# A SOCIAL HISTORY AND ANALYSIS OF THE LSD CONTROVERSY

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## Summary

The evolution of LSD use and the controversy surrounding it are reviewed. LSD is treated as a powerful drug whose mind-revealing effects embodied the potential for both psychological harm and personal insight. Predominant motives for LSD use appear to have shifted from desire for self-exploration to a desire for fun. Early LSD use, stimulated by curiosity and adventure seeking, focused on the personal, existential, and spiritual insights attributed (sometimes erroneously) to the drug. Opposition to LSD developed as LSD became a focus or symbol for generational conflict, parental worries, political dissent, irrational behavior and violence, personal cognitive dissonance, and threat to traditional values and institutions. LSD use declined because changes in the social conditions confronting youth created a desire for a type of drug experience LSD was ill-suited to provide, and because changes in users' attitudes and preparations changed the nature of the LSD experience. The relation of drug preference to social conditions, the attributional biases concerning drugs, and the similarities between LSD proponents' and opponents' behavior are discussed.

The brief history of American society's encounter with LSD is a case of social conflict that promises to reveal something about our society's values and how it handles conflict, about how values and expectations shape experience, and about why people take drugs.

The LSD phenomenon was remarkable for several reasons. The vehemence with which contradictory beliefs were asserted is perhaps its most salient feature. LSD destroys your mind; LSD expands your mind. LSD increases creativity; LSD does not increase creativity. LSD cures insanity; LSD use leads to insanity; the LSD experience is a model of insanity. When proponents of one position did bother to discuss the opposite point of view, the discussion was usually a sarcastic and personal derogation rather than a reasoned rebuttal. Even the normally restrained

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and unemotional scientific journals lost their composure when discussing LSD. One gets the impression that it became common for various experts and physicians to trade on their professional status to vent their personal opinions, and that even appearances of calm rationality were often merely ploys to make foregone conclusions appear to be the result of open-minded reasoning.

Suspicions and charges of hypocrisy were common, as each party in the controversy refused to believe the other parties' explanations for their attitudes and behavior. And, of course, many fingers were pointed at a multitude of villains as everyone blamed the controversy on someone else: the sinister drug pusher, the irresponsible and sensationalist new medium, the sadistic policeman, the mindless, lotus-eating acidhead, the biased and hypocritical Establishment scientist, and so on.

A consideration of the history of LSD controversy indicates three fundamental questions, and the present article is concerned with them: Why did LSD use become popular? Why did society object to the taking of LSD? And why did LSD use decline? In order to address these questions, it is first necessary to review the effects of LSD and to summarize the history of the controversy.

Our discussion is based primarily on a review of the extensive literature (both popular and scholarly) concerning LSD. Additionally, we interviewed approximately twenty persons about their own LSD use and its use by others whom they knew (often quite a few). The interview sample described LSD use in various parts of the United States and at all different time periods, except before 1964. Because of the illegality of the activities discussed and because of the impossibility of using impeccable sampling techniques, we chose not to treat the interviews as formal data-gathering, but rather as attempts to confirm, disconfirm, or augment the information obtained from the published literature.

## EFFECTS OF LSD

It was generally agreed that LSD is a powerful mind-altering drug. Some viewed its use as a senseless self-poisoning and as the inducement of an "experimental toxic psychosis" (e.g. Sarwer-Foner, 1972); at the opposite extreme, LSD was described as

something approaching a psychological panacea and a sacred shortcut to spiritual attainment (e.g., Leary, 1968).

Different dosages of LSD produce different types (not just different intensities) of experience, a fact that is important to our analysis of the controversy. (Detailed descriptions of the effects of various dosages may be found in Cohen, 1967; Geller & Boas, 1969; and especially Grof, 1975.) Very small doses (50 micrograms) enhance sensory experience, similar to the effects of marijuana. Small doses (100-200 micrograms) produce mild euphoria, some altered perceptions, and feelings of being very high but with a lucidity that is unlike the fog-like stupor of strong doses of alcohol or marijuana. At this dosage, unconscious material sometimes enters consciousness. People notice a lack of control of their streams of thought, as ideas come and go.

