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# News in Review

March 2000

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### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

Adolescence itself is recognized by sociologists and other social scientists as a subculture. In this News in Review story, social values, norms, and behaviour patterns unique to this subculture are examined through the phenomenon of the rave a relatively recent occurrence that recalls other mass-appeal events among young people, and yet one that manifests unique aspects, especially in the area of personal and collective behaviour. The role of fashion, drugs, music, dance, and peer culture in general are also implicit in this story.

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## Introduction

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

It was early on a Sunday morning in September 1999 that the darker side of the rave culture suddenly was exposed to the light in Nova Scotia. Just outside Halifax, at Exhibition Park, the largest rave in Atlantic Canada's history was in high gear. It was three in the morning, and 3000 people who had each paid \$25 admission were dancing through the night to loud techno and industrial music. A feeling of euphoria filled the room; and the rave drug Ecstasy took its effect on many of the patrons. But something went wrong.

Jaimie Britten, a 23-year-old from Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, started to go into convulsions and passed out. His friends were able to remove him from the rave party inside, and paramedics were called, but it was too late. Britten died in the parking lot of Exhibition Park from an overdose of Ecstasy. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident. In Ontario alone, nine deaths during 1999 have been attributed to this drug. Ecstasy, clinically known as MDMA, was first used in the 1930s as a psychiatric treatment in therapy and marriage counselling. It creates a euphoric feeling and a sense of peace and love; it also raises one's heart rate to dangerously high levels. It can cause chest pains, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The body can overheat to fatal levels.

Raves, all-night dance parties that started to gain prominence in Europe during the 1980s and have become increasingly prevalent in Canada during the last few years, have had an association with drugs since their inception. As DJ Chris

Sheppard, who was responsible for the first rave held in Toronto in 1988, points out, Rave for me has always been a celebration of love, a large gathering of people. That's always been the meaning [of a rave young people] gathered together to celebrate life, love, energy, and compassion. I wanted to see a place of happiness. Maybe it was a fantasy land, but I wanted to see something where everyone could come together in peace and harmony. This feeling of togetherness or PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect) is enhanced by the euphoric effects of Ecstasy. Jaimie Britten, on the night of his death had taken four of these pills four times the usual dosage. One of the major problems that concern police across the country is the perception among young people that Ecstasy and other club drugs are innocuous mere feel-good candy. As raves become a fixture in youth culture, and ravers become younger and younger, the potential for more overdoses increases. Jaimie Britten did not understand the dangers of this drug, and the message is not getting out to others. How can something that feels so good be so dangerous?

Mass participatory events in the adolescent subculture are nothing new. The rave as a psychological and sociological phenomenon some might even call it a spiritual response may be fraught with meaning, something that the ravers seem to be searching for or even experiencing, depending on whether you believe the sensations they are experiencing are real or illusory, or it may have more mundane significance. Human rituals have always been part of social organization. Ritual dancing has been around since the beginning of human civilization. Is the rave the most recent manifestation of age-old themes of the search for an ecstatic heightened sense of reality in a world in which reality seems banal or threatening; a sense of belonging to something greater; a temporary glimpse of the darker side of life and the mysteries of the night; a revolt against contemporary mores and restrictions; a rite of passage in which the self merges with the collective; the overloading of the senses to test one's limits (neurological or other); the predictable byproduct of media and a popular culture that validate excess; privacy in a public place? Or is it a quasi-industry where a buck is to be made? Or is it simply a helluva good party, with all the fun and risks that go with that? Or is a rave more of the same Woodstock reinvented? Will adults sleep better at night knowing the answers to these questions?

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# News in Review

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## Rants and Raves

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

The word rave has many different meanings, some with connotations suggesting high praise and others that suggest excess or lack of control. The word can mean to praise something with great enthusiasm but it can also mean to talk in a delirious or demented state or to rage with unchecked emotions, like a storm. Since the 1980s, the word has taken on another meaning in the popular culture. A rave is a loosely organized dance party that lasts through the night and typically includes techno music and often the use of psychedelic drugs. Words can take on secondary meanings because of their use in distinct segments of the popular culture and can also create strong reactions among the general public who may not be part of that subculture. They may also be misinterpreted or blown out of proportion because of fears, related incidents, or a general uncertainty as to what they are describing. Every generation of adolescents has a specific vocabulary that may or may not be understood by the general adult population. It is important, however, to remember that a word is just a word. What actual events, attitudes, or values that the word represents or describes is another matter.

