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Regulating the Rave Scene: Exploring the Policy Alternatives of Government

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Given the recent interest in raves by municipal officials across North America, the intent behind this manuscript is to explore the various policy alternatives that government might consider in response to rave culture and the "threat" of Ecstasy on youth. In particular, the paper focuses on three policy options: tolerance, prohibition, and harm reduction. A discussion of the alternatives and suggestions about the suitability of each one is outlined. Before doing so, however, a detailed discussion about rave culture, its dimensions, and its association with deviance is provided. Given the relative absence of analyses in the leisure literature of rave culture and the regulation of leisure behavior, it is hoped that the following manuscript will serve as a point of departure for further study on "deviant" leisure and the appropriateness of government intervention.

Keywords rave culture, deviant leisure, youth, resistance, government regulation, liberty, policy alternatives

Are the benefits of leisure truly endless? Most leisure researchers seemingly think so, presumably because they trust that leisure has the potential to contribute positively to the quality of individuals' lives. Not surprisingly, such sentiments have led many academicians to join forces with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in its campaign to promote the benefits of leisure (NRPA, 2001). Beginning with Driver, Brown, and Peterson's (1991) groundbreaking book, *The Benefits of Leisure*, the benefits movement has produced a litany of theoretical and empirical studies related to the economic (Crompton, 1999; Johnson & Brown, 1991), physiological (Froelicher & Froelicher, 1991; Paffenbarger, Hyde, & Dow, 1991), environmental (Rolston, 1991; Ulrich & Addoms, 1981), social (Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Green, 1998), and psychological benefits of leisure (Coleman, 1993; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000). Moreover, Mannell and Kleiber (1997) foresaw the role of leisure in fostering the psychological benefits of mental health and well being as the major thrust of future social psychological research in leisure studies. Nevertheless, despite their endorsement, questions persist about the strength of the association between benefits and leisure experiences.

For leisure to be regarded as a genuine benefit, Mannell and Kleiber (1997) insisted it must meet two criteria. First, it must be demonstrated empirically that involvement in a particular leisure activity is responsible for a change or the maintenance of a desired condition. Second, the change or maintenance must be seen (by whom, they do not specify)

as an improvement over what would have otherwise occurred. With respect to the first criterion, Mannell and Kleiber conceded that leisure benefits represent assumptions decidedly in need of further development, study, and testing. In particular, the psychological benefits of leisure, they argued, are not an automatic result of leisure involvement. With respect to the second criterion, whether outcomes are viewed as benefits is largely a question of values (Mannell & Stynes, 1991). The subjective valuation of leisure benefits perhaps explains why the interpretation of leisure relations and experiences focuses solely on socially approved forms of leisure. What little attention the "costs" of leisure receive appears to be implicitly moralistic.

Regardless of whether the benefits are valued as such and demonstrated effectively, leisure continues to be conceptualized in the literature as a positive realm of activity in which there are a myriad of benefits to participants and non-participants alike, both directly and indirectly. Rojek (1999) pointed out, however, that "an obvious and indisputable fact about leisure in modern society is that many of the most popular activities are illegal" (p. 82). Indeed, little attention has been given to "deviant" forms of leisure. Notable exceptions include Shaw's (1999) article on pornography, Eadington's (1996) article on the social costs of casino gambling, and Oppermann's (1998) edited book on sex tourism and prostitution. Despite these select examples, few would argue against the fact that leisure is accepted universally in the literature as a positive experience, or at the very least, as a neutral one that, in certain instances, lends itself to deviant activities. Rojek (1989), however, disputed such a claim. "What [neutrality] ignores," he wrote, "is that leisure is a cultural activity with a determinate network of rules of relaxation and exchange. The culture of leisure engenders a critical orientation to [the laws of order] because it is practically and symbolically defined in contradistinction to work values" (p. 87). Moreover, he explained, "it is reasonable to propose that leisure is one of the indispensable sites for the emergence and dissemination of antisocial values. Unlike work, leisure takes place in relatively low-surveillance contexts. The culture encourages people to be relaxed, to speak their minds, and be themselves" (p. 87). It is certainly hard to ignore the fact that many leisure activities embody acts of deviance.

If there is one cohort, in particular, that tends to be associated with deviant leisure, it is adolescents. Indeed, Dornbusch (1989) contended that most young people deviate from prevailing societal norms. Moreover, he found that deviant behavior increases dramatically and is disturbingly prevalent during adolescence. Dornbusch's findings are not surprising given that tensions between childhood and adult responsibility can lead to feelings of alienation among youth. It is through the process of identity formation that cliques and subcultures rooted in resistance to hegemonic adult culture tend to flourish (Gaines, 1991). Indeed, Epstein (1998) noted that adolescent, teenager, and youth deviance is often misconstrued as such because of ageist attitudes. What might be understood as an appropriate activity at an older age can be viewed, in contrast, as deviant and perhaps illegal when carried out by young people (e.g., sexual activity, alcohol consumption). Youths, after all, appear on occasion to be entirely distinct from their adult counterparts; their habits, eccentricities, and vernacular have long puzzled older cohorts. Horna (1994) added that youth activity is often labeled deviant because it is analyzed in relation to historical norms, social trends, and social stratification. In other words, just as benefits are subject to a valuation process, so too are the costs (Mannell & Stynes, 1991). Nonetheless, Horna conceded that certain antisocial behaviors are clearly deviant irrespective of age.

A good example of a contemporary activity in which youth participate, which takes place outside of mainstream culture, but is often associated with deviant behavior, is raving. Raves are

all-night dance events, held in abandoned warehouses and airplane hangars, open fields, and clubs, where a predominantly young crowd (teens to mid-twenties) dances amid often elaborate lighting and visual displays to the hypnotic beats of techno, acid house, ambient house, brutal house, progressive house, trance, jungle, and related musics (Tomlinson, 1998, p. 195).

In addition, raves are associated with the pervasive use of drugs, particularly a drug named Ecstasy, which is purported to enhance a sense of community among those who ingest it (I shall discuss the relationship between Ecstasy-use and rave culture more specifically in the sections that follow). While violence is uncommon at raves, several cases have been documented where drug use has led to overdoses and the subsequent death of unsuspecting ravers. Over the past few years, several of these unfortunate incidents have taken place across North America.

