

The Effects of Rhetoric and the Rhetoric of Effects

Past, Present, Future

Edited by
Amos Kiewe and Davis W. Houck



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On the Dance of Rhetoric

Ethnography, Embodiment, and Effect

AARON HESS

As seen throughout this volume, the nature of effect can be understood in a variety of ways. One troubling aspect of any discussion of effect is that it necessarily conjures *cause* as its preceding element. Yet, to establish rhetorical cause and effect is remarkably difficult, especially since the number of factors that go into the construction of a message, presumably constituting “cause,” is remarkably difficult to ascertain. Similarly, establishing a connection between one specific cause and the effect of persuasion or identification is equally difficult, as discussed in the Introduction to this book. The ability to recognize specific causes and specific effects is hampered by time and memory, both of which arguably interfere with the recognition of the “true” cause or effect, if such a thing exists. This essay offers an exploratory approach to interpreting cause and effect. Like many, I am hesitant to witness messages constructed in laboratories, preferring instead those messages constructed in their contexts and witnessed firsthand. Ethnography provides an insightful approach to understanding this problem of effects that potentially overcomes many of the epistemological concerns regarding effects (and cause, for that matter). Direct witnessing of messages and immediate inquiry into audiences allow the critic to comprehend the complex relationship among time, space, and speaking. This is especially true in the case of vernacular rhetoric,¹ which is under investigation here. Gerard Hauser calls this form of rhetoric a “performance of jazz—free-form ensemble call and response.”² In this free form of exchange, speaker and audience, advocate and opponent, and cause and effect become intertwined in ways that are difficult to recognize from a textual perspective. The interplay of discourse and appreciation of effect becomes wrapped up in the space and time of speech, requiring cognizance and presence from the critic. As Gerard Hauser puts it, “Local storefronts, gatherings in neighborhood shops, uses made of local parks and plazas, neighborhood and church festivals, and the like are beseechments to an attitude.”³ Rhetorical inquiry into these places and the effect of the discourses found therein requires an attention to the active production of discourse.

As such, in this essay, I offer a way of witnessing the contextual nature of rhetorical message construction through a participatory approach. In this manner, I analyze and evaluate the causes and effects of a message through ethnography and the direct performance of rhetoric. This level of engagement teases out notions of cause and effect as varied and complex and tied up in the agency of both speaker and audience. Vernacular rhetoric and advocacy, as Hauser puts it, “moved beyond the podium to the streets where the micro-practices of moment-by-moment interactions contribute not only to the organic character of the culture but become a significant source of rhetorically salient meaning and influence.”⁴ Ethnography offers the means to such an endeavor, especially through participant observation and interview methods. Interviews of speakers and audiences in the context of speaking can illustrate the thread that links message preparation, delivery, and reception, all of which are wrapped up in the microconstructions of rhetorical culture. Moreover, the active participation in message construction affords rhetorical scholars a reflexive opportunity of personal engagement. Effects, then, can be recognized and analyzed both through the interaction with speaker and audience and through self-reflexive means during an ethnographic project.

Vernacular Rhetoric and its Effects

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While several essays in this volume discuss the notion of effects as drawn from larger discourses, my approach appears through vernacular and critical rhetoric. Many elements of critical rhetoric inform this project, but three features are worth mentioning here. First, Raymie McKerrow’s offering of critical rhetoric foregrounds the performative elements of rhetoric, seeing praxis as a primary drive of the rhetorical critic.⁵ Similarly, critical-rhetorical ethnography engages at the level of praxis, meaning that the process of rhetoric is inherent to the project. Second, Michael C. McGee argues that scholars of critical rhetoric are active in the invention of discourses suitable for critical examination, pulling the fragments of discourses together to form a text.⁶ Placing critics squarely within invention invites participation in rhetoric, at both the macro and the micro levels. This movement of placing critics within the location of speaking mirrors similar approaches in critical discourse analysis.⁷ Finally, and central to the debate about the function and position of discourse, arguments regarding the materialist function of rhetoric situate critical-rhetorical ethnography as affecting social reality. Dana Cloud believes that “to argue for the materiality of discourse is part and parcel of the poststructuralist shift toward discourse theory.”⁸ She reminds us that rhetoricians must examine the material functions of discourse and reject arguments that label everything as discursive: “To say that hunger and war are rhetorical is to state the obvious; to state that rhetoric is *all* they are is to leave critique behind.”⁹ In Ronald Greene’s follow up on “another” materialist rhetoric, he pushes rhetoricians to examine the governing institutions and their function upon the populace: “When a materialist rhetoric

recognizes the interaction between rhetorical forms and institutional forms it resists being limited to a rhetorical politics of subjectivity.”¹⁰ These three elements of critical rhetoric, taken together, mesh within critical-rhetorical ethnographers and invite examination of the effects and locations *as they affect* local populations.

Simultaneously, the vernacular turn in critical rhetoric invites a discussion of the “where” and “who” of rhetoric. Rhetorical acts have been reconceived away from the pulpit and moved to the congregation. Kent Ono and John Sloop criticize the limited purview of rhetoric, arguing that the focus on powerful texts has dismissed a crucial part of everyday politics. “[I]f we limit our attention to such documents (of power) . . . then we are missing out on, and writing ‘out of history,’ important texts that gird and influence local cultures first and then affect, through the sheer number of local communities, cultures at large.”¹¹ Alternatively, they offer vernacular for analysis discourse, or “discourse that resonates within and from historically oppressed communities,”¹² and, later, outlaw discourses.¹³ The pair echo Dana Cloud’s concern for a materialist judgment of rhetoric, arguing that “the study of rhetoric implies the study of discourse and judgment on the level of everyday life; it implies, in short, a materialist conception of judgment.”¹⁴ Elsewhere, they refine this notion of rhetoric, critiquing the retrospective approach to rhetorical criticism¹⁵ and saying that rhetorical critics should investigate the development of local logics as they compete in discourses of power. In other words, rhetoric should be understood through its process, not merely by its textual product. Gerard Hauser also conceptualizes a vernacular turn in rhetoric, locating the formation of public opinion in the coffee shops and street conversations among the populace.¹⁶ To examine such rhetoric, Hauser offers an examination of effects: “these questions are inquiries into how actual members of actual publics respond to appeals, how they themselves actually engage in discourse that allows us to infer their opinion, and the rhetorical conditions that color their interactions.”¹⁷ Within such an empirical and materialist turn in rhetoric, new methods are necessary to reposition the critic *among* the exigencies of public life. As I outline later, an ethnographic approach to rhetoric can attend to these discourses and their effects.¹⁸

This attitude toward rhetoric parallels concerns about what effect may occur by rhetoric. While others in this volume discuss the progression of inquiries into effect in much more detail, I offer some salient points to the present discussion. First, looking back to Herbert Wicheln’s proclamation of a criticism of oratory, we find that he situates the critic as “concerned with effect” and that rhetorical criticism “regards a speech as a communication to a specific audience, and holds its business to be the analysis and appreciation of the orator’s method of imparting his ideas to his [*sic*] hearers.”¹⁹ Certainly, this passage is discussed in great length in this volume. For me, the specificity of the moment is important. Wicheln offers *kairos* as an essential part of the rhetorical situation to be understood by critics. Much later, Carole Blair offers an approach to rhetorical criticism regarding those “having been there” moments. She appreciates the power of public memorials as effecting audiences directly and in

material ways.²⁰ Indeed, as I offer later, an ethnographic approach to rhetoric also attends to the moment of speech and an appreciation for its immediate effect.

Second, Wayne Thompson discusses public address as to be “directly observed by the research worker.”²¹ Later in the essay, he elaborates upon the type of training necessary to complete such a study of “contemporary public address,” including “training in research methods.”²² Pressing for disciplinary reform, he continues: “And the point at which public address becomes unique, as distinguished from history and other subject matter areas, is its aliveness. Speech is a living subject, communication become dynamic. It is the spoken word, not the written page. It is a means of social change, not the social change itself.”²³

In this passage, Thompson entrusts rhetoric and public address as a process-oriented discipline, studying “language *as it is heard*, speech structure in relation to its effect *at the time of delivery*, the ethical power of the speaker *as he [sic] stands before the audience*.”²⁴ To this, I add that rhetoric can be understood through the direct performance of it. Thompson also argues that the purpose of such a research project would be to study “the selection of procedures and the evolution of techniques.”²⁵ While I recognize that Thompson and Wichelns are speaking of public address, I follow Raymie McKerrow in arguing that “the reversal of ‘public address’ to ‘discourse which addresses publics’ places the critic in the role of ‘inventor.’”²⁶ To gauge its effect, scholars should practice, perform, and invent rhetoric within the spaces of public discussion and deliberation. Ethnographic practices, especially participant observation, situate the critic in direct connection to both the audience and speaker. Recognizing that close readings of texts or biographical methods have limitations that recognize contemporary public advocacy, recent innovations in rhetorical methods have forged novel methodological partnerships between qualitative and ethnographic methods, among others.²⁷ The rhetorical ethnographer can take up the position of either or both by enacting arguments while in the field. In so doing, the critic can evaluate rhetorical effects, including the invention of arguments, the use of artistic appeals, and the reception from audience members. Here, the critic can examine everything from nonverbal reactions to counterarguments from audience members by following up via observations, informal conversations, or formal interviews. In other words, situating the critic inside the moment of *stasis* and controversy provides vital insights into the production of argument. I now turn to the particular moment of controversy and argumentation under consideration: DanceSafe and the so-called war on drugs.