Large doses (300-500 micrograms) bring the distinctive "psychedelic" (Osmond's term for "mind-revealing") experiental effects. Much hitherto unconscious material becomes conscious at these dosages, including memories and repressed feelings or attitudes. Grof's work in particular has established LSD's capacity for stimulating insight. Otherwise, religious and mystical experiences are reported, including memories of birth or awareness of death accompained by ecstasies and existential insights. Occasionally even "transpersonal" experiences are reported such as out-of-the-body or telepathic experiences. Strong LSD experiences have an element of euphoria but are by no means all pleasant. Yet stronger doses (600 micrograms or more) increase the likelihood of ineffable or apparently mystical experiences, occasionally described in terms of "cellular consciousness" (whatever that means).

LSD researchers generally agree that the drug does not cause or create thoughts; the content of the experience was already in the mind, if perhaps unconscious or latent (e.g., Blum & Associates, 1964; Grof, 1975; Hofmann, 1983). Introducing a chemical into the bloodstream does not add ideas into the mind, but only creates a disorientation or disorganization which temporarily changes the relations among the ideas that are already there. Grof (1975) noted also in this connection that there does not seem to be any feature common to all LSD trips; thus, the drug does not directly cause anything, but interacts with the characteristics of the user.

Actual hallucinations are quite rare (Cohen, 1967; Grof, 1975). The perceptual effects of LSD are distorted perceptions, not outright fabrications. The perceptual world is destabilized, allowing for increased influence of subjectivity and projection on perception—the world becomes, in a sense, one's Rorschach inkblot. Cohen's (1967) formulation is apt: "LSD may temporarily and selectively inhibit the brain's inhibitory activity." This explains both the psychological effects, such as confrontation with unconscious material and heightened appreciativeness of familiar things, and the sensory effects such as "trails," in which one's image of a moving object is suppressed more slowly than usual so that it seems to spread out across the visual field in its own wake.

The confusion in the debate about whether LSD enhances creativity (see Krippner, 1968, 1980, and Stafford & Golightly, 1967, for reviews) was largely a product of the failure to keep in mind that the drug can reveal but not create mental contents. The studies suggesting enhanced creativity due to LSD tended to use people (often artists) who were already creative (e.g., Berlin et al., 1955) but studies using ordinary, uncreative individuals tended, not surprisingly, to find that LSD did not make them creative (McGlothin et al., 1967; Zegans et al., 1967).

LSD's potential for producing both beneficial and harmful experiences is thus explained by its mind-revealing nature. The writings of Freud (1917) and Sullivan (1953) emphasize that mental defenses are erected for valid reasons but they tend to remain in place after they are no longer needed, unnecessarily restricting awareness and growth. A strong person with obsolete defenses or existential bad faith could obtain helpful insights from a mind-revealing experience. (Indeed, it is a basic premise of many therapies that insight can lead to growth.) On the other hand, borderline psychotics, paranoid or anxiety-prone individuals are courting disaster by taking psychedelic drugs.

However, few people on either side of the controversy seem really to have grasped that LSD merely revealed rather than caused ideas. Overattribution to the drug was a common error among both proponents and opponents of LSD use. A user, for example, would have a good experience or insight during a drug trip, would attribute it to the drug, and would conclude (fallaciously) that anyone who took it would have a similarly good

experience. He would then begin to try to persuade others to take it. Opponents of drug use were quick to make facile connections between someone's personal problems and previous drug use, as if the chemical intervention had caused a lasting alteration in the person's intentionality. Thus, a mentally ill person who had once taken LSD was quickly seen as an "LSD psychotic" (Cohen & Ditman, 1963). By the same token, the recent debate (Lee, Ranftel & Cohen, 1983) over whether Lee Harvey Oswald took LSD is presumably based on some notion that his drug use would explain his assassination of President Kennedy. Persons tend to attribute outcomes to the most salient events or reasons (Pryor & Kriss, 1977; Taylor & Fiske, 1975; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973, 1974), and few things can compete with an LSD trip for salience. Hence, it is extremely likely that personal insights and crises that were merely dramatized by the drug experience ended up being attributed to it. (Other reasons for overattribution to the drug will be suggested.)