On August 2, 2000, CBS News reported that in Florida alone at least 40 deaths had involved Ecstasy between 1997 and 2000. Similar numbers were reported in Illinois. On March 18, 2001, a 20-year-old man died of an apparent overdose after consuming Ecstasy, which he purchased at a rave in Rosemont, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. The incident led Chicago Mayor Richard Daley to introduce an ordinance that made it a crime for Chicago landlords to knowingly rent out buildings for rave parties where illegal drugs are used. The mayor also endorsed legislation in the Illinois General Assembly to toughen penalties for selling Ecstasy to make them comparable to the sale of LSD. In this regard, Ecstasy was framed as an illegal hazard.

Deaths associated with Ecstasy also have occurred in Canada. Following three Ecstasy-related deaths in the Toronto area in the fall of 1999, several dance promoters joined members of the rave community, the Toronto City Council, the Toronto Public Health Board, and the Toronto Police Department to form the Toronto Dance Safety Committee. The committee drafted the *Protocol for the Operations of Safe Dance Events*, a set of guidelines to ensure safety at raves held on city property that the City Council passed unanimously in December 1999. The protocol was developed under the presumption that Ecstasy poses a serious health hazard. Six months later, however, the City Council, led by Mayor Mel Lastman, voted to ban dance-music events on city property after the police made 24 arrests for drug possession at the city-owned Exhibition Place. Chief of Police Julian Fantino estimated that 80% of the attendees were using drugs and that about 25% were 16 or younger. In short, in both the U.S. and Canada, municipal policy makers have reacted to what they perceive as a public threat to the well-being of the adolescents in their communities. Spurned on by concerned citizens whose impressions of raves are developed largely through their exposure to sensationalized media reports about the fatal overdoses that have occurred at raves across the continent, politicians have attempted to address rave-related drug use by seeking legislation to prohibit its presence at rave events. Not surprisingly, the drug use that accompanies the rave scene is what leads many to associate the activity with deviance.

Given the recent interest in raves by municipal officials across North America, my intent here is to explore the various policy alternatives that government might consider in response to rave culture and the "threat" of Ecstasy on youth. In particular, I wish to focus on three policy options: tolerance, prohibition, and harm reduction. What follows is a discussion of the alternatives and my suggestions about the suitability of each one. Before doing so, however, I wish to provide a review of literature pertaining to rave culture, its dimensions, and its association with deviance. By attempting to define rave, I candidly acknowledge that I risk being too exclusionary, given that raves can differ from event to event, and therefore, understand that I risk making normative assumptions about its nature (Martin, 1999). Thus, as with any manuscript, I caution readers against accepting

the following overview as some sort of "objective truth" about rave culture. My intent is simply to give readers who are unfamiliar with rave culture an overview of the activity before moving onto exploring potential policy alternatives for addressing the issues associated with rave. Given the relative absence of analyses in the leisure literature of rave culture and the government regulation of leisure behavior, I hope the following manuscript will stimulate further interest in rave culture and serve as a point of departure for future study.

Sub-Cultural Leisure, Rave Culture, and Resistance

Not surprisingly, adolescence is the stage in life during which individuals are most likely to feel detached psychologically, or estranged, from their peers, parents, and society in general (Epstein, 1998). What makes adolescents particularly prone to feelings of alienation is the precarious position in which they are situated; in essence, adolescents are caught in "role limbo." They are neither children nor adults, so for the first time in their lives, they are forced to contemplate their future (Erikson, 1968) and search for personal meaning (Epstein, 1998). However, until they derive their statuses from their "productive" roles in society—that is, their adult role—many adolescents cope with their situations and develop their identities by participating in sub-cultural activities.

Thorton (1996) described sub-cultural activities as the means through which "youth imagine their own and other groups, assert their distinctive character and affirm they are not anonymous members of an undifferentiated mass" (p. 10). In this regard, sub-cultural activities, particularly sub-cultural leisure, serve as avenues for resistance. In leisure studies, Shaw (1994) identified agency and the notion that leisure is chosen freely as the two theoretical conceptualizations upon which resistance is based. Agency, if applied in the context of youth, suggests that adolescents are social actors who interpret social situations and actively determine, in each setting, their own responses to these situations. Resistance, Shaw explained, is a struggle against institutionalized power and it is only possible under conditions of relative freedom. For this reason, academicians in leisure studies, most notably feminist scholars, have argued that resistance is experienced through leisure because leisure is a site of personal choice, and self-determination (Green, 1998; Shaw, 1994, 2001; Wearing, 1998). In short, leisure provides opportunities for individuals to exercise personal power, which makes it a potential site for resistance. And so, sub-cultural behavior, style of dress, choice of music, and further refinement of these dimensions of their leisure are attempts on the part of adolescents to set themselves apart from hegemonic, adult culture.

Many adolescents are segregated from adult society, in the first place, because they do not work. As such, they must find spaces outside of adult culture if they wish to distinguish themselves from their adult counterparts. It is within the youth-only context of raves that an opportunity for true resistance to hegemonic culture occurs. Raves provide forums within which adolescent identities can be reconstructed, especially those elements that challenge socially acceptable "adult" behavior. At raves, adolescents "create their own space, beyond the naivete of childhood and in opposition to the adult world. It is here where ravers' identities lie, in the youth community of rave" (Tomlinson, 1998, p. 201). Under this premise, I would describe ravers as retreatist lifestylers. Rojek (1999) depicted this category of social actors as individuals who, as a means of personal expression, engage in practices that are antithetical to conventional life. Ravers disengage themselves from hegemonic culture by retreating to a highly developed, routinized fantasy world, which brands mainstream society as a second-order level of existence. The first order of existence is the rave. The rave is where, in the minds of ravers, real life happens.

Within hegemonic culture, however, work is viewed as a cornerstone of personal fulfillment and social well-being (Rojek, 1999). Therefore, any activity that fails to support the ethos of productivity is socially constructed as deviant. Rave culture, therefore, deviates from adult culture. "The raver does not go home to bed," Linder (2001) revealed, "he [or she] dances all night and into the morning—*sacrificing the productivity of tomorrow* for the communality of the present" (p. 5, my emphasis). With this in mind, rave culture attracts hostility because its participants are without discipline. They forsake discipline, the staple of productivity, in favor of abandonment, which is contradictory to the normative values championed by hegemonic culture (Critcher, 2000). The public objects to the essence of rave and what it represents, "the subversion of the ordered, restrained, chemically pure and self-contained body. Dancing all night to the insistent beat, popping pills and empathizing with all and sundry inverted all conventional discipline" (Critcher, 2000, p. 156). Given the construction of an alternative social order through rave culture, the behavior of participants is subversive, and therefore, regarded as a form of deviance.

