

FROM THE WAR ON DRUGS TO A WAR ON SUBCULTURE: MEDIA, LAW, AND
THE FUTURE OF RAVE

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This thesis seeks to explore the subculture known as rave, the various news media texts which are concerned with rave culture, and the consequences of these texts on both public opinion and government legislation regarding rave. Chapter 1 discusses youth culture studies in general and defines rave as a subculture dependent on various characteristics unique to the Internet Generation. Chapter 2 discusses the role of news media in constructing public opinion and suggests a possible deliberate alignment of news media and government interests. Chapter 3 contains an analytical discussion of four specific news media texts that each represents different myths about rave culture and the larger War on Drugs. Chapter 4 presents the State Palace Theater case study and positions the case as a concrete example of how sensationalistic news media is involved in the erosion of specific civil liberties for rave culture participants. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with examples of pending legislation that would further limit the rights of rave culture participants and with an explanation of the crucial role of the news media regarding the future of rave.

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Chapter One

Youth Culture Studies: Rave Culture

Music provides a medium through which people have constructed certain elements of their own identities for a long time. Especially in the post-war era, different types of musical expression represent different generations and subcultures, positioned in comparison to, and often at odds with, the respective hegemonic ideologies of specific time periods. Music itself has long been considered and understood as an art, as a medium through which people could express and communicate their ideas and feelings in an attempt to create a common, shared meaning. After the Industrial Revolution, new technologies blurred the distinction between art and media, creating a debate over the definition of popular music as a form of expression versus popular music as a commodity, a vehicle through which large and powerful media corporations can capitalize. Additionally, music provides a refuge for youth, who occupy a subordinate position in society, by providing a medium through which youth can identify with others in their generation and distinguish themselves from their parents' generation, or, more specifically, from the generation that rules their lives.

Popular youth culture has become a widely discussed, scholarly topic in both Europe and the United States since the birth of cultural studies as an academic discipline. Society's elite had traditionally viewed popular culture as a threat to certain moral standards, but cultural studies established a forum for examining the natural and everyday cultural phenomena that dictate the vast majority of our behaviors and values. The ruling social class, especially those members with any legislative influence, continues to devalue certain subcultures, especially youth cultures, most likely because its members

feel that their position of power is being threatened. It is this tension between the ruling and the ruled, between those who make the laws and those who are subject to them, that is the basis for my study of rave culture and the current media-driven controversy surrounding the activities of rave participants. The tension between dominant and subordinate social positions is an underlying theme in each of the following arguments, which comprise the three main arguments this thesis seeks to defend.

First, I will describe and define rave culture and its related practices from the perspective of rave participants. This discussion will begin with an examination of a representative sample of existing writings on cultural studies and youth culture so it is clear how my study of rave culture complements and contributes to these other works. Furthermore, I will position the origin and success of rave subculture as inseparable from three factors that are unique to what I will refer to as the Internet Generation: the emergence of globalization, the forceful political discourse endorsing drug prohibition, and the advancement of new technologies including the Internet.

I will then describe how the news media constructs public opinion by examining the transmission model of mass media, centralized media ownership, and the government's apparent alliance with certain media companies. This will be followed by an accuracy analysis of multiple, specific news media reports which represent different myths surrounding rave culture and which are key contributors to the recent public misperceptions regarding rave culture and "club drugs." I will argue that these myths are the source of crucial misunderstandings among non-participants concerning rave culture as a whole, and that this has prompted lawmakers to equate rave culture with drug

culture leading to an unconstitutional targeting of electronic music events by police and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Finally, I will describe the recent case surrounding raves at the State Palace Theater and position the case as an example of the consequences of distorted public and government perceptions of rave culture due to the myths perpetuated by various news media.

Many people value music as, metaphorically speaking, a place of escape. It is a space one can use to evade the sometimes harsh reality of life or to evoke memories of one's past. Through electronic music, dancing, and other facets of subcultural style, rave culture provides a space where participants have the opportunity to both create and experience a unique utopia in which they are free to express their true "selves," both individually and as a group. This space can also represent a distancing of ravers away from more conformist popular culture. Finally, this notion of space can often represent outer-space, as many of the symbols and practices of rave culture are inseparable from science-fiction, futuristic, out-of-this-world, and/or utopian ideals. Ironically, ravers don't necessarily seek out these themes because they wish to escape from a reality dictated to them by those in power. Rather, the members of rave culture seek more to ensure that at least a part of that utopia will be incorporated into the reality of the future—a reality that will be their own.

Youth Culture Studies

There are multiple perspectives through which cultural studies theorists discuss culture. A large part of this cultural studies rhetoric is concerned with the definition of culture itself. Many writers, such as Graeme Turner in British Cultural Studies,

understand culture throughout their works as a location from which we explore the substance of our daily lives and common understandings. Many people understand the word “culture” to mean “high culture” rather than “a site where the construction of everyday life may be examined” (Turner 1990). Turner also states that one of the reasons to study culture has to do with politics and the importance of examining the existing power relations that govern society. Additionally, he identifies an academic reason for studying popular culture which is “an attempt to understand a process or practice” (Turner 1990). While my examination of rave culture will include an in-depth description of the practices of ravers, a more crucial goal will be to gain insight into the politics of society’s power relations, examine how these are affecting rave as a way of life, and determine how rave is affecting those in power.

Another perspective through which culture has been examined is Dick Hebdige’s notion that symbolic practices and artifacts are the essence of subcultural style. Characterizing a subculture entails examining the explicit and symbolic practices and artifacts that the subculture's members embrace and form their identity around. These practices and artifacts are all part of style, which is where “the tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found” (Hebdige 1979). Style is at the surface of subculture because of the process of rearticulation that occurs when the members of a subculture apply meanings different than those adopted by the mainstream to specific practices and objects. In other words, particular practices and objects are redefined outside of their dominant meaning, and the new meanings are only shared between members of the subculture. Consequently, non-members often feel threatened by the lack of understanding the alternate meaning creates for them. Hebdige’s notions of subculture

and style will be essential to my discussion of rave practices and artifacts. Additionally, the federal government's attempt to ban an array of rave objects it claims are indicative of drug use will, in the State Palace Theater case study chapter, provide a perfect real-world illustration of how the misunderstanding of subcultural styles by those in power can lead to an unconstitutional limitation of numerous civil liberties.

Related to the tension between dominant culture and subculture is Lawrence Grossberg's, "The Political Status of Youth and Youth Culture." The media is an inseparable part of twentieth century youth culture according to Grossberg, and he states that "more than any other social identity, youth always exists, as a style, with and within the media" (26). Grossberg also cites a subcultural study from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in which the researchers assumed class position as "the relevant experience that held the subculture together" (28). Despite an initial attempt at defining the subcultures being studied generationally, the researchers found that generational identifications weren't necessary because the cohesiveness of the members of the subcultures were almost completely embedded in members' class position.

In my examination of rave culture, I will challenge this finding by describing the crucial generational factors and the class diversity that rave culture depends on. While other subcultures may be held together primarily by class similarities, rave culture relies heavily on three conditions that first existed for the generation of youth to which most participants of rave culture belong. These conditions are, first, the implementation and unyielding escalation of the War on Drugs; second, near-complete globalization characterized by an international marketplace for media and business which resulted in a

widespread tendency towards the commodification of culture; and finally, the advancement of the Internet.

While these three circumstances undoubtedly contributed to the construction of rave culture, another youth phenomena that emerged in the 1980's was that of youth violence. In his book, Youth in Crisis, Charles Acland describes the growing incidence of violent crimes committed by youth and the media attention that followed (and continues). In discussing the political agendas which were concurrent with the surge in youth violent crime, Acland mentions that the most pervasive and powerful of these agendas was the War on Drugs, which included invasive tools like home drug-testing kits for parents. He points out that "youth were centrally implicated by the War in Drugs as both those who required protection and those who were involved in the criminal activity of drug culture" (7). While this is a very important illustration of the incongruity that permeates the War on Drugs, Acland fails to suggest the probable causal connection between the rise in youth crime and the escalation of drug prohibition. However, he does imply a connection between youth crime and the American obsession with media violence when he says, "Americans are a profoundly violent civilian population, with murder and assault rates soaring above those of other Western industrial populations...American popular culture is teeming with depictions of violent acts" (15).

It is curious that in a country where the federal government offers television networks monetary rewards to comply with anti-drug guidelines in the plots of sitcoms, there exists no such bribe to minimize violent images on television (*Rolling Stone* 3/30/00). This is only one of countless contradictory policies that exist in our country. It provides a confusing message, especially to younger children, when graphic violence is

accepted as the norm in the media, yet simultaneously the government is waging a full-scale attack on rave culture, which is based on the mantra “Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect.” If American youth are in crisis, as Acland reports, it is no surprise.

Rave Culture

Recently, electronic music has spawned a subculture through which some members of the Internet Generation have found refuge. This is known as “rave” culture, and it was imported from Europe to America in the late 1980s. As with the members of a majority of modern American music cultures (i.e. jazz, hippie, disco), some electronic music fans found that the use of certain mind-altering substances enhanced their musical and personal experience at raves. However, the simultaneous escalation of the United States’ War on Drugs provided the perfect climate for a media panic targeting this subculture.

Rave culture was born in the United Kingdom in the 1980s. The first raves were all-night underground gatherings in abandoned warehouses or open fields and featured electronic dance music. Often referred to simply as “parties,” raves have elements of social parties combined with elements of music concerts, as evidenced in the unique social climate and the fact that the music is designed for dancing rather than passive listening. The main performer is the DJ, who mixes different tracks together on multiple turntables and often with the help of a mixer or synthesizer, providing an uninterrupted stream of music for hours on end.

The DJ generally selects tracks in reaction to the crowd, another quality that distinguishes the DJ from other types of musical performers, who usually have a predetermined set list. This creates a situation in which the audience actually influences

which tracks the DJ plays, and in turn, the audience members can be as much a part of the rave experience as a whole as the main performer onstage. Raves are undoubtedly much more interactive musical venues than are normal concerts considering that electronic music is the foundation for rave, but it is not the complete embodiment of the culture as a whole. Additionally, electronic music facilitates a shared meaning between ravers from totally different parts of the world, because communication through music is not dependent on the ability to understand a particular spoken language. Creating shared meaning between ravers is only dependent on the ability to feel the music as a universal language.

Another of the most essential elements of rave culture is dancing, which, like music, is a form of communication that transcends socio-cultural, political, and language barriers. Dancing to high energy techno music can be a cathartic experience for many, and the therapeutic benefit of this form of self-expression may be one of the reasons raving became associated with the drug MDMA, which also inspires feelings of catharsis and healing. Dancing and music, arguably the most universal forms of communication that exist, make up the fundamental nature of rave culture, but other symbolic practices that comprise rave style are crucial to the creation of a type of shared meaning and identification among ravers. Particular elements of rave style function to create both feelings of belongingness as well as feelings of individuality for rave participants. This is due to the fact that, while most ravers strive for a sense of community and identity within the culture, they also value and exhibit through style the inherent individuality that is essential to properly constructing one's own image within a larger community identity.

Rave culture has many appealing qualities, especially for the members of the Internet Generation. In addition to electronic music and dancing, many ravers are attracted by the accepting climate that exists within rave culture. Raves provide an environment where the participants feel respected and accepted no matter their age, race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or style of dress. Recently, DJ Tiesto commented on this topic in BPM magazine when he said, "I've traveled the world and seen how music transcends class and speaks a common language" (BPM Magazine: Issue 32 March/April 2002). Reflecting the globalization that came about during the coming-of-age of the Internet Generation, rave culture embodies and encourages acceptance of diversity. In fact, it is widely accepted that the philosophy of rave is Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect (P.L.U.R.), an acronym born from the American rave scene in the early 1990s (Fritz 203). In addition to pure fun, many people are drawn to these fundamental values of the rave scene. Ravers are often people who seek to extend these values into the "real" world.

Rave culture has also often been associated with futuristic or other-worldly themes, as the rave experience offers an opportunity to briefly escape from the "real" world. These futuristic themes are sometimes expressed through such things as flyer art, venue décor, or costumes worn by those in the audience or onstage. The mantra "PLUR" is also somewhat futuristic, and symbolizes the idyllic world of the future which many ravers and other members of the Internet Generation strive toward in the "real" world. Dancing and music facilitate the ideal modes of communication for this global world of the future, and promote a connection for ravers between themselves, other people, and the universe. Rave culture represents a community of people who find common ground

through music and dancing, counteracting the tendency of larger society to be lacking in the idea of community. Rave culture is a reaction to the fact that society often does not provide a supportive, caring atmosphere in which people can feel free to express themselves and know that they are safe and accepted. Ravers seek social interaction with a like-minded group of people who share these values, both for themselves and for society.

Subculture and Style: Artifacts, symbols, and signifiers of rave culture

Subculture is a relative concept. The term suggests subordination to a dominant culture, implying that a sort of superiority is inherent in the mainstream and recognizing mainstream culture as a more legitimate, valuable, or simply, “right” way to live. This is ironic in that a subculture only exists in relation to popular culture, and consequently, a movement once defined as a subculture may cease to have that classification if and when the subcultural practices in question are embraced and practiced by a more heterogeneous audience. It is significant, however, to note that the essence of the original subculture is unquestionably transformed as it is adopted by a mainstream audience.

Sarah Thornton addresses this debate in her book, “Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital,” by examining three distinct cultural hierarchies. She addresses the authentic versus the phony, the ‘hip’ versus the ‘mainstream,’ and the ‘underground’ versus the ‘media.’ After thoroughly pondering the different forms and definitions that these terms could take on, Thornton concludes that the best definition of a subculture is, “a social group that has been labeled as such” (162). Additionally, Thornton argues that since some practices are labeled “subculture” and some are not, and since this label or

lack thereof is in fact quite arbitrary when examined objectively, the only reason a particular practice is a subculture is that the media named it so.

Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony provides the most adequate account of how dominance is sustained in advanced capitalist societies. The theory addresses the seemingly naturally occurring qualities and properties of social hierarchy because, "hegemony suggests the complex process by which domination is transformed into civic cooperation" (Deetz 165-166). In 1977, cultural studies expert Stuart Hall commented, "The term hegemony refers to a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert 'total social authority' over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by 'winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural'" (Hebdige 15-16).

The news media and government have implicitly attempted to portray rave culture and its practices, including but not limited to drug use, in a deviant and negative light. The news media does this not by intentionally persuading the audience in what to think, but by changing what the audience thinks about, and how they think about it. This is evidenced by a general consensus of recent news media texts which report about rave culture without considering the perspectives of rave participants. Rave is understood by non-participants as going against the normative, and therefore "correct" culture, when in reality there is no "correct" culture.

The few in control of money, legislation, and mass communication simply aspire to convince the many to conform to a "natural" normative structure that those in power promote to assure their continued position of dominance in the future. Additionally, Dick

Hebdige points out that, “The challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style. The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed at the profoundly superficial level of appearances” (17). The styles associated with rave culture are misunderstood, largely because the media and non-participants wrongly associate every object that represents rave culture with drug use. It is possible that this representation is purposeful and designed to thwart the realization that, “Style in subculture contradicts the myth of consensus” (Hebdige 18).

The classic misconception surrounding rave culture is basically the notion that it is a culture based not on music but on the use of certain illegal drugs. This misconception is evidenced clearly in the words of a former LAPD officer who stated, “They’re not driving hundreds of miles for the music” (*Rolling Stone* 11/11/99). Not only is this statement blatantly untrue but it insinuates that raves are the only places ecstasy and other “club drugs” can be found. In reality, drug use is not limited to rave culture or other youth subcultures, rather it is simply a part of modern society.

