their place, attended by increasing numbers of young people from the surrounding Bay Area. So while grass roots underground parties symbolized the early rave years in the city, the later years saw the increased popularity of commercialized mass scale raves, which were highly publicized, expensive, and involved big-production values. When the dot com bubble burst in 2001, so too did the nighttime economy, as fewer could afford expensive entrance covers and ten-dollar drinks. But this was relatively short-lived as by 2005, a new club scene emerged with patrons preferring smaller, 'mellower' venues; perhaps related to the recession as well as the aging Generation X.²⁶ Many 'club drugs' continued in their popularity in these settings in the 2000s, although alcohol appears to be resurgent as an intoxicant of choice in the clubs, and many nightlife operators cite decreasing concerns about drugs in the clubs and increasing concerns with violence.²⁷

Despite Hong Kong having been a British colony until 1997, the British influence on this city's dance drug culture took a different trajectory. British expatriates, along with their North American counterparts, were the first to organize and promote raves as occasional events in Hong Kong in 1993. Ecstasy first appeared in these early 1990s raves attended by British expatriates, and not coincidentally were the first arrestees for ecstasy possession in the then colony. Although expatriates and local Chinese returnees were among the first rave attendees, these organized events in large open spaces like convention halls grew in popularity in the mid 1990s, and local middle-class and later working-class youth joined the party. So too did ecstasy's popularity at these events. Raves and organized dance parties were differentiated by the sophistication of lighting and sound, and music, however, this scene was relatively short-lived compared to other cities including San Francisco. The limited success of organized rave parties was related to lack of space in densely populated Hong Kong, but it was also due to the increased policing of these events and the government's enactment of legislation mandating organizers and promoters to meet stringent health and safety requirements as well as the fallout of SARS—a public health crisis in 2002–03.²⁸ The popularity of these organized events began to wane as many Hong Kong entrepreneurs recognized the potential profits of converting existing karaoke bars and restaurants into permanent venues for dancing and clubbing for expatriate and local patrons.

Hong Kong's organized rave parties in the early to middle 1990s differed from and the developing club scene during the late 1990s in relation to the music, commercialization and

the patrons of these different scenes. While the music at raves and organized parties was typically from the UK and North America, and without lyrics, more permanent local venues tended to include local Cantonese pop music. Raves were also recognized as sites with a high degree of anonymity, providing patrons with more opportunity to be liberated and experimental than in discos and clubs where space is more constrained and the risk of being under the watchful eye of others is greater. The emergence and expansion of discos and clubs resulted in a range of dance venues catering to different types of participants and experiences but united by the theme of commercialism. Licensed and unlicensed dance sites in the form of clubs, discos, and lounges flourished, catering to a range of local social groupings from the exclusive membership clubs featuring local celebrities to large scale discos with private VIP rooms to no frills dance rooms operating without liquor licenses, and spilling over to Shenzhen, a short train ride across to the Chinese border.²⁹ Despite the differences in social class groups, lifestyles and budgets associated with these venues, ecstasy was also a common link and became an integral part of a 'night out.'

But within a short time of ecstasy gaining popularity in Hong Kong, a new drug emerged as the preferred drug of choice. Ketamine became increasingly used as a supplement to 'top up' and shift the high from ecstasy. However, the use of ketamine to supplement ecstasy soon began to change and our recent research has found that many are using ketamine for its own sake.³⁰ Ketamine was associated with being particularly accessible, affordable at between six to twelve US dollars for a small packet to share, and less adulterated than ecstasy in Hong Kong, which may partially explain its expansion and reach. In addition, unlike ecstasy, the use of which is primarily confined to nightlife and dance venues, among Hong Kong youth ketamine gained popularity in wider leisure and recreational contexts (ibid). The rapid rise in and popularity of ketamine use among young people in Hong Kong is possibly unmatched internationally. At the end of the 1990s, ketamine use among young people in Hong Kong grew so quickly that within three years of its introduction to the local illicit drug market, it became the primary drug of choice among those under 21 years of age, surpassing that of ecstasy, and it has remained so since then.³¹

So although ecstasy use in the dance scene was, at least initially, a common link between San Francisco and Hong Kong, ketamine became a distinctive marker of difference. From the interviews in our two study sites, with the exception of marijuana and ecstasy, which were nearly universally used by respondents in both locales, ketamine was by far the most popular drug in Hong Kong but far less so in San Francisco. While the rates of ecstasy use in both locales are comparable, the use of most other intoxicants like cocaine, methamphetamines, mushrooms and GHB are relatively rare in Hong Kong. Correspondingly, Hong Kong respondents reported significantly lower rates of drug experimentation; more than half of Hong Kong respondents had used three or fewer drugs in their lifetimes versus less than a quarter of San Francisco respondents. While there were relatively few differences in the ages at which club drug users tended to start using drugs, Hong Kong respondents tended to start using cocaine, LSD and mushrooms later than respondents from San Francisco, but started using ketamine at a significantly earlier age.

While San Francisco and Hong Kong seem miles apart, these two urban locales share a comparable youth dance drug culture. Several points of comparison bear mentioning. First

the role of British rave culture has also played a significant role in San Francisco and Hong Kong, but in different ways. The British rave culture had a significant influence on the music, setting and cultural products associated with San Francisco's scene, particularly in its early years with British organizers promoting its development at the grass roots level. So too did British promoters come to Hong Kong with the hope of developing a similar kind of grass roots underground scene, however, this cultural form was short-lived, overshadowed by policing and ordinance restrictions and the rise of an locally driven and highly commercialized enterprise. Second, in both locales, although grass roots efforts among young people were central to the initial scene, their efforts were largely transformed through regulatory and prohibitive controls over venues and intoxication, and simultaneously, the mainstreaming and commercialization of the scene. Third, ecstasy has played an integral role in the emergence of the dance drug culture in both locales, although ketamine has come to the forefront in Hong Kong.