Dimensions of Raves

A closer look at the dimensions of rave culture provides further insight into why the scene is often associated with deviance. Like many sub-cultural groups, Thorton (1996) branded rave as a "taste culture;" that is, rave culture is associated with a specific taste in music, a specific style of dress, and people with the same interests. Similarities in tastes, she suggested, are "arguably the precondition for that oft-celebrated experience of social harmony, the thrill of belonging" (p. 24). Nevertheless, I must mention that rave and its dimensions are rather difficult to define and delimit. Martin (1999) argued that a wider view of the people who attend raves reveals anything but a homogeneous crowd. In his estimation, raves draw people from a wide spectrum of society. In addition to the people, he contended that other aspects of raves differ from event to event; thus, I forewarn readers that the following section provides generalized information about the dimensions of the culture in an attempt to further the audience's understanding of raves. While some might regard it as nothing more than this season's version of youth expression at the mate seeking point along the life course, I believe rave has its own unique characteristics, which make it a distinct manifestation of youth culture. It is my intention to demonstrate as much in the following section in which I shall discuss the participants, dress code, venue, music, and recreational drug use associated with rave culture.

The Participants

In general, participants at raves are predominantly Caucasian youth between the ages of 15 and 25, and participation among males and females is roughly equivalent (Weber, 1999). Perhaps the most telling trait of participants, however, is their socio-economic status. Ravers are typified by their middle class backgrounds, which is perhaps attributed to the fact that raving is an expensive leisure activity. The expense of clothes, accessories, admission fees, and drugs likely limits the ability of some youth to attend or participate fully in rave culture. Indeed, the costly nature of the activity prompted research participants in Weber's (1999) study to describe ravers as "little rich white kids from the suburbs" (p. 325). However, Linder (2001) has argued that middle class adolescents have turned to raves for the sense of community missing from their lives. Changes to family life and the disintegration of family bonds, she suggested, have forced youth to find new means of satisfying their need for community, new means such as rave culture. Perhaps the most attractive quality of raves is the sense of belonging and shared experience that pervades among participants, which

is identified repeatedly in the literature (Hilker, 1996; Linder, 2001; Stiens, 1997; Weber, 1999). Though this quality is not necessarily unique to raves, it is a salient motivation for participation in such a culture.

At raves, these middle class youth take on the identity of the events they frequent. In so doing, Linder (2001) indicated they "become members of a community by actively sharing and partaking in the rave" (p. 4). Although ravers, as retreatist lifestylers, generally regard their leisure lifestyle as the first level of existence, they are content to live a middle class existence during the week. Indeed, Stiens (1997) revealed that raving is not an "all-the-time" culture. "There is knowledge," he wrote, "that tomorrow I will work on homework, Monday I will go to school, but right now I am going to *play*" (para. 11, under Rave Spirituality, original emphasis). Theoretical explanations of involvement in presumably deviant forms of leisure suggest that individuals are motivated by the human need for play (Caillois, 1961). More important, however, Weber (1999) reported that ravers generally view their participation as a mini vacation during which they challenge their parents' norms of behavior. In this regard, raves offer youth a chance to leave behind for several hours everything else in their seemingly bland suburban lives. Paradoxically, not unlike their parents, ravers do embrace and reproduce the privileges associated with their middle-class roles, notably by using their relative wealth to participate in raves and exclude, perhaps unintentionally, those who cannot afford to participate. In this sense, rave appears to serve as an example of both resistance and reproduction.

The Dress Code(s)

As with any leisure activity, wearing certain types of clothing signifies and reinforces participants' identification with a subculture (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Weber (1999) noted that the clothing at the raves he studied fit into three distinct categories. First, the most common category is *androgynous* and *modest*. Males and females dressed in this manner wear baggy pants, baseball hats, t-shirts emblazoned with cartoon characters, running shoes, and carry knapsacks. In what Ross (1994, p. 11) described as the "never-never land of rave," he observed, "no one wears clothes their own size, [thereby] sartorially deferring adulthood" (in Tomlinson, 1998). Children's and infant toys (e.g., stuffed animals), plastic chains, lollipops, and pacifiers are typical accessories, too. "Don't be fooled, though," Tomlinson (1998) warned. "Ravers are not children. They are very conscious and deliberate in their employment of childhood culture" (p. 200). Presumably, infantilism is symbolic of ravers regaining their innocence and escaping from their adolescent problems (Stiens, 1997). The androgynous clothing also implies that ravers pride themselves on their lack of pretension and their open acceptance of themselves and their community.

As rave has grown, however, the style of dress has evolved with it. Androgynous dress styles remain common, yet, as one reviewer suggested, many female ravers, in particular, have increasingly adopted more suggestive forms of attire. For instance, female toros feature a recoup of the 50's sweater girl look via shelf-like clevage bras, baggy cargo pants are draped artfully low over their buttocks T'ed with satin thongs (a style that introduces buttocks to the traditional display of breasts), and elaborate lip make-up is used to emphasize their lips (perhaps, as the reviewer suggested, to signal fellatio). In short, the innocence portrayed by rave clothing is increasingly becoming more provocative, perhaps because of the introduction of new members into the rave community, particularly clubbers, and the fashion trends they bring with them.

Less common at raves are *retro* and *club* style clothing (Weber, 1999). Ostensibly, retro was more prevalent in the past. It includes a variety of colorful costumes, such as bell bottoms, "fun fur," feathers, top hats, and clothes made from vinyl or other plastics.

Club clothing, by contrast, belongs to "club kids" or "clubbers" (Weber, 1999). Clubbers are typically older participants, usually in their twenties, who dress more formally at raves. Males wear dress pants and collared dress shirts, whereas females wear high-heeled boots or shoes, short skirts and either loose fitting blouses, bikinis, or halter-tops. It is increasingly more common to see this crowd in attendance at raves, although their presence is generally unappreciated by serious ravers (Weber, 1999). This lack of appreciation also reflects a form of gate-keeping, which is aimed at reproducing rave culture as it existed traditionally, and resisting outside influences. In this regard, the community orientation associated with rave is confined only to those who "belong" to the group, not to outsiders. Nevertheless, increasing "outsider" attendance demonstrates the expanding appeal of rave culture.

