



Transforming Youth Leisure in Late Modernity: Consequence of Ravers

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Abstract

Youth are the global leader of tomorrow. In India almost half of the total populations are youth and recently India has framed new Youth Policy at 2013. At the other hand the number of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 (as per UN recommendations) is 1.1 billion; youth constitute 18 percent of the global population. Youth and children together, including all those aged 24 years and younger, account for nearly 40 percent of the world's population. These age groups are basically sensitive and vibrant in nature. The studies of their nature, culture & social consequences are having different dimensions and values. In this context the present article will be enlightening one of the most viable youth activities called rave culture and its consequence. Eventually the article will have a discussion on rave and India. The study is basically base on review of several books and news. The focus of the present study is to analyzing rave culture and brings out the risk factors. Although the article will demonstrate the relationship of rave with drug consumptions. The study on this area need to be elaborate to understand the view of youth in late modernity and to develop a holistic spiritual approach towards empower the youth.

Keywords: youth culture, leisure, rave, Ecstasy, clubbing, lifestyle.

Overview: The ways in which young people spend their free time, their cultural tastes, the styles they develop and the visible differences between them and the previous generation frequently make media headlines. Such headlines are rarely positive; young people's activities are frequently portrayed as distasteful, dangerous or threatening and as signaling a decline in moral standards. 'Evidence' relating to the activities of young people is used to press for legislative change in a range of policy areas, to increase surveillance of youth and to justify the imposition of new restrictions on their activities.

The widespread use by youth and young adults of global communication and information technology has led social scientists to re-conceptualize traditional categories of youth leisure', as contrasted with study and/or employment, in ways which now overlap and merge. Older generations' definitions of what constitutes 'leisure' must also be rethought. For example, young people's 'spare' time may be perceived by parents as 'lost' or 'wasted' if it consists of 'hanging out' with friends apparently 'doing nothing' rather than 'constructive' or organized leisure activities. But their teenage children may use impulsive 'time out' to relax and maintain social relationships or to withdraw and make sense and meaning of the barrage of sensations and information which daily bombard their lives, and to develop their own sense of independence and identity (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson 2001). Research shows youth find their own physical, psychological and digital spaces in which 'leisure' becomes a 'fluid' concept. The shifting kaleidoscope of leisure activities, fashion trends and 'must have' possessions in the digital age takes different forms for different age groups as youth and young adults move from family dependence to independence. Potentially harmful and/or illegal risk-taking for 'under-age' youth, such as drug and alcohol abuse, cigarette smoking, unsafe sex, and gambling are prevalent teenage 'leisure' behaviours. In this context the significance of rave culture has been increasing among youth.

Origin of Rave Culture: Since the late 1980s various youth sub-cultures have emerged around the world associated with music, dance, Countercultural lifestyles and alternate forms of spirituality. One of the more intriguing subcultures is associated with what is called “raves culture” or “doofing”. Rave culture involves youth from various socio-economic backgrounds participating in all-night dance parties characterised by electronic musical styles known as “psi”, “trance”, “house” and so on. The term “doofing” refers to the repetitive drum-beat that sounds like doof, doof, doof.

There are two forms of rave culture: commercial and underground. The original form of doofing began as an underground youth subculture in 1988 in England, which quickly spread throughout Europe, Australia and North America. As the underground activities began to attract substantial numbers of youth, some savvy entrepreneurs developed a commercial partly “mainstream” form of dance parties.

However, the underground style persists and continues to attract large numbers of youth. For example, the investigative journalist programme “Four Corners” estimated that every weekend there are at least 100,000 youths participating in rave parties in Australia. While the annual **Burning Man** (yearly festival of America) event in America likewise attracts enormous crowds of people out in to the desert landscape. Other major events have taken place in Goa in India, and on the famous resort island of Ibiza.