There is no doubt that ketamine's popularity in Hong Kong must be understood in the broader context of the global dance drug scene. As elsewhere, Hong Kong witnessed the emergence of a distinctive youthful and trendy dance scene where ecstasy had very much been embedded in the scene until the use of ketamine began to make in-roads. But why did ketamine come to dominate the youth dance drug scene in Hong Kong and spill over into use in other recreational settings? What is it that young people in Hong Kong seek in using ketamine and are their experiences similar or different to the experiences of young people in San Francisco? As an intoxicant, why is ketamine distinctive for Hong Kong youth? Does ketamine provide a way to tune in or tune out? Is it like ecstasy where ravers around the world report MDMA's ability, conjunction with the dance music, for spiritual or self awakening? We turn to look at the possible differences that exist between our two samples not just in terms of their personal characteristics but also in relation to their cultural notions of drug use and the meanings that young people in both places attribute to using drugs.

III Cultural Similarities and Dissimilarities in Drug Use

Although our study was never designed to be representative and consequently the personal characteristics of our samples cannot be taken to represent all dance attendees in San Francisco or Hong Kong, there nevertheless exist some interesting differences. While the age and gender breakdown of our samples were somewhat similar, our respondents' social class backgrounds were strikingly different. In San Francisco, the 60 per cent of respondents came from middle class backgrounds given their father's occupations and own educational background. About 65 per cent of respondents' fathers held professional or white-collar jobs ranging from bank vice presidents and engineers to small business owners and insurance salesmen to musicians, teachers, lawyers and doctors. Overall the sample was well-educated, with 60 per cent of them either currently or previously having pursued a post-high school education, ranging from vocational training to graduate school. Few respondents had dropped out of high school. Sixty percent of respondents were employed at the time of the interview, mostly in white-collar business or clerical jobs, education or non-profit fields, or in retail and service. Few worked in skilled trade or labor jobs. Of those working, 59 per cent of them worked part-time, but over 65 per cent of the part-time workers were also students.

In contrast with the middle-class characteristics of San Francisco respondents, about 75 per cent of Hong Kong respondents came from lower-class or working-class families. This characteristic was also reflected in the majority of the employed respondents who worked in the service industry or in trade occupations. While 33 per cent of them were employed in trade jobs or at the lower end of the service industry, and less than 30 per cent earned the equivalent of more than USD 1,000 per month. The most common occupations were hair stylists, cosmetologists, sales clerks, decorators, tele-marketers, servers at restaurants and discos, and construction workers. Thirty-three percent of the respondents were unemployed at the time of the interview, some of whom were students. Forty percent of them received 'pocket money' from their families every month, and for over 25 percent of them, that was their only source of income. Ten percent of them supplemented their income through various illegal activities such as selling or delivering pirated videodiscs and selling drugs.

Social class may provide a partial explanation as to ketamine's popularity, for despite its initial association with the local celebrity scene, its reputation in Hong Kong has come to be linked to working-class entertainment venues.³² Ketamine's distinctively working-class links are due to a number of factors including affordability and differential acceptance of ketamine-related behaviors in low budget venues. Ketamine's link to working-class venues is also related to those young persons searching for the 'K ride.' While blackouts and physical and cognitive impairment are not encouraged in low-end discos, respondents describe witnessing or experiencing such states in these venues without restraint. Those on the 'K ride' are ignored, watched over by friends or asked to leave. Such behavior, though, is not acceptable at upscale dance clubs by the professionals in our sample. Such behavior is associated with social distinctions as one respondent describes, 'we also consider the class of people who go to a particular place. We don't want to see them in a high class club.'

While ketamine, like ecstasy, is highly accessible, easily purchased on or near the dance venue, ketamine is much less expensive. Moreover, unlike ecstasy, ketamine tends to have considerably higher levels of purity in Hong Kong. While an ecstasy tablet may be halved with one other person, depending on purity levels and length of use, ketamine is more likely to be shared with a small group of friends. Users report that ketamine is the 'poor man's version of cocaine.' The majority of users who use either once or twice per month or on the weekends (about four times a month) have found ketamine an affordable and accessible option to supplement the high to continue dancing, controlling their use to a few lines during the night. Although such social class differences may go some way to explaining why ketamine is so popular in Hong Kong in comparison with those in San Francisco, it is also important to compare cultural notions of intoxicants used in dance drug settings in the two locales.

Although miles apart, respondents in both locales report strikingly similar motivations for intoxication in the dance setting, whether ecstasy or ketamine. As we noted from the outset, pleasure, although a feature often absent in drug scholarship, is fundamental to intoxication, and our respondents are no exception in reporting this as a main attraction in consuming drugs in a distinctly youthful scene.

But what is pleasure in this youthful context? The pleasure of ecstasy is defined in relation to fun, happiness, energy, and the ability to let go, and momentarily lose oneself. Fun features prominently among San Francisco youth. When asked what they like about using ecstasy, participants repeatedly utilized the word, fun, to describe their experiences: 'To me E is like the funnest drug. It's the funnest. It's so much fun. And like the high was great.' The centrality of fun is not surprising given ecstasy's association with dance parties, raves, and clubs—the key sites of their youthful leisure—and its use on the weekend during those periods of time off from the grind of work and school. The young people frequently described how ecstasy, especially when used within the dance-event setting, allowed them not just to have a good time but also to experience a uniquely superlative level of fun. Fun is therefore a central feature of these discussions of pleasure and their motivations for drug consumption.