Thus, the individual dispositional factors appear to determine whether a given person will have a good experience with LSD or not (Barolin, 1962; Shagass & Bittle, 1967). For example, Klavetter and Mogar (1967) showed that persons who are prone to "peak experiences" (Maslow, 1962) tend to have better and more meaningful LSD experiences than non-peakers. In addition to dispositional factors, "set" and "setting" are generally acknowledged to be important determinants of the LSD experience. "Set" refers to the individual's expectations about and attitudes toward the impending drug experience. "Setting" refers to the physical environment in which the drug trip takes place.

The LSD experience is usually characterized by a loss of volition (Klee, 1963). In particular, it does not appear to lead to delinquent acting out (Geller & Boas, 1969) or to violence or crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 1980), except insofar as its use is a crime. Klee (1963) noted, however, that in certain individuals with overcontrolled hostility, LSD administration did occasionally result in aggressive behavior.

The reader will have noticed an apparent contradiction between the assertion that LSD weakens one's defenses and inhibitions, and the assertion that LSD normally does not result in increased acting out behavior. To resolve this, one must distinguish between defenses that keep thoughts out of awareness

and defenses that prevent acting out one's impulses. There is, indeed, some opposition between these two defenses. Awareness of the implications of one's actions is one source that keeps people from performing certain acts. Thus, alcohol reduces one's awareness of the implications of one's acts and increases one's acting out—persons do things when drunk without considering that they will regret them later. LSD appears to have the opposite effect: by reducing the mental defenses, awareness is increased, so that the individual cannot make up his or her mind to do anything intrapsychically controversial because of all the possible implications. Also, the only exceptions to the generally nonviolent effect of LSD are in the persons for whom aggression is not intrapsychically controversial—persons whose minds become filled with aggressive impulses once the mental defenses are weakened.

Two final effects deserve mention. Although LSD is not addictive, some persons undeniably became fond of its use and used it frequently. There is some evidence that chronic users tended to have longstanding personality problems that antedated the LSD use (Barron, 1970); this may help explain the "amotivational syndrome", that is, the popular but only weakly supported view that chronic LSD use is associated with loss of interest in society's activities and in achievements. Secondly, persons who took LSD unintentionally or were given it without their knowledge often had extremely bad experiences. It seems likely that these resembled the self-perpetuating panic reactions that generally characterized "bad trips" (Weil, 1972).

For present purposes, the important effects of LSD are its ability to overcome certain mental defenses such as repression and reaction formation at strong doses, so that a kind of confrontation with self is provoked, leading either to insight and self-acceptance or to panic and anxiety; weaker does of LSD provide sensory and aesthetic enhancement, along with mild euphoria (Grof, 1975; Klee, 1963; Sarwer-Foner, 1972; also Geller & Boas, 1969).

### *History of LSD controversy*

LSD was unusual in having origins among people who were strictly middle-class, professional and well-educated. LSD was

first taken in 1943, by A. Hofman, the Swiss chemist who had first synthesized it (see Hofmann, 1983). At first, it was primarily used in research, partly in the hope that it offered an experimental model for studying schizophrenia and psychosis. This model was abandoned as differences between the psychedelic experience and the psychotic or schizophrenic experience became obvious (see Hollister, 1968; also Malitz, Wilken & Esecover, 1962).[1] While researchers were using it to model insanity, psychotherapists began to use it to help treat various mental disorders, with some encouraging results (Mogar, 1965, noted that there were over 300 published clinical studies, with generally favorable improvement rates; he cited various other literature reviews). It is plausible that there were other types of research done with LSD. For example, Lee, Ranftel and Cohen (1983) contend that the CIA studied LSD to learn what its potentially mind-controlling properties might mean for civil defense, political subversion, and interrogation of spies.