The Dance of Rhetoric

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It's Saturday night in the city. Tucked away in a hidden corner of the industrial district, youth congregate at a local rave. This fast-paced, all-night dance party features three addictive substances: drugs, music, and youth. The decision to take or not take drugs is fought in the minds of youngsters, just as DJs battle each other on stage,

spinning trance-inducing electronic music with deep beats. The glassed and glossed faces of many of those at the event answer that question in the affirmative. This does not come as a surprise; raves are well-known destinations for chemical indulgence, and the drug Ecstasy is the preferred substance for its empathic, energetic, and euphoric effects. The music and drug dance with each other with boundless highs and sensual lows. A booth stands in the corner with ravers parsing through a large, clear bowl of candy. Colored lights adorn the table, along with information about drugs, free fruit and water, and pamphlets on how to end the “war on drugs.” Adorned with badges featuring names above a small silhouette of a raver against what looks like a yellow street sign, volunteers dance along, stopping only to happily chat about intoxicants, the latest DJ, and the political consequences of mandatory minimum sentences with passersby: an odd place for drug education, it would seem. As the teenagers approach, one asks simply, “What is this?” The volunteer behind the table explains that the table’s sponsor is DanceSafe, an advocacy group dedicated to providing drug information without judgment and to ending the war on drugs.

One could wonder about the rhetorical situation of this organization and its membership. What would it be like to attempt persuasion with an audience intoxicated on rebellious youth and Ecstasy? How would a rhetorical scholar learn of such persuasion? Recognize its effects? This chemically induced context offers a suitable case study and exploratory discussion of participatory rhetorical methodology. Positioned within the complex and controversial world of drug use and misuse, DanceSafe offers a compelling form of advocacy to a tough audience, teenage and twenty-something drug users within the culture of raving. Rave culture is an intriguing location for rhetorical inquiry. Understood for its inherent counter-cultural attitude of resistance, the scene contains “deeply fought rhetorical/ideological battles around communalism and commercialism, performance and product, and sharing and spectacle.”²⁸ Brian Ott and Bill Herman’s discussion of rave culture provides insight into a place where the spectacle of dance brushes against the politics of commodification coupled with the use of drugs. Between these struggles is a health concern. The drug of choice, Ecstasy, is widely consumed by ravers. While not every raver uses drugs, rave culture cannot be separated from drugs. The experience of the drug, including feelings of deep connection, euphoria, and empathy, accents the communal atmosphere of the rave and the electronic music of the god-like DJ. However, as the sun comes up and the music fades, ravers are faced with a number of health concerns, including depression and neurotoxicity, as a consequence of their indulgence. As a result, members of rave culture organized to address this concern and created DanceSafe. Established well over a decade ago, DanceSafe is a health advocacy organization that attends to drug use in the rave scene through a harm reduction approach. Its mission is to mitigate the harms of drug use while supporting the culture of raving as a whole, a complex and nearly contradictory approach that couples health information with a strong sense of ethos. Given the corporeal effects of the drug and the embodied health advocacy

provided in the heart of a drug-using culture, DanceSafe's exigence offers a difficult yet fitting location for understanding rhetoric's effects. To study the group, I engaged in critical-rhetorical ethnography, which provides a participatory approach to studying rhetoric's effects.²⁹ This project operates as a case study which, I hope, articulates a promising direction for rhetorical scholarship interested in the first-hand recognition of and reflection upon effects.

DanceSafe, Harm Reduction, and Rhetoric in the "War on Drugs"

Rhetoric has been acutely aware of controversy,³⁰ and rhetorical scholarship aims to unpack how individuals come together to deliberate or advocate in a moment of *stasis*. Fundamental to such rhetorical exchanges is the context in which they occur and how it relates to the notion of effects.³¹ DanceSafe, as an advocacy group, exists in a historical context of the U.S. war on drugs, a widely held position of abstinence-only programs and education. Standing in opposition to abstinence-only approaches, DanceSafe is dedicated to ending the war on drugs. And, the volunteer group does not stand alone. As I will indicate, the United States is at a critical juncture; organizations and individuals are questioning the hardline policy of the war on drugs, and the populace in some states is voting in favor of crucial reforms of laws pertaining to marijuana. This context provides insight into the overall concerns of *stasis*, which inform the advocacy of the group. Within it, I investigate how DanceSafe situates itself symbolically and through its advocacy of a harm reduction message.

Harm Reduction in the War on Drugs

Well documented for its shortcomings and outright failures, the war on drugs continues to be waged on drug users across the globe.³² Both popular³³ and scholarly³⁴ accounts have recognized that widely used scare tactics and propaganda have failed to achieve their goals. In the United States, the war on drugs has largely been understood through a model of zero-tolerance policies and abstinence-only rhetoric. With drug use symbolically constructed as a criminal act rather than a health concern, the policies and guidance of the federal Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) continue to incarcerate thousands of nonviolent offenders. While many have protested,³⁵ the central policies of the ONDCP have remained entrenched in abstinence-only and zero-tolerance policies. One of the primary mechanisms of the ONDCP is to produce messages in the form of commercials, educational poster campaigns in schools, and online resources targeted at curious youth.³⁶ The theme of such campaigns is usually peer pressure; often, the campaigns utilize fear tactics as a primary means of persuasion. Drug users, in such messages, are constructed as dupes who foolishly "fell" for peer pressure. The consequences of drug use are catastrophic, leading to such things as social ostracism, emotional and physical pain, and death. While the ONDCP continues to argue that its campaign is successful, many observers have challenged their claims as dubious at best.³⁷

To challenge the ONDCP and antidrug policies of the federal government, a number of organizations and volunteer groups have come together, largely under the banner of harm reduction. At the most fundamental level, harm reduction exists as an alternative to the “zero-tolerance” or “abstinence-only” approaches common to American federal drug policy. Alan Marlatt describes harm reduction as “founded on a set of pragmatic principles and compassionate strategies designed to minimize the harmful consequences of personal drug use and associated high-risk behaviors.”³⁸ As a social movement, harm reduction is considered to be a grassroots alternative to “both the moral model (as exemplified by the ongoing ‘war on drugs’) and the medical model (addiction defined as disease).”³⁹ Given the failed policies of the war on drugs and of prohibitionist models, harm-reduction efforts began as proactive alternatives that focus on the notion of drug abuse as a public-health problem, not a criminal one. Notably, however, harm-reduction advocates do not reject the idea of abstinence as the safest alternative to drug use but argue rather that abstinence-*only* programs often fail to meet their difficult, if not impossible, goal.

In the United States, harm reduction has not been warmly received. At odds with the federal abstinence-based programs, harm-reduction efforts, such as methadone prescription or syringe exchange, are met with considerable opposition. While in the early twentieth century prescribed opiates and drug maintenance programs existed, their tenure was short lived. Under pressure from conservative voices in the Nixon administration and reinforced by the Reagan administration, the war on drugs began, with drug addicts positioned as public enemy number one.⁴⁰ Ernest Drucker and Allan Clear analyze the chilly rhetorical climate surrounding harm-reduction programs, arguing that the “climate of intimidation has limited the national growth and expansion of needle exchange leaving large numbers of injectors unreached and ignored, as virtually any support or social service for drug users, including drug treatment, is considered undesirable and fringe.”⁴¹ Under the Reagan and the first Bush administrations, drug use was construed as creating a moral panic, and this construction assisted in guiding public attitudes and subsequent policies.⁴² As a social movement, harm reduction has been categorized by the federal drug czars and national drug control strategists as a cover for legalization movements. As Gary Fisher argues, “The United States has taken a hard line against nearly all harm-reduction strategies, seeing them as methods used by legalization proponents to achieve that goal.”⁴³ In short, the discursive climate created in the war on drugs makes harm-reduction advocacy a difficult task.

As a social movement, harm reduction attracts a diverse set of interests and individuals. The primary objectives of harm-reduction programs follow the three principles outlined by Alan Marlatt: “first, working with individuals to reduce harmful behaviors . . . ; second, modifying the environment to enhance safety and reduce risk . . . ; and third, changing policies, laws, and regulations so as to reduce harm to both individuals and the larger society.”⁴⁴ However, the diverse proponents of harm reduction have different ideas about the means and ends of such programs.