The Venue(s)

Green (1998) noted "groups sanctioned within or excluded from public leisure spaces may choose individually or collectively to create their own private space for leisure" (p. 178). Indeed, the creation of private space is illustrated within rave culture. The venues at which raves take place are usually announced the day prior to their occurrence, presumably to evade police surveillance (Weir, 2000). Amazingly, the communication networks of rave culture can organize thousands of people in only a matter of days. Stiens (1997), a raver himself, revealed that it is, in fact, difficult for interested parties to determine where future raves are scheduled to take place, unless they are actually in attendance at a rave and pick up a flyer that promotes an upcoming event. Even then, Stiens indicated the flyers usually include only a telephone number. For this reason, he referred to the rave scene as a "self-containing culture" where first time participants access a rave if an active participant in the scene takes them to it. Moreover, the only way to continue participation is to actively attend the parties, otherwise one can be left "out of the loop." Given the clandestine nature of the event, Stiens commented that ravers resemble a "band," which is closed off from society, yet open to newcomers.

Because the venues at which raves take place are unregulated, they serve as locations of resistance. They are places where domination by hegemonic culture can be challenged (Giroux, 1994). Caused in part by the law itself in its attempt to control raves by making illegal the activities associated with the scene (e.g., drug use), raves are a form of underground leisure that take place in secret locations. The nomadic nature of the event makes raves difficult, if not impossible, for the authorities to control (Martin, 1999).

Nowadays, however, it is more common for raves to be held at public venues, such as concert theatres, dance halls, bars, and even public recreation facilities. Rave participants view venues in "legal spaces" as safer (Weber, 1999). A legal space is a venue rented from a property owner that has safety features such as emergency exits, event security, and drinking water. The venues pay stricter adherence to fire and other municipal codes, which means that parties are shut down by police or fire departments much less frequently (Weber, 1999). The increasing number of raves that take place in legal spaces is, again, indicative of the expanding popularity of these events.

The Music

Techno was the original music of choice of the rave scene during its earliest stages of development, but other related genres soon developed, too, including acid house, breakbeat, jungle, ambient, tribal, and progressive (Tomlinson, 1998). The choice of music acts as a filter to determine who is attracted to the events (Weber, 1999). Nevertheless, irrespective of the slightly different musical structures of the genres mentioned, the music played at

raves has a high level of bass and tends to be fast-paced, playing anywhere between 115 and 300 beats per minute (BPM). Evidently, ravers prefer 120 BPM because the beats stimulate the heartbeat as heard in the womb (Stiens, 1997). In the words of Tannenbaum (1993), the music "blends the repetition of disco, the frenzy of punk, and the melodic delicacy of a car alarm" (p. 189). Computers, samplers, synthesizers, and sequencers produce the music, which includes few or no vocals.

Because of the absence of lyrics, Gaillot (1998) contended that rave music is apolitical and inclusive. Its only purpose is to inspire dance (Linder, 2001), making dance an important facet of rave culture. Linder noted that raves demand the active participation of ravers. "Techno is music for dancing," she wrote, "it demands the participation of the body. Ravers are actors, not spectators" (p. 4). Unlike more conventional audiences at live musical events and concerts, ravers face each other, not the performer. As Tomlinson (1998) pointed out, "rave is something you immerse yourself in with other people. There is no guitar hero or rock star or corresponding musical-structural figures to identify with . . . You are just one of many other individuals who constitute the musical whole" (p. 203). Under this premise, the raver does not dance for external display; instead, the aim of dancing is to lose one's self. However, it is, as Martin (1999) suggested, a communal loss, too. That is, it is a loss of self that occurs in the setting of the rave. In dancing to lose the self, ravers achieve a kind of liberation by escaping their identity and reaching "a place where nobody is, but everybody belongs" (Melechi, 1993, p. 37).

Given the importance of the music at raves, disc jockeys (DJs) play a salient role. Hilker (1996) referred to rave DJs as "shamans," "priests," and "channellers of energy" because they control the "psychic voyages" of dancers through their selection and manipulation of music. DJs "spin" sounds to create music ravers desire to hear. Spinning is the art of mixing songs together by using different pitches, speeds, and an equalizer to create a seamless flow of steady music. It is the DJ's responsibility to take the crowd on a journey, to read their mood, and transport them to a different time and place through his or her choice and sequence of records (Stiens, 1997). However, despite the salient role of the DJ, rave music lacks an established star system (Tomlinson, 1998). Most musical releases are, in fact, not labeled with a title or the artist's name, which is a practice called "white labeling." In short, the focus is on the rave, not the artist. Again, rave music places the community above the individual.

Recreational Drug Use

Alcohol, perhaps surprisingly, is often unavailable at raves. In a qualitative study of the rave scene in Toronto, Weber (1999) reported that some of the raves he attended were licensed to sell liquor to patrons, but most of the time the licensed areas were relatively small and underutilized. Most ravers with whom he talked mentioned their disdain for alcohol, which they believed did not belong in the rave scene because of its tendency to incite aggression and violence. Violence, of course, is counter to the ideals that underpin rave culture. Respondents also indicated that drugs, by contrast, played such a significant role at raves that they found it difficult to imagine what raves would be like if such substances were unavailable. Not surprisingly, then, drug use is widespread among ravers and its availability is common at most raves.

Common rave drugs are methamphetamine, LSD, ketamine (Special K), and GHB (Gamma-hydroxy-butrate). The most infamous drug on the rave scene, however, is Ecstasy or "E" or methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), which is a synthetic, psychoactive drug with amphetamine-like properties. Holland (2000) reported that Merck, a pharmaceutical company, discovered the chemical in 1912. The company stumbled across Ecstasy in

its attempt to search for a vascoconstrictive substance to stop bleeding. It patented its finding, but at the time of the patent application, there was no use specified for the substance. In fact, Holland (2000) revealed that neither Merck nor any other company, despite a common belief to the contrary (Weir, 2000), marketed MDMA as an appetite suppressant. It surfaced as an adjunct psychotherapy in the late 1970s, and since the mid 1980s, has become popular at raves (Weir, 2000).

The chemical structure of the drug is believed to interfere with serotonin metabolism in the brain (Cohen, 1998). Ecstasy, like most recreational drugs, is used to change perception and mood (Husch, 1991). Users report sensations and feelings of empathy and well-being. Randall (1992) reported that 90% of users indicated the drug made them feel euphoric, more verbal, and closer to other individuals. Ostensibly, ravers do it to relax, forget, and feel free and uninhibited. Given the effects, Cohen (1998) observed that much of the bonding that occurs at raves happens under the influence of Ecstasy.