For some, the pleasures centered around enjoying an exciting night out and the immediate physical effects of an increase in energy and a heightening of the senses, while for others the pleasures of ecstasy were described as life-changing, leading them to become more open, sociable, or even spiritual in their daily lives, even when not on the drug. The pleasures of ecstasy's physical effects were often tied to the social context within which they used the drug. For example, because many participants used ecstasy at dance events, they noted a connection between the drug and their enjoyment of music and dancing. 'The energy... I mean, you wanna go out and you wanna dance. You wanna meet people. I think mainly it's the social thing. Lights... trance music. It's pretty much like a big.. it's pretty much the only place you can go and be in a large social gathering' (Brian, white male, age 19).

Many ecstasy users described a deeper enjoyment of music and dancing while on the drug; the music sounded 'better' or they could 'feel' the music, and they could dance for longer periods. The fact that this effect was communal, shared by hundreds of others dancing on ecstasy at the rave, further intensified the pleasure of the experience. Other participants focused on other sensory effects of ecstasy: the pleasures of visual effects and their heightened sense of touch while on ecstasy. Other pleasurable effects of the ecstasy high were related to the drug's impact on their emotions and their sense of well-being. Participants were drawn to their ecstasy experiences because they felt 'good,' 'happy' and 'relaxed.' They described feeling a sense of freedom that allowed them to behave in a less self-conscious or self-critical way. They felt free to act openly and authentically, to dance without worrying about whether they were 'good,' and to generally express themselves without fearing what others might think. 'You just feel happy and really open, it's like you're in another world... away from danger and all. You just feel like... you're safe. No one's going to hurt you and you feel happy, you don't feel depressed or sad... you feel really alive. It's just a good feeling' (Antonia, Hispanic female, age 20).

All your inhibitions are free, and you just like...all of a sudden you feel like you can do anything. That's the positive I guess.. cuz it can...show you that, oh, yeah... You come to that whole epiphany of like, 'Oh, I can do this.' Or you know, I can talk to people. And then, I guess your self-esteem somehow rises. And...I mean, yeah, like the whole atmosphere, like everyone's...letting go. And like I said, you know, they're not trying to put up their guard. Everyone's guard is down, you

know. It's like...very trusting, you know, and people will...you'll talk to people, it doesn't matter. Like you'll talk to people that you usually don't talk to.

(Ling, Asian American female, age 19)

According to their narratives, ecstasy helped them open up, trust others, and achieve emotional connections that were difficult or impossible otherwise. Ecstasy's impact on people's physical and emotional state, its enhanced sociability, combined with a meaningful social context, fostered interactions with others that made users feel the pleasure of ecstasy went beyond simple physical and mental effects.

Hong Kong respondents reported similar effects; ecstasy allowed them to express their emotions and to feel connected to others: 'You can express your deepest sentiments and feelings at the time. After that experience, my view in seeing the world changed.' Ecstasy's hallucinogenic effects, often described as illusions, were perceived as a positive attribute of the drug. Ecstasy also allowed users to feel disinhibited, to be more open and free without the restraints they normally feel in everyday life: 'Dancing is kind of like drinking. Getting high on ecstasy is also like drinking. You don't think so much. I'm a very shy person and don't dance much, and I wasn't very good at it... but after drinking or taking ecstasy, I don't care about these things anymore' (Ray, Chinese male, age 29).

The meaning of pleasure in this context—the euphoria, the energy, the emotional, the liberation to lose oneself—cuts across cultures, and, as other studies in different locales have shown, may represent a common global experience.³³ The immediate pleasures, for some, had a lasting impact, not in the physical sense, but in a greater awareness of self in everyday life. In San Francisco and Hong Kong, some occasional users experiment not with different drugs, but with different settings in which to consume ecstasy, hoping that new venues with alternative music and social groups will enhance their sense of pleasure. For many others, however, after a few experiences, the pursuit of pleasure is redefined as they combine different drugs to extend, prolong or alter the pleasures from ecstasy.³⁴

In San Francisco, respondents reported using substances such as marijuana or GHB 'to bring back up' the experience of being high. In cases such as this, respondents use one drug to extend the effects of another. In other cases, certain drugs were used to intensify the effects of others, particularly ecstasy, a point noted by other researchers.³⁵ Marijuana was frequently cited for its ability to enhance an existing drug experience, in some cases by making it more intense, in others by nicely mellowing it. For example, according to a young male, combining marijuana and mushrooms had the effect of making the experience more intense. 'When you're peaking you smoke a bowl and you peak a little harder... Definitely marijuana just intensifies any drug. Whatever it is, it all intensifies the situation. And...you know, I would say with every drug I usually always put weed in with it' (Cary, white male, age 19). Or as another respondent noted:

I used to smoke marijuana more for the effects it would give you on E. Because most of the time when you're on E, you're coming down on E and you need that little boost, and marijuana kind of....it wasn't too intense..... It brought it back a little bit. Made you feel better.

(Jay, Filipino/African American male, age 30)

Other drug combinations were believed to intensify not merely the ecstasy experience, but transform the experience completely. Hallucinogens were believed to enhance the ecstasy high by adding ‘visuals.’