Even before the media panic over rave culture went into full effect, *Rolling Stone* featured a short article in response to a number of reports which implicated ecstasy in the then-recent deaths of a few California ravers. After explaining that ecstasy was not the culprit in these deaths, the article noted that, “as electronic dance music acts become more popular, ravers and rave promoters are struggling to preserve the positive aspects of a subculture that’s gone overground. And concerned parents and police are grappling with regulating a scene they don’t understand” (*Rolling Stone* 11/11/99). These misunderstandings could just be manifestations of the denial many people have of the fact that drug use is not more widespread in rave culture than in other subcultures or in

society in general. Rave culture is an easy target, and drawing a primary association between the culture and illegal drugs gives law enforcement the appearance that they are doing a legitimate and society-saving job when they shut down parties or arrest promoters or ravers.

Members of different subcultures express themselves and communicate their membership allegiance through style. Particular aspects of style often function to give new meaning to ordinary objects or practices. “Such commodities are indeed open to a double inflection: to ‘illegitimate’ as well as ‘legitimate’ uses. These ‘humble objects’ can be magically appropriated; ‘stolen’ by subordinate groups and made to carry ‘secret’ meanings: meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination” (Hebdige 18). These new meanings are usually only available to and understood by members of the subculture, and non-members often misunderstand the new meanings. Dick Hebdige refers to this as “the subversive implications of style,” in his book, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (2).

The practices and objects that have been redefined outside of their hegemonic meaning are quite numerous within rave culture. Items such as glowsticks, pacifiers, brightly-colored plastic jewelry, and candy signify alternative meanings when viewed in the context of rave culture. For example, the media often reports that glowsticks are popular at raves because the visual effects intensify the effects of the drug ecstasy. In rave culture, people dance with glowsticks to express themselves and to simply provide entertainment. Glowsticks also facilitate the audience’s role as part of the rave experience because they create a bright, colorful, and visually pleasing atmosphere that is

independent of the DJ onstage. Glowsticks are symbols of the interactive nature of the rave experience.

Ravers are often concerned with the visual elements of the venue or their own appearances, and glowsticks are only one of many rave objects that are visually pleasing. Glitter, stickers, bright colors, and anything that glows in the dark promote a positive, happy, utopian atmosphere. Ravers are very much into having fun and being happy, and most endeavor to assure that everyone around them is happy as well. Most ravers are aware that they will be part of everyone else's rave experience, and some even wear elaborate costumes which add to the party atmosphere.

Another misunderstanding asserted in the media regarding objects of rave style are related to the clothes people wear to raves. Many ravers, especially in American rave culture, choose to wear "fat pants," wide-legged, loose-fitting pants that often have many pockets. The media has sometimes implied that these pants are used to carry large amounts of drugs into a rave venue, but in reality the pants are comfortable to dance in and help keep ravers from overheating. The abundance of pockets is convenient for those who like to bring lots of candy or beaded jewelry to a party to give out or trade with fellow ravers. Because most raves are all-night affairs, lasting anywhere from six to twelve hours on average, the pockets are also convenient for holding anything one might need in that time period. They also can take the place of a backpack or purse which can hinder dancing, and large pockets are convenient for storing bottles of water while dancing.

Many of the objects that signify rave culture are viewed in the hegemonic sense as symbols of childhood. The candy raver bracelet is a significant symbol within rave

culture, as are other objects that the mainstream may identify as being only for young children (Fritz 211). For example, many ravers wear clothes or carry objects that are symbolic of the popular children's culture that existed during their youth. For example, some ravers are partial to toys and clothes that feature Scooby-Doo or the Thundercats, while some are fans of more recent youth culture commodities such as the Powerpuff Girls or the Teletubbies.

In addition to electronic music, another art form that is associated with and has grown because of rave culture is the rave flyer. In the early days of raving, when parties were held in abandoned warehouses or other unlicensed venues, raves were often advertised only by word of mouth or on flyers. In those days, ravers often had to find the rave venue through "map points," which basically means there would be a location to go to first to find out where the party was being held. Sometimes parties had multiple "map points," and these locations were often only made known through an info line on the day of the party. Flyers are the main way raves are advertised, even today. Flyers simply have information about the party including the DJ lineup and other attractions. They are handed out at the end of raves or can sometimes be found in music stores or cafes. Most raves have a unique flyer featuring art that symbolizes the theme of the party. Flyer art reflects the artistic spirit of the rave movement, and recently flyer art has been considered a new visual art form. The book, "Searching for the Perfect Beat: Flyer Designs of the American Rave Scene," by Jason Jordan is just one of the books that details the artistic movement embodied by rave flyers.

Style is an essential and distinguishing part of subculture. It is often a form of communication between members of a subculture with each other and with the

mainstream. The confusion surrounding rave culture objects and practices provides a perfect illustration that, “the conflict between [hegemonic culture and subordinate culture] can be encapsulated in a single object, so the tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture- in the styles made up of mundane objects [artifacts] which have a double meaning. On the one hand, they warn the ‘straight’ world of a sinister presence- the presence of difference... On the other hand, for those who erect them into icons... these objects become signs of forbidden identity, sources of value” (Hebdige 2-3). Consequently, the expression of the style of rave culture is a free speech issue and has recently been attacked through the government’s recent effort to ban glowsticks and other rave artifacts from raves.

In addition to the misunderstandings surrounding objects of rave style, there are also misunderstandings of certain practices in rave culture. The misunderstandings are again largely due to the fact that the media has asserted that these practices are indicative of drug use. For example, the media and government has insinuated that ravers drink a lot of water at parties because ecstasy causes dehydration. In reality, lots of things cause dehydration, and dancing for hours on end in a crowd of people is one of them. Raves are frequently hot, crowded environments. People who are not used to the heat and hydration issues that can arise from vigorous dancing can get heat exhaustion if they don’t drink enough water. Ecstasy users do generally drink a lot of water, and they should since it helps regulate body temperature. However, just because bottled water is available and very popular at raves or just because someone is drinking water at a rave does not mean that everyone who goes to raves takes ecstasy. Most people who go to raves dance for a long period of time, and as with any physical activity, this causes a need

for rehydration. This may seem like common sense, but as I will discuss in Chapter Four, the DEA included receipts for bottled water as evidence that the promoter and owners of the State Palace Theater were promoting drug use.

Another practice that is misunderstood to be associated with drug use is the ingestion of candy or lollipops at raves. The media has often stated that candy relieves the jaw tension which is a side effect of ecstasy and other “club drugs.” In fact, ravers take candy to parties to share with fellow ravers or to provide themselves with the energy to stay awake and dance all night.

In the Dateline report and other reports on rave culture, raves are associated with rampant sex. There seems to be a tendency to assume that the drug ecstasy has something to do with sex, but this is hardly true. Most ecstasy users experience a feeling of connection or closeness with those around them, but these feelings are far from sexual. In fact, many men find they cannot perform sexually when under the influence of MDMA. Dance clubs are often connected with sex because they combine elements of rave with elements of bars. Bars and clubs are associated with sex because they are often venues for single people to meet each other. I will discuss the differences between raves, clubs, and bars in a moment, but it is essential to understand that rave culture and ecstasy use is independent of sexual activity.

The demonstration of rather extreme reactions to the music is another practice misrepresented within the media. Some people at raves react to the music in a way that non-participants may deem indicative of drug use. For example, dancing with abandon or closing the eyes and dancing energetically for long periods of time may give the impression that these people are on drugs. However, these demonstrations are often due

to the “runner’s high” brought on by the intense physical activity of dancing, as well as complete relaxation and acceptance from dancing in a large group of friendly people and the anonymity of dancing in a darkened setting (Kansas City Promoters Association). Many ravers really value having a place where they can dance and truly express themselves without having to worry about what they look like when they dance or what other people might be thinking about them.

In the context of rave culture, these and other practices are constantly questioned and implicated as evidence of drug use. However, much worse things occur regularly in bars, and going to bars is a mainstream practice that hasn’t really been questioned since the repeal of prohibition. There is other evidence that there is an informal government conspiracy against nonconformity. For example, participation in athletics, especially in America, is valued as a legitimate extracurricular activity and is encouraged among young children. There is a wildly disproportionate respect for extracurricular activities that are related more to artistic ventures. “Jocks” are often the beneficiaries of special treatment and are often treated as heroes, while members of other subcultures, such as punks or ravers, are negatively stigmatized by both the jocks and society in general.

Ironically, athletes and their coaches sometimes resort to drugs to enhance performance, and they are praised when their performance improves, which simply reinforces drug use. Additionally, participating in athletics is a risky behavior and many, many children and adults are injured, either physically or emotionally, in the competitive world of sports. However, although it is arbitrary that athletics is one of the most accepted extracurricular activities for kids today, current public policy, government officials, the media, and parents overwhelmingly encourage athletes and their

engagement in whatever behaviors are necessary to win, while simultaneously frowning upon any child or subculture that represents nonconformity.

Which Came First, the Music or the Drugs? The chicken and egg debate of rave culture

A popular practice that has come to signify raves, especially because of media coverage in the past two years, is the use of ecstasy and other drugs to heighten the senses and provide energy for all-night dancing. The evolution of raves and the re-evolution of ecstasy as a newly deemed illegal substance have gone historically and culturally hand-in-hand. The idea of raving as a subculture is parallel to the idea of certain drugs as illegal. This perpetuates the American tendency to associate some drugs with some members of society and other drugs with other members of society, and to base legality or illegality on the stereotypically constructed credibility of the particular members of society, rather than on common sense criteria such as scientific evidence pertaining to health and sociological evidence pertaining to the dire consequences of prohibition.

Today's rave scene has gotten a tarnished image in the eyes of the media and law enforcement, due to the irresponsible actions of a few. But even when overdoses or other distressing results of drug abuse are not present, the media and law enforcement have tended to view raves as illegal affairs that eagerly venture outside the law. Many ravers are just as concerned about overdoses and drug abuse as are the authorities. Not only do ravers view these incidents as tragedies for those concerned, but they also regard them as irresponsible actions that are ruining the rave scene and making it harder for ravers to hear the music they love. Ravers and promoters are concerned about the singling out of raves for special treatment by law enforcement. There should be no difference in the treatment of raves than there is for concerts or clubs.

Music is the essence of the rave scene. Although ecstasy and other drugs may be a big part of the scene for some people, others can reach a utopia simply through the feelings the music brings to them. The majority of ravers who do use drugs are responsible recreational drug users who go to work or school during the week and deserve, like anyone else, to relax on the weekends doing something that they have a passion for. Ravers are typically caring and compassionate people who want no more than to share a common bond through music and the rave experience with the fellow members of their culture without being interfered with.

What About Ecstasy?

Real ecstasy is MDMA. In essence, MDMA is a mood elevator, and produces feelings of self-acceptance, emotional warmth, empathy towards others, relaxation, and also has a mild stimulant effect. It temporarily reduces social anxiety and has potential medical benefits, particularly as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, as a therapeutic aid for terminal cancer patients, and as a suicide-intervention drug (Saunders 127).

Pharmacologically, MDMA is a serotonin releaser, working similarly to Prozac and other anti-depressants. However, MDMA is stronger than Prozac, yet short-acting. It cannot be taken every day, because it simply won't work even if one raises the dose, due to the fact that its effectiveness depends on the availability of serotonin in the brain. Thus, it is not physically addictive. MDMA also does not produce hallucinations.

The vast majority of people who use ecstasy (more so than any other recreational drug) find it pleasant, highly controllable, and with few unpleasant side effects. By all indications, if used moderately and responsibly, MDMA seems far less dangerous than

most recreational drugs, especially the two legal drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Certainly it is less dangerous than PMA, DXM, speed, and the many other drugs sold under the name of ecstasy to unsuspecting users (www.DanceSafe.org).

Bars vs. Clubs vs. Raves

There are stark differences between raves, clubs, and bars. The two main practices in bars are drinking alcohol and socializing, often with the goal of meeting new people for dating or sex. More often than not, the music in bars, if any at all, comes from a jukebox or karaoke machine. Clubs often feature electronic dance music but have an atmosphere more similar to that of a bar. Most clubs have a bar or multiple bars within them serving alcohol, and this leads to a clientele eager to drink and flirt rather than dance and experience electronic music. Consequently, the music played in many clubs is often more mainstream, “cheesy” dance music, and sometimes an actual DJ isn’t even present. Some clubs do feature very respected DJs from around the world, but clubs most often feature local DJs, some of which are “residents” at that particular club and play there frequently. The clientele in clubs is often very similar to that of bars which leads to the fact that it is difficult to go to a club just to dance because someone is invariably staring at you. This presents a problem for people who want to go to dance and not have to worry about sloppy drunks constantly trying to pick them up.

In contrast to both clubs and bars, raves provide a place for people to dance without worrying about unwanted advances or sloppy drunk people. Raves often appeal to people who have grown tired of the “meat market” atmosphere of night clubs and who prefer to dance with people on a purely platonic basis (Kansas City Promoters

Association). It is refreshing to know that if someone comes up to you to say hello, it is not with anything other than friendly intent.

Some raves serve alcohol and some don't, and some even have special roped or fenced-off areas for those who are over 21 and want to drink. The occasional absence of alcohol, and the presence of bottled water, is often cited in the media or by law enforcement as evidence of widespread drug use, because many people seem to believe that mind-altering substances are necessary to have fun or to socialize. However, when viewed realistically, the absence of alcohol makes a lot of sense since it doesn't exactly assist people who are trying to stay up all night to dance.

Another difference between clubs and raves is that raves have multiple DJs and even multiple rooms or stages featuring a wide variety of different genres of electronic music. Raves usually feature one or more "headliners," DJs who are generally more well-known either regionally, nationally, or internationally. They also generally feature local DJs, and bigger raves sometimes have other performers like stage-dancers or fire-twirlers.

Electronic Music Genres and Live Performance

There are numerous genres of electronic music and the popularity of each often depends on geographic location. "Techno" is a term sometimes used to describe electronic music in general, but also signifies a specific genre that is characterized by machine-generated repetitive beats with a minimum of vocals. Techno, trance, house, and jungle/drum & bass are the most common genres found at parties within the United States, and they generally provide the basic foundation from which the other genres developed. It is important to note that electronic music is very dynamic, and a majority

of DJs incorporate elements of other musical genres into their music. Furthermore, the classification of a lot of electronic music is arguable and the boundaries between genres are extremely blurred.

In addition to techno, described above, trance and house are both very popular and universal genres of electronic music. Trance, which also encompasses such variations as hard trance and progressive trance, is similar to techno but features more melodic, trance-like qualities and samples and is often more song-like in structure. House, which includes progressive house, hard house, and deep house, is “the direct descendant of disco, is in 4/4 time, and often utilizes soulful vocals” (Kansas City Promoters Association).

In contrast, Drum & Bass and Jungle are distinct from each other but both feature hip-hop influenced rhythms typified by guitar and drum sounds, non-4/4 tempos, and sometimes rap or MC accompaniment (K.C. Promoters Association). Jungle emerged from British rave culture in 1994 “combining reggae, hip hop rhythms, and techno, and suggested a hybrid Africanizing influence capable of providing an antidote to the soulless European repetitive beats of techno” (Mitchell 76). Other electronic music genres include ambient, happy hardcore, breakbeat, garage, two-step, and tribal.