Some researchers and therapists tried the drug themselves after observing their subjects' and patients' reactions. Many (including former experimental subjects) who tried the drug liked it; they sought to repeat the experience and to share it with friends. A black market for LSD began to develop in the late 1950s (Blum, Blum, & Funkhouser, 1964). Other psychedelic drugs, notably mescaline and psilocybin, also began to receive attention and publicity as well. With them, as with LSD, the initial interest was largely intellectual (Huxley, 1956).

In the early 1960s, LSD (and other psychedelics) received increasing national publicity. News treatments tended to be cute, curious, and skeptical but balanced. (In the major news magazines we found no evidence supporting the claim of Sarwer-Foner, 1972, and others that the news media had portrayed LSD as attractive or desirable.) Journal articles proliferated and books appeared. In the 1960s, the first negative indications—warnings of potential dangers from unsupervised LSD use—began to appear, both in professional and in popular (news) publications. Evidently the street use of LSD was expanding rapidly.

Leary and Alpert conducted their well-known drug researches at Harvard, using graduate students and others as subjects. Their eventual dismissal attracted national attention, as did Leary's subsequent arrest for marijuana possession. For better

or worse, Leary became the most visible spokesman for the psychedelic "movement." He predicted publicly that within a generation the use of drugs would sweep and radically alter our society. His famous slogan "Turn on, tune in, and drop out" linked the use of LSD to the rejection of current societal values, patterns, and obligations.

LSD use was not a legal risk in the early 1960s; where there were laws restricting its use, they apparently were not enforced (Blum, et al., 1964). In 1965, however, the federal government began its legislative crackdown on LSD use, presumably in response to public outcry. From 1966 to 1968, legal penalities for LSD use were established, were drastically increased, and began to be enforced.

Articles in the news dealing with LSD during these years were quite different from the curious and balanced approaches of the early 1960s. They began to portray LSD as extremely dangerous, focusing on such things as axe murders and suicides. In 1966 they began to emphasize dangers to the user, including bad trips and genetic damage. "Experts" became increasingly vocal in their warnings about the dangers of LSD use.

In the late 1960s, research and clinical findings were widely publicized that associated grave physical and psychological dangers with LSD use. However, LSD use was relatively widespread among college students and other college-age persons, including the dropped-out hippies. Many believed that the reports of the dangers of LSD use were simply a trick of the "Establishment" to discourage drug use. Their own observations and experiences often contrasted sharply with the portrayals of LSD in the news media. Moreover, in the early 1970s, much of the physical damage allegedly caused by LSD had been disconfirmed by further research (Dishotsky, Loughman, Mogar, & Lipscomb, 1971). Drug users saw this as a confirmation that the warnings were a fraudulent ploy, and they frequently refused to pay any more attention to such warnings (Weil, 1972). Thus, the opposition to LSD had partially discredited itself by premature and exaggerated warnings.

LSD use peaked in the early 1970s and has been declining since about 1972, although there is some evidence that 1980 saw a reversal of this decline. McGlothlin (1975) notes that the incipient decline in prevalence of LSD use was suggested by common

observations and by hospitalization records, although he cites a survey of high school seniors in one California county which found no change in reported LSD use over this time. Grinspoon and Bakalar (1979) cite epidemiological evidence that 1972 was the peak year for LSD use.

A surprising pattern emerged in the interviews we conducted with LSD users. It appears that the way people used LSD changed drastically in the early 1970s. Persons who took LSD in the 1960s typically took large doses, took it with one or two friends or alone, sought peaceful settings for the experience (often at home or in some natural setting), and described the experience in terms of psychological or religious insight. Recent (late 1970s) and current users typically take small doses, take it with large groups of friends and acquaintances, seek out stimulus-rich settings such as parties and movies, and describe the experience as an alternative form of getting high. They tend to be either unaware or skeptical of claims that personal or religious insight can be stimulated by an LSD trip. They frequently consume a lot of alcohol or other drugs together with LSD, a practice some 1960s users eschewed. Users of the early 1970s whom we interviewed tended to show both patterns of use or some combination of the two. For example, one person took it with a couple of friends to go to a party; he began to think about death and about how his mind embodied the universe, found these thoughts unpleasant and after a few hours of "agony" resolved never to take the drug again. Thus, for him, something resembling a mystical experience (Underhill, 1912) occurred unforeseen and discouraged him from further LSD use.