Ecstasy, therefore, serves as an expression of social interaction and intimacy: "If affinity and friendship are absent from [ravers'] lives what better to solve their problem than the affectionately named 'hug drug'—a drug that helps people trust each other and inspires an instant feeling of closeness" (Linder, 2001, p. 8). Drug use enables ravers to discard the guidelines and limits of one form of social reality, their ordinary day-to-day life, and immerse themselves in the values of another, the rave scene (Young, 1971). Thus, drug use is the means through which ravers negotiate the constraints of participation, namely to overcome social barriers. Put differently, Ecstasy increases one's "love to fear ratio" (Holland, 2000). That is, it enhances an individual's capacity to love him or herself, and love others, yet it decreases his or her anxiety about expressing him or herself in such a way. Ecstasy provides instant gratification to the user such that ravers are not required to expend any energy to build friendships (Linder, 2001).

Besides giving its users a euphoric feeling, Ecstasy is also known for inhibiting one's ability to reach orgasm (Holland, 2000). As Reynolds (1994) noted, "E androgynizes (it's a real dick shriveler)" (p. 56). Of course, beer and other drugs are purported to do the same, but Martin (1999) contended that Ecstasy, in so doing, disrupts the Freudian concepts of the self and the centering of sexuality in the genitals. Using Freudian terms, he suggested that what occurs is "a unity between the Id and the Ego, and a unification of these with the sensuality of the body and the intensity of the moment of the dance" (p. 92). The social interaction found at raves, he suggested, is thus affectionate, not sexual (as demonstrated by ravers heightened sense of empathy, which prompts participants to embrace and touch each other affectionately). This proposition is decidedly contestable given that youth, at their point along the life course, are likely to engage in sexual experimentation, but it does speak to the general atmosphere at rave events, which is presumably focused on a communal experience. Morever, with respect to sex, Ecstasy does not render its users vulnerable to sexual abuse (Holland, 2000). Ravers who ingest it continue to retain their memory and their consciousness remains unclouded. Ecstasy is, therefore, no date rape drug; rather, it enhances the community spirit of the rave.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Rave Culture

Admittedly, the preceding review of literature provides only a general glimpse into rave culture. Readers who wish to learn more about it are directed to the work of Critcher (2000), Weber (2000), and Martin (1999). The main intent of this manuscript is to consider policy alternatives in response to rave culture, not critique the culture itself. With this in mind, I wish to summarize this section by reviewing the many positive and negative aspects of the culture.

On the positive side, raves foster community. The sense of community, even tribalism, that pervades among participants is reflected by the crowd behavior observed at raves. Ravers report the absence of any fear of violence or crowd aggressiveness and attribute these sentiments to the values that underpin the activity. They also mention that social barriers are reduced at raves. The four pillars of the rave scene, peace, love, unity, and respect (PLUR) embody the inclusive nature of raves. Ostensibly, the "vibe" encountered at raves is not replicated at other parties or clubs. Ravers frequently report the absence of "attitude" at events, something that tends to be present at most other similar activities. The participants encountered at raves are generally welcoming, and ostensibly do not judge others on their clothing, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or dancing ability (Weber, 1999). Of course, the presence of such accepting attitudes are changing as new participants enter rave events; like any community, only those who fail to subscribe to the values that underpin the activity are marginalized. More generally, though, Hilker (1996) noted that "people [at raves] are celebrated for what they are, not what they aren't" (p. 20). For this reason, ravers are said to demonstrate openness toward traditionally marginalized groups, such as homosexuals, ethnic and racial minorities, and women.

With respect to the latter group, rave is an androgynous culture, too. Perhaps because of the threat of AIDS, or the effects of Ecstasy as a sexual inhibitor, or both, raves foster a shared feeling of openness and connectedness that transcends simple sex agendas. Female participants have commented appreciatively about the lack of sexual tension at the rave events they have attended (Weber, 1999). Moreover, Pini (1997) reported that, for many women, raves represent an undoing of the traditional cultural associations between the dancing, drugged, and dressed up woman and sexual invitation, and by doing so, create a space to explore new forms of feminine identity and pleasure. Tomlinson (1998) conceded, however, "one should not be so naïve as to think that romantic connections are *never* made at raves. But a hug from a fellow raver is not usually a sexual advance as much as a show of platonic affection, much like grade-schoolers holding hands" (p. 200, original emphasis). Of course, the participants are at a stage in their lives where they might wish to explore their sexuality and possibly search for a mate. Sexual interplay, therefore, does take place; it is, however, downplayed as *the* central aim of participation. In short, the nature of the activity—the fact that it fosters community, reduces barriers, and cultivates androgyny—suggests there are many appealing features of rave culture. As Martin (1999) remarked, "excitement, not deviance, is sought [by ravers]" (p. 92). In short, rave is deviant only in the minds of outsiders to rave culture, not to ravers themselves.

Nevertheless, the recreational drug use associated with the activity is disconcerting to many people. Raves decidedly serve as venues at which illegal drug use is pervasive. Moral objections aside, the use of Ecstasy and other rave-related drugs can pose potentially harmful consequences to those who use them. Harmless effects include dilated pupils, abnormal eye movements, sweating, fatigue, muscle spasms, including teeth grinding and jaw clenching (which explains the use of pacifiers), a slightly increased heart rate and blood pressure, and possibly increased temperature (Holland, 2000; Weir, 2000). More serious effects, however, include an abnormal fluid/electrolyte balance in users. Ecstasy increases water retention in its users such that their balance of water and sodium becomes unbalanced. Urinating less and keeping more water in the body causes sodium levels to drop, which can result in seizures and cerebral edema, though such outcomes are exceedingly rare (Holland, 2000). Ecstasy can also produce severe toxicity, if overdosed, and hyperthermia, both of which can result in death. Weir (2000) reported that high environmental and core-body temperatures and muscular exertion from long-drawn-out dancing might lower the risk of serious Ecstasy-related adverse effects. Moreover, she noted that active cooling measures (e.g., drinking water) and the use of the muscle relaxants, and anti-convulsant and sedative medications

might decrease mortality from the toxic ingestion of Ecstasy. Adequate treatment, such as the presence of drinking fountains, however, is not always available at the "underground" venues at which many raves are held. Consequently, venues that are ill-equipped to respond to emergencies can jeopardize the safety of participants.

Weir indicated, too, that complications following Ecstasy ingestion are unpredictable and surprisingly do not appear to be dose dependent. While she conceded that most ravers who use Ecstasy experience no complications, she mentioned that uncertainty about the purity of the substance makes it difficult to determine toxicity and predict the medical consequences of Ecstasy. Though many of the pills sold at raves have logos on them for identification purposes, tablets with the same logo stamp might not contain the same ingredients. In fact, Weir reported that approximately 10% of drugs sold as Ecstasy contain no active ingredient whatsoever. In a cautionary note, she wrote, "the ingestion of Ecstasy, as with most illicit drugs, essentially reduces to a game of Russian roulette because the contents of the tablets are unknown and unregulated and the dealers and suppliers are concealed and unaccountable" (p. 1846).