Although unique, each of these genres shares elements that distinguish electronic music from other musical forms. Most notably absent from the majority of rave music are lyrics. Moby, a DJ from New York explains, “when I got into dance music, I realized the passionate sound of a woman screaming or yelling could mean more to me than any complicated, labored lyric” (*New York Times Magazine* 3/17/02). This quote was featured in a subsection of the article titled, “What Words Alone Can’t Convey.” The

absence of lyrics is one element that contributes to the universality of electronic music and rave culture.

Another distinguishing feature of electronic music is related to the originality of the DJ's set. In most mainstream music, the live performance repeats what fans have first heard recorded on a musician's album. The live performance is simply a showcase of a band or musician's recorded work. Live performances were the original way most musicians made their money, but the technology of recording and reproducing created a situation where a band or musician will tour to promote their album, instead of the other way around. Additionally, the fans usually already have favorite songs picked out from the artist's album and expect to hear these songs in the live performance. This limits the live experience, because often a fan has predetermined what moment in the show will be superior, because they've sworn that they would go nuts when they heard a particular song performed live. The fans also might be waiting the whole show for that one song, and may only be completely satisfied if the band plays that song. Most bands tour and play the same songs over and over every night of the tour, especially from their most recent album. These bands or musicians usually have predetermined playlists including the specific order they will play the songs in before the show begins.

This is not to say that DJs don't have albums or don't play tracks from their albums at raves. However, the practice of playing one or two popular tracks from an album is generally only something a very well-known DJ will only sometimes do, and some feel this is a sign that electronic music has completely emerged from the underground and is beginning to conform to more traditional live performance routines. For the most part though, live DJ performances are characterized by the mixing of

different tracks together with computer-generated sound effects, which creates original tracks that may never be replicated again, even by that DJ. Granted, the tracks DJs mix are on vinyl records and therefore prerecorded, but it is always a total mystery as to what record(s) the DJ will choose for that particular moment. This creates a one-time experience that will never be replicated.

Though the vibes between parties can be very similar, the mood of the party, like the music, never progresses in exactly the same way between different parties. The music plays a crucial part in the vibe and mood of the party and the absence of vocals makes the music more universally meaningful than music that relies on lyrics. The infinite number of possible tracks makes it much harder for the audience to know what tracks to expect. In a way, this makes certain moments more genuine because they have not been premeditated in the audience's mind. It seems to limit the experience when one gets it in one's head that hearing a particular favorite song or songs live will make the whole show worthwhile. A psychological block is created because one's favorite song is already decided, long before one experiences it live. The DJ mixes records according to the crowd's vibe, the crowd's behavior, and other factors. Even the DJ doesn't know exactly what he or she might play before the party starts. The DJ is limited only by his or her record collection and his or her imagination. DJs, therefore, represent both copying and originality. With regard to this, Moby noted, "On my records, I'm the composer and the musician and the engineer, but also a plagiarist and thief" (*New York Times Magazine* 3/17/02).

In the next section, I'll examine the birth and continued existence of rave culture as dependent upon certain factors that are closely associated with the generation of

people who were coming-of-age at the same time that rave culture was growing. It will be evident that these factors are indisposible to both the technicalities of electronic music and the various characteristics that define rave as a unique cultural movement.

Generation Rave

Rave culture and its related practices are a reaction to the larger political, societal, and cultural climate in which rave was born and continues to thrive. The generation of people who were/are coming-of-age when rave practices began and while they remain a part of popular culture were/are exposed to a certain way of life while growing up that no previous generation has experienced. The emergence of globalization, the forceful political discourse endorsing drug prohibition, and the advancement of new technologies, especially the Internet, have driven this generation toward both the utopian practices of rave culture and toward the universally understood expression electronic music facilitates.

Throughout this thesis, I have been using the term “Internet Generation” to describe the generation of people born from approximately 1968 to 1987. In the book 13th Gen: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?, Neil Howe and Bill Strauss examine the generation following the Baby Boomers, which they call the 13th Generation, essentially the generation that is popularly known as Generation X. They define the 13th Generation as anyone born between 1961 and 1981. The generation they describe is like the Internet Generation in that it is distinctively post-Baby Boomer, and the older members of the Internet Generation also fit the description of the members of the so-called 13th Generation. The Internet Generation is simply a few years younger on average than the post-Baby Boomer Generation Howe and Strauss describe. The Internet Generation

encompasses those who grew up either during the beginning of the modern War on Drugs, which began in 1970, or who grew up during the period when Reagan and Bush Sr. were in the White House, and were subject to such propaganda as the D.A.R.E. program and the Partnership for a Drug-Free America advertising campaign.

During the same period of time, mass media and other industries began to operate on a more global scale, thanks to advances in the transportation and telecommunications industries. The globalization movement peaked when the Internet became available for more and more people. The Internet revolutionized international business, politics, and communications as it essentially made the world smaller. Both the Internet and electronic music facilitated understanding across cultural boundaries and national borders, and the Internet Generation was the first to traverse these boundaries. The Internet Generation is the first truly international generation according to Banks' article about MTV, where he cites Tom Freston as saying, "This is the first international generation... French and American teenagers are much more similar to each other than they are to their parents."

New technologies revolutionized the music industry at the same time. When music was first digitized in compact disc format around 1980, a new world of possibilities, that electronic music depends on, was born. As music in the digital form advanced alongside computer technology, digital editing and synthesizers made it possible to produce synthetic sounds and manipulate their different properties. Electronic music depends on these advances in computer technology, and in turn, rave culture depends on them.

In addition to technological advances and globalization, the Internet Generation is unique in its over-exposure to the uncompromising rhetoric and propaganda that is part of the modern War on Drugs. One could argue that the nonsensical yet obstinate qualities of the method with which the federal government approached drug prohibition actually backfired with the Internet Generation, in two senses. First, it backfired because in no way, shape, or form did it lower the rate at which any segment of the population consumed drugs, and there is evidence that it actually advertised and popularized drug use. It additionally backfired because now more and more members of the Internet Generation are actively opposing the War on Drugs, which was so forcefully jammed down their throats. Charles Thomas, president of the Unitarian Universalists for Drug Policy Reform noted when discussing Students for Sensible Drug Policy, “As each generation grows older, the students inspire us with their energy and idealism. They show us that there is hope for the future, especially in the drug policy reform movement. I mean, this is the D.A.R.E. generation! They grew up watching Partnership for a Drug-Free America commercials. Now we see that the prohibitionists' propaganda not only failed, but it backfired” (The Week Online- SSDP).

No matter whether they are referred to as the Internet Generation, the Drug War Generation, the D.A.R.E. Generation, the Just Say No Generation, the Rave Generation, or Generation Y, the people who were born roughly from 1968-1987 share a unique perspective on the world due to the situational specifics of the time period in which they grew up. Their unique perspective created the perfect climate for rave culture and its inherent universal and utopian ideals to thrive. In the next section, I will further examine

the implications of globalization in regard to the Internet Generation, electronic music, and cultural imperialism, the main concern associated with globalization.

The Internet Generation: Music, Globalization, and Cultural Imperialism

Humans think of themselves as existing within certain physical spaces and membership groups. For the members of the Internet Generation, locality has become less important as a factor that helps define or categorize culture. In addition, locality and genre have a reciprocal relationship, in that the essence of some music genres are solely dependent upon characteristics that only exist in specific locations. Classifying an artist as global or local is relative to the audience. Where the artist is from is one of the contributing things to who he is and to what defines his music. Of course, an audience's relationship with the artist can be facilitated by many other things, aside from location, that have also contributed to the nature of the artist and his music.

Whether locality is relevant depends upon the specific genre of music and the degree of importance to the defining characteristics of a song that the representations of cultural or communicative boundaries have within the music itself. Lyrics are a good example of this. Language can be defined as an oral or written representation of human thought, as music can be defined as sounds created by human feelings, and human feelings represented and evoked by sounds. "Music is the global language," proclaimed [MTV's] Sara Levinson (Banks 59). Music without lyrics is a language in itself. Music generates, creates, communicates, and manifests itself in the form of specific feelings in the listener, the same way language generates words. The difference is that feelings can be shared universally in a way that words can't.

Some artists may be more identifiable as representative of a specific type of music or ideal, instead of as representatives of their home country. The place the artist comes from as a chief characteristic might only be relevant for some groups or genres. For example, electronic music DJs are grouped more frequently by the type of music they play than by where in the world they're from, because their music is hardly dependent, if at all, on the language the DJ speaks. It doesn't matter where the DJ is from or what the language of his home country is, because he speaks the universal language of music, and lyrics aren't a necessary characteristic of the dance music genre. Dance music is becoming one of the most widespread global music genres because of the absence of boundary-setting lyrics in most dance music, which means there are fewer, if any, culturally-based boundaries that must be overcome contained within the music itself. Again, the main reason for this globally shared meaning is contained within the particular characteristics of electronic music itself.

The absence of lyrics in the majority of techno music allows members of the audience to individually develop and apply their own unique meaning to a song or album. There are no lyrics telling the listener explicitly what the song is "about," rather, the listener gets to determine that for him or herself. Although each participant will develop an individual meaning based on subjective criteria, a collective meaning based on the feelings the music evokes will also undoubtedly exist. In effect, the absence of lyrics creates a musical form that depends not on the interpretation of the words of a particular language which is limited to those who speak that language, but on the interpretation of particular feelings that the music so powerfully and meaningfully evokes in the mind, heart, and soul of the listener.

It is also important to note that this feeling and the meaning it creates may be vastly different on different occasions of listening to the same song or album. Like with any other genre of music, the circumstances of a situation help determine how a song will make one feel, but unlike other musical forms, a shared meaning between electronic music lovers from totally different parts of the world is not dependent on the ability to understand a particular spoken language, but on the ability to feel the music as a universal language. Music like this, that transcends restrictive boundaries created by language and other differences, along with other boundary erasing advances such as the internet and new technologies, means that locality is becoming more and more an arbitrary trait, and less and less relevant as a defining characteristic of music.

New technologies like the internet have blurred the distinction between global, national, and local music. These advances have brought people together, through their shared media interests, even though they physically may be a world apart. The attribution of a global or local label to a group is based on dynamic criteria that causes the label to therefore be often changing, relative to time and audience. Music is a cultural form that can be a defining feature of individual or national identity because it reflects the attitudes and beliefs that comprise a culture.

Local musicians who compete with international artists for airplay on local radio stations are sometimes subverted because of the strong economic benefits provided by the transnational corporations that sponsor the international artists. They offer a lot more potential to generate revenue because they will spend a lot of money on advertising. In some countries, however, the government will ban or censor the artist's recorded music or live performances. For example, in China, exposure to foreign-produced music is

highly limited because of conflicting political, philosophical, or religious views about how society should be run.

Generational identification is a very important indicator of an artist's global or local influence. If musicians are tied to specific generations locally and/or globally, this may be able to be determined by certain consumer goods related to music, such as 1980s mix albums. Generational issues are related to technological advances because whether certain music becomes global is dependent upon whether it has the opportunity/means to be exported, which is an opportunity that has only been made possible for recent generations of musicians. This implies that globality is a generational, or temporal, indicator. If certain music is global, it can be concluded that it existed during a time that technology facilitated the necessary tools to produce particular styles of music and the exportation of music in order to be shared with the world. For example, electronic music is dependent on technological advances like the production of mixers and synthesizers and the advent of storing music in digital form, which sustains computer-generated music.

Cultural imperialism goes hand-in-hand with globalization and the recent technologies that make it possible. The Internet makes it seem like a much smaller world, as it closes the gap between oceans, brings people closer when they can't be in the same place physically, and eases communication over distances. It ultimately blurs the distinction between local and global.

The rapid exportation and exchange of cultural products and the decreased importance in location due to technology may be an indicator that the groups humans generally form loyalties to based on commonalities- nationality especially, in this case-

may shift based on the redefinition or creation of new perspectives from which they identify themselves. This- the world, in effect, being made smaller- is made possible by technological advances in the telecommunication, computer, and transportation sectors where adversities involving time and distance are reduced or completely eliminated. Maybe one's country and nationality are becoming less of a priority as a common characteristic people generally share with the people in the groups to which they belong and/or define themselves in relation to. There are many worries surrounding the issue of cultural imperialism, but even if culture based on locality were totally eliminated, it doesn't mean culture will cease to exist, it just means it will be structured and categorized based on different criteria.

Presumably, the "imperialist" cultural practice developed subsequently to the "original," and its nature was therefore influenced by the conditions that existed at the time of its birth and existence. It can be looked at as a subculture of the original, but it's still a different culture than the original. The new location provides, at least, the opportunity for the [sub]culture to grow, change, and develop, as it is incorporated into a culture that is different from the one it was born out of. A similar thing happens when a subculture in a particular place, rave culture for example, becomes mainstream. In becoming mainstream, the subculture is transformed into something it originally was not. In other words, the nature of the audience or participants, which is dynamic, has an effect on the definition of a group of practices as a subculture or as more mainstream culture.

Conclusion

In the next chapter, I'll discuss how the news media play a crucial part in constructing public opinion about certain phenomena, mainly, rave culture. Furthermore,

I'll discuss centralized media ownership and a case of the media's alignment with government as two factors effecting the way the media portray certain events or experiences. I'll argue that news media is often responsible for instigating and perpetuating certain myths and that these myths can have very real consequences for both the public and those who are the subjects of the myths.

Chapter Two

The News Media: Constructing Public Opinion

The news media possess an immense amount of power and influence over both general public opinion and more formal legislative, or public policy, decisions. The cultural, societal, and political problems that are associated with this are largely underestimated. Neither public opinion nor government legislation should be based on news media opinion, because the news media, in some respects, represents the ultimate form of public manipulation. The images and texts of news media reports address the average news media consumer who is likely to believe he is hearing a report about a realistic event independent of whether or not it is accompanied by scientific basis or other undeniable evidence.

Frequently, there will be an event in which multiple news media outlets exaggerate or report unsupported information as fact regarding the particulars of a certain phenomenon. This causes unwarranted and unnecessary concern among the general, media-consuming public. Accuracy analysis, a feature of the transmission model of mass communication, is one of the ways to determine whether a particular story will have this effect. The transmission model explains communication as the “process of moving messages from a sender through a medium to a receiver” (Grossberg 1998: 16). This model expresses the idea that the successful transmission of the content of a message from one person’s mind to another person’s mind is the primary challenge of the communication process. This successful transmission results in a shared meaning also known as understanding, or intersubjectivity (Grossberg 1998:17). However, often this

shared meaning is prevented because whatever medium the message travels through distorts the message, altering its meaning.

Accuracy analysis entails an examination of a particular news media text to establish which assertions within the story are proven facts, and which assertions the media source reported to be true but can be shown to be false by examining scientific or other factual evidence. These false assertions within a media text are often the cause of meaning distortion. The limitations of accuracy analysis surround the fact that once the wrong is corrected, it generally does not receive as much public exposure as the initial incorrect information, if it receives any exposure at all.

Although many news media outlets claim that providing the public with truthful, vital news stories is their first priority, and seem to have convinced the general public, for the most part, that this is true, it is abundantly clear that this is not the case. The news media has the same agenda as what people may think of as primarily entertaining forms of media have, that of maximizing profits through advertising. More specifically, television and print news media have the primary objective of maximizing ratings and circulation volume, respectively. Good ratings and high circulation equal wide exposure, which, in turn, equals vital interest from advertisers.

Advertising funds most forms of media, from television and print media advertisements to internet website advertisements. So, for example, in order for a particular newspaper to stay in business, it must have sufficient exposure to the public for advertisers to be interested in funding it. News media is much more marketable when it's dramatic and entertaining, just like any other form of media. Thus, the producers of news media have a vital interest in making the news as exciting and dramatic as possible.