It should be noted that users were and are often unaware of the size of their dose. Typically, they obtained one "hit" and swallowed it, unaware that the size of the typical doses varied dramatically over the course of LSD's popularity. In fact, dosage figures in micrograms were apparently meaningless to many users. Many LSD users therefore are unaware that dosages have declined.

The shift toward weaker doses of LSD apparently coincided with increasing use of LSD by high school (instead of college) students. Thus, the typical LSD user became younger as usage of the drug peaked and declined. We will return to these developments in the section dealing with the decline of LSD.

## Why Did LSD Use Become Popular?

The fact that large numbers of people accepted criminal and personal risks in order to experience LSD (often repeatedly) is hard to explain unless one acknowledges that there was something very good and appealing about the experience. Indeed, Leary's behavior only makes sense if one believes that the psychedelic effects were at least sometimes very positive. He may have genuinely believed that LSD was so valuable that society would tolerate and eventually embrace its use, even if he persistently provoked and antagonized the repressive forces of the status quo.

There are, of course, several kinds of good experience. An experience is "good" if it provides insight and stimulates growth, if it feels pleasant and pleasurable, or if it relieves unpleasant feelings. We shall argue that the history of LSD use is characterized by a shift in emphasis from the first to the second of these, and that LSD was never well suited to the third.

In the early 1960s, when LSD use began to become popular, a wide range of positive consequences were attributed to the drug, including increased creativity, mystical enlightenment and spiritual ecstasy, miraculous cures for psychological problems (including alcoholism, homosexuality, and neurosis), self-actualization, aesthetic bliss, telepathic and transpersonal experiences, improvement and enhancement of sexuality, and increased understanding of both one's individual personality and of the human mind in general. These claims were certainly exaggerated and overgeneralized, but they attracted curiosity and promised interesting adventure, at least, to the prospective user. LSD must have provided at least part of or a semblance of what it promised. The point is that diverse, unexplored, and desirable possibilities were attributed to this drug, and these attracted attention and curiosity. Those who tried the drug were often sufficiently satisfied that they continued to take it and recommended it to others.

The age-specific appeal of LSD is important. Youth and late adolescence, in Erikson's (1968) "psychosocial moratorium," are exploratory and experimental stages in which one is eager to find new realms of experience. This receptivity was probably accentuated by the atmosphere of the early 1960s, as sexual experimentation became more widespread and public, the race to the

moon began in earnest, and political Utopianism infected many young persons. In contrast, middle-aged persons have made their major life choices based on an implicit belief that they are familiar with the range of options. Confronting middle-aged persons with new realms of experience questions the premises by which they live and presumably creates "cognitive dissonance" (see Festinger, 1964, on postdecisional disparagement of unchosen alternatives). Middle-aged persons are thus reluctant to admit the existence of new experiential horizons, whereas youth is eager to explore and recognize them. LSD symbolized that difference. It is not surprising that the heyday of LSD use was also the time in which the "generation gap" was widely discussed and bewailed.

In addition, it seems likely that youth desires to discover things that are unknown to their elders but are in some way consistent with their elders' values or teachings, so that youth can establish its own independent identity within the general framework of societal (parental)values. Thus, for example, LSD users of the 1960s alluded to their parents' use of alcohol as if the parental alcohol use somehow justified their own use of LSD. Weaklund (1969) made clear that underneath the rebellion of the hippie movement lay the affirmation of traditional American values, including love, individual freedom, equality, tolerance, and social harmony (p. 357). Youth emphatically wanted the LSD experience to be good by traditional standards and values.

Leary's pronouncements emphasized the religious nature of LSD as a means of legitimizing the drug by traditional values. His glowing tributes to drug use also appealed to the budding narcissism of his youthful followers. As Grinspoon and Bakalar (1979) put it, "Every teenager who had taken 500 micrograms of LSD could convince himself, with the help of teachers like Leary, that he was in some sense the equal of the Buddha or Einstein" (p. 71).