Before watching this News in Review report on raves, discuss why you think these dance parties came to be known by this name. In what ways do the traditional meanings of the word rave fit the context of these dance parties?

Print and non-print media understand the power of words and, in order to capture the attention of readers or viewers, use headlines of carefully chosen words and phrases to alert the consumers to what they the media have decided is an important issue or is the essence of the issue. Read the following headlines, and highlight the words that make each headline particularly forceful. If the headline was all you read or heard, how would you react?

Four Treated for Overdoses after Rave Party at UBC  
Inquest to Probe Ecstasy Deaths  
Ecstasy Shoots to the Heart of Squalid Rave Culture  
Hardly Ecstasy: Four Overdose on Bad Dope  
Death-leap Partygoer Had Taken Ecstasy  
Sound Advice to Stop Dance of Death  
The Danger of Being Young, Hip and High  
Woodstock Madness; Riot a Vivid Picture of Our Current Cultural Climate  
Students Drug Use Rampant  
Ravin Good Time; Drugs and Music Lure Kids  
Clubbing: Stark Raving Madness  
A Deathwatch on Raves  
Love Affair with Ecstasy Bought Student Dreams to a Halt

### **A Surrealistic Scene?**

Research the term surrealism in the dictionary. The Dada and Surrealist artists in Europe in the 1920s would often create poems made up of found phrases from the world around them. When you read aloud the words you underlined together as a single piece of text, what gives them a metaphoric or poetic sound? What is the tone or feeling expressed in the poem you have just composed? Is it angry? Cynical? Euphoric? Bizarre? Irrational? Realistic? Inflammatory? If this poem were repeated over and over, what subconscious effect do you think it might have on people? What might they think about raves and rave culture? In your mind is this an accurate representation of the rave scene?

While watching and listening to the video, jot down words that jump out at you. Describe the effect of these words together but separate from the rest of the soundtrack.

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# News in Review

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## An Artificial High?

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

Those involved in the rave scene say it is more than just a dance party. It is a meeting place for a community; it is about the creation of feelings of peace, love, unity and respect, better known as PLUR. They say there is a freedom in the collective release of energy. It doesn't matter how one dances, it only matters that one does. As Nick Nonsense, owner of the only rave record store in Halifax, states in the video, "In a large group of people, we're all listening to the same music, we're all dancing in the same room. That can be a pretty uplifting feeling. It's not something that is generated naturally that much in our culture anymore."

Raves, like many other cultural phenomena, have a close connection to the world of fashion. In terms of a rave style almost anything goes; fashions are as extravagant and excessive as the event itself. Vivid colours that are picked up by the lights are preferred. Big pants that are cool and comfortable and flow when ravers dance are popular. Multi-hued hair worn in pigtails or baby clips is also favoured. Others wear bikini tops and short skirts. The favoured accessory is the glow stick, a 15-centimetre-long tube filled with luminous chemicals. Ravers say that the atmosphere is non-judgmental; it is very diversified and attractive to many young people regardless of class or ethnic background. As one raver told *The Toronto Star*, "Where else can people feel this accepted? Whether they are black or white, gay or straight, it doesn't matter. Aside from home, I feel safer at a rave than

anywhere else.

The parties attract hundreds, even thousands of people. Most are teenagers or young people in their early 20s. Admission to these events is anywhere from \$20 advance to \$50 at the door. Raves can be held anywhere, including university and college residences, nightclubs, banquet halls, or outdoor fields. Usually the location is kept hidden until the day of the event. Often ravers will meet at a specified point and be bused to the rave location. This only adds to the sense of mystery and excitement of the event. Rave events typically begin about 10 p.m. and continue into the next morning, until about 8 a.m. The visual aids such as laser and light shows and glow sticks, along with the steady pounding techno or industrial music at 200+ beats per minute, create an experience called ataxia in which the senses become blended. Participants say they begin to hear colour and see music.

For those ravers who use drugs, the desired effect is to enhance the overall sensation of the event and to increase the general feelings of openness and peace. Some prolong the frenetic energy that is characteristic of the first hours of the rave by using stimulatory hallucinogenics, such as Ecstasy (the most sought-after rave drug) and MDA. These not only cause mind-altering effects but also provide participants with the impression of endless energy. In addition to the inherent danger of drug use, one of the biggest dangers during this excessive and prolonged state of physical and psychological arousal is dehydration. Knowing this, many ravers forego alcohol, preferring to drink only water.