In response to the unpredictable nature of the consumption of Ecstasy, the rave community has launched awareness programs to educate ravers about pills. Weir feared that the overabundance of untrustworthy information on the Internet, however, might encourage naïve users to adopt what she called "'irrational' rational drug use" based on limited information and misinformation. The threat of contaminants in Ecstasy pills sold at raves makes raving a dangerous activity. The dangers associated with Ecstasy use, in turn, have been extended to rave culture, most notably by the press and municipal policy makers. Consequently, active discussions regarding the prohibition of raves are taking place across North America.

Liberty and Rave Culture

Public policies pertaining to leisure behavior, including prohibition, ultimately boil down to the reassertion or limitation of individuals' liberty. Liberty, in this context, is associated with the presence or absence of constraints imposed directly (formal social control) or indirectly (informal social control) by government on individuals. Liberty itself enables people to act in ways others cannot control. Consequently, under certain circumstances, people are left free to behave in ways that others might find immoral and subversive. Often, those upset by another's behavior react by trying to limit liberty. The problem for government, therefore, is to decide under what circumstances it is justified to impose limits on individual choice or action.

The *harm principle* proposed by John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty* is perhaps the most salient criterion for distinguishing between those areas in which restraint on others is warranted and those in which such restraint is considered inappropriate. Mill wrote:

> the sole end for which mankind (sic) are warranted individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their numbers is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his (sic) will, is to prevent harm to others. His (sic) own good, either physical or mental, is not a sufficient warrant (Mill, 1983, p. 13).

In essence, the harm principle rules out paternalistic interference with the liberty of people for their own good, even if the behavior in question poses a serious threat to those who behave in such a manner. In other words, where there are no dependents or dependents are unlikely to be seriously harmed by the behavior in question, an individual's life is that

individual's own business. The harm principle also restricts interference with behavior that is simply offensive to others or behavior that others believe is immoral, but not harmful to others. Thus, interference is justified only when it is necessary to protect others from harm.

Even though people might be offended deeply by witnessing what they view as immoral or obscene behavior, such behavior cannot be prohibited simply because it is offensive to others, otherwise almost any behavior would be subject to prohibition given that almost any behavior has the potential to offend someone. In short, the subjectivity of the claim does not warrant the restraint on liberty (Bowie & Simon, 1998). In some instances, though, offensive acts are genuinely harmful to others. Arguably, the recreational use of drugs harms users' loved ones, employers, and the general public (Horna, 1994), but the extent of the harm is tenuous at best. In the interest of public safety, the harm principle does permit the regulation of "other regarding actions"—that is, those actions that might harm others—under circumstances where the others are genuinely harmed by the behavior in question. The key, however, is to determine whether the behavior is truly harmful to others or if it is simply morally abhorrent.

Arguably, raves pose a perceived threat to mainstream society from two sources. First, they have been portrayed as a threat to societal values and interests. Put simply, raves are hedonistic. Ravers undermine disciplinary control by rejecting delayed gratification, a fundamental value crucial to the capitalistic system upon which our society is built (Martin, 1999). In so doing, the participants and the raves they attend presumably pose a threat to the social order. Second, the nature of rave has been promulgated stereotypically as a deviant drug culture by the mass media. Ignoring the community-oriented nature of the activity, the frightening media portrayal of widespread drug use and warehouse parties away from adult supervision has alarmed concerned parents, guardians, and politicians, who, in response, have called for a crackdown on raves by public officials. Perhaps what they find most disconcerting about rave culture is that raving "affects" the "all-American" kid next door (Linder, 2001). Ecstasy-abusing ravers are none other than young, white, middle class youth. The message, therefore, has been that rave has invaded "the picket-fenced neighborhoods symbolic of America" (Linder, 2001, p. 13). Here again, rave is portrayed as a threat to community life.

Critcher (2000) noted, however, that "improvised gatherings of large numbers of young people, intent on enjoying themselves and making a great deal of noise, are always perceived as a threat to public order" (p. 151). In other words, the social reaction to rave culture has been driven largely by a moral panic. The fact is that the majority of youth today do not attend these parties (Aldaf & Smart, 1997; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2000). Moreover, of those who do attend, and of those who use Ecstasy, few experience any medical complications (Weir, 2000). It seems clear, therefore, that the panic surrounding rave culture is largely moralistic.

Bowie and Simon (1998) argued that the burden of proof rests upon those who wish to limit liberty to show that their conception of immorality is not merely personal prejudice or preference. They contended that those who would limit liberty in order to minimize offense must demonstrate the following:

1. that the purportedly offensive behavior cannot be evaded easily;
2. that it is impractical to provide a controlled area where the behavior in question need not be witnessed by the general public;
3. that the purportedly offensive behavior is not an expression of an ideology or ideal that should be protected under the freedom of speech; and
4. that the behavior is regarded widely as deeply objectionable within the community as a whole.

In the context of rave culture, the response is clear. First, given the underground nature of the activity, raves take place outside the view of the average citizen, so they are easily avoidable. The unsupervised nature of the activity is disconcerting to opponents of raves. Second, rave culture is rooted in its expression of hedonism. As a result, it is underpinned by an ideology that is counter to the ethos of productivity, which is advocated by the mainstream. It is not surprising, therefore, that any form of resistance against hegemonic culture would face a reactionary response. Finally, though rave events are viewed moralistically as deviant, I argue the activity itself is objectionable only because it serves as an arena for resistance. Such an objection is clearly moralistic, too. In sum, the arguments against rave events themselves, at least in my view, do not warrant the restriction on liberty.

Concern arises, however, with the presumed danger associated with recreational drug use. In general, an objection from the community as a whole lies with the adolescent drug use linked to rave culture. Clearly, the sale or use of recreational drugs are illegal in North America, which perhaps implies that widespread community support exists for government endeavors that address what amounts to a social concern for the well-being of its adolescent members. Drug use violations can be viewed as crimes without victims, however, so restricting liberty is perhaps inappropriate given the harm principle. There is certainly a case for paternalistically interfering with the behavior of non-responsible persons (Bowie & Simon, 1998), but is it possible to address adolescent drug use without restricting participation in the rave scene? Moreover, is it necessary to restrict the rave scene, given that many ravers claim that the availability of drugs at raves is unimportant to them (Weber, 1999)? In answering these questions, it is important to recognize that rave culture is composed of five dimensions, one of which is drug use. It is difficult, therefore, to disassociate the rave scene from drugs. This fact presents public policy makers with a difficult political decision: How should government respond to rave culture and the potential threat of Ecstasy?