While criticisms from federal officials misrepresent the movement by labeling it a cover for decriminalization or legalization, they are not far off in stating that some advocates do seek goals such as these. As Gary Fisher puts it, "While it is quite likely that individuals and groups who support very liberal legalization policies also support harm-reduction groups, that does not lead to a conclusion that harm-reduction groups are attempting to legalize drugs."⁴⁵ Definitional issues complicate the nature of harm reduction, often causing confusion over the boundaries and causes of the movement. Interestingly enough, DanceSafe intersects with a variety of other movements, offering pamphlets for the Marijuana Policy Project and Students for Sensible Drug Policy, both of which seek the goal of decriminalization.

Central to my inquiry into harm reduction and DanceSafe is the belief that drug use/misuse is a social problem that is rhetorically produced. As a rhetorical problem, it is vital to recognize the competing rhetorical goals of the ONDCP and harm-reduction organizations such as DanceSafe. Additionally, investigators studying the rhetorical construction of drug use cannot dismiss the material⁴⁶ and real-world negative health risks of drug use but should also recognize that the meanings associated with alcohol and other drugs use are essentially contested concepts in American society.⁴⁷ The meanings attached to drug *use* carry over to *users*, making important claims about the nature of drug-user identity. For example, Erich Goode argues that the American drug panic of the 1980s can be understood through both objective and socially constructed measures.⁴⁸ On the one hand, frequency of discussion by politicians, levels of awareness in public polling, and media coverage indicate that drug abuse was a top concern of the American public. Yet, data show that overall use of drugs in society was down considerably during the same time period, indicating that the social problem of drug abuse was largely socially constructed. On the other hand, Goode finds that indicators of heavy or dangerous use as well as the negative consequences of use, such as violence or theft, were higher in that time period, indicating that the problem can be understood as objective.⁴⁹ In sum, rhetorical approaches to understanding the effects and reception of drug control education, such as DanceSafe's drug advocacy, should recognize both the symbolic and the material power of drug use as a social issue. Methodologically, my active participation within DanceSafe's campaign assists in recognizing this duality.

DanceSafe

DanceSafe is a harm-reduction organization founded in 1999 by Emanuel Sferios, then a thirty-year-old former social worker. He formed the project out of fear that youths might use drugs that they thought to be Ecstasy but that actually contained potentially lethal substances. At its inception, the organization was funded by a collection of dot-commers who had formerly attended raves and were dissatisfied by the scare tactics of the war on drugs.⁵⁰ The group is dedicated to "educating their mostly teenage and twenty-something audience about drugs and their dangers in a more effective style than the antidrug rhetoric preached in schools and commercials."⁵¹ The

philosophy of the organization declares two primary principles: harm reduction and popular education. First, “in its barest sense, harm reduction is a pragmatic approach to dealing with societal drug use. It begins with the observation that despite all our efforts as a society to stop the use of illicit drugs, people are using them anyway, and it seems unlikely this situation is going to change soon. This necessitates a practical response to reduce the harm that is taking place right now. And this response is called, appropriately enough, harm reduction.”⁵²

To enact the principles of harm reduction and as its second principle, DanceSafe calls upon popular education models from Paulo Freire: “As opposed to more traditional educational models that see the teacher as a large container full of knowledge and the students as empty containers that need filling, popular education sees learning as a creative process that transforms everyone, teachers and students alike.”⁵³ To achieve its goal of increasing “the ability of our peers to positively influence their own health and safety,” DanceSafe tables and booths at raves provide an array of services.⁵⁴ First, DanceSafe volunteers offer information about the contents and history of drugs. The information provided comes in the form of colorful cards, specifically made to look like the advertising flyers given out for future events. On the back of each card, information is listed in descriptive categories: “What is the drug?,” “How is it used?,” “What are the effects?,” and “Be careful.” The final category does not direct behavior regarding the drug; rather, it indicates the possible side effects of use, including the outcome of mixing it with other drugs, negative side effects, and legal status. DanceSafe offers information pertaining to common illegal drugs such as ecstasy, marijuana, and magic mushrooms but also provides information about legal intoxicants such as alcohol, tobacco, and nitrous oxide. Other information found at DanceSafe tables relates to hearing protection, sexually transmitted diseases, and legal issues related to drug use and the rave scene. DanceSafe also provides pamphlets that describe local rehabilitation centers for treatment of addiction. Second, DanceSafe provides free fruit, candy, water, and condoms for ravers. Food and water are offered to assist ravers who may be unaware of their sugar and hydration levels, a common problem at raves. Finally, and most controversial, some DanceSafe chapters offer onsite pill testing for ravers. In these cases, ravers may bring pills to DanceSafe booths, where a portion of the pill is scraped off and tested with chemical compounds that indicate, by color change and the presence of smoke, the presence of MDMA or other substances. After the test is complete, DanceSafe members inform the raver about the contents of the pill but do not indicate what to do with it, leaving the element of choice in the hands of ravers. The controversy of pill testing bleeds into a larger ethical question of harm reduction.⁵⁵

Method: Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography

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To investigate the reception and effects of DanceSafe’s campaign, I utilize two methodological lines, ethnography and rhetorical analysis, in what I call critical-rhetorical

ethnography.⁵⁶ First, the ethnographic side of my research guided my participation in the volunteer group. Using the method of participant observation, I became a complete member of the organization.⁵⁷ For nearly two years, I worked with DanceSafe, assisting in organizational planning, attending nearly every event, and recruiting new members into the group. I used participant observation and advocacy to learn how to enact DanceSafe's campaign while also reflecting upon the argumentation strategies being used by the group and its reception by drug users in the rave scene. Throughout my tenure with the organization, I kept detailed fieldnotes, which are a vital source of data for rhetorical ethnographers and are developed over the course of a project. As accounts of the scene, fieldnotes provide the most direct connection between the researcher and his or her advocacy. Fieldnotes should record the field of argumentation, asking fundamental and theoretically progressing questions ranging from "What is going on here?" to "How do advocates of this organization construct persuasive messages for this particular audience?"

I also performed two rounds of interviews, which I conceptualized as "guided empathic conversations." The interviews were *guided* in that I used a semistructured approach to each encounter that helped me ask pertinent questions about the campaign but also provided a flexible interview moment. Following Fontana and Frey, I conducted the interviews with a spirit of *empathy*, through which the "interviewer becomes an advocate and partner in the study, hoping to be able to use the results to advocate social policies and ameliorate the conditions of the interviewee."⁵⁸ Finally, my interviews were treated as *conversations* to mirror natural dialogue.⁵⁹ In the first round, I interviewed the current DanceSafe membership to inquire about the types of message strategies and general political ideals of the group as it conducts its advocacy. In the second round, I interviewed thirteen ravers while in the scene to ask about how the campaign was received. The individuals selected for interviews were those with whom I had built a rapport through previous interactions. The sampling method was one of convenience, rather than random selection, primarily because of the complex nature of the scene. As mentioned, raves are counterculture spaces, and random selection survey research would be incompatible with the attitude found there. Questions in these interviews included types of experiences with DanceSafe, reflections on its central message, comparisons to federal antidrug campaigns, and reasons for drug use.

Second, the rhetorical side of my research offers theoretical principles that structure the overall purpose and development of fieldwork. Qualitative inquiry asks fundamental questions about how individuals interact within particular contexts; however, the question of advocacy is one of rhetoric. As such, I use the long-standing concepts of *kairos*, *invention*, and *phronesis* as guiding rhetorical principles and interpret them for critical-rhetorical ethnography at the moment of advocacy and argumentation. Traditionally, *kairos* can be understood as the timeliness and appropriateness of speech and situational context.⁶⁰ This dual rhetorical concept provides the rhetorical ethnographer with the means for examining the

moment of advocacy.⁶¹ The notion of *kairos* attends to the situated character of rhetoric, as discourse that exists in time and space, with a particular group of people with their own *doxa*. As rhetorical ethnographers exist in the field of argumentation, they develop a local and contextual knowledge through the constant interaction with participants. Thus, to participate in the advocacy of an organization, rhetorical ethnographers must have a thorough knowledge of what types of discourses will be effective in the moment at hand.