Toward the end of a rave, the early hours of the morning give way to a different atmosphere in which the beat slows down; and for those who use drugs, the substances change from stimulatory drugs to hallucinogens: cannabis, LSD, and psilocybin mushrooms. These drugs are used by some in an attempt to ease the participant out of the frenetic stage to a calmer state, thus avoiding a crash. After the event is over, ravers often go to parties and after-hours rave clubs to also bring themselves down from the high they have been experiencing during the mass gathering.

### **Discussion**

1. Do raves create a real sense of community? How would you define the word? What is the purpose and function of community in human society? Why do we live and work in communities? What are the benefits of communities? Are there any disadvantages to communities, perhaps communities that grow too large? Can the individual get lost in a community?

2. Where else can people feel this accepted? Do you feel that the quote of a young raver in The Toronto Star is accurate? Are there any places that you feel totally accepted? Why do you think the feeling of acceptance found at raves is so appealing to large groups of young people? What is acceptance? The U.S. sociologist W.I. Thomas has identified four fundamental human desires: excitement, a sense of security, feelings of tenderness, and personal recognition. How do these desires lead to feelings of acceptance? How do raves, like other mass events, create feelings of acceptance? Is the acceptance experienced by rave participants genuine or artificially induced and temporary? Is there really any difference?

3. One of the premier postmodern scholars, Marshall McLuhan, was Canadian. In his book *Understanding Media* (1964), he writes about tribal patterns in our modern culture.

A tribal and feudal hierarchy of the traditional kind collapses quickly when it meets any hot medium of the mechanical, uniform, and repetitive kind. The medium of money or wheel or writing, or any other form of specialist speed-up of exchange and information, will serve to fragment a tribal structure. Similarly, a very much greater speed-up, such as occurs with electricity, may serve to restore a tribal pattern of intense involvement such as took place with the introduction of radio in Europe, and is now tending to happen as a result of TV in America. Specialist technologies detribalize. The nonspecialist electric technology retribalizes.

Examine the various thoughts, themes, terms, and references in this statement. Express in your own words what you think McLuhan is saying? How might a rave restore a tribal pattern of intense involvement? What is there about a rave that could be considered tribal?

4. W.I. Thomas identifies the desire for excitement as a primary motivation for human beings. According to him, in order for a human being to develop and to survive, he or she from infancy must be stimulated (excited). Babies are played with, rocked, entertained with colourful toys and pleasing sounds. Young children are intrigued and amused by rhythmic patterns and rhyming songs and games. Even the lungs of newborns are excited into action by the stimulus of arriving into a world of light, sound, and varying temperatures. Humans of all ages are stimulated-entertained by television programming and advertising that is glitzy and very fast-paced. Even some news programs subscribe to what has been referred to as the jolts per minute style of programming. As the saying goes, If it bleeds, it leads. There are those, however, who say that in modern society, we have raised the excitement level too high and that we are increasingly surrounded by a culture of sensory overload that actually has the opposite effect of causing the rational parts of

the human brain to shut down in a sense be anaesthetized by excessive stimuli. Discuss these ideas in terms of the social phenomenon of the rave. To what extent might the rave simply be an extension of a societal sensory overload? What is the sensory load in your school?

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## Raves and the Social Order

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

Societies establish police forces to ensure social order as the particular society has defined it. In some ways, raves are an attempt to go beyond certain boundaries of human behaviour. There is no doubt that a part of the rave scene involves drugs that are illegal and have led to situations in which police have been required to be involved.

In June 1998, RCMP Corporal Scott Rintoul of Vancouver initiated an intelligence probe into the rave party scene. The probe was in response to an increasing number of high-school and university/college students experimenting with chemical drugs while attending rave parties. The purpose of the probe was to gather information on raves and their infrastructure and to gather intelligence on the trends, if any, with respect to chemical drugs being used by rave partygoers.

As part of the investigation, Rintoul has attended more than 40 raves, at both indoor and outdoor venues, with capacities ranging from 400 people at an indoor rave to 7500 at an outdoor party.

News in Review would like to thank Scott Rintoul for his contribution for this issue of the summary below.

The origin of raves in the 1980s in Europe and the United Kingdom brought about the stereotypical definition of a rave as being a drug-saturated event. However, the evolution of raves is

beginning to change this stigma. Not all rave-goers participate in drug use. Security and first aid professionals are being hired by the more reputable promoters to limit the amount of drug entry into these events and to attend to emergency situations. The rave scene is new and evolving. Organized, safe environments with the absence of drugs are the only way to attempt to gain public approval and support of these events.