Thus, a combination of wishful thinking and receptiveness to new experience shaped the interest in LSD among youth of the early 1960s. LSD trips did provide some with personal insights and at least stimulated spiritual appetites. There was evidence of shifts toward "higher" values and even self-actualization associated with LSD experiences (Mogar, 1965; Klavetter & Mogar, 1967). At the societal level, interest in Eastern religions and

meditations flourished on the heels of the psychedelic movement, as did acceptance of psychotherapy and interest in psychology among nondisturbed persons. These trends may be taken as possible evidence that the drug experience reawakened society to the importance of subjectivity in human experience and to the range of subjective experience. Certainly at least some individuals were affected that way (Cox, 1977; Rueger, 1973; Walsh, 1982).

We suspect that the discussions of psychedelics in terms of religion were attempts to find a language to talk about the experiences rather than the reason people took the drugs in the first place. Whether LSD offered "genuine" spiritual, religious, or mystical experiences is controversial (Downing & Wygard, 1964; Kapleau, 1980; Walsh, 1982; and Pahnke's Good Friday experiment, as described in Leary, 1964, 1968) and is hard to evaluate objectively. Insofar as LSD stimulated interests in religion and mysticism, it must have offered a glimpse of what such experiences might be like. On the other hand, lasting spiritual enlightenment was not produced by LSD trips. Any lasting constructive value of LSD experiences seems to be of the sort that insights gained during the experience could, with continued effort, be integrated into one's life. In short, the LSD experience could perhaps awaken spiritual interests, but it was probably not an effective shortcut or substitute for spiritual progress. Kapleau's comment is eloquent: he notes that many previous drug users have taken up meditation and spiritual disciplines (and given up drugs) but it is exceedingly rare that anyone abandons a spiritual discipline to go into drugs.

It is not likely, then, that many persons came to LSD expecting authentic religious experience. The religious or pseudo-religious effects of LSD were probably an unforeseen byproduct of the experience that was sought for personal and quite secular reasons, such as adventurous curiosity and fashionability.

As suggested earlier in this paper, the reasons people began to use LSD in the 1960s were not the same as the reasons people were using it in the 1970s. The latter appear to have been motivated by the desire for fun ("kicks") and by peer pressure rather than by curiosity about consciousness expansion. But the discussion of that shift belongs with the examination of the decline in LSD.

## Why Did People Object to LSD Use?

There are indeed genuine risks to the unsupervised use of LSD, and some concern (especially of parents regarding their children) was justified. However, it is clear that the objections to LSD use were greatly disproportionate to the actual dangers of using the drug. Society responded to LSD as if the drug represented a serious threat to its basic values and organization. (Perhaps it did!)

Indeed, the real dangers of LSD use received scant attention amid the proliferation of dire warnings of every sort. Public information accused LSD of causing gangrene, leukemia, psychosis, homosexuality, headaches, chromosome damage, narcotic addiction, blindness, birth defects, weakening of character and loss of motivation, suicidal and homicidal behaviors, and brain damage. These links appear to have been mostly spurious; by the mid-1970s research on the potential physical harm caused by LSD had abandoned all except the possible dangers of use during pregnancy. Thus, these events recall the spurious association of masturbation with blindness and insanity: unfounded warnings of physical and mental dangers were used to frighten people away fron doing something that society wanted to prevent them from doing.

Clearly, the public was misinformed about the extent of the dangers of LSD. The publicity in the news media played a role in that misinformation. A good illustration is the story about LSD users who became blind after staring at the sun—the story was a complete and admitted falsehood, yet the retraction of it was not publicized as well as the original story. Similarly, not everyone who saw the "LSD MURDER" headlines in the celebrated 1965 case learned later that the jury rejected the LSD explanation and that the murderer had had a prior history of mental illness (Rublowsky, 1974).

But it would be wrong and naive to image that the news media arbitrarily took it upon themselves to discredit LSD with a fright campaign. The media are in business and they publicize what people are interested in hearing, so that their business will thrive. Not only were people quite interested in hearing about the dangers of LSD, they were willing to forgive lapses of scientific

caution and objectivity in these reports. In short, the exaggerations and misinformation in the news were a response to the demands of the public's collective psyche.

