

Most of us tend to believe the following about the illicit drugs industry:

- (i) There are huge and elaborate organisations that have networks that cross international boundaries
- (ii) The power brokers in the industry are only concerned with maximising profits, which run into thousands of per cent/billions of pounds. These people (men) are often well known but are untouchable
- (iii) The power brokers ruthlessly corner all supplies of a particular drug
- (iv) A distribution hierarchy exists. There are ‘faceless men in foreign countries’, and below them are agents who arrange supply to people who arrange import. The importers have agents who operate a sales network throughout their own country to achieve maximum distribution. At the lowest level is the ‘pusher’, whose job it is to see that, irrespective of the consequences, the maximum number of people use as much of the drug as possible
- (v) The consumer’s welfare is important only because a dead consumer no longer consumes drugs and if the death is attributed to the drug it may discourage other’s from taking them
- (vi) Part of the immorality lies in the exploitation of damaged people coupled to the deliberate, profit-motivated creation of a need for the drug which is seen as detrimental to both the consumer and society as a whole
- (vii) Other criminal activities occur during this process – bribery and corruption, state employees at all levels are paid and bribed to enable the industry to function, ruthless measures are employed to squeeze out rival distributors

In fact some have argued this is a better fit for the pharmaceutical industry than the illicit drug industry (see Goring (1978) *Multinationals or mafia: who really pushes drugs?* In P. Wilson & I. Braithwaite, *Two Faces of Deviance: Crimes of the Powerless and Powerful*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press).