In their article, "What is News?" Jamieson and Campbell discuss the qualities of a newsworthy event. They assert that a story covered in the news media should be personalized, featuring interviews with experts and people affected by the particular event. Stories that are conflict filled and sometimes violent are more newsworthy, as are actual and concrete stories. Stories that are novel and sometimes deviant also make good news. Finally, Jamieson and Campbell emphasize that issues of ongoing national or international concern are especially newsworthy (40). Although a news story may have the qualities of a newsworthy event, this simply implies that it is a story that would attract viewers, and therefore advertisers. Just because a story is newsworthy in the sense that it draws viewers by no means implies that the story will be presented objectively.

Unfortunately, the news media has a tendency to exaggerate and embellish the truth, disguising reality in an ultimately manipulative sense, especially when a particular news phenomenon has the potential to produce future dramatic and entertaining stories. In addition, and especially when a particular news story may be somewhat abstract with regard to the real lives of the particular media consumers, the media will ultimately try to create a human interest perspective on the story to assist the consumer in identifying with it on a more personal level.

There is no better example of this tactic than the momentous body of news stories that have resulted since the installation of the War on Drugs. In fact, the Drug War afforded the news media a chance to become, or at least greatly influence, the actual events that make up the news. In reporting the availability of certain drugs in certain areas of the country, the news media was, among other things, advertising the particular drug. In truth, drug use is very localized, and in the instance of many illegal drugs,

people in many places had never even heard of certain drugs until they were featured in the national media. It was only then that the particular drug would make its way into those regions. In many cases with illegal drugs, news media stories became self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, following a 1989-1990 media panic over a form of methamphetamine called ice, warned, “News articles describing [ice] as like ‘ten orgasms pronto’ are working like paid ads... If the media says it’s an epidemic, drug adventurers say, everybody’s using it, so I’ve got to try it” (Jenkins 19).

Media Ownership

Centralized ownership control is one explanation for the perpetuation of myths that would possibly be debunked by accuracy analysis. Whomever owns a particular station, network, newspaper, or magazine has control over what is reported and how it is reported. Accordingly, they have control over what information the public receives and, therefore, how the public constructs reality. In his book, Subculture: The Meaning of Style, Dick Hebdige describes the implications of this control:

the crucial question has to do with which specific ideologies will prevail at any given moment...[to answer this question] we must first consider how power is distributed in our society...we must ask which groups and classes have how much say in defining, ordering, and classifying out the social world. It should be obvious that access to the means by which ideas are disseminated in our society (i.e. principally the mass media) is not the same for all classes. Some groups have more say, more opportunity to make the rules, to organize meaning, while others are less favourably placed, have less power to produce and impose their definitions of the world on the world (14)

Recent developments in government deregulation have encouraged the onset of media conglomeration, characterized by vertical and horizontal integration of varying media producers. This has caused an unprecedented situation in which a very small number of

media companies controls a very large portion of the world's media. The following profiles of two of the world's top media companies, AOL-Time Warner and the Walt Disney Company, clearly illustrate this situation.

In the year 2000, for \$160 billion, America Online bought Time Warner, which was created in 1989, when *Time Inc.* merged with Warner Communications. The AOL-Time Warner merger formed the world's largest media conglomerate. AOL-Time Warner is comprised of such prominent media companies as Turner Broadcasting Systems, CNN News Group, Home Box Office, Warner Music, Warner Brothers Studio, Castle Rock Entertainment, and New Line Cinema. Their publishing division is the largest magazine publisher in the country. They publish *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *People*, and *Fortune*, to name just a few (Columbia Journalism Review website).

The world's second largest media conglomerate is the Walt Disney Company, with 1997 revenues of \$23 billion. It owns a number of television production companies such as Walt Disney Television, Touchstone Television, and Buena Vista Television, and control cable networks with more than one-hundred million subscribers. The Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group, under Walt Disney Studios, includes Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, Hollywood Pictures, Caravan Pictures, and Miramax Films. In 1995, Disney bought Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., which owns the ABC Television Network. The ABC Television Network owns ten TV stations outright in markets such as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Houston. It also has 225 affiliated stations in the United States and partly owns several European TV companies. As for cable-TV, ABC controls ESPN, Lifetime Television, and A&E Television Networks. ABC Radio Network owns 26 AM and FM stations in

cities like New York, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles, and has over 3,400 affiliates. Capital Cities/ABC, Inc. also earned over \$1 billion in publishing in 1997 (*Extra!* Nov/Dec 1997).

Ultimately, the implications of these international conglomerates are largely negative, because centralized control over the media, whether it be television, movies, newspapers, magazines, or books, means that all of the information the public gets originates from the minds and hands of a very few. It creates a more limited perspective from all media sources, which is convenient for those in a position of power within the media, and often within politics, but very inconvenient for the unsuspecting public, who believes in the reality that those controlling media create. Those in control of the media have the power to create a reality, or at least a perspective of the world that does not actually exist for everyone. In other words, "...ordinary lives today are more often powered [governed] not by the givenness of things but by the possibilities that the media (either directly or indirectly) suggest are available" (Appadurai 55). Any move away from this fabricated perspective threatens the power of those in control of media or government.

Media Aligned With Government?

Relatedly, it is of the utmost importance to realize that the government, at least the U.S. government, has a significant amount of influence over the messages communicated through various media formats. Without even delving into the issue of censorship and its related controversies, there is one revealing policy related to the War on Drugs that aligns government interests with media ownership interests. This alignment is exemplified by the fact that the Federal government offers benefits to

networks that air shows with anti-drug themes. A *Rolling Stone* magazine article from March 30, 2000, details this travesty, known as the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. The following is a brief summary of the article.

In January 2000, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) was exposed for reviewing television scripts sent by television executives in exchange for financial rewards. The ONDCP claimed that it was merely trying to determine whether a particular show satisfied its anti-drug guidelines. However, the ONDCP's media-campaign director, Alan Levitt, held a series of thirty anti-drug training meetings with TV executives and magazine editors throughout 1999. These meetings outlined the ONDCP goal of reaching ninety percent of the teen population with four anti-drug messages per week. The basic message they were trying to convey is, "Losers use drugs." This most recent ploy is highly reminiscent of after-school specials and D.A.R.E. messages.

The result of these meetings was the television networks' realization that they could profit handsomely by cooperating with the drug czar's office, and many of them continue to implant anti-drug messages in current shows. The program relies on the federal law that states that when the federal government buys space for a public service announcement, the network has to donate ad time of comparable value. This buy-one-get-one-free deal is not a beneficial contract for television companies. The drug czar's office devised a way for the networks to avoid this policy. All they had to do was insert anti-drug messages into the content of shows such as *ER* and *NYPD Blue*. It would be a very poor financial decision for the networks to pass up this offer, especially if it meant

losing the revenue from advertising slots during highly rated shows. For example, the WB received a \$34,000 credit for altering an episode of *Moehsa*.

The program started in 1997 when Congress allocated \$1 billion for anti-drug ads. Some networks clearly disapproved of the program. MTV protested by showing underage spring breakers doing body shots and girls drinking liquor out of guys' bellybuttons on a spring break show, and then ending the show with the voiceover, "Brought to you by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America." NBC resisted at first, but then drug czar Barry McCaffrey had President Clinton call the CEO of General Electric, which owns NBC. The General Electric CEO called the president of NBC, and NBC began putting anti-drug messages in some of its shows. Co-executive producer of *ER*, Neal Baer, who supports the government program, commented, "You will never see a successful role model on TV smoking pot...even though that is something many people do and even though you can show lots of other illegal acts."

The WB Network was more receptive to the idea, and since producers advanced the anti-drug messages, the WB has seen an increase from \$1.2 million to \$5 million in advertising dollars from the White House. Unfortunately for taxpayers, a government analysis of 576 focus groups concluded that the program is unreliable with respect to achieving the desired results. The main effect of the campaign, according to Queens College drug-policy expert Lynn Zimmer is, "likely to be the strengthening of anti-drug attitudes among those who already disapprove of drugs."

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign is just another example of the government-funded propaganda that contributes to the many deceptive facets of the War on Drugs and fuels media-driven societal panics. The government has no business

underhandedly advancing its own arbitrary agendas through the fictional television media, as this is surely an abuse of power. It is clearly an effective tactic, however, in giving the public the impression that these government agendas are shared more widely throughout society than is actually the case.

Conclusion

The next chapter will detail a selection of recent and specific news media stories related to rave culture. Two important things will be evident at the conclusion of Chapter Three. First, through accuracy analysis of each text, I will demonstrate how the recent news media reports on raves and club drugs have constructed and reinforced various myths about rave culture. Secondly, I will dispel these myths and discuss the implications of the mainstream news media's efforts to explain the subcultural practices that characterize rave in a way that non-participants can understand. This attempt at explaining rave culture has sometimes been fairly parallel with the rave participants' own view of the culture. However, most attempts have been incompatible with or in downright opposition to the participant's perspective, depending on the particular news media source. Ultimately, the myths about rave culture advanced by various news media have contributed to the unconstitutional targeting of electronic music events by law enforcement.

Chapter Three

News Media Myths About Rave Culture

Rave culture is a subculture over which there has recently been an abundance of ambiguous treatment by the news media that symbolizes a larger cultural discourse. This chapter focuses on a selection of specific news media reports which are emblematic of the larger body of stories that comprises the recent discourse surrounding this subcultural movement. Each report represents one or more distinct myths about rave culture which both the media and the government have successfully advanced as truth to people who don't participate in the culture. The media and law enforcement have each defined drugs like MDMA, ketamine, LSD, and methamphetamine as "club drugs," implying a connection between these drugs and electronic music culture.

It is important to note the differences between the three different mediums represented below. The first two reports are from commercial broadcast television news programs. The third report is from the news magazine *Time*, and the fourth report is from the newspaper *USA Today*. An additional section details a variety of reports from the music magazine, *Rolling Stone*. Each report is subject to particular unavoidable constraints due to the nature of each particular medium. For example, a magazine has the opportunity to reach the audience on a number of different occasions throughout the report, depending on how much or how little of the report is actually taken in by the audience. Some of the audience may only see the cover page, which in this case, promotes a sensationalistic view of the topic, but others in the audience may read the entire text of the report itself, which in this case actually reports on the issue from a variety of perspectives. The newspaper faces a similar situation, while the television

reports have the advantage of portraying certain images through actual video footage.

The implications of these constraints are often significant, so it is crucial to keep in mind the particular medium through which each report is presented.

Myth #1: Illegal Drug Use is Inseparable from Rave Culture

NBC's Dateline

On Tuesday, May 2, 2000, NBC's Dateline aired a twenty-seven minute segment called "Teens and Drug Abuse: Do You Know the Signs?" The segment reported an investigation into rave subculture from a non-participant's point of view. This point of view, the title of the story, and the repeated appeal to fact that the only expert on any topic who was interviewed was a Drug Enforcement Administration agent. While the story was meant, at least on the surface, to inform parents of the latest activities that some teenagers participate in, an extremely sensationalistic tone circulated throughout the segment. This tone was apparent through false information, lack of scientific evidence for claims, and the presentation of only the law enforcement perspective of rave culture. The persona of the producers of the segment can be described as almost identical to the point of view shared by most enthusiastic drug war supporters. The Dateline segment publicly claims that parents should not allow their children to attend raves.

The story makes the overall claim that parents should not let their children attend raves because a common activity at these dance parties is the use of certain "club drugs." It is supposedly intended to be informative and problem-solving, but the persuasive nature and one-sidedness with which the argument is presented severely detracts from the segment's effectiveness in solving the problems it was created to eliminate. The intended audience, middle-aged parents and guardians, are typically uninformed of the activities

that their kids actually participate in. The producers of this segment are at an advantage because it is impossible for the audience to have preformed opinions on matters they haven't even heard of. In the case of this Dateline report, most of the audience did not have a prior opinion on raves, a large reason why the segment was done in the first place. In a way, Dateline was at an advantage because it didn't have to change already formed opinions. In fact, the story had the opportunity to set the foundation of what many parents will believe about raves indefinitely whether or not that information was actually true. The Dateline segment was highly misleading, but because the audience was largely unknowledgeable in the first place, they don't know that Dateline mislead them and provided them with both false and incomplete support for the argument.

There were three main types of support for the arguments presented within the Dateline segment. The first was an interview with a United States Drug Enforcement Administration employee. The interview with the DEA agent was a partially valid source for information about raves, although that information was very one-sided. If Dateline had also interviewed someone from a drug reform organization, the reformer's response to the DEA agent's comments would have presented another side of the story. If Dateline was truly trying to create awareness among parents, they would have been more successful if they had provided complete information. This exactly mirrors a major downfall of the Drug War in that its proponents claimed to be trying to eliminate what they thought were the causes of social ills, but the effort backfired because the government purposely provided false or misleading information that can be characterized as propaganda. By only citing the DEA, the Dateline rhetoric only accesses values that embody the laws of the United States which are in no way necessarily moral, ethical, or

right for all Americans. Like many arguments against drug use, Dateline goes no further than to cite that people shouldn't do drugs because they are illegal, or just because the government says so. It is probable that drug opponents don't cite any other rational reasons for not using drugs because they simply don't exist universally.

While it is true that a small number of kids have died from overdosing on drugs at raves, citing this as a reason for parents to not let their kids attend raves is strictly an appeal to emotion in place of rationality. For example, Dateline tells the story of a girl named Hillary who went to a rave and died that night in her sleep of a GHB overdose. The segment theorized that the GHB was slipped into Hillary's drink without her knowledge. What Dateline doesn't mention is that GHB is a common drug used voluntarily at raves and that it is a possibility that Hillary knowingly and willingly took the GHB. The point of this story was to scare parents into thinking that their innocent, non-drug using children would be victimized if they attended a rave. What Dateline fails to mention is that the majority of kids who die of overdoses at raves do so because either they themselves chose to take too many drugs and didn't realize it was too much or they didn't take the proper precautions against overheating, such as drinking a lot of water. The only solution to this problem would be to make drugs that are illegal legal so the government could control their contents and strength, or at least take harm-reduction measures. Dateline is misleading by portraying rave-goers as criminals who slip drugs to unknowing children.

The third type of support for their argument against letting kids go to raves is actual footage of a rave. The segment presents video evidence of widespread drug use by showing a video tape that Dateline obtained when they enlisted a sixteen year old girl,

with her parents permission, to go to a rave accompanied by disguised Dateline chaperones and an undercover camera. Although the hidden camera accomplished its purpose, which was to document the prevalent use of both legal and illegal drugs, the segment contained no scientific facts in support of the hypothesis that these relatively new “club drugs” have harmful long-term or short-term health effects. “Club drugs” include ecstasy, ketamine, nitrous oxide, LSD, GHB, and many forms of speed. The only reasoning given for why many of these "club drugs" should not be consumed was from Jim Molesa of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, who said, “[Ecstasy] is now considered dangerous, and illegal, listed in the same class as heroin and marijuana.”

Notice that Molesa does not refer to any scientific evidence, information, or statistics when proclaiming that ecstasy is dangerous. His comment represents the majority of the faulty reasoning that perpetuates throughout this Dateline story. The audience is told repeatedly what they should or should not allow their children to do, but they are not told why the drugs are illegal or even harmful. In fact, commenting that ecstasy is listed in the same class as marijuana and heroin is tremendously misleading. Scientific evidence has overwhelmingly concluded that it is physically impossible to overdose on marijuana and that marijuana does not cause physical addiction. Conversely, scientific evidence has overwhelmingly concluded that heroin is highly addictive, has severe withdrawal symptoms, and can lead to death from overdose. This contradiction may result in different interpretations of Mr. Molesa's comment within the audience. For example, the comment may lead part of the audience to conclude that these drugs are just as harmless as marijuana, and another part of the audience to conclude that these drugs

are just as dangerous as heroin, neither of which conclusion has been scientifically proven to date.