Similarly, invention guides the rhetorical ethnographer to create arguments within the context of speaking, paying close attention to each *kairotic* moment. Michael McGee argues that within critical rhetoric, critics invent discourses and texts that are suitable for criticism.⁶² Drawing from this conception, invention in rhetorical ethnography engages both in reflection upon extant discourses within the *kairotic* moment and in the production of new arguments toward the overall goal of the organization's advocacy. Murphy speaks of invention being inherent to understanding counterpublic discourse and asserts that it is both a constitutive and an oppositional act.⁶³ In this way, invention both forms the identity of counterpublic or vernacular communities and strategically positions them within larger public fields of argumentation. Finally, rhetorical ethnography embraces the concept of *phronesis* as prudence or practical wisdom. Robert Hariman believes that the performance of *phronesis*, as an Aristotelian ideal, occurs in "everyday political consciousness."⁶⁴ He believes that a thorough revitalization of the virtue "recovers the body as a trope for political communication . . . the body active in political life as a body serving as a field of figuration."⁶⁵ The political body, in this sense, references an ontological and political positioning of *phronesis*. Yet, Hariman also underscores the "everydayness" of phronetic judgment.⁶⁶ Similarly, Long asserts that the location is not just about place but also about the function of *phronesis* as being "thoroughly embedded in the world of finite contingency."⁶⁷ It is in this world of uncertainty, variability, and possibility that the rhetorical ethnographer can utilize the virtue of *phronesis* as a driving ideal of vernacular advocacy.

Overall, this methodology provided a dual perspective into the production of discourse and advocacy within a particular rhetorical moment. While other research into drug users entails a strong qualitative element⁶⁸ or textual focus,⁶⁹ my approach adds firsthand, participatory experiences to understanding health advocacy and its effect. Separately, ethnography and rhetoric cannot account for the complex advocacy performed by DanceSafe. Ethnography could provide interpretive insights into the culture and performances found at raves, but it would miss the nature of advocacy and argument offered by the volunteer group. Rhetoric, especially coming from a post hoc textual perspective, would miss the situated character of the rave, which is difficult to comprehend without being there, especially as a site for advocacy. To assess the campaign, I asked local youth who had witnessed the campaign about their reactions to and their interpretations of it. While this project existed in a larger project, with other items on the interview guide, the central question dealt with active advocacy

and message adaptation with a difficult-to-reach target audience: young drug users. As a gauge of effects, my perspective allowed firsthand reactions to a campaign from an active target audience. Davis W. Houck and Mihaela Nocasian call for the historical and rhetorical examination of “living texts”;⁷⁰ I have, in parallel fashion, sought to find a text that is still very much active and alive and that offers a view into the ongoing development of rhetoric. The two rounds of interviewing provided a “before and after” picture of the campaign, asking volunteers how they crafted their messages and ravers how they received it. Being a part of the planning process and actively performing the campaign insightfully allowed me to display the complex process of message construction and production. Consequently, I was able to chart specific choices about the campaign made in preparation for raves and its success with the audience.⁷¹ Cause, for me, includes the variety of choices made before messages were produced; effect is the in situ reception of an active campaign. Campaign volunteers adapted messages and learned just as I did, offering insight into the process of rhetoric. Finally, as an active participant in the scene, I developed a unique perspective into the group’s training, development, and maintenance of a message campaign. The result of having such a vantage will be elaborated upon.

Analysis: Charting DanceSafe’s Effect

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Ethnography offers a specific and contextualized understanding of effect at the moment of advocacy. The challenge of effect occurs in both time and space. As time passes since the creation of specific messages, audiences and speakers may change their personal impressions of the message, forgetting key details or supplanting them with new ones. The spaces of speaking are nuanced, with a multitude of factors affecting the reception of a message. Sounds, sights, and smells all affect how individuals react to messages and are difficult to recollect via post hoc surveys or textual approaches. Ethnography, however, offers an approach that can account for the deficiencies created in time and space. The snap judgments made by audience members can be recorded via interview and direct observation. Of course, the “true” nature of effect is ultimately lost, but much can be gained through participatory approaches. The questions asked of ravers as they received DanceSafe’s messages provide specific accounts of how advocacy was performed to this audience. Moreover, the critic’s engagement in message creation and dissemination through participant observation provides an accounting for cause and effect that is exceptionally difficult to ascertain via other methods. Nonverbal feedback, emotional and affective considerations, and other embodied elements are directly realized by the critic. Conversations and interviews alike provide vital insights into the successes and failures of the campaign.

While the interviews covered a number of issues, under scrutiny in this essay are inquiries into the rhetorical choices made by volunteers and the persuasive effect of the campaign. The questions included the following: Describe your experiences with DanceSafe. How many times have you noticed DanceSafe’s presence at

raves? Have you received information from DanceSafe? What do you think DanceSafe provides for ravers? How would you characterize DanceSafe's central message? What does DanceSafe want you as a raver to walk away with? How is this message presented? How, if at all, have you used the information presented by DanceSafe? Overall, do you find that DanceSafe provides a service to the rave scene? How do you use that service, if at all? What could DanceSafe do more effectively to better serve ravers? These questions were asked of thirteen different ravers in the scene who had approached the DanceSafe table seeking information. In most cases, the individuals that I contacted for interviews were those with whom I had built a rapport. Interviews lasted between fifteen and forty-five minutes, were conducted within the rave scene, and were fully audio-recorded and transcribed. IRB approval was obtained before research began.

Responses to the interview questions led to a number of conclusions regarding DanceSafe's rhetorical activism. First, DanceSafe was received by a preponderance of ravers as a positive type of nonjudgmental drug education with a central idea of *responsible choices regarding drugs*, consistent with the desired message discussed by volunteers. The mission of the organization stipulates that members cannot pass judgment upon drug users while providing accurate information about drugs, and this message was well received by ravers. Second, ravers interpreted DanceSafe's message largely through a sense of ethos. Ravers remarked that DanceSafe was a comfortable and safe place to discuss drug use, largely because of the character of the volunteers and their attitudes toward the ravers as an audience. Finally, DanceSafe was recognized as having a long-standing presence and as a source of wisdom within the rave scene. This sense of localized judgment, which I articulate with the notion of *phronesis*, was recognized by ravers as having a powerful effect on their reception of the overall campaign. While individual members of the organization would fade in and out, the appearance of DanceSafe booths were understood as long-standing features of the scene.

DanceSafe's Message of Responsible Drug Use and Truth

Working within the harm-reduction philosophy, DanceSafe crafts a message that is about *choice* and *knowledge*. Individuals should be able to make informed choices about drug use, rather than be fed exaggerations and scare tactics as is usually provided from federal antidrug agencies. When curious drug users approach the table to inquire about DanceSafe, volunteers frequently indicate that DanceSafe is an educational organization about informed decision making. In one exchange, a volunteer described DanceSafe's philosophy as "pro-choice" with regard to the decisions made by the youth in the scene. Members continuously sought ways to educate youth about their choices about drugs, sexual activity, and civil liberties. Coupled with a nonjudgmental stance, the central message is designed to invite ravers to talk about health and their choice in drug habit. In response, ravers positioned DanceSafe as choice and "truth," contrasted with official coercion and lies. One raver

reflected on this attitude toward drugs, summing up the campaign as saying “that we can’t tell you what to do, even if it’s illegal. Obviously people are going to do it anyway, and rather have them be safe than not be safe.” Understood as rhetorical effect, this recognition of purpose indicates that DanceSafe was, at the very least, effective in its self-portrayal as a drug education and health advocacy group.

In my interviews, ravers, in response to a question about the central message of the campaign, reported that they largely understood DanceSafe in this way. DanceSafe is designed to provide honest, accurate information to its target audience. Ravers interpreted the central message as supporting these two complementary goals: provision of honest information and respect for personal responsibility. First, DanceSafe’s mission of providing honest, accurate information was confirmed in my interviews via the perceptions of ravers. Interviewees indicated that DanceSafe offers an array of positive and negative facts about drugs, coupled with an ethos of honesty and trust. Such an ethos was discursively deployed in opposition to governmental or parental authorities, which I discuss in the following section. One raver remarked that “People have a lot of wrong information and they don’t know what they’re talking about and don’t know what they’re taking. And so it’s really good that there are people out there who are actually informing kids because they’re going to be doing it anyway. So it makes it a lot safer for the people who are at least smart enough to try and figure it out. But, I mean I think it’s great.”

In another case, a young raver indicated that the information was without bias because of its presentation style: “You’re not telling me to not do drugs. You’re just telling information about it.” This type of honesty was supported by DanceSafe’s use of a two-sided message about drug use, one that included positive and negative effects about using drugs. Another raver elaborated, quite eloquently, about the nature of the message’s appeal and structure: “I, for example, use your cards as one of the many references because I have found, in my opinion, an unbiased source. They seem to have looked at the different sides of the spectrum and come to a particular conclusion that is logical, scientific, and isn’t out there to scare anybody away from doing a specific drug. Yet the positive effects of it and the negative effects of it. I appreciate that a great deal.”

