

Conflict over Raves in the U.S.: A Case Study of Chicago

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The Princeton University Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies is conducting an investigation into the issues surrounding current and recent conflicts over rave music in the U.S. The project is part of larger study of contemporary conflict over art and culture which is supported by a grant to the Center by the Rockefeller Foundation.

In recent years, public officials, law enforcement, parents, community members, club owners, disk jockeys, and ravers have been engaged in a debate over whether or not the government should regulate night dance parties that feature electronic music. Much of the debate has taken place at the city level, with municipalities such as New York, New Orleans, and Tampa having either passed “anti-rave” ordinances or considered similar measures. Parallel legislation has also started to emerge at the state and federal levels with the aim of imposing restrictions and criminal penalties on rave clubs and promoters. In Chicago, the conflict led notably to two recent ordinances. The first (May 2000), required party promoters to obtain an amusement license or be liable to a fine of up to \$10,000 (Municipal Code section 4-156-300). The second (March 2001), added that managers and property owners could be imprisoned for up to 6 months if controlled substances were found on the premises (Municipal Code chapter 7-24, article II-A). The Chicago conflict will serve as the principal case study for the research.

In order to get a full and balanced perspective on the origins of the conflict, the nature of the debate, and the range of perspectives, researchers interviewed 33 Chicago participants on all sides of the issue. The interview data is being combined with newspaper accounts in order to draw a picture of how and why the conflict unfolded in the manner that it did.