The reason LSD in particular (more than other drugs) was singled out for vehement opposition probably has to do with its use by mainstream citizens. Middle America would tolerate minority and ghetto youngsters taking drugs, but LSD was a phenomenon of white middle- and upper-class youth, which made it salient.

A set of reasons can be cited for the vehement and sometimes irrational opposition to LSD use:

*(1) Misattribution of general anxiety.* In the 1940s and 1950s, the general level of anxiety in the American public was high. It became fashionable to refer to the present as the "age of anxiety" (May, 1953; Tillich, 1952). Reading the literature of that period, one cannot help but wonder: Whatever happened to the age of anxiety? It is unlikely that the anxiety simply disappeared due any abrupt changes in character structure and life-style. Rather, it is probable that the 1960s simply confronted people with external factors to which they could attribute anxiety. The extensive research following the seminal work of Schachter and Singer (1962) has demonstrated that people will easily accept false explanations for why they are upset (aroused). Anxiety, an arousal for which the person is unaware of the cause, would seem especially susceptible to such misattribution. In the 1960s, surplus anxiety probably was attributed to war, generational conflict, racial conflict, and so on—and to LSD.

In short, LSD made its appearance in a society that was somewhat predisposed to worry and to overreact. The recent experience with thalidomide, a fertility drug that turned out to cause birth deformities, made the public especially predisposed to worry about drugs (Brecher et al., 1972).

*(2) Parental worries.* In the early nineteenth century, the worries of parents about their children focused on the early years, due to the high rate of mortality among the young. The twentieth century refocused parental fears on the late adolescent and early adult stages (Aries, 1962). This has been due not only to the combination of compulsory military service and large wars,

but also due to the great increase in college attendance. Colleges came to provide salient centers for experimentation outside traditional moral values (Fass, 1977). Moreover, colleges have steadily abdicated their in loco parentis supervision of students' nonacademic affairs, a development that accelerated in the 1960s. College years became a stage of life in which the young person was financially dependent on the parents but physically removed from them, situated in an atmosphere that provided (and perhaps encouraged) experimentation with things that parents perceived as moral dangers (sex), ideological dangers (liberal professors) and physical dangers (driving around the clock to Florida for vacation).

LSD and its companion drugs provided a focus for these parental anxieties. The new drugs were unfamiliar to the parents and were surrounded with an aura of moral and ideological rebellion. Blum and Associates (1964) noted society's disproportionate fascination with "druggie sex," a fascination that combined the sexual titillation with the anxiety of moral dangers to the young. Parents were thus attuned to hear about the dangers of drugs, so they bought newspapers and magazines that described these dangers. The news media sensed this and obligingly began to feature stories emphasizing these dangers. Thus, the preliminary findings linking LSD to chromosome damage attracted national publicity whereas similar findings about X-rays, caffeine, aspirin, and virus infections did not (Brecher et al., 1972). A certain circularity developed in the public information system. The public's concern about the young and disapproval of drugs made it eager to hear about drug dangers, so the media featured evidence of such dangers, which fueled the public's alarm and anxiety and further stimulated its interest in such stories.

*(3) Crime and fear of the stranger.* The public's perception of LSD, then, was characterized by two kinds of distortion. First, there was selective attention: the public was awash with information (including misinformation) about LSD, yet was egregiously ignorant about some aspects of the drug and its effects. Secondly, as noted earlier, there was a pervasive tendency to overattribute effects to the drug. It has become axiomatic in social psychology that systematic distortions of perception and understanding reflect attributional biases, that is, cognitive

needs. Drugs came to be used to fulfill the public's need for explanations for certain phenomena, and its perception of drugs was distorted so as to fulfill this explanatory function better. Specifically, the public came to perceive drugs as creating intentions, so that they would explain behaviors that seemed otherwise troubling and inexplicable.