This summary indicates that the rhetorical message offered by DanceSafe’s campaign was interpreted in nuanced ways by its audience. It was received and weighed, as many health-related messages are. One respondent spoke of comparing and contrasting the message with other information available, especially with regard to ethos and logos. The use of scientific logic and methods were important to this raver, which could be found in governmental sources as well. Yet, for him, the message was effective because of its ethos and its two-sided approach, providing information on both positive and negative effects of drugs. This is inherently a discussion of ethos, which, as I discuss in the following section, is laboriously constructed by the campaign to connect with rave culture. Because of that connection, the campaign is able to utilize scientific appeals that bolster its credibility as being objective—as representing

“truth”—while subjectively connecting with the individual raver. In speaking of the information disseminated, one raver affirmed the objective nature of the materials: “But I had them [DanceSafe flyers] for a long time wind up on my wall with the picture on one because I grabbed two of every one and the information below because my friends would come over and they’d be like, ‘Blah blah blah this and that.’ And I’d be like, ‘Really, go refer to that. It will tell you the truth.’”

The second aspect of the central message of the campaign is its focus on personal responsibility. Indeed, DanceSafe not only provides information about drugs but also challenges ravers to take personal responsibility for their actions and for those of the people around them. In this case, the campaign’s central message carries weight in a seemingly contradictory manner. Effectively, it becomes: “Do drugs safely,” which connects to larger concerns about the ethics of harm reduction as a paradigm.⁷² Ravers, in discussing this theme, provided interesting analyses of the purpose of DanceSafe. Most directly, ravers commented about how drug use requires personal responsibility, understood in a number of ways. One raver explained that drug use intersects with other elements of responsibility: “The fucked-up thing about the rave scene is like, like I’m all for all-ages parties so all people of all ages can come and party, but these little thirteen-year-old kids dress up like sluts and they have no responsibility and like I don’t know. It also gives the scene a bad name when these little kids come and eat a bunch of pills and OD. And I don’t know it’s just a whole cycle. That’s why I think you guys [DanceSafe] are great.”

In this example, DanceSafe’s message is well received as one that encourages ravers to take responsibility for a number of actions. Looking beyond personal decisions, ravers reflected on the social nature of responsibility. One raver paraphrased John F. Kennedy, saying, “It’s not what your rave scene can do for you, it’s what you can do for your rave scene.” She expressed concern that ravers often neglect themselves and the scene they enjoy and saw DanceSafe’s message as reminding them to be accountable for their actions. In other cases, the accounts of personal responsibility were more specific to drug use. One raver remarked, after being asked about DanceSafe’s role in drug culture, “And it has built this kind of responsibility for all those people who are coming in, trying to teach them what really was going on and the things to look out for and how not to be stupid.” In this case, the raver noted how DanceSafe’s message of responsibility is directed both at the individual and at the social scene, an issue I explore in more depth later. Ultimately, the nature of responsibility was intertwined with being informed by DanceSafe. Another raver, drawing from a source that perhaps more aptly fits the scene, paraphrased the 1980s cartoon *G. I. Joe*: “It is so true, knowledge is half the battle.”

Ethos Construction and Reception

An essential element of the DanceSafe campaign is the construction of ethos. Gerard Hauser believes that “local ethos grows from adhering to the rules of propriety its vernacular requires.”⁷³ Raver culture is one of distrust and resistance; to be

successful in disseminating its message, DanceSafe must find ways to connect to the character of ravers.⁷⁴ The DanceSafe president, Lisa, explained that ravers attend parties for drugs, music, and community and that ravers engage in participatory rebellion against mainstream culture. The act of attending a rave is charged, marked with being both social and ostracized. This principle of identification as social outcasts provides ravers with a rallying cry of, as Lisa puts it, “just because I want to be different.” Yet, as a population, ravers are fleeting, maturing out of their drug use and rave attendance very quickly. This means that DanceSafe is presented with a new audience of ravers at each rave, many of whom have never experienced a rave and are being initiated into—born into, as ravers put it—the scene. To respond to this morphing audience, DanceSafe utilizes a sense of ethos built on invitation.⁷⁵ Engaging in a nonjudgmental approach, the health campaign volunteers invite conversation about drugs from anyone while in any state of mind, including intoxication. This construction of ethos was completed in two ways. First, DanceSafe maintains a positive cultural presence in the scene. Second, DanceSafe situates itself against other, commonly understood health promotion or education agencies, especially perceived governmental programs such as DARE.

As a positive presence in the scene, DanceSafe is understood by ravers as providing a foundation for knowledge about drugs. One raver discussed DanceSafe, saying, “I see it’s a very positive thing; I think it’s good particularly that you’re handing out the different cards with the different facts on drugs.” Another raver, when asked about whether she sees DanceSafe’s presence as offering something positive, responded in the affirmative: “Yes, it does it really does. Everyone talks about your booth, and they love your booth. The fact that you guys are actually caring.” This positive presence translates directly into the Aristotelian notion of ethos as goodwill. Ravers received and understood the campaign directly through ethos, interpreting the intent of the volunteers as expressing goodwill toward the culture and individuals within it. Given the environment, this element of the campaign was powerful. As discussed, ravers can and should be understood as rebellious and often resistant to authority. DanceSafe approaches this subculture with the educational and philosophical aim of moderation, which is in stark contrast to the celebration of youth and indulgence. However, in this profound moment of contradiction, ravers report that DanceSafe accomplishes its goal of connection. In the words of another youth, “It’s great that you guys are concerned with the well-being of the scene and the well-being of these random people that you’ve never met and don’t really have any connection to.”

The other construction of ethos found in the campaign is much more in line with the rebelliousness of the raver crowd. Youth who attend raves do so to escape, and drug use is understood as a way to forget the ills of life. One young pair of ravers, when asked about why they attend raves and use drugs, revealed that they seek an escape:

Interviewee 2: Yeah, because like in today’s society we have so many different stresses. We have school, family, friends, relationships, jobs, everything.

Interviewee 1: Yet even for like teenagers, I mean, young kids, adults, these days there is so much stress.

Interviewee 2: . . . and I mean, drugs are a kind of like, kind of like a release from that.

Not only do these pressures affect their decisions to use; they motivate the subculture to act out in resistance. Brian Ott and Bill Herman contend that raves feature a “flattening of hierarchy,” which problematizes the notion of ethos as expertise.⁷⁶ In other words, ravers come to dance and to escape from the rigidity of everyday life, especially in its hierarchical and authoritative form. How, in this space, does a group like DanceSafe construct a sense of health promotion ethos that embodies authority via expertise while simultaneously rejecting it? To do this, DanceSafe constructs its ethos as a type of rhetorical foil. It operates *against* traditional notions of authority by placing itself in contrast, in effect, fitting in with the larger counterculture theme of resistance. As noted, youth escape from and in some cases reject the types of authority that appear in daily life. Parents, teachers, and police only offer the tribulations that are cause for escape, and so DanceSafe rejects them in much the same way. Volunteers position DanceSafe as “not your parents’ drug education” and indicate that programs like the governmentally supported DARE are the opposite of the booths at the rave. During one of my observations, the rave was broken up by local police authorities, and DanceSafe members quickly distributed wallet-size cards that explained the concept of illegal search and seizure. In my initial interviews with DanceSafe volunteers and leadership, my interviewees indicated that DanceSafe was like cool “baby-sitters” who allow the kids to do more than Mom and Dad permit or “sober friends” who look out for you when you’ve overindulged. During my observations, I found DanceSafe, as well as myself, constructing the health organization as “We’re not the police, and we’re certainly not your parents!”

Beyond performing in this way, ravers reported that the effect of this construction was noticeable and powerful. When asked about the central message of DanceSafe, ravers commonly responded with statements that reflected a “not-your-parents” attitude. One said, “They are giving them [ravers] a viewpoint that’s not from their ‘parents’ so to speak” and added that DanceSafe avoids the “DARE education stigma,” which she called “bullshit.” Another raver told me that DanceSafe is “looking out for these kids when their parents aren’t here.” This powerful construction allowed DanceSafe access to a vulnerable population to disseminate its campaign message. One of the volunteers indicated that he tries to be as nonjudgmental as possible, that passing judgment would be negative to the campaign. He explained that the preferred approach is to be “just a very calm acceptance, nonjudgmental. Giving out information, and that’s it.” This character of DanceSafe was well received. One raver recognized that DanceSafe was different from parental or governmental sources of information and that the calming approach was effective: “if it was more hostile like, ‘don’t do drugs’ less people would come by and pick them up.” Overall, DanceSafe

was effective in constructing a character that was both inviting and oppositional to perceived traditional sources of drug campaigns.

Phronesis and Participant Advocacy

The final aspect of understanding the effect of DanceSafe's rhetoric is through my own personal experiences in the campaign. Rhetorical ethnography positions the rhetorical critic not only within the moment of advocacy but also as an active participant. In turn, the researcher reflects upon his or her own development and performances of the advocacy. Certainly, the researcher learns of the inventive practices of the campaign or protest, as I did with DanceSafe. Looking beyond invention, however, rhetorical ethnography calls upon the notion of *phronesis* as the practical judgment built through experience. *Phronesis* provides an additional tool for reflecting upon the complex idea of effect, especially since it opens personal understandings of cause and effect. I examined *phronesis* not merely as a virtue that other volunteers embodied but as something that *I* needed to embody. Consequently, through the active performance of the message, I experienced a learning curve in the organization and had to learn how to present myself and my personal history as a part of advocacy.