Still, drug use is of a major concern to police. Any drug, whether it is designer or other legal alternatives, has the potential to cause problems, accidents, and even death. Overdose is just the beginning; other recognized concerns are dehydration and driving while under the influence. The real danger of these designer drugs is the fact that users feel they are in control. Even with occasional or weekend use, users become addicted to the lifestyle. In 1999 there were 11 drug overdose deaths at raves in Canada. All victims were reported to have taken Ecstasy.

Drugs are sold and ingested without knowing exactly what the substance actually is. Ecstasy is not as benign as some make it out to be. Intelligence has uncovered that dealers knowingly sold PCP, MDA and DXM as Ecstasy to unsuspecting buyers. The results of the analysis of suspected Ecstasy (MDMA) has established that pure Ecstasy is not as abundant as rave-goers think it is. A closely related chemical drug known as MDA is just as prevalent as Ecstasy. MDA is similar to Ecstasy but the effects last longer. However, very few chemical drugs users even know what MDA is. Drug traffickers are trafficking chemical drugs in capsule or press tablet form as Ecstasy, however analysis indicates that they are either Ecstasy (24%), Ecstasy with side products (25%), Ecstasy and MDA (15%), MDA (10%), MDA with side products (23%) or other (3%). We also see a lot of methamphetamine. We very rarely see cocaine.

In B.C. we are seeing more and more DXM (dextromethorphan). DXM is not listed in Canada's drug laws so possession is legal. Chemists are mixing DXM with caffeine or methamphetamine and selling it in tablet form as Ecstasy. DXM is a synthetic non-narcotic producing narcotic effects: very similar to the effects of heroin but not as defined. The effects include euphoria, auditory and visual hallucinations, and loss of co-ordination. Many users liken the effects to that of LSD. A user experiences four plateaus depending on the dosage. These include slight intoxication, hallucination, strong intoxication and hallucination; and ultimately they reach a sub-anaesthetic phase.

In B.C. we have only ever had one seizure of Rohypnol. In January 1999 North Vancouver Drug Section executed a warrant at a residence with respect to a cocaine investigation. To their

surprise they found one million dollars and 4300 tablets of Rohypnol. The Rohypnol was in its original packaging and had been smuggled in from Mexico. There was no intelligence whatsoever that the Rohypnol was for the B.C. market, the Canadian, or even the U.S. market. Aside from the January 1999 seizure we have not had any other seizures nor have we had a positive test of Rohypnol being used in a sexual assault case. Some argue that Rohypnol is everywhere in clubs and at raves in B.C., but our information says otherwise. I have seized thousands of drugs from raves and we have never come across Rohypnol.

GHB, however, is prevalent. Last May I attended a presentation at St. Paul's hospital in Vancouver. It is the hospital that deals with most overdose drug cases in the region. The presentation was put on by emergency doctors for other emergency doctors. They said that aside from cocaine and heroin overdoses the next three drugs that are most worrisome are Ecstasy, GHB and DXM.

With respect to chemical labs, we see equal amounts of chemical drugs in tablet form or capsule form. The capsules indicate that there is a lab close by. In B.C., we went from eight chemical labs in 1998 to 19 labs in 1999. Last year a lab was taken down two hours from Vancouver that was in the process of making two million hits of Ecstasy.

Drugs are not the only problems that the police must worry about in regard to raves. More often than not, public complaints about raves deal with the noise generated at all hours of the morning, both from the music and crowds of people coming and going. Because indoor raves can attract on average between 1000 and 3500 people, parking becomes a problem in residential areas where many of the venues are located. Safe venues include wedding halls, banquet halls, cultural centres, and nightclubs. However, there are many less safe venues, include warehouses, old vacant buildings, and barns that do not have the ability to allow for emergency exits if needed.

Even though raves have made a concentrated effort to please the drug user under the influence, there are many positive aspects to raves as well. The music is of the highest quality with the best DJs being hired from around the world. This alone is an attraction for those just wanting to dance and have a good time without the involvement of drugs. In addition, the absence of alcohol creates a relaxed atmosphere and ultimately a lack of violence. In keeping with the rave culture ideal of PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect) violence is not tolerated.