The segment contained no scientific facts about the health issues concerning these drugs largely because there aren't any well documented scientific studies, long term or short term, that prove that a moderate amount of some of these drugs is harmful. In fact, the few scientific studies that do exist conclude that, on a short term basis, a number of these "club drugs" are only harmful when taken in very high doses or without enough water. While it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to include the specific details of these studies, results of the studies and details of studies in progress can be found at <http://www.dancesafe.org/eneuro.html>. Dateline failed to mention this published scientific information in the segment.

Dateline also neglected to mention two possible alternative solutions to the problem of kids accidentally overdosing at raves, or anywhere for that matter. First, legalizing drugs would allow the government to control the content and strength of the substances in question. A second solution would be to educate kids and parents alike using absolutely factual information, rather than propaganda, in order that they will be better prepared to protect themselves against an overdose if they choose to use drugs. It seems as if this second solution is exactly what Dateline was attempting in this report. However, the story fails to present the entire case and most of what is actually included comprise argumentative fallacies and one-sided perspectives.

Here are three examples of false, misleading, or absent information that appeared in the Dateline report. First, the sixteen year old who went to a rave with the Dateline hidden camera, who Dateline calls "Amy," reported that the youngest kid she talked to at

the rave was fourteen. In reality, kids as young as eight or nine do occasionally attend raves. Dateline also fails to mention this, thereby misinforming parents of the real age at which they should begin to be concerned about their children attending raves.

Another example of a misrepresentation of information in the Dateline report comes again from “Amy.” When discussing a girl and boy she met at the rave who were both on ecstasy and who reported that they were boyfriend and girlfriend even though they had met only two hours before, “Amy” comments, “I was like ‘will you remember this is your boyfriend tomorrow morning?’” This comment insinuates that users don't remember what they did while they were on ecstasy after they are sober. This contention is not necessarily the case at all. After using ecstasy, most users can remember what they did while they were on the ecstasy. Dateline can't back up “Amy's” comment with any scientific information about ecstasy causing memory loss because there simply isn't any. Therefore, Dateline allowed a sixteen year old girl who has never done any of these drugs to present, as fact, her own personal, and completely unsupported, opinion about the effects of “club drugs.” Because most of the audience didn't know anything about these drugs in the first place, they weren't able to discern the true facts from the opinions of each of the people, including “Amy,” who Dateline enlisted to discuss “club drug” use at raves.

By presenting uninformed people's opinions as fact, Dateline portrays raves as much more dangerous than they really are. These scare tactics do nothing more than replace the vacuum of information that parents previously had with incorrect and misleading information. By only presenting the side of the issue that is legally acceptable, Dateline is demonstrating the opinion that it is better to give the audience

false information that supports the law than to furnish the public with true information that may actually solve the problems at hand, although it may contradict the reasons that something is illegal.

Another misleading specific of the Dateline piece is when “Amy” is talking to a group of kids who are doing nitrous balloons, and one of them falls down and blacks out for a few seconds. This is a common occurrence for people who don't sit down to use nitrous. While the camera shows the girl who has just fallen over after doing a nitrous balloon, the Dateline voiceover reports, “You are about to witness something that would scare most parents to death.” Then Dateline cuts to commercial.

The fact that they cut to commercial immediately following the footage of a girl falling over accompanied by the aforementioned voiceover is extremely misinformative. It leads anyone in the audience who is not familiar with the effects of nitrous to believe that the girl lying on the ground is dead. During the commercial, most of the audience will change the channel. Many of these people will not return to Dateline until a few minutes after Dateline has returned from the commercial break. These audience members will miss the follow up segment that shows the girl who fell over from the nitrous stand up and start dancing again after only 5 seconds. By missing this segment, these audience members may continue to believe that the girl died from the nitrous. Even the audience members who do see what really happens to the girl are misled into believing that she was dead during the entire commercial break. This is a classic way that information can be misrepresented on television. Thoughtfully placed commercial breaks interrupt the flow of communication and increase the chance for misunderstanding

and shared meaning. In this case, Dateline relied on this tactic to misrepresent an occurrence as something much more serious than it actually was.

This example answers the question of whether the Dateline report is trustworthy. It exemplifies that the Dateline report is not realistic, cannot be trusted, and is full of one-sided reasoning. This example is also another way the rhetoric appeals to emotion in place of rationality.

One-sided language is another criteria for evaluating this report. The Dateline producers made certain language choices in order to construe ravers as criminals. For example, one voiceover says, "...which brings us back to 'Amy,' the **brave** young girl who **offered** to help open the door to the rave world for us." The fact that the producers used the word "brave" insinuates that "Amy" was putting herself in some sort of grave danger by attending a rave, as if it were full of violent criminals who would surely try to take advantage of her. They also claim that "Amy" "offered" her services as a favor, as if it were all "Amy's" idea to do a report on raves and go undercover. "Amy" herself reports that she didn't know anything about raves until she went undercover for Dateline. "Amy" could not have "offered" her services to help report on something she didn't even know existed.

As we have already observed, the media is often known for cooperating with the government to promote compliance with certain laws. It is unclear whether the government's anti-drug television policy partially motivated the misleading information that characterized this story or whether the producers of NBC's Dateline are just ignorant. Dateline only reports specific, government approved solutions, and neglects to point out

that the drugs in question would be much safer if they were legal because their content and strength would be controlled.

The effects, both long and short term, of the way Dateline presented this culture are significant. Some short term effects of this story are related to the outraged ravers who do not appreciate their extracurricular activities being presented in such a false and misleading manner. Many ravers feel that society discriminates against them because they are interested in DJs, dancing, and substance use instead of more widely accepted activities such as athletics. One could argue that people who play sports have more of a chance of doing bodily damage than people who spend a lot of their time using drugs at raves. Since bodily damage is one of the only reasons that is ever cited for people not to use these “club drugs,” ravers are justified in feeling that they are discriminated against.

Other short term effects of the report were the development of untrue rumors and myths about rave culture. Because so much of the information in the Dateline report was misleading or downright false, any members of the audience who previously had no knowledge of raves instead now have incorrect information about raves. Having the wrong information but believing it is correct is inherently worse than having no information at all.

In the next section, I will describe ABC’s 20/20 Downtown report which perpetuates the myth that harm reduction techniques encourage illegal drug use. This story aired on October 19, 2000, only six weeks after a crucial event in rave culture history. On August 26, 2000, the Drug Enforcement Administration conducted a raid on the State Palace Theater in New Orleans where a rave was being held that night. The raid led to an unprecedented case in which the venue owners and rave promoter were indicted

under the federal Crackhouse Law. I will discuss the case at length in the next chapter, but it is crucial to keep in mind the sequencing of this event in relation to the timing of the different media reports and the resulting escalation of the ideological struggle over the meaning of rave culture.

Myth #2: Harm Reduction Measures Encourage Drug Use

ABC's 20/20 Downtown

Ironically, Drug War advocates blatantly condemn the idea of harm reduction. U.S. law enforcement representatives and legislators alike have repeatedly rejected numerous harm reduction measures that other countries with similar drug policies have proven successful. The outright rejection of proven harm-reduction programs indicates that the aims of the War on Drugs go beyond minimizing the harm drug abuse and addiction cause to society. Harm reduction embodies the notion that, despite the War on Drugs, some people will inevitably choose to use drugs. It includes everything from needle-exchange programs to educational pamphlets to ecstasy testing kits. The goal of harm reduction is to limit the risks involved with taking drugs. Allegedly, the whole point of the War on Drugs is to reduce the harms that certain drugs supposedly cause, if not for individuals then at least for society. However, harm reduction is a concept embraced by Drug War critics, and most European drug experts, primarily because many of the harms associated with illegal drugs are outcomes of prohibition and not of the particular drugs themselves.

DanceSafe is one of the leading harm reduction organizations in the United States. DanceSafe is a non-profit group founded by Emanuel Sferios that gained initial prominence within rave culture because of its work testing ecstasy pills at raves. One

reason there have been cases of kids who have died from overdosing on a drug or drugs at raves is that the drugs consumed at the raves are not controlled by the government because they are illegal. This means that the strength or contents of a black market drug bought at a rave cannot be determined without laboratory testing. Also, the lack of strictly factual drug abuse education contributes to the naiveté of young rave-goers. The government would rather tell people to “Just say no because we said so” instead of presenting factual, scientific information about the health risks associated with these drugs and then allowing people to make an informed, yet personal decision about whether or not to use them.

DanceSafe also organizes other harm reduction and drug abuse prevention tactics in addition to pill testing, such as peer counseling and literature distribution. The Oakland-based group is largely funded by computer industry professionals from Silicon Valley. In fact, the ninth person ever hired by Microsoft, Bob Wallace, met DanceSafe founder Emanuel Sferios at a rave and subsequently donated over \$70,000 to the DanceSafe cause. Wallace has also contributed about \$300,000 to research on mind-altering drugs. He explains ecstasy and rave culture’s popularity within the computer industry by pointing out, “In the Internet work community, it’s very intense, long hours, very structured, very difficult...So you can imagine when these people have a little free time, they want something that helps them open up and feel compassion and love.” Sferios also explains that ecstasy is popular among middle-class professionals because it is not addictive and can be used relatively safely, unlike other drugs like cocaine and heroin. Many tech industry professionals are also involved in the rave scene, independent of whether or not they use ecstasy.

DanceSafe and rave culture were the subjects of ABC's 20/20 Downtown on October 19, 2000. The report took the side of law enforcement and was highly misleading. Like the Dateline report that came six months before, the 20/20 story reinforced the sensationalism surrounding rave culture and ecstasy by irresponsibly misstating or simply excluding crucial information. The following is an analysis of the report, including clarifications of the many deceptive ideas that pervade the story.

First, 20/20 insinuated that DanceSafe gives ecstasy users their pills back after they test them for the presence of MDMA. Actually, DanceSafe obtains a small scraping of the pill to test, and then returns the pill to its owner before, not after, testing the scraping. This method assures that DanceSafe volunteers are never in possession of what they know to be a controlled substance.

Much more ludicrous was 20/20's inquiry about why DanceSafe doesn't confiscate the pills that test positive for MDMA. Although there are many other untruths within the story, this suggestion should single-handedly discredit the entire report due to its utter stupidity. Suggesting DanceSafe should confiscate pills that test positive for MDMA is like suggesting that needle exchange programs should stop handing clean needles over to users after taking their dirty ones. The problem with this is that the program would be a scam rather than a health service. It would defeat the entire purpose of needle exchange programs, and nobody would come. Similarly, nobody would come to have their pill tested if they knew it may be confiscated from them, and more people would die from fake pills that contain cheaper yet deadly substances such as DXM and PMA.

Another way the 20/20 report contributes to the sensationalism over ecstasy and rave culture is its contention that there have been “dozens of overdose deaths” worldwide from MDMA. This is simply not true, and is a dangerous misconception. In reality, the deaths that have resulted around the world after individuals have taken real ecstasy are not the result of ecstasy overdoses, but rather of heatstroke. Perpetuating this misconception sends the message to young people that they will be okay as long as they do not take too many pills. In reality, the people who have died at raves after taking ecstasy have not necessarily taken a large amount of the drug. In fact, people have died from heatstroke at raves even after only taking one pill, or half a pill. Additionally, heatstroke can be exacerbated by any stimulant, including caffeine or energy drinks. The statement made by 20/20 that “dozens of people have died from overdoses of ecstasy” because “taking too many pills [makes] your body's organs shut down” is simply false. Heatstroke and dehydration result from hours of aerobic activity in hot nightclubs without drinking enough water. Being on a stimulant drug of any kind can increase body temperature a few degrees, but it won't increase it so much that one develops heatstroke. Heatstroke emergencies at raves are the result of hot environments and a lack of access to cool drinking water. Luckily, heatstroke emergencies are easily preventable if ravers are educated in the importance of drinking water, especially if they are using any substances, including alcohol.

In addition to heatstroke, some deaths deemed “ecstasy-related” are actually caused by cheaper adulterants that ecstasy manufacturers sometimes substitute for real MDMA. PMA is the most dangerous of the common adulterants found in fake pills. It produces a stimulant effect while increasing heart rate and blood pressure. Ingesting one

pill of PMA is probably not deadly, but three or four could be life-threatening. Unlike MDMA, PMA does not have a threshold at which blood pressure and heart rate will stop increasing. The higher the dose, the higher one's blood pressure and heart rate will go. This can be lethal if the user mistakes the initial stimulant effect for the effect of MDMA, and thinking the pills are real, ingests more. MDMA is actually very difficult to overdose on from acute toxicity. Someone would have to ingest between twenty and forty pills depending on potency to overdose from MDMA. There are other risks from taking too much real ecstasy, but these are short-term for the most part and rarely life-threatening. The most important harm reduction tip that DanceSafe promotes about ecstasy is that if someone takes a pill and doesn't feel a normal ecstasy response, they may have consumed anything, and they should not consume any other pills on that occasion.

20/20 also implied that the DanceSafe program sends the message to users that as long as their pill contains MDMA, it is safe. DanceSafe follows the same pill-testing standards that harm reduction workers throughout Europe and England use. The users are always informed that no pill is entirely safe, even if it tests positive for the presence of MDMA.

DanceSafe operates under the notion that people must be told the truth about the benefits of ecstasy and other drugs for there to be any chance that they will also listen to the warnings about the risks and dangers. In contrast, the website of the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) lists only the potential negative side effects. These potential side effects are the same ones that you can find in the Physician's Desk Reference for thousands of other medications, yet the benefits of these drugs are listed first. NIDA does not say anything positive about the MDMA experience, and any young

person going to that site for information will immediately know that they are not getting the whole story. Most young people, upon reading obviously incomplete information, often subsequently refuse to believe anything they read. There is in fact much important information about the risks of ecstasy on the NIDA website, and it would be much more accepted by young people if NIDA would simply tell the truth about the drug's positive effects. This situation is likewise the reason that programs like D.A.R.E. and Partnership for a Drug-Free America backfired. To glamorize and sensationalize ecstasy, or any drug, as simply a “dangerous, illegal drug,” without putting it into a proper context is very irresponsible. Lies, exaggerations and emotionally potent oversimplifications are quickly dismissed by young people for what they are, but the real warnings are also dismissed. In reality, lies and scare tactics actually increase harm and jeopardize people’s lives.

Finally, 20/20 Downtown anchor Elizabeth Vargas actually stated that DanceSafe operates “outside the law.” Whether she meant that their work is illegal or that DanceSafe doesn’t have the support of law enforcement is no matter, for neither of these is true. Pill testing, like needle exchange, is a necessary public health service that is fully within the scope of the law in many states, and DanceSafe has had the full support of police in every city with a DanceSafe chapter. Although 20/20 did not mention it, DanceSafe also has a contract with a DEA licensed laboratory to test pills sent in anonymously by users. The lab results are posted monthly to the DanceSafe website- www.dancesafe.org- with a picture of the pill, the location from which it was sent, and its content analysis. This service helps users avoid pills which contain PMA, DXM, speed, and other more dangerous fake tablets.

