Barry McCaffrey, author of “Don’t Legalize Those Drugs,” does an excellent job of arguing that drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and many more illicit drugs should remain illegal. He uses many statistics to reinforce his argument and leaves very few holes in the argument. However, his argument is not rock solid, and he never really talks about any counter argument within the article. In addition, I believe that there are too many statistics and really no persuasive elements to his piece. In spite of these minor flaws, it is an otherwise excellent argument.

McCaffrey builds a strong case for keeping banned drugs illegal. His main way of doing this is through the use of statistics. In the first four body paragraphs of his argument he uses solid statistics to back up why drugs should remain illegal. The sources are excellent and range from the National Institute of Justice to a National Journal of Medicine and the University of Pennsylvania. He believes that drugs not only wreck families and create crime, but also believes that illicit drug use leads to a higher risk of disease and addiction. These facts are hard to argue against. Drugs do lead to an increase in crime rates and problems at home according to sources. However, the statistics aspect of his argument also leads to problems. There are a few figures that do not have sources and these figures seem just too high to be believable. In fact, he begins his argument with “Three-quarters of the U. S. population opposes the legalization of psychoactive drugs such as heroin, cocaine, LSD, methamphetamine, and marijuana” (43.) However, there is no source to back up this claim. I just find this
statement to be too high. In addition, I think that this argument based only on facts gets a little boring by the end of the article.

The author throughout the piece gives fact after fact to support his claims, but he doesn’t even try to use another persuasive element to his argument. He tries when he talks about drugs ruining families and leading to problems in the house, but never makes it personal. I would have taken a more personal approach to this element of his argument. Of course people do not believe in children suffering, but when you only list facts, it makes it too impersonal. The author should have used a story or created a scenario to get the audience riled up in order to invoke stronger feelings against illegal drug use.

Another weak aspect of the author’s work is the lack of acknowledging the other side of the argument. He goes on and on throughout the article about how drugs ruin lives, but he refuses to even look at the other side. I don’t believe in drug use either, but there are some benefits to some drugs. I know that some drugs like marijuana are beneficial for people who are going through extreme pain, and he never brings up this beneficial aspect. Another possible benefit of legalizing some drugs is the ability to tax these drugs. It would bring in revenues for the state and federal governments. This money could be used to help people in an endless amount of possibilities. The last possible benefit to legalizing illicit drugs is freeing up room in prison systems across the country. Prisons right now are overpopulated and crowded. Legalizing a drug such as marijuana for recreational uses could alleviate some of the problem. If marijuana was legal, there would be less people put in jail for being caught for it, and this would free up some room in the prison systems. Again, I am against the idea of legalizing illicit drugs,
but even I can think of some of the arguments from the other side. Barry McCaffrey refuses to do this, and I think that it hurts his argument. There are some possible benefits to legalizing drugs that he doesn’t even bother bringing up.

Overall, I think that the article was well done and thought out. The use of statistics to back up his claims is solid, but the lack of other persuasive elements does bring the piece of work down. In addition, he fails to even recognize the potential benefits seen by the opposing side. However, this doesn’t harm his argument too much because the majority of America is against illegal drug use. I can see why the author didn’t even make an effort to do so.

Comments: Focus on analyzing the argument is consistent throughout, and for the most part is well explained. Also notice the underlined sentences: The paper is clearly organized according to the points the writer wants to make about various aspects of the argument.