Rave culture and the Arrival of Ecstasy:

But not only are the 1980s and 1990s linked with the growth of alternative political movements, we also see the ‘arrival’ of the rave. Its history has been well documented (see Critcher 2000), showing how ‘acid house’ music, combined with ecstasy, created a new youth cultural phenomenon that became known as ‘rave culture’. Ecstasy, containing a substance called “MDMA,” was and still is the most common drug at dance events. Introduced already in the time of the First World War, partly used in the Nicaraguan War and redeveloped by Alexander Shulgin in the 1960s, Ecstasy became later associated with the dance music environment.

In the contemporary dance music scene, “it acts as both party-igniting fun-fuel and the catalyst for ego-melting mass communion” (Reynolds, 1999). Underground music from the USA, and new styles of record mixing, transformed not only the music industry but also dance culture. Ecstasy became known as the new ‘recreational drug’ having a close association with particular dance and music. This created a music industry that aimed to construct a total experience, drawing on the needs and wants of ecstasy users. Venues and producers created lighting and sound systems that played on the pleasure-seeking sensations of the drug experience. Ecstasy increased the sense of community and sociability where dancing, rather than romance, was to become the major pleasure. A whole new industry and lifestyle emerged that replaced the individualism of Thatcherism with a collective sense of being (Hill 2002), while also celebrating hedonism and pleasure-seeking as core values to youth culture (Collin and Godfrey 1997). Rave was a hugely popular activity amongst the young, being seen as the second coming of the ‘summer of love’ (Osgerby 1998). In its early years, the rave was perceived as representing an ‘enemy within’ that needed close attention and regulation (Hill 2002a), but major difficulties existed in control.

As parties in abandoned warehouses became larger, and more people became involved, the police struggled to control them. Once a party was happening, the best the police could do was turn new people away. A number of large-scale events were organized by new entrepreneurs who exploited this principle, ensuring that the illegal event was unstoppable if organized quickly

The Rise of Clubbing:

By the middle of the 1990s, attention had shifted from illegal raves to the growth of legal clubbing venues. After the Second World War, nightclubs had become important venues for the young, but in the 1990s major changes started to take place in these structures. Instead of being venues for late-night drinking and sexual encounters, they became venues that catered for rave culture, alternative music and the taking of ecstasy. This became big business and, by 1996, it was thought the industry was worth over £2 billion, with every large city seeing the expansion of new clubs (Malbon 1999). Clubbing became an urban pastime that attracted large sections of the youth population. For example, Mintel (1996) suggested that over 42 per cent of young people went clubbing, or to a discothe`que, at least once a month – an increase of 9 per cent over five years (Malbon 1999a). Clubbing as a route into sexual relationships was seen as low priority, especially among girls (Henderson 1997), and involvement was more about enjoying the atmosphere of latenight dancing and music (Release 1997).

Clubbing was closely associated with ecstasy, being tied into the 'oceanic experience' of the night out, giving value and meaning to a seemingly meaningless activity (Malbon 1999b). The club scene grew at a fast pace with between 400 and 500 venues available in and around London, while cities such as Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds used local clubs within cultural districts, seeing it as an important aspect of economic, as well as social, regeneration. But clubbing also became an international phenomenon, with clubbing holidays to places such as Ibiza, Goa and the Caribbean being seen as an extension of the new cultural lifestyle associated with dancing (Malbon 1999c).

Indian Context of Rave Culture:

Let us begin with some incident of rave activities to understand the scenario across India. More than 300 youngsters of the age group 20-25 years were rounded up in a police raid in a rave party at a hotel in Maharashtra. In another incident in a Chennai suburb, seven people were arrested including six Nepali citizens for hosting a rave party in the wee hours of the night. The police have also claimed to have rescued nine women of Nagaland and Assam from the place. One of them who posed as an employment agent is being suspected to be running a prostitution racket.

