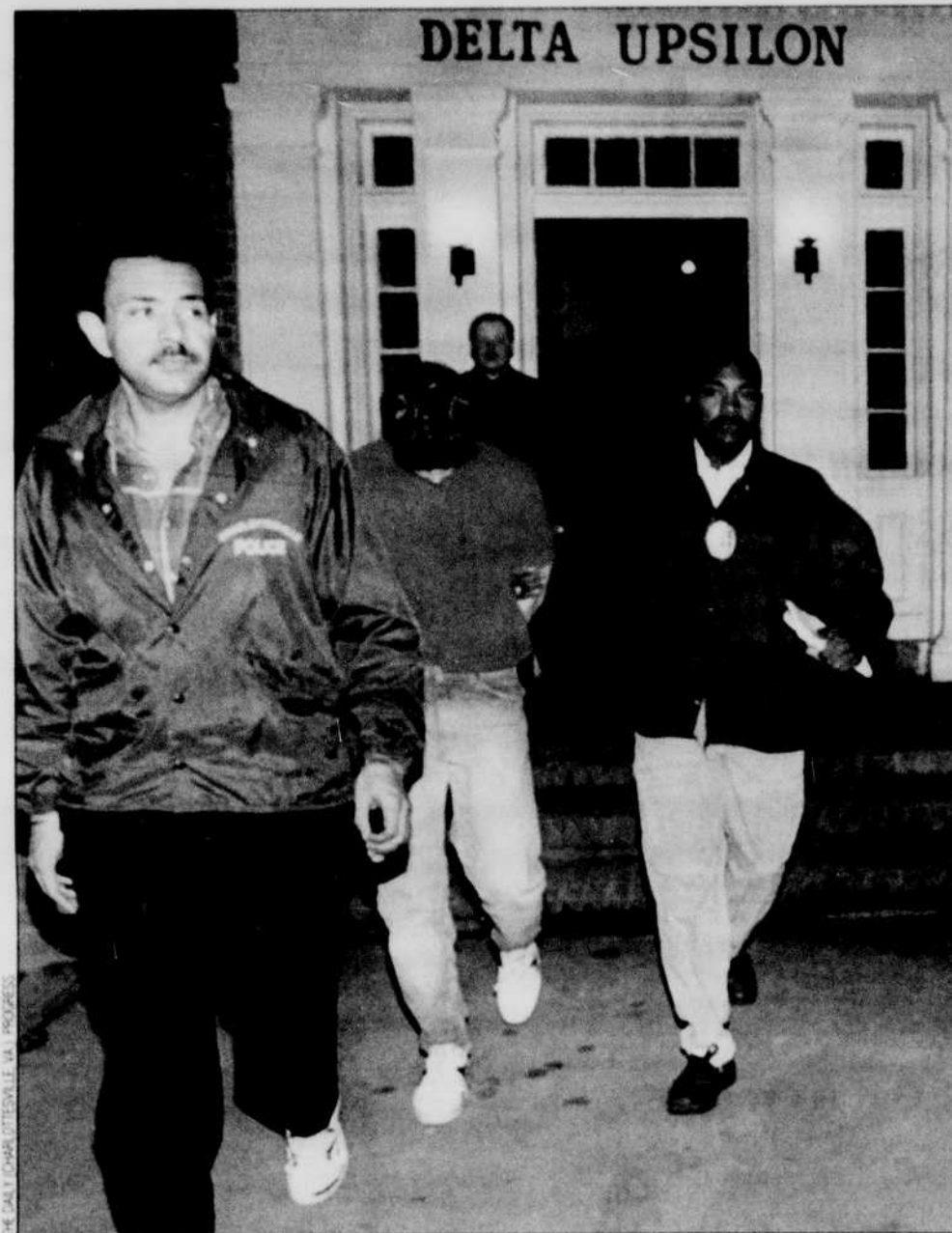


"Any major college or university that says it doesn't exist isn't telling the truth"

— Lt. Jack Handley, Florida State U.



Police arrested 14 students in a drug raid in March 1991 at the U. of Virginia's fraternity row.

Some names have been changed or withheld at the request of the individuals.

Adam remembers the happiness, the kaleidoscopic swirls, the sensation of being a part of everything. Jen remembers the misery, heaving for seven hours into a toilet bowl she believed would eat her alive.

They are not the rule. Nor can they be ruled out.

Almost 10 percent of all college students have taken LSD, and one in two students will take some kind of illegal drug before graduation. Jen, a junior at Michigan State U., has dropped acid five times. Adam, a student at the State U. of New York, Stony Brook, has done it dozens of times. Statistically, 150,000 students reading this can relate to using acid. Whether drug use starts out at a party or ends up replacing books, it has become a prevalent part of

higher education.

Josh knows that all too well. As a junior at Michigan State U., he has used marijuana, LSD and ecstasy — a methamphetamine that produces a state of euphoria. As a dealer who earns an average of \$200 to \$250 a week, it's his job to know the market.