In Hong Kong, however, ketamine became a booster to speed up and heighten the liberating sensations from ecstasy and dancing. Moreover, as an affordable ‘top up,’ ketamine redirects and shifts the stimulant and euphoric effects of ecstasy.³⁶ Based on hearing from and observing their peers, they expected and were not disappointed by the reaction time and the shift in their high from shaking to the music on ecstasy to floating and flying on ketamine. With one or two lines, most users were able to continue to enjoy the dance environment. An additional attraction of ketamine, according to our participants, was that while ecstasy would take effect after about 20 minutes, ketamine’s effects were much more immediate.

After taking E, you can dance more and it last longer. For K, it comes into effect very fast, it just takes about five minutes. And then I become dizzy so I may not always be able to dance. But it depends on the quality of the drugs... If I just take E, I feel full of spirit... If I take K, it feels like my eyes can’t open very wide. People call this the K eye, and I feel higher.

(Kiki, Chinese female, age 24)

The first time was at a disco with my friend, after we had some ecstasy. We snorted it in the toilet. I saw people snorting heavy doses, but I told myself try only a little first... I had one line. It was very bitter and felt strange. It made me feel faint, confused, like floating in the air. The floating feeling is like when you listen to music, you feel like you’re physically oppressed, and when you dance, you feel you are releasing this oppression, it feels very pleasant. I will only use K after ecstasy because once I had only K at a rave and the feeling was just faint. I didn’t get that feeling of oppression and that sensation of a release and floating feeling that I felt before.

(Sini, Chinese female, age 25)

In this way, ketamine was used in conjunction with ecstasy and was oriented around improving or transforming the ecstasy experience. While ecstasy provided energy and disinhibition for dancing and socializing, ketamine moved the high in a different direction. The above respondents highlight some of the unique experiences of ketamine, especially its ability to produce a feeling of, first dizziness, followed by floating and release. This floating sensation is reported without the use of ecstasy.

The first time going to a disco I didn’t know what to do... standing in a group staring at others... then a friend suggested taking drugs, he had two packets [ketamine]. After taking it, my friends and I stood there, waiting, smoking, and suddenly, not knowing why... it seemed that someone was pulling me... suddenly I was out on the dance floor... I was floating and floating... it seemed that I could see myself floating but I wasn’t really. All around me things are inclined this way and that.. moving up and down...

(Choi, Chinese male, age 16)

From this discussion it is clear that participants in both sites used drugs for similar reasons. Like many young people attending dance events in different parts of the globe, using intoxicants like ecstasy intensified their feelings of pleasure. Furthermore, in order to extend or heighten the pleasurable effects, our participants used a combination of drugs. However, while in San Francisco the preferred drug of choice to use while intoxicated on ecstasy was either marijuana or GHB, in Hong Kong it was ketamine. Nevertheless, although cultural similarities in why our participants used club drugs existed in both samples, their narratives also revealed cultural differences in how our participants described their experiences.

While the pleasure of ecstasy in the dance drug setting lies in its ability to lose oneself, their narratives also point to a sense of humanistic spirituality—a self awakening and recognition of the role as an individual and as part of a collective. While Hong Kong respondents felt ketamine helped to ‘transcend the moment,’ San Francisco respondents described ecstasy’s facilitation of a spiritual connection through ‘being in the moment.’

An ability to lose control was an important attractive feature of ketamine that emerged from the narrative accounts of the Hong Kong sample. Participants described ‘free floating or winging,’ becoming ‘vague,’ ‘blurry,’ or in a state of confusion.³⁷ If continuously snorted during the course of an evening it could make them physically immobile. The loss of control, the loss of the ability to move, is paradoxically connected by our respondents to a sense of freedom. What they emphasize here are the physical experiences of ketamine which they found to be particularly attractive. Within this state, ketamine enabled respondents to relax and transcend the stress, conflict and boredom of everyday life. As scholars have observed, boredom, in its modern articulation, is associated with a number of major transformations in life ways including individualism, belief in the right to personal happiness, secularization, the resulting capitalist division between work and leisure.³⁸

About ten percent of the respondents described the ‘K ride’ experience as exhilarating and frightening. These effects are described in both positive and negative ways, relating to the physical state—confusion, numbness, dizziness—as well as the metaphysical being—feeling out of control, moving out of the body to fly. Although respondents sometimes described their ketamine experiences as frightening, they also observed the experience as ‘amazing,’ even after feeling out-of-control or even in a state of near death.

My greatest experience with K was when I nearly found myself dying...On that night, I had some money and took some ketamine and ecstasy. I got a pack of ketamine and people around me kept spooning it to me so I snorted a lot. While I was snorting the ketamine, I remembered I still had a packet in my pocket. I took it out and gave it to my friends, and they spooned to me again... After that, I went out to the stage and dance. I found I couldn’t control myself. I just stopped there with my opened eyes. I saw many people in stripes. When the music was low in sound, I saw everything shaking. Then I asked my friends to take me back to sit down... I could not control myself and I thought I would probably die. I was really afraid of this... I wanted to move but I couldn’t. I wanted to hold up my hand but I couldn’t. How could this be? I was definitely afraid of that... I called to my friend, and my

eyes had already turned over. I didn't know what was going on... They shouldered me to the toilet. At the time, I dimly saw people dancing in a slow pace with slow actions.. I felt hard and the effect came again. They took me to the toilet to help me vomit... I sat at a side and I didn't know why it seemed that something was going back to my body. I did not know whether it belonged to me or not. Yes, maybe my soul did come back. I found myself becoming clearer. I came back to the world, came back to Hong Kong. I felt I was awake... I was very afraid. I didn't know whether it was a rebirth, but yes, you could say this. At least I understand the feeling which was nearly death.