## **Discussion**

1. What are some of the major concerns the police have with regard to raves? Aside from activities that are illegal under the Criminal Code of Canada or under local bylaws, in what ways are raves related to concerns about social order?
2. What do you think should be done to make raves safer?

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## Gotta Dance!

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

I have no desire to prove anything by dancing . . . I just dance.  
Fred Astaire, famous Hollywood actor and dancer

On with the dance! Let joy be unconfined;  
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet  
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet  
George Byron, English poet, from *Childe Harold III*. 22

This wondrous miracle did Love devise,  
For dancing is love s proper exercise.  
John Davies, English poet, from *Orchestra, or a Poem dancing*

Dance is the only art of which we ourselves are the stuff of which  
it is made.  
Ted Shawn, U.S. dancer and choreographer

What Is Dance? Why Do We Dance?  
Human beings demonstrate many curious behavioural patterns,  
and dance is, to put it simply, a human behaviour that is the  
rhythmic movement of the body. This common behaviour has,  
throughout the centuries, been accompanied by music and often  
drums. Dance has an enormous range, and there is an equally  
enormous number of reasons and motives why human beings  
feel the need to dance. Human dance has been recorded since  
the beginning of human history, and some have suggested that it

is our response to rhythms we sense in nature and all the world around us. Furthermore, sociologists and anthropologists have suggested that dance is the result of the same impulses that give rise to music; as such they are therefore closely related and naturally would go hand in hand, so to speak.

Human beings have danced in ritual ways as part of religious rites or to celebrate great events. Consider how sports players on the field dance, sometime alone, sometimes with their arms around each other, when they score a goal. Imagine the feelings that are being expressed in these kinds of dances. Humans also dance to pass the time, to entertain themselves. Dance is fun. Dance is often a significant part of mating rituals. Think about the high-school dances and the pair bonding that occurs at them. Consider the school prom with its King and Queen and how this very ritualistic dance either creates or confirms a social hierarchy, often reinforcing traditional gender roles in society. For many people, dancing is good therapy, a way to release pent-up emotions, a way to express oneself in a very physical way. Dancing is a stress releaser, unless of course you feel you obliged to dance to someone else's music.

Dancing is an individual activity and achievement but it is also done in groups. Dance is spontaneous emotion. Dance is exciting. Dance defies gravity; it is flight at low altitudes. A basketball player shown on video in slow motion moving down the dance floor is visual proof of the agility, grace, energy, and skill that human dancers demonstrate.

Dancing can be very class-oriented, reserved for only those who can afford the clothes, or it can be a democratizing agent. Dancing in the streets as opposed to the Grand Ballroom is as different as night and day and yet similar in many ways. Dance can tell a story: a fantasy world can be acted out with dying swans, charming princes, heroes and heroines galore. And then the music stops. Or sometimes the music (of the spheres) continues indefinitely like the planets, creating intricate, predictable, cosmic patterns.

Shall we dance?

### **Activity**

Brainstorm answers to the questions below and then suggest to what extent you think raves are really about dancing.

1. In 1000 BC King David danced all night before the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. This is one of the earliest known examples of ritual dance. Why was it a ritual dance? What other

ritual dances are you aware of?

2. In AD 774 Pope Zacharias forbade dancing. Why do you think dancing has been regarded as an illicit, even immoral, activity? Is this attitude still prevalent today?

3. In 1734 the dancer Maria Sallé adopted a see-through gauze tunic, a piece of clothing that was a precursor to the ballerina's tutu. In the same year Marie Camargo shortened her skirts. Why did they do this? How have clothes and fashion played a role in dancing? How are the two related even today?

4. In 1905, the innovative dancer Isadora Duncan appeared in Russia. Her anti-ballet, a free-form dance much less disciplined than classical ballet and derived from ancient Greek dances, caused quite a stir. In what ways have humans attempted to control dancing? How have they used dance to liberate themselves? Who are the truly innovative dancers of the last decade? What are the innovative and free-form or self-expressive dances of the last decade? In what ways can dance be a form of revolt?

5. In 1952, in the Hollywood movie, *Singin' in the Rain*, Gene Kelly happily danced (with an umbrella) in the street, in the rain! How or why would any sane person do this?

6. In 1968 Arthur Mitchell, the first black principal dancer with the New York City Ballet, founded his own company of dancers, the Dance Theatre of Harlem. How can dance be a political and sociological statement? In what ways can dance be the medium of expression and affirmation for minority groups?