Occurrences such as these have become commonplace in newspapers today. In this stressful, hectic, demanding, multitasking era, partying has become a necessity especially among the youth to temporarily escape reality and lose oneself within the comforts of dance, music, drinks and friends. Recently, a new form of partying has entered the lexicon of Indian culture called 'Rave Party'. A rave is an electronic music dance party that lasts all night. It can feature performances from DJs or live music performers. Raves usually take place in dark rooms filled with laser lights, strobes at clandestine locations including warehouses, nightclubs, and farm fields. Law enforcement agencies suspect a lot of drugs, including Ecstasy, which do the rounds at a rave. These parties first became popular in Great Britain back in the late 1980s. Moral policing apart, it's the drug bit that's perhaps the most disquieting.

In India, Goa was the first to receive the rave party culture introduced by the Hippies. The nightlife of Goa is a major attraction for tourists and the beaches are a hotspot for organizing parties. These parties are sometimes termed 'trance parties'. The rave culture has spread like wild fire to almost all parts of the country including the small districts and towns.

Though rave culture is not synonymous with drug abuse and alcoholism but there is rampant drug peddling especially by foreigners. And the business is flourishing. It is a difficult task to monitor drug peddling and as a result over the past few years many urban middle class youngsters have taken to harmful substances called 'club drugs' including Ecstasy, gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB), ketamine, and Rohypnol which are said to enhance energy, endurance, confidence, sociability and sexual arousal. Each of these drugs has different psychological and physiological consequences due to its inherent properties. The effects of these drugs range from relatively minor disorders like hypertension, agitation, anxiety, nausea, confusion to major problems like coma with abrupt awakening and violence, schizophrenic symptoms, liver toxicity, catatonia and even death. One of these drugs, Rohypnol also known as the 'date rape drug' is a sedative which is colourless, tasteless and easily dissolvable thereby effortlessly allowing the perpetrator to slip it into the victim's beverage. Several instances of rape and sexual molestation go unawares due to the victim's inability to remember details and the subsequent lack of proof.

In India, little attempt has been made to successfully conduct analysis about rave parties and the nitty-gritties in them, however, it has been seen that it is primarily the neo-rich middle class youth that is taking to this mode of partying. The common assumption that such a culture is restricted to urban areas is highly flawed since there has been a growing trend of raves in small cities and towns over the last few years. The age of youngsters attending rave parties is coming down and instances of rape, substance abuse, drug peddling, drunken driving leading to accidental deaths is growing with each passing year. Peer pressure is one of the biggest reasons why teenagers are falling into this abyss of drinks, drugs and sex. In a recent episode, the son of a famous Bollywood star was arrested after a police raid at a rave party. Such events instead of deterring essentially end up glorifying the rave culture.

While there is no moral judgment involved in the ethos of partying, clubbing or enjoying life the way one wants to, it is always wise to be aware of what one is signing up for and not be ultimately caught up in an inextricable mesh and fall prey to inebriation, drug peddling and unwanted or forced sexual encounters from which there may be no way back.

Conclusion: In the late 1980s and early 1990s, rave culture represented a significant subcultural phenomenon in Britain. Since young people were the prime movers of rave culture, older generations often viewed it as resistant and offensive. Nevertheless, apart from the undeniable countercultural aspects in the form of drugs, illegal warehouse and outdoor parties, raving also brought energy and sense of meaning to the lives of many young people after a week of monotonous drudgery. For example, the aforementioned “**PLUR**” ethos of rave culture, standing for peace, love, unity and respect, further illustrates that one does not have to be too much sceptical about the nature of raving. Rave culture is very much based on the “raving” community that is made up by friends. They embrace a rage to live and look for the escape from the everyday stereotypes.

In addition, rave culture may pride itself on a vital contribution to the world of electronic dance music. Many contemporary music genres, not only in Britain, have come from a whole once called “rave.” Today, the scene is extremely diverse, but the original genres of house and techno, although highly modified, still take up the running.

The dark side of rave culture is, of course, represented by drugs. Clubs, parties and festivals are unthinkable without taking pills. The principal drug associated with the rave scene is Ecstasy. It is frequently called the “social drug,” as it contributes to the feelings of empathy and unison on the dance floor.

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