(Kai, Chinese male, age 23)

Ketamine's popularity for our Hong Kong respondents may therefore be due to its ability to transcend youthful boredom and stress, albeit temporarily, and enable them to float and be free. This state could be achieved in a variety of social spaces including leisure, school, and even work. In a society in which freedom may be increasingly elusive, ketamine's freeing qualities may be particularly attractive. In this sense, the notion of tuning out is less about shutting out one's surroundings, and more related to a spiritual awakening of the self and the temporary pursuit for liberation.

Experiencing the moment was also noted by our respondents in the San Francisco sample. In ways similar to the participants in Hong Kong, ecstasy changed the ordinary and the familiar into something that was 'out-of-the-ordinary.' It operated not only to disrupt or break the routine of life³⁹ but also to transform mundane activities and interactions into ones that were deeply pleasurable, satisfying and exciting. Going beyond the everyday, or 'alterity' as Malbon⁴⁰ calls it, removed the ecstasy user 'from the "normal" times, spaces and social relations of their everyday lives' (ibid, p. 83). Transforming the everyday, 'transgressing boundaries,' and inspiring 'pleasure, excitement, exhilaration and desire'⁴¹ were central and fundamental features of ecstasy's appeal. Here, the ecstasy experience, allowing one to 'tune in' is not that dissimilar to ketamine's 'tuning out'—in both instances, the transcendence of the everyday and spiritual quest for liberation link them together. Still it's important to note that some researchers have suggested that taking ecstasy and attending dance events may gradually become routinized themselves and hence predictable and mundane, and consequently may explain why some users are attracted to mixing or supplementing ecstasy with other intoxicants.⁴²

Nevertheless while ecstasy was particularly attractive for our participants to experience the moment, ketamine was much less attractive. This suggests that particular drugs invoke meaning specific to their social economic, cultural and spiritual context. Although the San Francisco respondents described the effects of ketamine, for example the floating sensation, in similar ways, many of them did not like the specific physical experiences that were so attractive for young people in Hong Kong. Besides noting that their experience of using ketamine was 'bad,' they also complained of feeling ill, nauseous, dizzy and jittery. As one respondent noted in describing the experience, 'It was...just really dizziness.... I just wanted to like lie there, and get over the dizziness. It was never euphoric or felt good' (Theo, Filipino American male, age 30). These physical experiences convinced some respondents that taking ketamine was not fun.

I mean, that's just not my idea of fun. I don't like drugs like that. I like ones that make me either like happy, singing, dancing, or something like that. I think it's just preference, if they really wanna...tune out and...block everything out, be oblivious, if you're into that, then that's the drug for you.

(Sarah, white female, age 28)

Moreover, the loss of control which was attractive for young people in Hong Kong was described by our respondents in San Francisco as too debilitating. Losing control while on drugs was most commonly described as a state, or even the state, to be most carefully avoided while on drugs. While the San Francisco respondents often privileged intoxication, they were generally in search of what Measham refers to as a 'controlled loss of control.'⁴³ Finally, using ketamine on its own, without ecstasy was viewed by one respondent as an empty experience. 'I didn't like doing Ketamine without being on E, 'cause the high was kind of empty' (David, white male, age 25). This may reflect an overall characteristic of our San Francisco respondents, narratives which emphasized the social element of drug use, especially related to taking ecstasy. Taking ketamine on its own provided no social element precisely because the drug's effect was so debilitating that it was impossible to relate to others.

But an interest in the transitory and immediate effects of drug intoxication was not the only characteristic identified by our participants in San Francisco, they also emphasized the more enduring and even permanent benefits in using club drugs, and especially ecstasy—a feature that did not figure in the Hong Kong accounts. Participants in San Francisco described how the longer-term positive effects produced changes both in their sense of themselves and in their subsequent social behavior and interactions with others. Far from evoking the enjoyment of temporarily losing control, participants in San Francisco looked to the long-term benefits of using drugs. While they may also wish to transcend the mundane at least for an evening they also sought more. Some ecstasy users contended that its effects were ephemeral and confined to its intoxicating influence. Other users, though, sought to build on and draw from their ecstasy experiences by integrating their newfound spiritual sentiments, blurring of boundaries, and sociability into their everyday lives. The pleasures of ecstasy are thus associated with a longer-lasting positive experience. Many San Francisco participants believed that they could re-create some of the positive and pleasurable experiences of ecstasy on the dance floor—previously unexplored means of relating to others and the world in general—into daily life. They argued that their 'drug-self' could influence and bring happiness to their 'everyday self.' Some connected changes in their self-confidence or self-esteem to their ecstasy use, which they said improved their ability to interact with others in their day-to-day life, or in their ability to connect to their emotions. For others this took on a metaphysical or spiritual undertone in which ecstasy was seen to have opened them to understanding a greater purpose or meaning in life.⁴⁴ Ecstasy's life-changing ability, and the new consciousness it engendered, was often tied to a process of self-discovery. While most had started using ecstasy for more mundane reasons, primarily for fun, some said this shifted over time, as ecstasy enabled a transformation in how they perceived themselves.

An emphasis on these more lasting changes—the self awareness, the prospect of a new emergent self, the forging of communal relations beyond the dance-drug setting—may be

one reason why ketamine has very limited attraction to our San Francisco respondents. Although 37 per cent of them had tried ketamine, less than 25 per cent had used in the last year, and only two percent had used it in the last month. For those who had used in a measured and controlled manner, the ketamine experience was novel—watery legs and arms, walking in a dreamy and cloudy state and slight numbness. But most San Francisco respondents were aware from friends and reading up on ketamine of potential negative effects—confusion, numbness, sense of being out of control—ketamine was generally not seen as a pleasurable substance nor consistent with the forging of a new self.