ABC is not the only large media source that criticized DanceSafe and harm reduction at that time. Just four days after the 20/20 report aired, the 3rd Annual Harm Reduction Conference was taking place in Miami. The conference drew 1100 physicians, scientists, teachers, community activists, and health professionals together for four days to examine harm reduction issues. The *Miami Herald*, curiously enough, did not even mention the conference within the content of the newspaper, but instead featured a half-page advertisement on October 23, 2000 with the headline, “To Dance Safe, Dance Drug Free.” The blatant advertisement included a specific attack on the conference, proclaiming, “Miami reminds those who claim to reduce harm while promoting drug use that they send complex, confusing, and erroneous messages... Welcome to Miami, we’ll be watching out for you...Our children are being lured into a dangerous and deceptive late-night culture of ‘techno’ music and laser lights at ‘Raves’... Attending or supporting these activities is like playing Russian roulette.” The outrageous and insulting ad was signed by the Miami-Dade mayor, the Miami Beach police chief, and the presidents of both Barry University and University of Miami, among other public figures. Ironically, members from both the University of Miami psychiatry and behavioral sciences department and from the school of medicine attended the conference as featured speakers. DanceSafe was also very well-represented at the conference (Miami New Times).

DanceSafe is committed to educating the community about the true risks and benefits of various drugs. The organization promotes the idea that all drugs, legal or illegal, have inherent risks and dangers. However, drug warriors and government organizations like NIDA and the DEA utilize the “just say no” approach while claiming

to be warning users about the dangers of ecstasy. They are completely silent on the greatest danger facing ecstasy users, which is the risk of a pill containing PMA or other more dangerous adulterants. These drug war advocates recognize that fake pills are a direct result of prohibition and the uncontrolled market. If they acknowledged this publicly, they would also have to admit that the only way to completely prevent the deaths from fake pills is to decriminalize and regulate ecstasy. Decriminalization would eliminate the illicit market and, if strictly controlled, make it much harder for ecstasy to get into the hands of children. The fact that it is easier for many children to obtain ecstasy or other drugs than it is for them to obtain alcohol is something that prohibitionists refuse to acknowledge. A University of Maryland survey of high school students showed that alcohol truly is the hardest substance to acquire, rather than unregulated drugs like marijuana and ecstasy.

Decriminalization is not even considered an option by agencies that make money off of prohibition, such as the DEA. This is part of what is termed the “prohibition industrial complex” (Dancesafe.org). The drug war will never be won, and this ensures continued economic prosperity for some at the expense of the lives of many others, the very lives the drug warriors insist they are trying to protect.

It is unfortunate that Dateline and 20/20 limited their reports to the one-sided and dangerously misleading perspective that the government drug warriors also advocate. The overwhelmingly biased nature of these stories is the primary reason they are implicated in furthering the sense of panic over rave culture and club drugs. In the period of about two months after the 20/20 report aired, at least seven other major networks did features about ecstasy and rave culture. New Orleans experienced the panic floodgates

about a month earlier when local television stations, radio stations, and newspapers flocked to cover the August DEA bust at the State Palace Theater. In fact, the local TV-news crews were on the scene promptly while the DEA was still occupying the venue.

In the next section, I will discuss news media coverage from a different medium than television. The *Time* magazine cover story on ecstasy and rave culture was published just one month after the Dateline story, and one could argue that the *Time* coverage of the rave culture debate reinforced the misperceptions originally advanced by the Dateline story. However, the written medium did afford *Time* the chance to present multiple perspectives on the issue in the actual written article, but simultaneously reinforced the sensationalism of the Dateline report through *Time*'s visual representations of the culture on both the cover page and throughout the article.

Myth #3: Ecstasy Users are at a High Risk for Abuse of the Drug

Time Magazine Cover Story

As a whole, and especially compared to most other news reports on the subject, the *Time* article is very comprehensive and mostly free of manipulative propaganda. Unfortunately, the cover page and the diagrams within, which receive much wider exposure than the actual article, support the media panic over ecstasy and rave culture. It is imperative to keep in mind this unmistakable inconsistency between the impression the panic-promoting *Time* cover page gives of this topic and the impression the more comprehensive, two-sided article gives. It is tactics like this one that allow *Time* to take advantage of revenue-producing media sensationalism while still remaining a relatively reputable source of information.

Two key components of the report definitely assert the myth that ecstasy is addictive. The most significant element that contributes to this myth is the final quote *Time* chose for the main article. Regarding ecstasy, one girl commented, "...You feel at ease with yourself and right with the world, and that's a feeling you want to duplicate every single week" (68). For people who actually read the article, the impression the last few sentences gives them will likely be the one they remember. The article ends with a quote that seems to support the merits of ecstasy use, but it really gives the impression that ecstasy is addictive, and that users are at a high risk for abuse. The comment implies to parents that if their child takes this drug, they will crave that feeling all the time. In reality, MDMA has benefits and drawbacks alike, but the overwhelming majority of ecstasy users find the benefits well worth it if they simply take it in moderation.

The other element of the article which supports the myth that ecstasy is dangerous and addictive is a large, colorful, and fairly detailed series of diagrams stretches across the third and fourth pages of the article. The diagram allegedly shows the progression of chemical changes that occurs in the brain when the drug ecstasy, or MDMA, is present. The problem with the diagram is that it asserts information that has never been proven conclusively in any scientific study. The article mentions briefly that more studies were definitely necessary, but again, many people read magazines for the pretty pictures or diagrams, and not the articles. The diagram shows pictures of damaged nerve cells and reports that the damaged nerve endings sometimes grow back, but abnormally. The picture of the nerve "after recovery" shows what the nerve ending might look like two weeks following the ingestion of the drug. Neither the article nor the diagram captions mention the scientific fact that the nerve continues to repair itself long after two weeks.

The front cover of *Time* also supports the myth that ecstasy is in fact more evil than good. First of all, the headline “What Ecstasy Does to Your Brain” implies two falsehoods. The wording implies that the brain will undergo permanent negative alterations due to ecstasy ingestion. The headline also implies that scientists have a definitive answer to what ecstasy does to the brain and that this answer is contained within the article itself. Obviously, these tactics are part of efforts to sell more copies of the magazine, but again, it is partially due to manipulative marketing devices like this one that the public, the majority of which will only see the front cover, becomes misinformed. Misinformation implies that the audience does not have any prior knowledge of the topic, and it may also mean that the factual information does not support the idea *Time* is attempting to convey.

The sub-headline on the front cover advertises that the story will report on three main ecstasy-related topics. These topics are, “-The Science,” “-The Rave Scene,” and “-Inside a Crime Ring.” Again, although there are scientific findings within the article, the first part of the sub-headline implies that the science is conclusive, which the article itself denies. “-The Rave Scene” sub-headline connects the drug once more with a generally youth-oriented subculture based on music. Immediately following the ecstasy story, there is a two and a half page story about how music is the essence of rave culture. This means that presumably the only negative thing about connecting the drug with the rave subculture on the front cover is that some readers may already have negative attitudes about rave as a subculture stemming from past negative press portraying raves as associated with illegal drug use.

Finally, the last sub-headline probably carries the most negative connotations. The phrase “-Inside a Crime Ring” is loaded with implications, and is the only wording on the front cover that has anything to do breaking the law. The phrase “crime ring” also carries a negative connotation since it is referring to organized crime, and “organized crime” evokes images of violent mobsters. It is as if *Time* is trying to emphasize, again for dramatic effect, the irony that the market for a drug with the name “ecstasy,” sometimes known as the “love drug,” is controlled by scary mobster-types. The one and a half page crime ring story reports the downfall of Italian mafia figure Sammy Gravano. The story itself is rather random and incidental, and was probably only included because crime stories help sell news media. The public is obsessed with defeating the archetypical “bad guy,” even if he is only an illusion.

Another reason the front cover is so misleading is the unique color scheme. A close-up picture of a teenage girl with a blue pill in her mouth makes up the pictorial aspect of the cover. The right side of the picture is colored with bright, psychedelic-looking coloring while the left side produces a stark contrast featuring only black and white. The fact that they used a young girl for the picture gives a human interest aspect to the story because it has a good potential to evoke feelings of pity for the helpless and innocent teenagers who are the most implicated of ecstasy users. The tactics for the War on Drugs have always surrounded protecting innocent youth from the evils of drugs, so this representation fits with that theme.

The ambiguous nature of the *Time* front cover simply reinforces the information provided in the [Dateline](#) report for those who will not actually read the *Time* article. Not surprisingly, *Time* has also played a part in past sensationalistic reporting surrounding

illegal drugs. “In 1986, *Time* magazine declared the crack problem the issue of the year, and Newsweek proclaimed it the biggest story since Vietnam and Watergate” (Jenkins 97).

Although relatively reputable news magazines like *Time* do not generally have the brainwashing potential that television news often has, they still have very wide public exposure and significant influence over what other media companies report. According to Time.com, “One in five Americans reads a newsmagazine.” The *Time* website also reports that *Time* is the number one news magazine in America and had a circulation of about 4.1 million in the first half of 2001. This adds up to 43.6% of the market share for news magazine subscriptions and 46.1% of the market share for newsstand sales. So of the 20% of Americans who read a news magazine, almost 50% read *Time*, no matter whether they have a subscription or just purchase it from the newsstand. Furthermore, these numbers do not account for those who only see the front cover and form an impression of a story based only on that.

Fortunately, the actual text of the *Time* article is largely more objective than its front cover and diagrams suggest. It is sufficiently balanced to be relieved from comparison with the propaganda-filled, one-sided Dateline report. The following are a number of examples that show how the *Time* article is far superior in objectivity and truthfulness than the Dateline story and most other news media treatments of the issue.

I was actually very surprised at the information contained within the article itself, which was very objective in relation to the Dateline report. There were definitely parts of the report that were misleading, but compared to Dateline, which basically looked like an after-school special, the *Time* article gave a much more scientific and more factual

account of what we do know about how ecstasy really works. Unlike the Dateline report, which used testimonials from the DEA and other law enforcement representatives to convince the viewer of the grave and absolute dangers of ecstasy, the *Time* article reported that we will need much more extensive scientific research on humans before we could really determine any dangers or merits of the drug.

In addition to comments from neuroscientists and other researchers who contend that ecstasy causes both short and long-term damage, the article equally features researchers and psychiatrists who advocate MDMA's therapeutic value. For example, the article discusses the work of renowned psychopharmacologist and former Dow chemist Alexander Shulgin, and also describes the groundbreaking work of Rick Doblin, who earned his Ph.D. from Harvard and founded the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. The article also details the history of MDMA, mentions that the drug's appeal is not limited to ravers, and gives some details of newly proposed and/or recently enacted legislation related to the criminal penalties associated with ecstasy.

Another important element of the article is the inclusion of positive comments about the drug from users or supporters who are successful professionals. Most notably, the article mentions Bob Wallace, who is ninth from the top of the Microsoft Corporation, and who has donated considerable funds to DanceSafe, a prominent harm reduction group within the rave community. The article discusses the invaluable benefits of harm reduction and sufficiently explains that most ecstasy related complications or deaths result from adulterants like the deadly PMA and DXM, and not from actual MDMA.

Most notably, *Time* followed the ecstasy report with a story about rave culture and emphasized that the essence of the culture does not revolve around drugs. *Time* ended the rave culture article with the quote, “you won’t need any substances to get high. The music will take you there all by itself” (72). Very few news media reports on rave culture make this point, and, in fact, most argue against it. Finally, *Time* followed the ecstasy/rave report with a story called “Music on the Brain,” which discussed the enormously positive effects that playing an instrument or listening to music have on the cerebral cortex of the brain, which is associated with higher brain function.

Timing is a key factor in sensationalistic reporting, because the timing of the stories and the fact that the story is appearing in a diverse range of news media formats will serve to reinforce the ideas from previous stories. Consequently, it is no surprise that the *Time* issue containing the ecstasy cover story, dated June 5, 2000, was published just over one month after the May 2, 2000 airing of the Dateline rave story. After seeing the extremely biased Dateline report on raves and ecstasy, one would only need to glance at the cover of the *Time* issue to remember the Dateline story. *Time* does have one of the biggest circulations of all news magazines, but one cannot deny that many more people are merely exposed to the front cover of the magazine. From waiting rooms to the grocery store line, most of the people who view the dramatic front cover will never read the actual story. Again, if they had been exposed previously to another report on the issue, seeing it appear on the cover of *Time* will simply remind them of the information they ascertained, and the opinion they formed, from their initial exposure to the story.

In the next section, I turn to the *USA Today* cover story published August 28, 2001, just two days after the one-year anniversary of the DEA bust at the State Palace

Theater. The *USA Today* article perpetuates the myth that rave culture artifacts are drug paraphernalia. Consequently, the report was published just five days after the American Civil Liberties Union won an injunction that temporarily blocked part of the plea agreement in the State Palace Theater case. U.S. District Judge G. Thomas Porteous agreed with the ACLU that legal products such as glowsticks, pacifiers, vicks vapo rub, and candy jewelry could not be defined as drug paraphernalia even when associated with a rave. Part of the plea agreement in the Palace case was that the State Palace Theater management was required to ban certain rave culture artifacts because they were evidence of and facilitated drug use. The injunction was temporary at first, but on February 1, 2002, the judge upheld the decision permanently, citing that it was a violation of First Amendment rights to ban legal products from a rave venue. The timing and contents of the *USA Today* story is no doubt connected with the ACLU suit, as the article warns parents that they should be aware that their child's possession of certain legal items may actually be a sign that they are going to raves and using drugs. The story is also representative of how a number of large newspapers contributed to or perpetuated the panic over rave culture and club drugs, again, with impeccable timing. The *USA Today* report includes a rather humorous two-page centerfold that proclaims to be a guide for parents to detect illegal drug use.

Myth #4: Rave Culture Artifacts are Drug Paraphernalia

USA Today Cover Story

It would be impractical to point out all of the specific errors *USA Today* provides in the centerfold, given the absolute ludicrous, fabricated, misstated, and/or incomplete nature of the majority of the information. It is important to understand, however, that it

isn't the individual pieces of false information alone that are worrisome. The fact that some important information about the real risks of some of these drugs was either left out or incorrect is just another case, like with Dateline and 20/20, of the media attempting to give parents information to protect their kids, but really ending up making things more dangerous by giving false information. The article doesn't cite any scientific studies when reporting the effects of these drugs, and only minimally reports statistics, which are limited to U.S. government sources. In addition to parents being misinformed, many kids may discredit the true things in the centerfold chart once they see one or more of the things that they know isn't true. Finally, the article and centerfold may just contribute to even more kids wanting to try these drugs, because as I noted earlier, coverage like this often acts as an advertisement, rather than a deterrent.

On August 21, 2001, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a class action lawsuit and motion challenging certain terms of the plea agreement in the State Palace Theater case. Just one week later, *USA Today* featured a story warning parents that the possession of certain legal items may actually be a sign that their child attended raves to use drugs. *USA Today's* stance on the issue was decidedly in support of the federal government's contention that products such as glow sticks, vicks vapor rub, surgical masks, and pacifiers constituted drug paraphernalia. Graham Boyd, the Director of the ACLU Drug Policy Litigation Project, stated in response, "It is nonsensical to think that glow sticks and masks can be used to ingest drugs which is how the law defines paraphernalia. It is time the American public realized that raves are not the havens for rampant drug use that the government has led them to believe and are in fact an established form of youth culture" (ACLU Press Release 8/21/01).