Understood as an effect of rhetoric, *phronesis* begs the researcher to engage in reflexivity⁷⁷ and to learn from mistakes and risks taken in the scene.⁷⁸ Carrie Birmingham positions *phronesis* as a pedagogical model of self-reflection. In her case, "the conceptualization of reflection as *phronesis* adds clarity to the nature of the relationship between reflection and actions—that is, actions are derived from reflection, and reflection is built through the practice of reflective actions."⁷⁹ Christopher Long also believes that an ontological positioning of *phronesis* in much the way that I have here "points to the possibility of developing a critically self-reflective model of ontological knowledge firmly embedded in the finite world."⁸⁰ And finally, Frederik Thuesen positions *phronesis* as an embodied virtue: "As moral virtue is defined as 'states of character,' *phronesis* therefore takes embodied dispositions for reflecting—and especially feeling and acting—appropriately."⁸¹ Each of these underscores the socio-relational qualities of *phronesis*: that it is a virtue, experienced between people, that invites reflection on the outcome of those interactions. In this sense, the virtue carries its traditional Aristotelian understanding of practical wisdom but is augmented with recent theorizing in social sciences and interpretive/ethnographic scholarship.⁸² Drawn from the qualitative tradition in communication, the notion of reflexivity inherently understands that the researcher is the instrument in any study. In rhetorical ethnography, the measuring of rhetoric's effects is built through systematic reflection upon the process of learning by the researcher in the field of argumentation. To build such an inventory, the rhetorical ethnographer should ask questions about personal effectiveness and growth. At times, *phronesis* is recognized through trial and error, through success and failure. To report upon it is to lay bare the privileged position of the researcher. To understand

DanceSafe's rhetoric through *phronesis*, I have organized my learning as a volunteer into two levels: failures and epiphanies.

Any type of advocacy requires learning. As a fresh recruit in the scene, I quickly realized my limitations and failures in helping advocate on behalf of DanceSafe. In each moment of learning, I was able to realize many of the necessary components of the campaign and to reflect on how they contribute to DanceSafe's overall success. In my first rave, I watched in bewilderment as a raver seemed to be stuck in one place, not talking with anyone and hardly moving. At that same rave, a young woman approached DanceSafe and asked, "I just took two hits of ecstasy and two pills of Vicodin. What's going to happen to me?" During that same rave, I mistakenly called the psychedelic drug 2CB a liquid, when it's actually a pill or powder. In still another rave, I had a prolonged conversation with a raver who was considering taking Ecstasy but was also taking antidepressant medication, and I was unsure about the consequences. Each of these examples taught me that I had much to learn about the *facts* of drug use before I would be able to interact appropriately with youth. As a requisite part of the advocacy, DanceSafe members are responsible for knowing contraindications related to mixing medication and other drugs and that the immobile young raver was likely stuck in a "k-hole" from recreationally ingesting ketamine. Moreover, such knowledge is *always* contextualized and unpredictably called upon and becomes a part of the overall message. Otherwise, it would be like protesting a war but being unfamiliar with the political backdrop of the conflict. As *phronesis*, knowledge of drug use took the form of wisdom, with its requisite flexibility and discernment regarding use. These base failures presented moments of learning, which later became essential components of my performance. As simple as it sounds, I had to *know* before I could advocate. Translating this lesson into measuring effects, DanceSafe was responsible as a broker of knowledge in the rave scene. The effect of its campaign was to inject scientific knowledge into the free-for-all of rave culture. Later, in my interviews, this finding was confirmed as one raver reported in an interview: "I, for example, use your cards as one of the many references because I have found, in my opinion, an unbiased source. They seem to have looked at the different sides of the spectrum and come to a particular conclusion that is logical, scientific, and isn't out there to scare anybody away from doing a specific drug." As such, DanceSafe is responsible for drug knowledge, built from science and, as I quickly learned, filtered through *doxa*. The flyers and their information were not just presented through the culture of the rave; they were bolstered with its wisdom.

While failures provide the opportunity for much-needed reflections upon learning, I experienced a number of epiphanies regarding my advocacy within DanceSafe. These moments were guided by interactions with particular ravers. They are specific and cannot be understood without having been there in the moment of rhetorical production.⁸³ As ethnographic experiences, they provide an assessment of effects that is nearly impossible to recreate from merely a textual purview or

from a social scientific inquiry. One of the first epiphanies occurred early in my observations. A young woman approached the booth and asked all of the volunteers, "Since you all do this, does that mean that you are sober? Do you or will you ever do drugs again?" This question was repeated in one form or another in later observations. It highlights a complication in the performance of advocacy. On the one hand, if DanceSafe members reply that they are sober or that they have given up drugs, they may threaten their ethos. Ravers could perceive volunteers as merely replications of parents, police, or drug counselors who "don't really get it." On the other hand, if volunteers reply that they engage in drug use, that may violate the message of "drug use has consequences." In my observations, I found that volunteers most often chose the latter path, believing that 'fessing up to ravers about past and present drug use was an important type of connection. It provided an opportunity to share the effects of the campaign on their own choices and to situate the scientific knowledge within personal choice. One element of DanceSafe is the testing of Ecstasy pills. One volunteer remarked during a similar exchange that he wouldn't ingest Ecstasy without knowing what's in it from testing. These personal admissions laid bare the type of intuition about how to *discuss* ethos with an audience. It shows how rhetoric's effect is mediated by personal character and can potentially be complicated by the slightest whiff of performative contradiction.

Another epiphany occurred with a young male raver named Coyote. In usual fashion, he approached the DanceSafe booth asking questions about what the group does. After explaining the advocacy of harm reduction, I had a longer conversation with him about drug use and raves. He explained that he has been attending raves for only about five months and that he felt that people at the raves were his "family." He noted that he used drugs but planned on quitting because he didn't want to get "caught up" in drug use. Even though he planned on quitting, he signaled that he would continue attending events. We spent time discussing what drugs mean to ravers (he claimed that they foster connection), but also recognizing that connections can be made without them. Toward the end of our conversation, he thanked me for taking the time to chat and asked for my signature on a colorful sheet of paper. The word PLUR was centered on the page, surrounded by a rainbow of color and signatures from others he had met. He explained that he asks for these signatures from those he considers to be a part of his family. This moment taught me about the importance of listening as a part of advocacy as well as how the sharing of stories can be as important as any argument offered about the pleasures and pitfalls of drug use.

This moment underscores the notion of connection within advocacy. While the epiphanies I have described are largely about ethos through personal decisions, this interaction shows how ethos is established and deployed through listening and sharing. Coyote's story of family and finding connections in the rave scene hints at the importance of DanceSafe's providing a sense of goodwill through communal advocacy. Ravers approach the table, share stories, and disappear back into the music and the glowing lights. Yet, in that moment of sharing, ravers long for a sense

of honest interaction and community in the rave. The drug ecstasy, as an empathogen, strengthens that experience as profound connections are made through bursts of serotonin. Certainly, the authenticity of those interactions is questionable, but the *longing* for them is not. As an organization, DanceSafe offers a space to tell stories and *to be heard*. To be an effective advocate within this campaign is to offer a place for sharing of experiences regarding drugs, instead of the spewing of arguments about negative side effects. This is a form of intuition about this particular audience—that their judgments and experiences about alcohol and drug use are narratively built.⁸⁴ Looking back to interviews with volunteers, I believe that this act of goodwill fits into the strategy of nonjudgment. It forms, in part, the “cause” of DanceSafe’s message and can be traced to Coyote’s moment of sharing. It reflects a notion of ethos akin to Foss and Griffin’s invitational rhetoric.⁸⁵ Rhetoric, in this sense, is embodied and shared; the campaign is apprehended socially, through interpersonal connection, as much as it is through fliers, pamphlets, and posters.

Discussion: Participating in the Effect of Rhetoric

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This project, an inquiry into the effects of DanceSafe’s rhetoric, reveals a number of discoveries. First, DanceSafe strives to connect with youth with a difficult message of responsible drug use. Certainly, the message has its contradictions, performative, internal, or otherwise. However, at its core, the message is nonjudgmental, which connects to the *doxa* of this crowd. Ravers are a rebellious bunch, seeking to escape from parental or local authorities. They come to a rave to meet people and to dance, not to be educated. Yet, DanceSafe offers a space to share stories and to listen. Rhetorically, it invites discussion of drug use, both its pleasures and its pains. Overall, DanceSafe’s message is effective because it invites participation, sharing, and honesty.