"I sell mostly weed and acid," he says. "Mostly, I do it for the money.... It's good, and it's relatively safe. It's simply supply and demand. People want it. If they won't get it from me, they'll get it from somewhere else. If I can do a service, why shouldn't I make some money?"

The market for heavier drugs like cocaine and heroin is too dangerous and too scarce, Josh says. "[The police] really try to go after the folks selling the harder stuff. But they mostly leave alone weed and acid folks, unless they're obvious. Only stupid dealers get busted."

Sometimes, The U. of Virginia's fraternity row was the site of a massive drug raid in March 1991. Forty-

seven federal, state and county narcotics agents raided three fraternities, charging 14 students with possession and intent to distribute ecstasy, marijuana, amphetamines, LSD and cocaine. Street value of all the drugs was estimated to be less than \$500.

But the national media attention that this operation brought to Virginia prompted a lengthy debate about drug testing and substance abuse on campus.

The raid made its point. Drugs were not just a thing of the '60s and '70s. Although the numbers may be decreasing, college students still are sniffing, smoking and swallowing mind-altering substances in relatively large amounts.

"It does exist, no doubt about it," says Lt. Jack Handley, of Florida State U.'s campus force. "Any major college or university that says it doesn't exist isn't telling the truth."

Brooke, a student at Boston U., says there is an easily accessible network through which students can procure virtually any type of mind-altering drug. Dealers on her campus abound, she says. "There are definitely enough dealers to supply 20,000 kids with what they want."

Steve, a sophomore at the U. of California, Davis, was one of these providers. As a regular user of acid, pot, mushrooms and nitrous as well as crack and cocaine, Steve supported the habits of others in order to support his own. "I dealt whatever I was using at the time," he says. "It was a way of making it pay for itself."

And police hope dealers like Steve and Josh will provide them with what they want as well. Most major universities have young undercover officers who pose as students and move about the campus looking for a law enforcement fix. Undercover police officers at the U. of Rhode Island found more than a fix last December. The Theta Chi fraternity was banned from campus after the president, Michael Ragosta, was charged with delivering marijuana. Ragosta allegedly sold a total of 5 ounces of marijuana on five different occasions to undercover officers. Other members of the house were apparently cognizant of the drug dealing.

Lt. Karl Swenson, an officer at Colorado U.'s police department, says many students come to campus with pipelines and connections. Most students maintain drug connections from their hometown. To fight this flight of marijuana and cocaine into their territory, Colorado's police work with neighboring universities and police to stop the threat at its source.

Sometimes that's not so easy. At the U. of Kansas, officer Burdel Welsh says most signs of narcotics are underground.

Students don't advertise their habits, but they have them. Welsh says police usually discover marijuana, pipes or cocaine as part of routine traffic stops. The few tips they do get come from people turning in their roommates.

Besides the plants and white powder, police report mushrooms competing for popularity with a trendy resurgence of LSD and ecstasy. "Back in the seventies, they were saying students did it for a mind-altering experience," Welsh says. "Today they do it because it's cheap."

Shrooming is quite popular among students not only for economic reasons, but also because they consider it a natural high. Brooke says her experiences with shrooms was intense. "It was phenomenal," she says.

She has less flattering referrals for LSD,

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which she tried for the first time at the age of 15. "It was the worst experience of my life." Yet that nightmare did not deter Brooke from giving LSD another chance while at Boston U. That experience, she says, was "a great hit."

This discrepancy between the trips is responsible for the varied reports on LSD. Because of the recent resurgence of these hallucinogens, most students are unaware of the possible side effects. Dr. Henry Abraham of St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Boston has studied the effects of drugs on the nervous system for 28 years. He says taking LSD is "like playing Russian roulette with your brains."

"Taking LSD is different for different people," he says. "Some people swear by it, some swear at it. Some take it and say it's a party, but others can take it and develop a series of life-long disabilities."

If a person is susceptible to LSD's adverse effects — and there is no way to check for susceptibility — even one bad trip could lead to visual disturbances and psychotic disorders in

It may take criminal charges to reform some drug users, but most students are undaunted by the threat of arrest. Perhaps it is youth, but the confidence that they will not get caught and the flippant attitude toward the law persists. Brooke says she never worried about arrest while under the influence of hallucinogens. "They can't prove that you're fucked up."

She is more careful about marijuana. "You

"In general, it seems that social norms are changing in relation to drugs."

— Patrick O'Malley, researcher

can always get busted with weed — a bag, papers, bowl — there is always residue."

Even this sort of drug etiquette hasn't decreased substantially the prevalence of drugs. The numbers, though declining,

Some believe these decreases, however slight, represent a change in societal acceptance of illicit drug use. Though college campuses traditionally have been the last bastions for liberalism, the drug war finally may have had an effect on student attitudes.

"In general, it seems that social norms are changing in relation to drugs," says Patrick O'Malley, a research scientist at Michigan. "It is becoming less of a thing to do. It reached a peak in the early eighties and is on the [decline]."