The *USA Today* story seemed to be in response to U.S. District Judge G. Thomas Porteous's then temporary, but eventually permanent, blockage of the section of the plea agreement banning pacifiers, glow sticks, and other items that did not fit the legal definition of paraphernalia. The judge's decision came just two days after the ACLU filed the suit. Despite the ruling and just five days later, *USA Today* featured a large, color photograph of a purple pacifier attached to a necklace of colorful plastic beads, at the top and in the center of the cover page. The headline proclaims, "A guide to illegal teen drugs," and at the bottom of the picture it says, "Parents may not be savvy when it comes to club drugs...a pacifier might be more than a fashion accessory." It then directs readers to pages 6-7 D, the centerfold of the "Life" section. The picture and brief description of the story on the cover signified the paper's support of the government rather than the ACLU. This was a key indication that the remaining part of the story would only propagate the one-sided nature of the already year-long ideological struggle concerning the meaning of rave culture within the news media.

Sure enough, the centerfold feature contains many panic-producing elements, most of them related to untrue or incomplete assertions. The top headline on the left page says, "A strange new world of teenage drug use," and five short paragraphs follow, warning baby-boomer parents that they don't know anything about the new drugs their kids' generation has access to and that they should be worried. However, only four of the eight drugs in the subsequent chart were not readily available to the baby-boomers.

The headline on the top of the right page says, "Popular 'club drugs' over flow rave scene, enter mainstream," and a typical story exaggerating the terms of ecstasy use follows. Additionally, a box titled "Slang for the scene" appears all the way to the right

of the story and contains a number of terms that mostly describe absolutely ridiculous combinations of drugs that are hardly universal if not completely unrealistic and blatantly untrue. Ironically, the only one of the terms listed that is definitely not fabricated and exists universally is, “P.L.U.R.- Peace, love, unity, respect- the raver mantra.” It is surprising that *USA Today* included this term considering that most parents would probably be in support of their child being part of a culture that promotes such values.

The main part of the *USA Today* feature is the extensive chart that appears on the bottom two-thirds of both pages of the centerfold. The headline above the chart says, “The lowdown on the hippest highs,” and it details eight different drugs that parents should allegedly be worried about their kids becoming involved with. The chart contains the columns: “What it is,” “what it looks like,” “how it is used,” “cost,” “what it does,” “its effects,” “street names,” and “common lingo among users.” The eight drugs pictured and reviewed are cocaine, ecstasy, GHB, heroin, ketamine, LSD, marijuana, and methamphetamine.

The previous four profiles discussed mainstream news media sources that are largely aimed at a specific audience primarily made up of adults and parents. In the next section, I will give a cumulative description of *Rolling Stone* magazine’s coverage of issues pertaining to the War on Drugs and the attack on rave culture. Because *Rolling Stone* is a magazine centered around different musically-based cultures and is aimed at a younger audience, their perspective on these issues is notably different from other news media sources.

Rolling Stone- Contrasting the Myths?

In contrast to the four news sources I have just described, *Rolling Stone* is a type of “insider” magazine based around different music cultures, but it also reports on other issues pertinent to its readers’ lives, such as the War on Drugs. Different substances have previously been associated with different music cultures, even though the specific drugs are in no way necessities for a particular culture. *Rolling Stone* is a good source for information about developments in the drug war that the regular news media often ignore, due to the difference in the *Rolling Stone* audience compared with mainstream news audiences.

The content and other elements of the previous four cases indicate that a mainstream news audience likely consists mostly of parents, or at least adults, while the general content of *Rolling Stone* indicates a more youthful audience. These younger readers, as members of the Internet Generation, have a much different perspective on the drug war than the members of older generations have, as I discussed in Chapter One. The high frequency with which *Rolling Stone* features articles about the War on Drugs or related issues is a good indicator that much of its audience belongs to the Internet Generation. Furthermore, it is evident that *Rolling Stone* readers, in general, represent the participant perspective of the various music cultures *Rolling Stone* is concerned with, as opposed to a likely mainstream news audience.

Taken in its entirety, the body of *Rolling Stone* articles concerning the War on Drugs and rave culture is largely more realistic and factual than most coverage by other media sources. One could argue that the articles are written in this way only because this is what the magazine’s readers want to hear, but even if this is true, it doesn’t preclude

the facts that are contained within the articles. Some of the headlines and a very limited amount of the actual content of the *Rolling Stone* coverage can indeed be sensationalistic and melodramatic, as evidenced in the article described below regarding the boys who died from overdosing on the synthetic drug, 2-CT-7. However, most of the reports that appear in *Rolling Stone* generally encompass all sides of a story, and it is unfortunate that the magazine isn't popular with a segment of the population whose members don't already look at these issues from a comprehensive perspective.

There are three categories that most of the drug-related stories that *Rolling Stone* reports on fit into. First, the magazine often features stories surrounding just one specific drug. The magazine also has a more politically oriented section called "National Affairs" that frequently examines certain aspects of the War on Drugs as a whole. Finally, *Rolling Stone* has recently dedicated space to a number of different stories about the oppression of rave culture.

The first article I will make note of is significant because it actually reports some of the preliminary conflicts associated with rave culture in America. "Dark Side of the Rave" by Pat Blashill published in the "Rock and Roll News" section of the November 11, 1999 issue reported that "Drug deaths and police crackdowns threaten the national rave scene." The story appeared six months before the Dateline story, which signifies that *Rolling Stone* was ahead of other national media sources concerning this issue. The article suggested that the "crackdown" would most likely send the rave scene back underground. The content of the article was accurate and unbiased, but the wording of the title and subheading embody a significant rhetorical device that actually supports news media sensationalism.

Regarding their coverage of specific drugs, *Rolling Stone* generally provides accounts that address important political or scientific issues that are often underreported in the mainstream news media. For example, a recent story titled, “The Great Cocaine Quagmire” by Tina Rosenberg, featured in the April 12, 2001 issue, discussed over three pages how newly elected President Bush may take over the cocaine situation in Colombia. The report was sympathetic to the residents of Colombia who survive on the profits from exporting cocaine. A similar story, “Kentucky’s Homegrown Rebellion” by Peter Wilkinson, from the October 11, 2001 issue, details over six pages the impact of growing marijuana on Kentucky farmers and citizens.

A more biographical report, “The Acid King,” also by Peter Wilkinson, details the life of science prodigy/chemist Leonard Pickard, who is now in federal prison for being busted as one of the biggest LSD manufacturers in the world (busted Nov 7, 2000). The almost nine page article from the July 5, 2001 issue celebrates Pickard and others who dedicated their lives to assisting people who desired to expand their own consciousness with the help of psychoactive drugs. Another mostly biographical report was featured in the Australian edition of *Rolling Stone* in July 2001. “Dr. X” by Gary Greenberg details the life of Rick Doblin, the Harvard Ph. D. who founded the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), and who has dedicated his life to showing the public the ability of certain psychoactive drugs to heal some mental illnesses or traumas. Doblin spearheaded the campaign that recently resulted in FDA approval of a study on the ability of MDMA (ecstasy) to treat post-traumatic stress disorder using human subjects. The study will be conducted at the University of South Carolina.

Three other stories related to specific drugs and contained within various *Rolling Stone* issues are slightly more sensationalistic. The story, “Killer Bods” by Paul Solotaroff from the February 14, 2002 issue features five pages on the dangers of sport/weight-lifting supplements such as ephedrine, andro, creatine, herbal speed, and other steroid substitutes. “Sex, Meds, and Teens: Scenes from the new (legal) drug culture,” by Stephen Fried, examines the sharp increase in ADD stimulants and anti-depressants being prescribed for the 18 years old and younger population. Part of the headline from the four page story, which appeared in the May 11, 2000 issue, was replicated on the front cover of the January 31, 2002 issue to refer to a new synthetic that is implicated in several recent teen deaths.

The story, “A Journey Into the Designer Drug Underground” by Mark Boal was advertised on the front page of the issue with the headline, “The New (Legal) Killer Drug.” Similar to the headline “Scenes from the new (legal) drug culture” that appeared two years earlier in the previously-mentioned article, the cover page headline also implies that the fact that a drug is legal can be blamed for the fact that it is a “killer.” The headline inside can also be implicated as sensationalistic: “This much of this drug killed this boy. And it was perfectly legal.” This recent article by Mark Boal reports on a relatively new synthetic drug with the chemical name 2-CT-7.

The bulk of the report tells the story of an eighteen year-old boy who died in Memphis after ingesting the synthetic drug 2-CT-7. All of the headlines associated with this story are panic-producing, but there are elements of the story itself that implicate the irresponsible dosage and/or the combination of other drugs, rather than the fact that the drug is legal, in the death of three boys. The main story is a report about Josh Robbins,

who died after snorting about 30 milligrams of 2-CT-7 after already having taken MDMA and ephedrine. Deep in the story, Boal reveals that the active dosage of 2-CT-7 is just 10 milligrams, when taken orally. The fact that Robbins mixed the drug with two other psychoactive drugs and the fact that he ingested three times the active dose all at once by snorting it were the reasons he died. The two other known deaths associated with 2-CT-7 were under similar conditions. One was an Oklahoma man named Jacob Duroy who snorted 35 milligrams and died about two hours later. The other was a twenty-four year old web designer from Seattle who reportedly took a “heavy” dose of 2-CT-7 orally, but combined it with over three times the active dose of MDMA, producing a cerebral hemorrhage.

The legality or illegality of any drug doesn’t have any effect on the fact that it is possible to die from most drugs, even aspirin or alcohol, when one takes them in excess. Additionally, one of the only drugs that is physically impossible to overdose on is actually illegal: marijuana. No dose of marijuana is fatal to humans due to the fact that it does not alter cardiovascular or respiratory functions (Morgan 133). According to popular lore, one would have to ingest half of their own body weight by smoking within the period of one hour to produce a lethal overdose. In fact, a main misconception that permeates American mentality is that if a certain action is legal, it is safe, and an action that is illegal must be unsafe. This is a very dangerous impression to have, because it presupposes that a role of the government is to protect people from things that have been deemed, by one group or another, “unsafe.” This gives the public an excuse to refrain from taking responsibility over their own actions, and it also precludes many

constitutional rights. The public needs to stop equating “legal” with “safe,” and “illegal” with “harmful.”

Rolling Stone has published numerous articles about the War on Drugs. Featured are editorials such as, “My Problem with the War on Drugs” by P.J. O’Rourke, a satire of both sides of the drug-policy debate, and “America’s War on Drugs: A Rolling Stone Forum,” which includes eleven pages of comments concerning the drug war from various lawmakers, CEOs, police chiefs, academics, and artists. Additionally, the “National Affairs” column often includes stories about drug war issues, such as, “Drug Education: The Triumph of Bad Science” by Jason Cohn in the May 24, 2001 issue, “The New Coalition Against the Drug War” by Erika Casriel in the August 2, 2001 issue, and “The Drug War: Back to the Stone Age- A profile of Bush’s new drug czar, John Walters,” by Daniel Forbes in the November 8, 2001 issue.

Student involvement in drug reform has gained importance recently and appeared in the March 15, 2001 issue of *Rolling Stone*. “Students vs. The Drug War” by Phil Zabriskie profiles the new, national, student-led group, Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP). The group’s recent expansion from 2 chapters to well over 70 occurred in response to a provision of the Higher Education Act introduced in October of 1998 by House Representative Mark Souder, a Republican from Indiana. The law prohibits any applicant with an adult drug conviction from receiving federal financial aid. SSDP points out that the provision singles out low income families, and that no other group, such as sex offenders or even murderers, is excluded from financial aid after conviction.

Finally, *Rolling Stone* has reported on issues pertaining to rave culture and the war on club drugs. In addition to “Dark Side of the Rave,” mentioned above, “The War

on Raves,” a two page article by Jenny Eliscu from the May 24, 2001 issue, reports “Rave promoters busted in wave of drug crackdowns at dance clubs around the U.S.” The story profiles the DEA raid on the State Palace Theater and even features Graham Boyd, the chief drug-policy litigator for the ACLU and also the lawyer for one of the defendants in the Palace case, who comments, “The government is trying to get at what it sees as a social ill- Ecstasy- by going after an expressive speech, which is the music.” The story also describes the government’s scheme to apply the Crackhouse law to club and rave venues and the ACLU’s efforts to curb free speech violations. The article also describes the war on rave as a result of the War on Drugs, proclaiming, “The DEA’s crackdown on raves is another byproduct of the war on drugs- specifically, the DEA believes it can curb the use of ecstasy among teens by targeting rave culture.” Finally, the report suggests that in actuality the government’s ruse backfired, evidenced in the fact that ever since all the media coverage began over rave culture, many kids in the mainstream or other subcultures have tried ecstasy too. Ecstasy use continues to increase among kids in grades 8 and over.

Rolling Stone also included a short news article in its January 17, 2002 issue with the headline “Florida Rave Crackdown Fails.” It reported on the government’s case against Club la Vela, the 2nd case in U.S. history (after the State Palace case) where the Crackhouse law failed to vindicate club owners in allowing drug use at events. The short article featured a statement from the Club la Vela CEO, who said of the case, “This wasn’t a war on drugs. This was a war on culture.”

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed representations of rave culture from the viewpoints of different national television, magazine, and newspaper sources. The timing of the stories in relation to particular historical events, such as the State Palace Theater bust and the ACLU injunction, support the idea that media and government react to each other in a cycle that creates a snowball effect. The stories also produce sensationalism by reporting things that aren't true as fact and neglecting to cite any scientific data.

This chapter additionally illustrated how the media is influencing non-participants' conceptions of rave culture and how these impressions create misperceptions about the culture among parents and law enforcement. These misperceptions, along with the abundance of erroneous reports detailed in this chapter, has led to the unwarranted and unconstitutional targeting of raves and clubs by the Drug Enforcement Agency and other law enforcement and legislative authorities. A specific, as well as historically significant, example of how this targeting has seriously affected rave culture is described next in Chapter Four, the State Palace Theater Case.

Chapter Four

The State Palace Theater Case

On the night of August 26, 2000, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration conducted a raid of the State Palace Theater on Canal Street in New Orleans. The State Palace is a concert and performance venue that, since 1995, has been the home to New Orleans' biggest raves. Louisiana State University graduate Donnie Estopinal was the promoter of the Palace parties, and in five short years he had become one of the most well-respected promoters in the electronic music business. Estopinal, whose nickname is "Disco Donnie," was responsible for bringing the absolute best DJs in the world to the Palace at his legendary Freebass Society parties. This musical talent, in addition to the loyal ravers from New Orleans and the surrounding region, designated the New Orleans rave scene as one of the best in the world. The events of that fateful night in late-August would secure the Palace and the New Orleans rave scene a prominent place in the history of rave culture.

Hundreds of ravers were lined up outside the Palace and around the block waiting for the doors to open for a party called "Phuture Phat Hong Kong Phooey," while DEA agents blocked the entrances and attempted to subdue the confused yet offended crowd. Inside, DEA agents were scouring the venue for any evidence, no matter how small or absurd, that would show that Estopinal and the venue owners, Robert and Brian Brunet, had been knowingly allowing drug activity to go on during the raves at the Palace. The DEA's search yielded the seizure of such things as receipts for the sale of bottled water and glowsticks. After a few hours of confiscating computers and paperwork and conducting thorough searches of Palace employees and their belongings, the DEA left to

compile the meager evidence they had collected. In the meantime, several local news stations had arrived and were conducting interviews with shocked ravers and collecting footage of hundreds of teenagers lingering about in hopes that the party would still happen.