While we are not suggesting that our Hong Kong respondents did not experience any of these life-changing experiences, their accounts of ketamine use tended to omit any such discussions. Nevertheless, in spite of these cultural variations, we would still suggest that their narratives of ‘tuning out’ are similar to ‘tuning in’ but articulated in culturally different ways. It was precisely this ability to lose control and become immediately and momentarily immobile that attracted young Hong Kongers. But beyond this immediacy is the pursuit and longing for freedom and liberation from the everyday to experience a spiritual connection to the self.

IV Conclusion

Contemporary research in many locales around the world suggests that intoxicants have become embedded, in what appears to be, a global youth dance drug culture. Ecstasy, in particular, has been integral to the scene even as users around the world experiment and make cocktails with other drugs associated with the dance scene, including non-prescription drugs, hallucinogens, cocaine, and crystal methamphetamine, in the pursuit of new heights of pleasure and altered consciousness. Ecstasy and other intoxicants are also important dimensions in this shared global youth culture even in the face of its shift from grass roots efforts at staging raves to the expansion and range of commercialized settings scattered in cities across the world. With the emergence of a highly commercialized and segmented dance drug scene, researchers have been left wondering if the original motives of intoxication and raves—that of emotionality and spirituality—have been lost in the transition.

Largely absent in discussions about the local and global youth dance drug culture is the comparative dimension, that is, the possible different meanings associated with drug use in different social cultural locales. And that has been our objective here, to take a tentative first step to examining different meanings associated with drug use in two specific social cultural contexts. In doing so, we have tried to make sense of the growing interest among scholars from different frames of reference—criminological, sociological, anthropological, historical, and religious—to try to understand the micro level of emergent cultural and class distinctions and negotiated youth identities in the context of broader conditions of modern times. Intoxication, a notion of much value but understudied, provides a useful framework for this comparison of the meanings of drug use in different cultural locales. Why? Because intoxication and the pursuit of pleasure provides a link between the present and the past. Intoxication tells us about the meaning derived by individuals from using particular

substances as well as the social, economic and cultural conditions in which they seek an altered consciousness.

So what does intoxication and pleasure mean in modern times for young people? Of particular significance for us has been to reconcile Leary's call in the 1960s to 'turn on, tune in, and drop out' through a spiritual search for the self, stimulated by hallucinogens to the more recent call by ravers and the club generation to 'tune out' or 'tune in' through ketamine or ecstasy respectively. Although each scene is defined in culturally and class specific ways, young people in both locales give meaning to their respective drugs of choice in their settings with similar motivations. On the one hand, they share similar experiences of pleasure through intoxication in rave and other dance settings. Pleasure is articulated as fun, happiness, euphoria, energy, liberation and the losing of one's self to or beyond the moment. Yet the experience, described by San Francisco ravers and Hong Kong disco and club goers, of not just the losing of self, but the finding and awakening of the self, or what we could broadly describe in humanistic terms, a spiritual self. This awakening of the self, however, differs for young people in San Francisco who prefer ecstasy and those in Hong Kong who prefer ketamine. San Francisco youngsters describe ecstasy's role in awakening the self in the communal sense while Hong Kong youth associate the self emerging from the isolated but the flying and liberating experience of the ketamine ride. Intoxication and a sense of spiritual connection, albeit transitory and momentary, provide a tonic for the boredom and routine of everyday life. But it is also an indicator of young people's positioning within the neo-liberal state—where young people are paradoxically held accountable to individuality and responsibility but at the same time, are in a holding pattern of prolonged dependency as adolescents.

References

1. Hunt, Geoffrey, et al. Dance Drug Scenes: A Global Perspective. In: Hunt, Geoffrey; Milhet, Maitena; Bergeron, Henri, editors. *Drugs and Culture: Knowledge, Consumption and Policy*. Surrey; 2011.
2. Rudgley, Richard. *The Alchemy of Culture: Intoxicants in Society*. London: 1993. Walton, Stuart. *Out of It: A Cultural History of Intoxication*. London: 2001. p. 22
3. Rudgley. *The Alchemy of Culture*.
4. O'Malley P, Valverde M. Pleasure, Freedom and Drugs: The Uses of "Pleasure" in Liberal Governance of Drug and Alcohol Consumption. *Sociology*. 2004; xxxviii
5. Foucault, Michel. *The Use of Pleasure*. New York: 1990. O'Malley P, Valverde M. Pleasure, Freedom and Drugs: The Uses of "Pleasure" in Liberal Governance of Drug and Alcohol Consumption. *Sociology*. 2004; xxxviiiZajdow G. "It Blasted Me into Space": Intoxication and an Ethics of Pleasure. *Health Sociol Rev*. 2010; xix
6. De Rios, Marlene Dobkin. *Hallucinogens: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Prospect Heights, Ill: 1990. Inaba, Darryl S.; Cohen, William E. *Uppers, Downers, All Arounders: Physical and Mental Effects of Psychoactive Drugs*. Ashland, Ore: 2000. Grob, Charles S., editor. *Hallucinogens: A Reader*. New York: 2002.
7. Inaba; Cohen. *Uppers, Downers, All Arounders*.
8. Lenson, David. *On Drugs*. Minneapolis: 1995.
9. Leary, Timothy. *Leary on Drugs: Writings and Lectures from Timothy Leary (1970–1996)*. San Francisco: 2008.
10. Chatterton and Hollands. *Urban Nightscapes*.
11. Reynolds, Simon. *Energy Flash*. London: 1998.