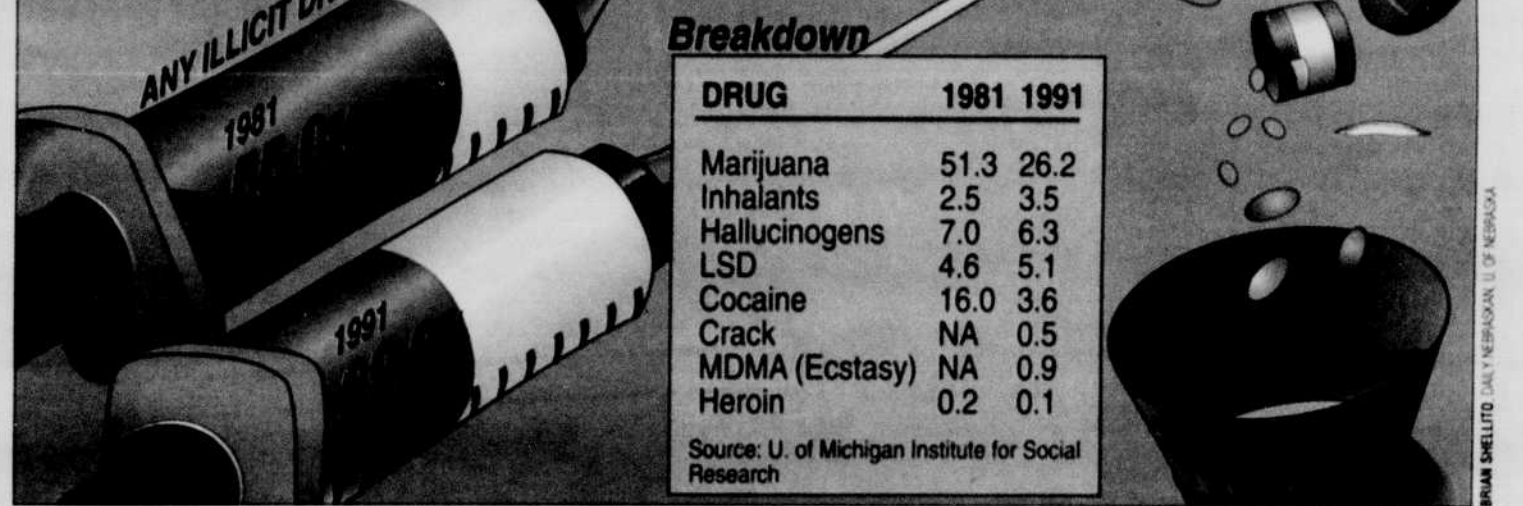
The decline can be attributed to increased education and changing attitudes toward drugs, says Henry Wechsler, a lecturer at Harvard U. who has studied narcotics use. That perceived risk concerning drugs has decreased popularity among college students.

Tom, a junior at Northern Arizona U., stopped using drugs after he saw an old roommate try cocaine and drop out of school two days later after becoming addicted.

"The way I see it, there's a definite line that's

Trends in drug use

Among college students one to four years beyond high school. Figures are in percents which reflect who used in the last 12 months.



a person's life, Abraham says.

Brenda, a senior at the U. of California, Los Angeles, smokes pot occasionally "because I have a fine time with weed." But she steers clear of harder drugs because of the consequences.

Mind-altering drugs are a thing of the past for Brooke for that very same reason. She has dabbled in virtually every type of illicit drug, including LSD, mescaline, mushrooms and cocaine. Those days are over. "It's like Russian roulette, a great high or you die," she says, echoing Abraham. "It's not worth the risk."

But drugs, in whatever form, continue to taint the police blotters. Pennsylvania State U. investigator Ron Schreffler says cocaine use has dropped off in the past few years. At one time it was more prevalent and less expensive than marijuana on his turf.

"We have groups that think there's nothing wrong with it," he says. "But once we catch them and they go through the legal system, they may change their minds."

remain high, and people like Brooke, Jen and Adam are still statistics on the U. of Michigan's Institute for Social Research annual survey on nationwide drug use. The 1991 survey shows

"There are definitely enough dealers to supply 20,000 kids with what they want."

— Brooke, a user

use of all drugs has dropped during the last few years. Only LSD use has stayed constant and, in some cases, increased. Marijuana use, on the other hand, remains the most popular illegal pastime. In 1991, 46.3 percent of college students admitted to trying marijuana. The same survey revealed that 9.6 percent had tried LSD, 9.4 percent dabbled in cocaine and 2 percent had used ecstasy.

crossed between pot and everything else," he says. "I haven't smoked pot in almost a year. I stopped because it wasn't a new experience for me anymore."

For some, it is simply the new experience they are seeking. Many find themselves unable to get enough of that experience; others will dislike the effects drugs have on them. Whatever the impetus to use drugs or the outcome of experimentation, the fact remains that college students continue to do them.

"Kids are spending their parents' money getting high. It's not worth it," Brooke says. "But if you want it, you can get it."

Sometimes even those who do get it decide it's not really for them. "I used so often and so much that it lost its novelty," Steve says. "I just figured it was time to get serious about school."

Jason Snell, U. of California, Berkeley, contributed to this article.

By Bill Frischling and Jeff L. Kart, *The State News*, Michigan State U.