Second, to connect to youth, DanceSafe discursively establishes its ethos as a trusted organization that enacts goodwill toward its audience. This understanding of effects is an Aristotelian one but is, in my case, determined through interviews that inquire directly into the reception of the campaign. Ravers told me that DanceSafe effectively established rapport and that its volunteers were perceived as differing from parental or traditional drug education sources. They also indicated that, while not parents, DanceSafe volunteers expressed their caring for drug users in ways that family members would. This was purposeful, as I understood through my interviews with volunteers. As a part of their advocacy, DanceSafe members strove to make connections with ravers. Finally, I personally learned about the process of advocacy by performing it. Through critical-rhetorical ethnography, I witnessed and recorded the effect of rhetoric as I experienced it. Using the guiding concept of *phronesis*, I reflected on the recruitment, training, and learning process of becoming a volunteer. This approach provided insight into the effective strategies of vernacular advocacy, through both successes and failures of persuasive attempts.

Through this case study, I have provided some methodological insight into the study of rhetoric's effects. Thinking back to Wayne Thompson's early call for research workers to directly observe rhetoric, I suggest that my ethnographic approach to vernacular advocacy operates as a successful approach to witnessing and participating in rhetoric. Contrasted with textual purviews, this embodied method provides firsthand accounts of how rhetoric is produced. I was privy to organizational planning, recruitment of new volunteers, and the performance of advocacy. This insider perspective provided a thorough inspection of how a vernacular organization performs. Through my interviews with rhetors and audience, I was able to apprehend the entirety of the rhetorical transaction. In my initial interviews with volunteers, I was given strategies and stories of their time in the rave scene. Reflecting on their interactions with campaign, ravers reported back the successful elements of DanceSafe's approach. Finally, as a participant in the group, I directly learned to embrace DanceSafe's nonjudgmental approach to drug education and health campaigns. Taken together, these methodological elements provide a start-to-finish view of rhetoric. From a qualitative perspective, I engaged in a form of triangulation, drawing from multiple sources (including myself) to understand DanceSafe's message. From a rhetorical perspective, I inquired into the reception of messages and learned of the practical judgment of being a volunteer. Thompson calls for adequate researcher training in observation and reporting techniques. Rhetorical ethnography provides such a perspective and pushes further through its participatory aim. Moreover, the virtue of *phronesis* provides rhetorical scholars with a guide to understanding how agency is formed at the point of advocacy and shared between audience and speaker alike. As audiences receive and respond to messages from speakers, they have an impact upon future advocacies. In other words, the development and refinement of messages with multiple audiences over time, the building of *phronesis*, illustrates how the agency of a speaker is molded toward successful persuasion. In return, phronetic speakers are able to recognize the impact of their messages through the process of discernment.

Looking further, ethnography offers something to the discussion of rhetoric that has been missed in the history of the discipline. Early rhetorical training was engaged and embodied in the practice of rhetoric, beginning with Isocrates. Since Wicheln's call for criticism of oratory, the textual or biographical purview has been a mainstay of rhetorical approaches. As displayed in my analysis in this essay, using participatory and ethnographic methods can account for conceptions of rhetorical concepts that are difficult to comprehend otherwise. The ethos of DanceSafe was actively evaluated through immediate reactions to the campaign. But to understand the value of ethos, I had to be a part of the culture and witness its performance. In cases where ravers could and would question the advocacy group's ethos, asking about personal use and motivations, I was able to follow up with audience members or volunteers to discover how estimations of ethos changed or were defended. In other cases, I had to explain the ethos of the organization to those who inquired

into the group. Here, I learned firsthand how to construct and invent ethos for DanceSafe. Outside this controversy, rhetorical ethnographers could examine the nature of effects, including political campaigns, public address, and protest activities. Participant observation, in the guise of rhetorical ethnography, is best suited to produce arguments; however, the observational level of the method provides immediate reactions to public discourse.

In answering Gerard Hauser's plea for an ethnographic rhetoric,⁸⁶ my case study here outlines an approach that can revitalize the study of rhetoric's effects. The difficult *epistemological* questions of effect can be answered through an *ontological* repositioning of the rhetorical critic. Rather than searching for texts upon texts that answer the question of effect, the rhetorical ethnographer positions him- or herself within the field of argumentation and advocacy. In so doing, the embodied knowledge of the ethnographer, coupled with the inventive requirements of the critic, provides insights into both cause and effect that are otherwise missed. Considerations of character and ethos as they are actively performed surface in ways—nonverbal, affective, or corporeal—that cannot be otherwise understood. Ethnography does not claim to provide a one-to-one connection between rhetorical cause and effect, nor do I claim to do so here. Rather, the rhetorical ethnographer examines a multitude of factors that impact message construction, development, and reception. Rhetoric is not performed in a laboratory; its public nature requires the necessary tools to engage the public. Ethnography offers such tools. Moreover, rhetorical ethnography engages in phronetic judgment, drawing from its roots in rhetorical theory. This element, accented with the performative elements of participant observation, provides the critic of vernacular rhetoric with firsthand knowledge of message delivery. Mere observation of messages offered by advocates in the field misses on the affective and embodied nature of performing those messages. *Phronesis*, as a virtue, adds intuition and wisdom to the critical reflexivity inherent in ethnography. It provides a measure of effect that is nearly impossible to replicate via any other method.

That said, rhetorical ethnography has its limits, especially regarding effects. Many insights can be gathered from the approach, but reliance on the personal experience and reflections of the ethnographer can be questioned. Tracing a specific line between what was planned behind the scenes and what happened at the rave is difficult. Many factors intervene, yet an after-the-fact reflection of the campaign would miss many of the details that go into the rhetorical encounter. Ethnography can capture those split-second reactions, many of which are nonverbal or affective. Additionally, my particular approach does not adhere to rigorous sampling techniques and does not locate a fully representative sample of audience members. While these limits exist, this study does provide insights into how many ravers received the campaign. While I do not claim to generalize from these results to the overall population of ravers, the insights of this study offer potentially transferable results, as many ethnographic works do, to other similar sites or campaigns. This campaign sought to meet young drug users “where they’re at,” in contrast to other

approaches in the war on drugs. Recognizing the strategies inherent to this advocacy could prove valuable to those engaged in health advocacy or drug education.

Through this essay, I have provided an overview of a participatory approach to studying rhetoric, using my time with DanceSafe as a guide. Indeed, this approach requires polishing. As it stands, it follows the line of critical rhetoric and vernacular discourses; however, the methodological assumptions could be expanded to more traditional approaches to rhetoric. Certainly, as I have stated in this study, the measuring of ethos is not a radical departure in the field of rhetoric. However, the direct participation in message campaigns is. New considerations, ethical or otherwise, can fill out the approach. The study of public address, as Wayne Thompson describes, could be a reflection upon discourse rather than participation in it. Interviews with speakers and audience members, as I have provided here, can provide insight into the difficult questions about the effects of rhetoric. For now, for those interested in campaigns and public advocacy, critical-rhetorical ethnography can offer rhetorical critics the means to witness and participate in the rhetorical effects of such messages.

Notes

1. Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).
2. Gerard Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular: A Plea for an Ethnographic Rhetoric," in *The Rhetorical Emergence of Culture*, ed. Christian Meyer and Felix Girke (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2011), 166.
3. Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular," 168.
4. Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular," 159.
5. Raymie McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91.
6. Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 54 (1990): 274–289.
7. Barbara Johnstone and Christopher Eisenhart, *Rhetoric in Detail: Discourse Analysis of Rhetorical Talk and Text* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2008). See also the special issue of *Critical Discourse Studies* that details ethnographic accounts of critical discourse analyses: Michal Krzyżanowski, "Ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis: Towards a Problem-Oriented Research Dialogue," *Critical Discourse Studies* 8 (2011): 231–238.
8. Dana L. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 142.
9. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse," 159.
10. Ronald Walter Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998): 27.
11. Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 19.
12. Ono and Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," 20.
13. John M. Sloop and Kent A. Ono, "Out-law Discourse: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 30 (1997): 51–69.
14. Sloop and Ono, "Out-law Discourse," 54.
15. Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "Critical Rhetorics of Controversy," *Western Journal of Communication* 63 (1999): 526–538.

16. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices*.
17. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices*, 12.
18. This method is discussed in more detail in Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62 (2011): 127–152. In this essay, I focus on the elements of the method that provide a view into the effects of the method.
19. Herbert A. Wichelns, "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Carl R. Burghardt (State College, Pa.: Strata, 1995), 22.
20. Carole Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," *Western Journal of Communication* 65 (2001): 271–294.
21. Wayne N. Thompson "Contemporary Public Address as a Research Area," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 33 (1947): 274.
22. Thompson, "Contemporary Public Address," 277.
23. Thompson, "Contemporary Public Address," 277–278.
24. Thompson, "Contemporary Public Address," 278. Emphasis in original essay.
25. Thompson, "Contemporary Public Address," 280.
26. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 101.
27. Dwight Conquergood offers a pointed critique about "arm-chair" methods, in contrast to the possibilities opened in ethnographic conditions. See Dwight Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," *Communication Monographs* 58 (1991): 180, and Dwight Conquergood, "Ethnography, Rhetoric, and Performance," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 80–123. A number of recent works make parallel claims and search for ways to open up the methodological possibilities of rhetoric: Johnstone and Eisenhart, *Rhetoric in Detail*; Michael K. Middleton, Samantha Senda-Cook, and Danielle Endres, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," *Western Journal of Communication* 75 (2011): 386–406; Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography"; Art Herbig and Aaron Hess, "Convergent Critical Rhetoric at the 'Rally to Restore Sanity': Exploring the Intersection of Rhetoric, Ethnography, and Documentary Production," *Communication Studies* 63 (2012): 269–289; Karen Tracy, James P. McDaniel and Bruce E. Gronbeck, *The Prettier Doll: Rhetoric, Discourse, and Ordinary Democracy* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Don Waisanen, "Bordering Populism in Immigration Activism: Outlaw—Civic Discourse in a (Counter) Public," *Communication Monographs* 79 (2012): 232–255.
28. Brian L. Ott and Bill D. Herman, "Mixed Messages: Resistance and Reappropriation in Rave Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 67 (2003): 250. This essay provides a historical backdrop to the use of drugs in the rave scene and a keen analysis of the development of rave culture over time.
29. Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography."
30. Ono and Sloop, "Critical Rhetorics of Controversy."
31. McGee, "Text, Context, and Fragmentation"; Davis W. Houck and Mihaela Nocasian, "FDR's First Inaugural Address: Text, Context, and Reception," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 649–678.
32. Gary L. Fisher, *Rethinking Our War on Drugs: Candid Talk about Controversial Issues* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006); Julian Buchanan and Lee Young, "The War on Drugs—a War on Drug Users?," *Drugs: Education, Prevention, and Policy* 7 (2000): 409–422.
33. Jim Bildner and Madeline Drexler, "The Wrong Way to Fight the War on Drugs," *Boston Globe*, June 27, 2006, <http://www.boston.com> (accessed May 22, 2008); Taylor W. Buley, "Drug Policy Should Focus on Helping Addicts, not Jailing them," *Baltimore Sun*, June 28, 2006, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2006-06-28/news/0606280023_1_drug-treatment-war-on-drugs-drug-policy (accessed February 10, 2012); Kari Lydersen, "Drug-Terror Connection Disputed; DEA Defends

Traveling Exhibit as Critics Draw Parallels to Prohibition Era," *Washington Post*, August 12, 2006, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/> (accessed February 10, 2012).

34. Dirk C. Eldredge, *Ending the War on Drugs: A Solution for America* (New York: Bridge Works, 1998); William N. Elwood, *Rhetoric in the War on Drugs* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994).

35. Cheryl L. White "Beyond Professional Harm Reduction: The Empowerment of Multiply-Marginalized Illicit Drug Users to Engage in a Politics of Solidarity towards Ending the War on Illicit Drug Users," *Drug and Alcohol Review* 20 (2001): 449–458.

36. Aaron Hess, "Resistance Up in Smoke: Analyzing the Limitations of Deliberation on YouTube," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26 (2009): 411–434.

37. Office of National Drug Control Policy, "National Drug Control Strategy," February 2007, <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/policy/ndcso7/ndcso7.pdf> (accessed April 13, 2007); Marsha Rosenbaum, "Kids, Drugs, and Drug Education: A Harm Reduction Approach," (San Francisco: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 1996); Fisher, *Rethinking Our War on Drugs*.

38. G. Alan Marlatt, "Highlights of Harm Reduction: A Personal Report for the First National Harm Reduction Conference in the United States," in *Harm Reduction: Pragmatic Strategies for Managing High-risk Behaviors*, ed. G. Alan Marlatt (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 1.

39. Marlatt, "Highlights of Harm Reduction," 1.

40. Buchanan and Young, "The War on Drugs."

41. Ernest Drucker and Allan Clear, "Harm Reduction in the Home of the War on Drugs: Methadone and Needle Exchange in the USA," *Drug and Alcohol Review* 18 (1999): 111.

42. James E. Hawdon, "The Role of Presidential Rhetoric in the Creation of a Moral Panic: Reagan, Bush, and the War on Drugs," *Deviant Behavior* 22 (2001): 419–445.

43. Fisher, *Rethinking Our War on Drugs*, 68.

44. G. Alan Marlatt, ed., *Harm Reduction: Pragmatic Strategies for Managing High-Risk Behaviors* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), xvi–xvii.

45. Fisher, *Rethinking Our War on Drugs*, 57.

46. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse."

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49. Goode, "The American Drug Panic."

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51. Mark Martin, "The Ecstasy and the Agony: Group Tries to Reduce Risk by Testing Pills," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 21, 2000, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2000/07/21/MN88496.DTL&ao=all> (accessed February 10, 2012).

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54. DanceSafe, "Philosophy and Vision."

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56. Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography."

57. Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, "Membership Roles in Field Research" (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1987).

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59. Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996).

60. John Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16 (1983): 35–48; James L. Kinneavy and Catherine R. Eskin, "Kairos in Aristotle's Rhetoric," *Written Communication* 17 (2000): 433.

61. Carolyn R. Miller, "Foreword," In *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, ed. Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), xi–xiii.

62. McGee, "Text, Context, and Fragmentation."

63. Troy Murphy, "Rhetorical Invention and the Transformation of 'We Shall Overcome,'" *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 4 (2003), 1–8.

64. Robert Hariman, "Prudence/Performance," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 21 (1991): 34.

65. Hariman, "Prudence/Performance," 34–35.

66. Hariman, "Prudence/Performance," 27.

67. Christopher P. Long, "The Ontological Reappropriation of Phronesis," *Continental Philosophy Review* 35 (2002): 48.

68. Brian C. Kelly, "Conceptions of Risk in the Lives of Club Drug-Using Youth," *Substance Use and Abuse* 40 (2005): 1443–1459; Kira B. Levy, Kevin E. O'Grady, Eric D. Wish, and Amelia M. Arria, "An In-Depth Qualitative Examination of the Ecstasy Experience: Results of a Focus Group with Ecstasy-Using College Students," *Substance Use and Misuse* 40 (2005): 1427–1441.

69. Dejong and Wallack, "A Critical Perspective"; Elwood, *Rhetoric in the War on Drugs*.

70. Houck and Nocasian, "FDR's First Inaugural," 674.

71. Arguably, any ethnographic work is inherently participatory, which means that an ethnographer would struggle to separate him- or herself from the message construction of a campaign. Merely meeting with volunteers, for example, and asking questions about message strategies has an impact on future messages. Through the reflection, volunteers may make adjustments or realize something new about how they produce the campaign.

72. Guttman, "Ethical Dilemmas," 164.

73. Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular," 168.

74. Ott and Herman, "Mixed Messages," 261.

75. Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 2–18.

76. Ott and Herman, "Mixed Messages," 254.

77. Carrie Birmingham, "Phronesis: A Model for Pedagogical Reflection," *Journal of Teacher Education* 55 (2004): 313–324.

78. Karen A. Stewart, Aaron Hess, Sarah J. Tracy, and Harold L. Goodall, "Risky Research: Investigating the 'Perils' of Ethnography," in *Qualitative Inquiry and Social Justice*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Michael D. Giardina (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 2009), 198–216.

79. Birmingham, "Phronesis," 317.

80. Christopher P. Long, "The Ontological Reappropriation of Phronēsis," *Continental Philosophy Review* 35 (2002): 36.

81. Frederik Thuesen, "Navigating between Dialogue and Confrontation: Phronesis and Emotions in Interviewing Elites on Ethnic Discrimination," *Qualitative Inquiry* 17 (2011): 617.

82. For a thorough discussion of *phronesis* in the social sciences, see also Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

83. Blair, "Reflections on Criticism." 274.

84. This is reflected in other health communication literature regarding alcohol use and college-age populations where narrative sharing and listening are effective approaches to getting students to think through their decision to drink. See Marianne LeGreco, Aaron Hess, Linda C. Lederman, Tara Schuwerk, and Angela LaValley, "An Innovative Dialogue about College Drinking: Developing an Immediate Response Technology Model for Health Promotion," *Communication Education* 59 (2010): 389–404; Lisa Menegatos, Linda C. Lederman, and Aaron Hess, "Friends Don't Let Jane Hook Up Drunk: A Qualitative Analysis of Participation in a College Drinking Simulation," *Communication Education* 59 (2010): 374–388; Linda C. Lederman and Lea P. Stewart, *Changing the Culture of College Drinking: A Socially Situated Health Communication Campaign* (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 2005).

85. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."

86. Hauser, "Attending the Vernacular," 169.