12. Guardian Staff Writers. End the Nightlife Crackdown. San Francisco Bay Guardian. Mar 26. 2010 <<http://www.sfbg.com/2010/03/23/end-nightlife-crackdown>>
13. Salasuo M, Seppala P. Drug Use within the Finnish Club Culture as Marks of Distinction. *Contemp Drug Probl.* 2004; xxxiPerrone, Dina. *The High Life: Club Kids, Harm and Drug Policy.* Monsey, NY: 2009. Rief, Silvia. *Club Cultures: Boundaries, Identities, and Otherness.* New York: 2009. Siokou C, Moore D, Lee H. "Muzzas" and "Old Skool Ravers": Ethnicity, Drugs and the Changing Face of Melbourne's Dance Party/Club Scene. *Health Sociol Rev.* 2010; xix
14. Measham F, Moore K. Repertoires of Distinction: Exploring Patterns of Weekend Polydrug Use within Local Leisure Scenes across the English Night Time Economy. *Criminol Criml Justice.* 2009; ixHunt, Geoffrey. Molly Moloney and Kristin Evans, *Youth, Drugs, and Nightlife.* London: 2010.
15. Chatterton and Hollands. *Urban Nightscapes.* Macdonald R, Shildrick T. *Street Corner Society: Leisure Careers, Youth (Sub)Culture and Social Exclusion.* *Leisure Stud.* 2007; xxviMeasham F, Hadfield P. Everything Starts with an "E": Exclusion, Ethnicity and Elite Formation in Contemporary English Clubland. *Adicciones.* 2009; xxi
16. Pilkington, Hilary. The Dark Side of the Moon?: Global and Local Horizons. In: Pilkington, Hilary, et al., editors. *Looking West?: Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Cultures.* University Park, Penna: 2002. Lipsitz, George. *Midnight's Children: Youth Culture in the Age of Globalization.* In: Maira, Sunaina; Soep, Elisabeth, editors. *Youthscape: The Popular, the National, the Global.* Philadelphia: 2005. Maira, Sunaina; Soep, Elisabeth, editors. *Youthscape: The Popular, the National, the Global.* Philadelphia: 2005. Nilan, Pam; Feixa, Carles, editors. *Global Youth?: Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds.* New York: 2006.
17. Exceptions include Calafat, Amador, et al. Risk and Control in the Recreational Drug Culture: SONAR Project. Palma de Mallorca2001Agar M, Reisinger HS. Going for the Global: The Case of Ecstasy. *Hum Organ.* 2003; lxiiD'andrea, Anthony. *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa.* New York2007Hunt, et al. *Youth, Drugs, and Nightlife.*
18. St John, Graham. The Difference Engine: Liberation and the Rave Imaginary. In: St John, Graham, editor. *Rave Culture and Religion.* London: 2004. Partridge C. The Spiritual and the Revolutionary: Alternative Spirituality, British Free Festivals, and the Emergence of Rave Culture. *Cult Relig.* 2006; viiBeck G, Lynch G. "We Are All One, We Are All Gods": Negotiating Spirituality in the Conscious Partying Movement. *J Contemp Relig.* 2009; xxiv
19. Partridge C. The Spiritual and the Revolutionary: Alternative Spirituality, British Free Festivals, and the Emergence of Rave Culture. *Cult Relig.* 2006; viiBeck G, Lynch G. "We Are All One, We Are All Gods": Negotiating Spirituality in the Conscious Partying Movement. *J Contemp Relig.* 2009; xxiv
20. Takahashi, Melanie. The "Natural High": Altered States, Flashbacks and Neural Tuning at Raves. In: John, Graham St, editor. *Rave Culture and Religion.* London: 2004. Partridge C. The Spiritual and the Revolutionary: Alternative Spirituality, British Free Festivals, and the Emergence of Rave Culture. *Cult Relig.* 2006; viiBeck G, Lynch G. "We Are All One, We Are All Gods": Negotiating Spirituality in the Conscious Partying Movement. *J Contemp Relig.* 2009; xxivSt John G. Neotrance and the Psychedelic Festival. *Dancecult.* 2009; i
21. Crane, Diana. Culture and Globalization: Theoretical Models and Emerging Trends. In: Crane, Diana; Kawashima, Nobuko; Kawasaki, Ken'ichi, editors. *Global Culture: Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalization.* New York: 2002.
22. The San Francisco sample comprised 300 youth and the Hong Kong sample 100 youth. Both studies had comparable inclusion criteria, involving recent attendance at a dance club or rave and use of illicit drugs in the past six months. The interview documented respondents' life histories, initiation, motivations and problems with alcohol and drugs, involvement in drug sales, and experiences in different dance venues. Although there were some minor differences in the interview schedules, the protocols were developed in tandem to allow for comparison between the two sets of interviews. The San Francisco interviews were conducted in English and the Hong Kong interviews were mainly conducted in Cantonese, the local Chinese dialect, and translated into English. Respondents were recruited from dance venues, advertisements, contacts from prior studies, and chain referrals from respondents. Interviews took place in various settings, from the respondent's or peer's home to public parks, coffee shops, fast food outlets, bars, quiet lounges,