7. In 1983 break dancing became very popular in the inner cities of North America. Later it spread beyond North America. What do you think this dance phenomenon was all about?

8. In 1995, Riverdance, a group composed of 72 dancers performing traditional Irish dancing, often in spectacular group precision, opened in London, England, and soon after became a hot item in North America. What do you think audiences responded to in this dance form?

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# News in Review

March 2000

## Drugs and Raves

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

Many ravers point out that drugs and raves are separate issues. Experience has shown, however, that when the two do come together, there is high risk and danger.

Many of the drugs used at raves have exotic but deceptively benign-sounding names such as Ecstasy, clarity, rookies, bidies, yellow sunshine and piña colada. The drugs themselves, however, are not innocuous. So far in Canada, 11 deaths have occurred because of these drugs. Although all of these drugs fall under the general catchphrase club drugs, chemically they fall into three very different groups.

On a sheet of paper, create a table with the headings: Drug Name, Other Names, Short-Term Effects, and Long-Term Effects. As you read the material below, make point-form summary notes in your table.

#### **Tranquilizers and Sedatives**

The most common drugs that fall into this group are GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and Rohypnol. The major drug that fits into this category is GHB, better known as G or liquid Ecstasy. It comes in both liquid and powder form. It is an extremely fast-acting depressant and can affect the central nervous system, causing sedative effects, within 10 to 30 minutes of taking the drug. If taken in small amounts it can lower anxiety and cause drowsiness. In larger quantities it can induce nausea, vomiting,

headaches, and may result in coma. It can slow the user's breathing and heart rate and is potentially very dangerous when combined with other depressants like alcohol. It has been linked to an increasing number of date-rape cases over the past few years.

Rohypnol, better known at raves as rookies, rophies, roche and forget-me pills, belongs to the same class of tranquilizers as Valium, Halcion and Xanax. It affects the area of the brain that is responsible for memory and can produce retrograde amnesia, a phenomenon where someone using the drug will not remember anything that occurred while under the drug's influence. Although Rohypnol is produced in pill form, it can be crushed and snorted. Since one cannot taste or smell this drug, it can be easily slipped into the drinks of unsuspecting club-goers. Some of the health risks associated with Rohypnol include a lowering of the user's blood pressure, gastrointestinal problems, urinary retention, and impaired vision. An overdose can lead to coma.

### **Psychedelic Stimulants**

The most common drug in this category is Ecstasy, which is also sometimes referred to as clarity, XTC, Adam or lover's speed. Ecstasy contains MDMA, a compound that mixes the effects of methamphetamines with the hallucinatory qualities of mescaline. Methamphetamines such as speed, uppers, crank, and crystal meth cause the heart to race, and increase blood pressure and the body's metabolism. Users of these drugs can become more talkative and feel a sense of exhilaration and euphoria. Conversely, users may also feel increased anxiety. Some of the other negative effects of methamphetamine use are an irregular heartbeat, chest pain, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The body can also overheat to fatal levels.

MDMA has many of the same effects on the body as methamphetamines. In addition, however, users can experience muscle seizures. Often users will experience jaw clenching as a result and will try to mitigate this effect by using an infant pacifier. Some of the long-term effects of the use of Ecstasy may be an increased risk of Parkinson's disease and serotonin depletion, which has been linked to depression and suicide.

Ecstasy is by far the most popular of all the club drugs, and the availability in Canada is increasing. The pills that sell for \$20 to \$40 each cost the dealers approximately \$10 and can be manufactured for 50 cents to \$3 a pill. Most of the drugs entering Canada are produced in labs in the Netherlands or Belgium and come through customs on tourist flights, or by express mail and freight shipments through countries such as France, Spain, and Germany, which are normally not associated with drug

shipments. In 1999, the RCMP seized 34 000 pills. In January 2000 alone, however, the RCMP successfully seized 110 000 pills at Pearson International Airport in Toronto with a street value of \$4.1-million. In addition, the police have discovered two small non-operating labs in storage units in the Toronto area. Production of the drug can be very dangerous. The chemicals involved are highly toxic and explosive, and experts are worried that there is a potential for serious accident if people with little or no experience dealing with these exceptionally volatile chemicals start producing Ecstasy using recipes found on the Internet.