Potential Policy Alternatives

Assuming that government must respond to rave culture in some shape or form, there are, in general, three policy alternatives from which it can choose: (1) tolerance, (2) prohibition, and (3) harm-reduction. The "tolerance" approach is simply a laissez faire response to raves, whereas the latter two alternatives, by contrast, are paternalistic in that they are adopted with the intent to protect rave participants from potential harm. While prohibition restricts liberty by forbidding an activity, harm reduction simply puts protective measures in place, which allow participants to continue their participation better aware of the consequences of their participation. In the following section, I discuss each alternative in greater detail and suggest the suitability of each one.

Tolerance

The first policy alternative, *tolerance*, is a strategy whereby government refrains from responding formally to rave culture. The rationale for this approach is that, like other underground youth movements, rave will eventually develop mainstream appeal, which will ultimately lead to its demise. Indeed, the biggest threat to raves, according to Linder (2001), is cultural assimilation. As mentioned, rave culture defines itself in opposition to mainstream culture, and by extension, to things mass-produced, and mass-consumed. Commodification of the rave scene, therefore, promises to move the rave from an underground subculture to a more commercial or mainstream phenomenon.

Stiens (1997) alleged that the commodification of rave culture has already begun. At the raves he has attended more recently, he was surprised to witness tickets sold by Ticketmaster, participants dressed more fashionably, a steep rise in the cost of admission, and outrageous demands by DJs who charged sizable fees for spinning. Raves are now held in popular clubs and other more traditional venues, advertised in mainstream newspapers and on the radio, and their audiences are expanding to include individuals who do not necessarily subscribe to the principles upon which rave culture was founded (Tomlinson, 1998; Weber, 1999). Moreover, whereas in the past rave culture supported underground music scenes that were almost unknown outside of a particular locality, it is now broadening its audience to include those outside the rave scene. Epstein (1998) noted that the alienation of youth is a common marketing strategy, which makes underground music scenes, such as those connected to rave culture, particularly appealing to the corporate music industry. Though Tomlinson (1998) cautioned that rave music is ill-suited for commercial success, she did warn that "[the industry] will steal whatever it can, regardless of the politics at stake. But not without co-opting, mainstreaming, and sterilizing the product first" (Tomlinson, 1998, p. 206). If consumed by the corporate music machine, rave music will no longer be viewed as genuine resistance because it will lose its subversive message (Epstein, 1994).

Moreover, incorporation of the rave scene itself will presumably reduce its appeal, and its effectiveness, as a form of resistance (Butsch, 2001). Serious ravers have long lamented that outsiders simply fail to understand what the rave scene is all about, hence their reason for closing raves off to mainstream society, yet opening them up to newcomers. The introduction of new members who are willing to "buy" rave culture, but not "buy into" its belief system might only exacerbate their position and lead to growing dissatisfaction with the state of rave culture. Already, many ravers are blaming the media portrayal of raves as places where drugs are obtained easily and used freely, which they argue attracts people looking only to buy or sell illicit drugs, and not necessarily those who adhere to the principles of raving (Weber, 1999). As rave begins to penetrate into popular culture, it will be interesting to see if serious ravers maintain their commitment to the culture. Put differently, Tomlinson (1998) wrote, "as techno music creeps into popular movie soundtracks and mainstream dance clubs, as rave-inspired graphics are used to market Levis jeans and bottled soft drinks, the 'secret society' of rave will continue to be infiltrated by outsiders. Rave's ultimate survival as a communal 'love circle' remains to be seen" (p. 209). In sum, fragmenting the grounds for resistance might be the best way to control rave culture (Martin, 1999). Adopting a tolerance approach, however, is politically dangerous because it can be construed as unwillingness on the part of government to address what has been portrayed as a deviant activity that harms middle class youth. Ever cognizant of public opinion, elected officials are more likely to take the view that any reaction, regardless of how insignificant, is more politically appealing than doing nothing.

Prohibition

Prohibition, in contrast to a tolerance approach, forbids by law the sale or use of Ecstasy. Rave events themselves are unlikely to be prohibited given that it would be hard to make the case that attendance itself ought to be unlawful. Adopting prohibition as a policy alternative, therefore, means that Ecstasy becomes the interest of the police, the courts, and the prison system. Consequently, strategies to enforce a prohibition policy involve enacting new legislation to ban the sale and use of Ecstasy, devising exemplary sentences for those who break such laws, and increasing police action (Critcher, 2000). Though this alternative might seem politically appealing to policy makers, it too has its concerns.

First, it is a punitive policy option. Steep penalties do nothing to provide non-violent drug offenders with the rehabilitation necessary to re-introduce them into society. Instead such measures focus exclusively on punishment. In the U.S., the penal mindset of the war on drugs has overburdened the criminal justice system. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU, 1996) reported that law enforcement of drug related crimes consumes more than half of all police resources nationwide. Moreover, the ACLU revealed that the recent climb in the American incarceration rate has made the United States the world's leading jailer, with a prison population that now exceeds one million people. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (2002) indicated that non-violent drug offenders make up 55.1% of the federal prison population. Conceivably, adding Ecstasy offenders to the war on drugs would serve only to exacerbate the problem.

Second, tough new penalties for Ecstasy use will bring punitive federal drug laws to communities currently unaccustomed to having the lives of their children ruined by long prison terms for non-violent offenses. That the community in which a perpetrator lives would influence policy, however, is unjust and would only demonstrate racial disparities in drug laws, as Illinois State Senator, Ricky Hendon, pointed out in a comment he made about Ecstasy-related laws in Illinois. Nevertheless, he argued to treat teenage partygoers the same as professional drug traffickers is problematic. Remember: Ecstasy users at raves are adolescents, teenagers, and young adults. Most drug use that occurs during youth is experimental, yet McColl (2001) demonstrated it is typical for first time offenders to be trapped into long prison terms that ruin their lives. Further, he argued punitive drug sentences tend only to perpetuate recidivism.