When the DEA left, the Palace doors opened for business, and although many had given up, a fairly large crowd filed into the venue. The headlining DJ, Sandra Collins, had opted to leave since the DEA was taking such a long time to conduct the raid. This was very unfortunate since Collins is considered one of the best female DJs in the world, but most in the audience were just happy to not be standing in the middle of Canal Street anymore. Most of the other DJs remained, and despite the feeling of impending doom that lingered even after the DEA was gone, most of those in attendance had a good time. Luckily the music was powerful enough to allow the crowd to forget about the earlier events and simply have fun and dance.

Upstairs in the “house” room, a local DJ played a track that seemed in response to the DEA takeover. The track he played is called “You Don’t Know Me” and was made popular by international house DJ Armand Van Helden. The lyrics to the song were quite appropriate for the occasion, which signified the beginning of a long fight by ravers to rectify their misunderstood culture. The lyrics are:

You Don't Even Know Me
You say that I'm not living right
You don't understand me
So why do you judge my life?

Every time I turn around its something
People talkin about what they don't know
And when I try to move on up
They're always pullin me down
I'm tired and I've had enough

Its my life
And I'm livin it now

I'll always wonder why
People try to hurt me
No happiness in their own lives
So they act out all their jealousy
Who are you to say that I'm living wrong?
Always tellin me what to do
I decided that I gotta be strong
What makes you think that I needed you?

You don't know me...

Most electronic music tracks don't have lyrics, but many of the ones that do have similar themes to this one. Rave culture has always been misunderstood, and the small crowd who happened to be in the house room when the track came on felt a sense of solidarity and assurance that no matter what future actions the DEA might have planned, the New Orleans scene would survive without question.

Local New Orleans news programs featured the raid for multiple days in a row as one of their top stories, and the New Orleans newspaper, the *Times-Picayune* featured a front page article on the Tuesday following the raid. The headline was "All the Rave," and two color photos of a rave at the Palace decorated the front page. Inside, the continuation of the article was spread over three more full pages and included eight more pictures. Despite the local attention, it wasn't until the January 12, 2001 indictment of Estopinal and the Brunets for the violation of the federal Crack House Statute that the rest of the rave world, and the legal world, took notice. The 1986 statute was originally designed to prosecute people who inhabited abandoned houses and used them as headquarters for selling drugs, according to Glenn Reynolds, Professor of Law at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville (EM:DEF). The application of the crack house

statute by U.S. Attorney Eddie Jordan was the first time in history that the law was extended in an attempt to prosecute “the promoters of events at which others may have been selling or consuming drugs.”

Apparently, on several occasions, the DEA, U.S. Attorney Eddie Jordan, and local New Orleans law enforcement officials have all stated that they are specifically pursuing rave culture because they believe it is responsible for drug use among teens. The charges against the Brunets and Estopinal, however, are clearly a violation of the First Amendment. By targeting a specific musical genre, law enforcement officials are overstepping their authority. Furthermore, they are using the crack house law way outside of its intended context (EM:DEF).

The New Orleans rave scene had been at a standstill since the raid, and the electronic music talent was forced into clubs. The State Palace remained closed for raves until May of 2001, almost a year after the DEA raid. Apparently, around January of 2000, the DEA and the New Orleans Police Department initiated “Operation Rave Review.” The operation apparently led the DEA to conclude that a raid on the Palace would produce evidence of drug possession with intent to sell among either staff of the promoter or within venue management. Other than receipts for bottled water, the DEA actually found no evidence of said drug activity when they raided the Palace, and furthermore, no evidence was found linking either the Brunet brothers, Estopinal, or any member of the Palace staff to drug possession, sales distribution, or manufacturing throughout the entire operation which lasted well over a year.

The operation may have been a manifestation of the 1999 Club Drugs Initiative adopted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). NIDA turned out to be one of

the first government agencies to draw the inaccurate conclusion that “club drugs” were somehow an exclusive problem of nightclubs. The campaign received \$54 million in its first year, and although it admits the presence of "club drugs" in universities, the military or other government organizations, it does not nickname ecstasy or other drugs “university drugs” or “military drugs.” The agency was clearly profiling a style of music and culture in a slanderous way (EM:DEF).

The day following the indictments, U.S. Attorney Eddie Jordan said, “In my time as a prosecutor this is one of the most unconscionable drug violations I have seen... They used these raves to exploit young people by designing them for pervasive drug abuse” (*Times-Picayune* 1/13/01). He said this despite the obvious absence of any evidence whatsoever that would implicate the defendants in violating the crack house law.

After temporarily dropping the charges in response to expected plea agreements from the defendants, the District Attorney filed new charges which also included the crack house law. Additionally, the DEA threatened to request that a Grand Jury bring a separate count against each man for each party thrown at the State Palace Theater. If multiple counts were brought, the crime would qualify as a “Continuing Criminal Enterprise,” which carries a minimum sentence of 20 years, with a maximum of life in prison (EM:DEF). Luckily, the defendants avoided this situation, and worked out a plea agreement in which none of the three individuals would be subject to criminal penalties.

Instead, Robert Brunet’s company, New Orleans Barbeque, Inc., plead guilty to one count of “Operating a Crackhouse” on May 17, 2001. The plea came about after the Brunets determined that continuing the legal battle would lead to serious financial troubles for them and their families. In addition to a \$100,000 fine against New Orleans

Barbeque, the agreement required the State Palace to ban glowsticks, pacifiers, surgical masks, vicks vapor rub, chill rooms, any objects which emitted light, and other items the DEA had been considering as drug paraphernalia. The plea additionally set a minimum age of eighteen to attend raves at the Palace, the only stipulation of the agreement that many ravers in the New Orleans scene thought was reasonable, or even favorable.

Though the case ended with the plea agreement, it was clear that the DEA and its investigation of the State Palace failed to find any wrongdoing on the part of the promoter or the management of the venue, but bullied a plea agreement anyway to try and save face (EM:DEF). It is unclear whether the indictment by the DEA was a premeditated strategy to pursue criminal charges against Donnie, Robert and Brian, or whether it was a last resort to produce a criminal conviction from an otherwise unsuccessful investigation (EM:DEF).

The most damaging aspect of the case for the electronic music industry, however, is the precedent the case set for the future. By holding venue owners and promoters responsible for the behavior of their guests -all 5,000 to 50,000 of them- the precedent has already discouraged many venue owners to allow electronic dance music acts. Furthermore, the precedent will likely dissuade several promoters from continuing in the business. Attorney Generals in other states have already publicly announced an interest in applying the same strategy in their own districts to pursue criminal prosecution against raves. Additionally, subsequent cases have arisen in which the DEA again attempted to apply the crack house law to raves and clubs. The DEA's case against Club la Vela in Florida is the most notable of these, but on November 27, 2001, it took only 75 minutes for jurors in the case to reach a unanimous "not guilty" on all charges verdict. Luckily,

this verdict also set a precedent for future application of the crack house law with respect to nightclubs.

A few months before the plea agreement was reached, the U.S. Department of Justice issued an "Info Bulletin on Raves." The April 2001 document contained information about the Department of Justice's campaign against raves. It clearly outlined a profiling of one type of music, for no similar document exists about rock concerts or pop concerts to even determine if drug use exists at these shows. It also included a section about the intended application of the crack house statute to rave promoters, along with five steps law enforcement officials should follow to successfully prosecute promoters using this strategy. Additionally, the Electronic Music Defense and Education Fund reported in July 2001 that the DEA's education efforts regarding rave and club prosecution were becoming more widespread around the country. The DEA conferences in several cities focused on educating local law enforcement about so called drug paraphernalia - i.e. pacifiers, glow sticks, blow pops, etc. - with the intention of profiling electronic music events as particularly drug obsessed. The conferences included medical staff and other health professionals, along with law enforcement officials.

Because the case and the plea agreement was in clear violation of the 1st Amendment, the American Civil Liberties Union stepped in to fight for rave culture and for freedom of speech. On August 21, 2001, the ACLU filed a motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction against the terms of the plea agreement which forbid the aforementioned objects of rave culture from the State Palace Theater. The ACLU also filed a class action lawsuit against the federal government (McClure v. Ashcroft), in support of civil rights and more specifically in support of the electronic

music act, Rabbit in the Moon, who used glow products as part of their act. On August 23, 2001, District Court Judge G. Thomas Porteous upheld the injunction until further notice (EM:DEF). The suit was even covered in London's *Financial Times*.

Finally, on February 1, 2002, Steven McClure, the founding member of Rabbit in the Moon, with the help of the ACLU, won his case against the federal government, ensuring the legal use of "chemical light sticks" in his electronic music act. On Saturday, February 9, 2002, just over a week after their courtroom victory, the weekend before Mardi Gras and consequently the celebration of the return of Estopinal's Zoolu Mardi Gras raves to the State Palace, Rabbit in the Moon took the stage at the State Palace Theater where they performed to a packed house, now legally armed with "chemical light sticks" (EM:DEF). Two nights later the famous New York DJ, DJ Micro, performed at the State Palace at the fifth rave in the 2002 series of Zoolu Mardi Gras parties. In an interview, Micro told BPM Magazine (March/April 2002) that his most memorable experience performing is "Zoolu All-Stars every year in New Orleans." Zoolu 2002 represented victory for both the New Orleans rave scene and rave culture across the globe.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Despite the victories in the State Palace Theater Case, state and federal laws singling out electronic music events continue to threaten the civil liberties of rave culture participants. For example, a new federal bill known as the “Clean, Learn, Educate, Abolish, Neutralize, and Undermine Production (CLEAN-UP) of Methamphetamines Act of 2002” was recently introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Doug Ose of California, and already has forty-two cosponsors. A section of the bill states that any rave promoter who promotes an event “that takes place under circumstances where the promoter knows or reasonably ought to know” that illegal drugs will be sold or consumed could be fined and sentenced to up to nine years in federal prison (EMDEF 4/5/02).

While the news media may or may not be to blame for the actions of government, they certainly can be held responsible for the perpetuation of myths within public opinion surrounding rave culture. These myths may be at fault if the public shows support for bills like the one mentioned above, which are clearly prejudiced against electronic music events specifically. The public may overlook the fact that this legislation clearly infringes upon many civil liberties if the public continues to believe news media myths that support only one side of the ongoing ideological struggle with respect to the meaning of rave.

Accuracy analysis, a feature of the transmission model of mass communication, is one of the ways to determine the likelihood of a particular story perpetuating certain myths. The transmission model explains communication as the “process of moving

messages from a sender through a medium to a receiver” (Grossberg 1998: 16). This model expresses the idea that the successful transmission of the content of a message from one person’s mind to another person’s mind is the primary challenge of the communication process. This successful transmission results in a shared meaning also known as understanding, or intersubjectivity (Grossberg 1998:17). However, often this shared meaning is prevented because whatever medium the message travels through distorts the message, altering its meaning. The limitations of accuracy analysis surround the fact that once a wrong is corrected, it generally does not receive as much public exposure as the initial incorrect information, if it receives any exposure at all.

The fact that rave is a youth subculture automatically subjects it to subordination by those in power. For the most part, the news media texts discussed in Chapter Three took advantage of particular assumptions about the type of audience that would be most likely exposed to each story. The texts were aimed at a segment of the population who would presumably have little or no prior knowledge about rave culture. The texts also assumed that this audience would de-code the meaning of the texts in a way that would produce the internalization of the myths in the audience members. These myths represent assumptions about rave culture that differ from how rave and its practices are understood by rave participants.

It is additionally important to think about the myths asserted within these texts through the perspective of “agenda-setting.” Agenda setting explains that the media does not tell the audience what to think per se, but what to think about, and how to think about it (Grossberg 1998: 346). In other words, the media offers a preferred perspective regarding the importance or unimportance of particular events, issues, and topics within

public life. The basic trends concerning the portrayal of rave culture myths across a variety of news media texts reinforces the fact that this particular youth culture is a salient topic within the public forum. However, it is crucial to recognize which specific point(s) of view in relation to rave culture a particular media text represents for there to be any chance of the public internalizing a more comprehensive view of rave culture as it is seen from multiple perspectives.

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Appendix A

Noteworthy Quotes Concerning the War on Drugs

“Give ‘em dirty needles and let ‘em die.” -Judge Judy on Needle Exchange programs

“The casual drug user ought to be taken out and shot.” -Daryl Gates, LAPD chief, 1990 to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee (Jenkins 97)

“The voters in this country should not be expected to decide which medicines are safe and effective.” -General Barry McCaffrey, Drug Czar, 1996 (Shulgin 1997: xxviii)

“If people let the government decide what foods they eat and what medicines they take, their bodies will soon be a sorry state as are the souls of those who live under tyranny.” -Thomas Jefferson, 3rd President of the U.S. (Shulgin 1997: xxviii)

“Our politicians have converted a chronic medical problem into a criminal justice problem.” -Dr. Joycelyn Elders, former U.S. Surgeon General (Gray)

“It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong.” -Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778), Writer (Shulgin 1997: 388)

“That humanity at large will ever be able to dispense with artificial paradises seems very unlikely.” -Aldous Huxley (Jenkins 183)

“We have two million people in jail. Our country doesn't build hospitals, doesn't build schools and doesn't build day-care centers. It builds prisons. This is not the hallmark of a free society, but of a police state.” -Steven Hager, High Times Magazine, Editor-in-Chief, June 10, 2001

“Penalties against possession of a drug should not be more damaging to an individual than the use of the drug itself.” -President Jimmy Carter, October 2, 1977 (Shulgin 1991: 452)

“A society of free people will always have crime, violence, and social disruption. It will never be completely safe. The alternative is a police state. A police state can give you safe streets, but only at the price of your human spirit.” -Alexander Shulgin (Shulgin 1991: 448)

MDMA is “penicillin for the soul.” -Alexander Shulgin (Jenkins 87)

“Whoever came up with the idea of restricting financial aid for drug offenses? He needs to be in prison.” -Dave Matthews, Musician (*Rolling Stone* 8/16/01)

Appendix B

Drug War Statistics

(from *Rolling Stone* 8/16/01)

-Long term studies show that the 70% of elementary school kids who had D.A.R.E. show no difference from peers in levels of drug use.

-In the year 2000, state and federal funds for the drug war including the criminal justice system totaled \$40 billion... and only 25% goes to prevention (which is mostly futile anyway-i.e. D.A.R.E.) and treatment.

-24% of the 2 million incarcerated were convicted on non-violent drug charges- we spend \$9 billion a year to pay for them to be in prison. In addition, 20% of U.S. prisoners are victims of "forcible sex," according to a recent report by the Human Rights Watch. This means we also pay for health care if a prisoner contracts HIV. HIV rates among convicts is extremely high compared to the rest of the population.

-The United Nations estimates that illegal drugs generate at least \$400 billion a year in revenue and comprise 8% of all global trade.

-All races use and sell drugs at about the same rates, but 75% of those in prison on drug convictions are minorities. In New York, 94% of those incarcerated on drug convictions are black or Latino.

-Over 260,000 cases of AIDS have been traced to infected needles. One-fourth of the 40,000 new HIV infections every year are caused by injection drug use. The federal government provides no funding for needle exchange, and syringe possession is illegal in forty-seven states.

-The rate of imprisonment for black women is eight times the rate for white women. Black women are ten times more likely than white women to be reported to child-welfare agencies for prenatal drug use and every state permits terminating prisoners' parental rights.

-The highest homicide rates in U.S. history correspond to alcohol prohibition and drug prohibition.

-The National Institute on Drug Abuse survey of 1998-1999 high school seniors shows that white students use cocaine at seven to eight times the rate of African American students and heroin at seven times the rate of African Americans. However, black students are imprisoned for drugs at a rate of over 510 per 100,000 while the rate for whites is only about 30 per 100,000.