### **Psychedelic Anaesthetics**

The most popular drug in this category is ketamine, otherwise known as Special K, K, vitamin K or cat valiums. It is sold legally to veterinarians as an anaesthetic and is similar to PCP (phencyclidine). At low doses, ketamine creates an effect similar to extreme drunkenness. It impairs judgement, attention, learning ability, and memory. It can cause panic, paranoia, and rage. With higher doses it can cause delirium, amnesia, increased blood pressure, and potentially fatal breathing problems.

### **Discussion**

1. If you go to any high school on the North Shore and you ask a Grade 10 student to find some Ecstasy, that student should be able to do it that afternoon. They just go to someone else in the school. The dealers are our kids. (RCMP Constable Shane Tuckey, in the June 17, 1999, issue of the Vancouver Sun). What are the implications of accessibility to such drugs? How can society control or restrict accessibility? Whose responsibility is it to limit the use of such drugs? How could this be accomplished?
2. Unfortunately, the image of drugs has been attached to the rave scene for years. Drugs are out there, at high school dances, local bars and nightclubs but, for raves, they seem to be the only issue . . . the media can find to grab a story line. The bottom line is that we do everything in our power to keep (drugs) out. (Ryan Kruger, rave company owner, quoted in The Toronto Star, July 14, 1998). Many ravers, like Kruger, maintain that the scene is not about drugs at all and that the media have overstated the prevalence of drugs in the rave culture. Do you agree or disagree?

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# News in Review

March 2000

## Culture, Commerce, and the Teenage Market

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

Teenagers represent one of the fastest growing and most powerful consumer groups in society today. More and more this group has the money, the consumer tastes, and marketing savvy to be taken very seriously by marketers. Because they have the money, they are spending at record levels. According to market researchers, there are two separate marketing target groups of teenagers: the nine- to 14-year-old group known as tweens and the 15- to 19-year-old teens. These two distinctive groups have a significant influence on the marketplace.

#### **Tween Merchandising**

There are 2.4 million tweens in Canada, according to a Creative Research International Inc. survey commissioned by YTV. This group will spend approximately \$1.5-billion in the next year. Each will spend on average \$137 per year for back-to-school clothing. Seventeen per cent have ATM bank cards. Sixty-seven per cent have access to the Internet; this group is even more wired than older teenagers since tweens have earlier curfews and will often surf the Net rather than go out. The buying habits of tweens break down according to gender, with 20 per cent of boys spending their allowances on video games (compared with three per cent of girls) and females spending more money on CDs of their favourite bands. Tweens are the main reason that Pokémon has sold over 11 million copies since the Japanese video game was introduced two and a half years ago. They are the reason that Pokémon spin-off merchandise has earned \$6-billion in

sales. Pop stars like the Spice Girls, The Backstreet Boys, 98 Degrees, The Moffatts, Take 5, and Brittany Spears have become global sensations mainly as a result of the buying power of this demographic group. According to Environics Research, the number-one aspiration of this group is to be older, and marketers like to capitalize on this desire. When asked, the average tween wants to be 18 years old, and advertisers, knowing this, will market products that will make tweens feel older and more sophisticated.

### **Teen Marketing Trends**

The average teen also would like to be considered older. When polled, this group generally said that they wanted to be 20 years old. There are 1.7 million people in this demographic group in Canada, and they were responsible for spending an astonishing \$12-billion last year. They spend a majority of their money on clothes, music, entertainment, and food. In addition to spending their own money they have a great influence on family purchases such as computer systems and entertainment units. One characteristic that differentiates teens today from teens in the 1970s and 1980s is the number of different sub-groups or cliques found in teen culture. In previous decades one could usually split most teens into three groups: the so-called jocks, rockers, and preps. Today, there are at least a dozen different groups. Each group is defined by its fashions and music. Ravers wear labels such as Snug, Fiction, and Porn Star and listen to techno groups while, for example, Boarders listen to Korn and wear T-shirts from their favourite punk band. Marketers, therefore, find it difficult to identify one single teen culture. As Chris Staples, creative director of the Vancouver-based advertising firm Palmer Jarvis DDB, told Maclean's magazine (March 22, 1999), The Pepsi Generation has splintered into 100 subsets. One thing that unites most teens is the importance of clothes. An Environics poll found that 66 per cent of teens cared a lot that their clothes were in style, while 74 per cent stated that they always choose their clothes with great care.

With less than half of teenagers working in part-time jobs, many wonder where all the money is coming from. Most of the \$12-billion comes from other family members. The average family is becoming smaller, with a Canadian average of 1.7 children each, and therefore the family income can be divided into larger chunks. Some teens experience the six-pocket phenomenon; they receive money from their parents, step-parents, and grandparents. An average teenager has a disposable income of approximately \$500 a month, according to Gary Butler of Youth Culture Inc. Marketers are finding tweens and teens have a lot of advertising savvy and are often cynical about marketing.