Third, with respect to rave events, heightened surveillance might force raves further underground, which can threaten the public safety of participants. Venues might not meet appropriate safety standards or have the means to address health concerns that might emerge during the course of an event. With respect to the sale of Ecstasy, McColl (2001) contended that a more fiercely competitive Ecstasy black market, more risk-prone Ecstasy dealers, and greater levels of violence associated with the Ecstasy trade are likely consequences of harsher Ecstasy penalties. While traditionally the Ecstasy black market has been composed of relatively peaceful actors, he argued that tough federal penalties could drive current dealers out and leave the market to violent criminals. Recently, Butterfield (2001) gave evidence of this very fear. He reported that violence among dealers has increased substantially as the sale of Ecstasy has spread from rave events to the streets. The underground market developed around the sale of Ecstasy is, in essence, a form of resistance against prohibition.

In short, a punitive prohibition policy on Ecstasy is problematic because it is impossible to prohibit young people from using substances they want to use. A wide range of substances, not just Ecstasy, is cheap, potent, and readily available for adults and teenagers alike. A more prudent course of action, therefore, is to not increase Ecstasy penalties and not risk subjecting more non-violent drug offenders, a number of whom are likely to be quite young, to long prison sentences that will be out of line with the known medical dangers associated with Ecstasy use.

Harm Reduction

An alternative to the tolerance and prohibition policy options is for government to adopt harm reduction strategies. Harm reduction is a pragmatic policy approach to dealing with rave-related drug use. It begins with the recognition that drug use at raves is going to continue, irrespective of efforts to encourage abstinence and regardless of the threat of punitive consequences. While encouraging abstinence remains part of the strategy, harm reduction approaches also provide ravers with information and resources so that drug users

at raves do the least possible harm to themselves and those around them. Rosenbaum (1999) argued that harm reduction policies must be rooted in three assumptions. First, any form of drug education must respect and build upon rave attendees' abilities to reason and learn from their own experiences. Second, total abstinence might not be a realistic alternative for all rave attendees. Third, the use of mind-altering substances, such as Ecstasy, does not necessarily constitute abuse given that the majority of drug use does not lead to addiction or abuse. If policy makers can accept these assumptions, Rosenbaum contended that harm reduction policy initiatives become more palatable.

With respect to rave culture, the first strategy under a harm reduction policy initiative is to ensure that the venues at which raves take place meet necessary safety and health standards and provide adequate security to accommodate the large number of attendees. Such a strategy begins with collaborative efforts that involve all departments of a municipality, including fire, police, and ambulance services to ensure that all municipal bylaws and codes are met. If venues fail to meet the necessary bylaws or codes, the premises ought to be closed prior to the rave event taking place. Suggested requirements for venues ought to include access to unlimited drinking water to mitigate the effects of prolonged dancing and subsequent dehydration in a warm or high temperature environment, setting age restrictions for admission, and permitting raves to take place on municipally-owned properties as well as private venues. As mentioned, ravers themselves believe that raves organized in legal spaces are safer (Weber, 1999), so it is conceivable the rave community would accept such standards.

The second and perhaps most important harm reduction strategy is to conduct an awareness campaign to educate ravers about the health effects of rave participation, Ecstasy, and other rave-related drugs. Among several suggested harm reduction strategies, Weir (2000) recommended that ravers be encouraged to replenish fluids and sodium, take breaks from dancing, know the risks of contaminated drugs and the inaccuracies of logos, know the signs and symptoms of toxicity, avoid alcohol, ensure medical center and team is on-site, and refrain from attending raves alone by arranging with a friend to look out for each another. These messages are likely to be more effective if delivered by an organization at arm's length or completely disconnected from government. In a bid to reduce harm associated with drug use at raves, the rave community has established organizations to educate ravers about pills and introduced Ecstasy-testing kits and laboratory pill analysis programs (Weir, 2000). DanceSafe.org, for instance, is an organization that promotes health and safety within the rave and nightclub community.

The fact is that ravers still want to continue to have drugs available at raves. Consequently, Weber (1999) discovered that ravers see the availability of accurate and non-judgmental information on drugs, including education about the appearance and effects of certain drugs, as vital to their health and well-being. Further, Weber reported that many ravers thought the testing of drugs for purity levels would provide some peace of mind to those who ingest such substances at raves. He concluded that, based upon his observations, harm reduction is a realistic policy option that would be welcomed within the rave community.

Conclusion

Given the arguments I have presented, I would imagine it is evident to the reader that I am advocating the adoption of harm reduction policies with respect to rave culture and Ecstasy use. While the natural and expected inclination of the public, media, and government is to react to the recent, unfortunate Ecstasy-related deaths by attempting to put a stop to raves entirely, I believe the complexity of the issue necessitates a more reasoned approach. Reactionary responses are largely moralistic and they are too quick to limit liberty under

the premise that the behavior in question is objectionable. It is incumbent upon government to recognize that the labeling of rave culture as deviant is simply a matter of subjective valuation.

Moral objections aside, it strikes me that the real issue of concern is not that youth are engaging in subversive behavior, but rather that youth are at risk because of the potential contaminants contained in the Ecstasy they use. Nevertheless, as someone who believes strongly in maintaining liberty, I am reluctant to encourage government to adopt a pro-hibition stance. Moreover, I believe fundamentally that, in the words of Etzioni (1998), "Successful policies are accepted because they are recognized to be legitimate, rather than imposed" (p. xxvi). Prohibition, in my view, is not a policy alternative that youth can rec-ognize as legitimate, for "the control of Ecstasy is tied into a moral culture that says it is all right to take drugs for medical reasons but not for fun" (Martin, 1999, p. 83). This irrespective of the fact that "negative side affects (drug interactions and allergic reactions) are far more likely to be experienced by people improperly using the many legal, readily available drugs than people using illegal drugs" (Burbank, 2002, para. 13). Unfortunately, despite (or perhaps, in spite of) prohibition policy, youth will undoubtedly continue to use Ecstasy.

Given the likelihood that Ecstasy use will continue, government must, in my view, adopt a more reality-based approach to addressing public concerns about rave culture. Tolerance is not an option for the simple reason that there will likely be political consequences for inaction. Besides, from my perspective, it would be unconscionable to do nothing given that government has the ability to act on behalf of the well-being of its younger citizens by reducing the potential for harm and making raves safer, even if the actual number of youth harmed by Ecstasy is minimal. Harm reduction strategies such a health education and enforcing safety standards at the venues at which raves take place allow youth to continue their participation better informed of the consequences of their actions and within safer facilities without infringing upon their liberty. As long as they do not harm others, youth must be free to engage in the leisure activities that they enjoy, even if such activities are subversive, for they, too, have their benefits. Adult culture would be wise not to impose its will, but rather to teach youth to be skeptical and, more importantly, to be safe.

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