- and at a University office. For further details about the methods used in San Francisco, see Hunt, et al. Youth, Drugs, and Nightlife. . For further details about the methods used in the Hong Kong sample, see Joe-Laidler K, Hunt G. Sit Down to Float: The Cultural Meaning of Ketamine Use in Hong Kong. *Addiction Res Theor.* 2008; xvi
23. Diebold, David. *Tribal Rites: San Francisco's Dance Music Phenomenon 1978–1988.* Northridge, Calif: 1988.
 24. Cheung YW, Ch'ien JMN. *Drug Use and Drug Policy in Hong Kong: Changing Patterns and New Challenges.* *Subst Use Misuse.* 1996; xxxi
 25. Reynolds, Simon. *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture.* New York: 1999.
 26. Chonin, N. The Beat Goes On. *San Francisco Chronicle.* Mar 10. 2002 <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2002/03/10/PK183434.DTL>>Zinko, C. Club Scene Grows up. *San Francisco Chronicle.* Dec 2. 2005 <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/12/02/MNGSNG1SQH1.DTL>>
 27. Moloney, Molly, et al. New Forms of Regulating the Night-Time Economy-- the Case of San Francisco. In: Hadfield, Phil, editor. *Nightlife and Crime: Social Order and Governance in International Perspective.* Oxford: 2009.
 28. Joe-Laidler, Karen. Globalization and the Illicit Drugs Trade in Hong Kong. In: Sumner, Colin, editor. *The Blackwell Companion to Criminology.* Malden, Mass: 2004.
 29. Joe-Laidler KA. The Rise of Club Drugs in a Heroin Society: The Case of Hong Kong. *Subst Use Misuse.* 2005; xl
 30. Joe-Laidler K, Hunt G. Sit Down to Float: The Cultural Meaning of Ketamine Use in Hong Kong. *Addiction Res Theor.* 2008; xvi
 31. Joe-Laidler, Karen; Day, Jeffrey; Hodson, David. A Study on the Psychotropic Drug Abuse Problem in Hong Kong. Final Report to the Action Committee against Narcotics, Narcotics Division, Hong Kong Government; Hong Kong. 2001. Joe-Laidler K, Hunt G. Sit Down to Float: The Cultural Meaning of Ketamine Use in Hong Kong. *Addiction Res Theor.* 2008; xvi
 32. Joe-Laidler K, Hunt G. Sit Down to Float: The Cultural Meaning of Ketamine Use in Hong Kong. *Addiction Res Theor.* 2008; xvi
 33. Sanders, Bill, editor. *Drugs, Clubs and Young People: Sociological and Public Health Perspectives.* Burlington, VT: 2006. Collin, Matthew. *Altered States: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House.* London: 2009.
 34. Hunt G, et al. Combining Different Substances in the Dance Scene: Enhancing Pleasure, Managing Risk and Timing Effects. *J Drug Issues.* 2009; xxxix
 35. Solowij N, Hall W, Lee N. Recreational MDMA use in Sydney: A Profile of "Ecstasy" Users and their Experiences with the Drug. *Br J Addiction.* 1992; lxxxviiForsyth AJM. Places and Patterns of Drug Use in the Scottish Dance Scene. *Addiction.* 1996; xciHammersley R, et al. Patterns of Ecstasy Use by Drug Users. *Br J Criminol.* 1999; xxxixHunt G, et al. Combining Different Substances in the Dance Scene: Enhancing Pleasure, Managing Risk and Timing Effects. *J Drug Issues.* 2009; xxxix
 36. Joe-Laidler KA. The Rise of Club Drugs in a Heroin Society: The Case of Hong Kong. *Subst Use Misuse.* 2005; xl
 37. Joe-Laidler K, Hunt G. Sit Down to Float: The Cultural Meaning of Ketamine Use in Hong Kong. *Addiction Res Theor.* 2008; xvi
 38. Anderson B. Time-Stilled Space-Slowed: How Boredom Matters. *Geoforum.* 2004; xxxvGoodstein, Elizabeth S. *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity.* Stanford, Calif: 2005. Musharbash Y. Boredom, Time, and Modernity: An Example from Aboriginal Australia. *Am Anthropol.* 2007; cix
 39. Cohen, Stanley; Taylor, Laurie. *Escape Attempts: The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life.* New York: 1992. p. 45
 40. Malbon, Ben. *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality.* New York: 1999.
 41. Lupton, Deborah. *Risk and Sociocultural Theory: New Directions and Perspectives.* New York: 1999. p. 167

42. Shewan D, Dalgarno P, Reith G. Perceived Risk and Risk Reduction among Ecstasy Users: The Role of Drug, Set, and Setting. *Int J Drug Pol.* 2000; xReith, Gerda. On the Edge: Drugs and the Consumption of Risk in Late Modernity. In: Lyng, Stephen, editor. *Edgework: The Sociology of Risk-Taking.* New York: 2005.
43. Measham, Fiona. "Doing Gender" - "Doing Drugs": Conceptualising the Gendering of Drugs Cultures. *Contemp Drug Probl.* 2002; xxix
44. Feeling that one now understands the meaning of life is not unusual for drug users. For example, Huxley (1954) Coleridge (1956), and, De Quincey (1971) all described similar effects for mind altering drugs. See Boon, Marcus. *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs.* Cambridge, Mass2002Huxley, Aldous. *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell.* New York1954Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Collected Letters.* 2Oxford1956; De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium Eater.* London1971

Table 1

Lifetime drug-use rates, by location

Drug (%)	San Francisco	Hong Kong
Marijuana	97	89
Ecstasy	92	88
Ketamine	37	85
LSD	59	8
Mushrooms	78	9
Methamphetamine	55	31
GHB	25	3
Cocaine (powder)	60	32
Crack cocaine	11	0
MDA	14	0
Nitrous Oxide	62	0
Poppers	12	0