Advertisers keep looking for new ways to reach this very lucrative market.

### **Discussion**

1. How many different groups can you identify in your school? How do musical tastes and fashion differ from group to group? What would you say the marketing potential is of each group?
2. How much does the average tween spend a year? You can calculate this number by taking the total amount spent by this group each year and dividing it by the number of tweens in Canada. Compare this amount with the average amount spent by teens each year. How much do teens spend a month? A week? Based on your first-hand knowledge of tween and teen spending, do these amounts seem realistic?
3. Look up the word demographics in the dictionary. What does it mean? Why are there more teenagers today than in the 1980s? Why do you think market researchers are concerned about demographics?
4. Teenagers today volunteer to a greater extent than teenagers in the past and are more multicultural than any other generation. Many teenagers across Canada do not have the economic means to spend a lot of money on clothes, music, and entertainment. How do teenagers who do not fall into the demographic profile of the buying teen market group deal with the commercial depiction of teenagers as a whole?
5. Youth News Network is an organization that for the last decade has been attempting to sign up schools across Canada to receive daily newscasts that contain commercials in exchange for free equipment. Critics of YNN say that it has nothing to do with news or education but is an attempt to reach this marketing target group, which in the past has been inaccessible, directly through schools. They claim that no school or school board has the right to sell its students as a captive audience to commercial advertisers and that advertising has no place in the classroom. Find out if your school has been approached by YNN. Does commercial advertising exist in your school already? Have you been turned into a captive market in your school? To what extent do you think you have been targeted for commercial purposes in society as a whole?
6. Marketing has a lot to do with peer culture and peer influence. What are the marketing implications of the rave phenomenon?

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## Discussion, Research, and Essay Questions

### Raves: Dancing the Night Away

1. Twenty-two-year-old Mississauga DJ Eternal, was quoted in The Toronto Star as saying, Every generation knows that music is an essential part of the growth of young people and is a universal language, a manner of sharing cultures. Interview someone you know from a different generation (this could even be someone 10 years older than yourself) and ask them to share their stories about the importance of music in their teens. What music did they listen to? What memories does this music evoke in them when they hear it again? Do you notice any similarities in their experiences to your own? What are the connections between popular music and drugs? Between popular music and marketing? Report your findings to the class.

2. Research and write a paper on one of the following drugs: MDMA, MDA, Rohypnol, GHB, ketamine, phencyclidine, or mescaline. What is the chemical make-up of the drug? How does the drug affect the user? What are some of the dangers associated with the drug? What are the long-term health effects of using this drug?

3. Many people compare the current rave scene to the hippie movement of the 1960s. Research the major characteristics of each movement and prepare a debate, either arguing for or against the validity of this comparison. When preparing your debate, you might want to study events in the two major centres of the hippie movement in Canada: Vancouver's Kitsilano scene and Toronto's Yorkville scene (including the infamous Rochdale College).

4. According to market researchers, teenagers today have more money to spend than teenagers from previous generations. Calculate the amount of money you spend each month on items such as clothing, music, entertainment, and food. How much do you spend? Is it close to the reported figure of what the average teenager is spending in Canada?
5. There are many different ways of creating community in society other than raves. Brainstorm with your class what some of these are. Start a class project to help create a feeling of community within your school or town.
6. Philosophy is the use of reason and argument to find truth and knowledge. It is also a system or set of beliefs or a particular branch of knowledge. How would you characterize the philosophy of the rave culture?
7. In literature, art, and folktales the night can often represent the unknown, the mysterious, and the forbidden. What do you think is the importance of the all-night aspect of raves?
8. Raves are not the only social events at which people's senses become overwhelmed. Can you think of others? What is the effect of such sensory overload? If, by overwhelming the senses, one shuts out something bad to what extent might you also shut out something good?
9. Research and write a short paper titled *The Neurology of Raves*.
10. The word rave has many connotations and shades of meanings. It is a verb, an adjective, and a noun. Use each of the following synonyms for rave in a sentence that shows clearly what the word can mean. Verbs: babble, bluster, harangue, rage, ramble, rant, roar, splutter; Adjectives: ecstatic, enthusiastic, excellent, fantastic, wonderful.

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