The well-documented increase in crime, especially in senseless violence, is threatening to the public in two ways. First, obviously, individuals come to fear for their safety. The fear of harm has combined with other anxieties to make the fear of the stranger increase steadily throughout the past century (Sennett, 1974). Drugs fed this fear. The uncertainty and anxiety connected with encountering a stranger are exacerbated by the notion that drugs may have rendered his or her intentionality utterly foreign to one's own. An older person we interviewed articulated this anxiety: "When you meet someone on the street you never know what he's going to do or *what he's taken.*" We suspect that for some, the seemingly incomprehensible Manson murders were adequately explained by the fact that cult members had used drugs. Drugs came to serve as an explanation for unacceptable and dangerous behavior.

The second way in which violence is threatening is that it suggests to persons that they themselves might be capable of such unacceptable behavior (see Freud, 1913; also Wheeler, 1966, on behavioral contagion). Even on a small scale, it is threatening to be similar to someone who behaves badly, as laboratory studies have shown (Cooper & Jones, 1969). For a time, the rise in crime could be conveniently attributed to ethnic outgroups, so that the mainstream citizen could safely believe in his or her own integrity as opposed to their presumably innate wickedness. But as it became obvious that the perpetrators of crime and violence were often in no obvious way different from the mainstream citizen, new explanations were needed. How could people do such things? An answer appeared conveniently: drugs made them do it. Drugs came to be perceived as resembling demonic possession (Blum, 1969). This explains the great appeal of news stories in which persons took LSD and then engaged in some socially disapproved behavior: they reinforced the attributional function of drugs for behaviors that otherwise were threatening and inexplicable. The mainstream citizen could go back to feeling that he or she would never commit such acts, at least as long as he or she avoided such drugs.

It seems likely that filial problems also led to drug attributions. When adolescents rebelled or otherwise failed to fulfill parental expectations, earlier generations of parents attributed this to the influence of "bad company," but recently parents who have the same difficulties with their children often suspect them of taking drugs. Obviously, many parents would prefer to believe that chemicals have altered their child's intentionality than to believe that the child is sincerely rejecting parental values, teachings, or expectations. When a generation of parents saw its young in revolt, there was a great appetite for explanations that focused on something other than possible failings in the parents. Attribution to drugs not only exonerated (mostly) the parents' values and past actions, it even permitted them to believe that the young were basically as the parents wanted them to be, except that they had fallen under the (reversible) influence of external, intentionality-altering agents.

Thus, the public grasped that LSD somehow suspended defenses and inhibitions; but this effect was distorted to seem like a loss of social responsibility and obligations, loss of impulse control, and loss of common sense (thus similar to the familiar effects of alcohol). The public mind then elaborated these pseudo-effects into a belief that LSD use created sinister and antisocial intentions. Evidence was sought and produced that seemed to confirm that view. The public was confronted with phenomena that had threatening implications; drug-induced intentionality provided a relatively appealing explanation for these phenomena.

*(4) Dissonance and the addiction myth.* LSD is not addictive. This has been acknowledged by all responsible works on LSD, even those that were quite critical of street (unsupervised) use of LSD (Cohen, 1967). The news media also appear to have largely refrained from referring to LSD users as "addicts" and from quoting self-proclaimed experts who described the drug as addictive. Yet abundant impressionistic evidence, including the remarks of the few older nonusers we interviewed, suggests that the anti-drug general public never really grasped that LSD was not addictive. This misperception can be partly explained as a blurring of categories, an assimilation of LSD to the familiar model of heroin. Still, the misperception was systematic error or an instance of selective attention, and therefore it presumably indicated an underlying motivation.

Users of LSD (at least before 1970) claimed beneficial effects of the drug, as noted earlier. In other words, they described it as not (just) fun but as a valuable experience; consequently, they recommended that many current nonusers should try it. Acknowledging such claims as legitimate would create severe cognitive dissonace in the nonuser. If the nonuser recognized LSD use as a potentially valuable experience, he logically should not only stop opposing its use by others but should perhaps try it himself (Blum, 1964). The claims of LSD's value were thus quite personally threatening to the anti-LSD position, and so opponents of LSD use saved their bitterest insults for deriding these claims. (Indeed, even objections to something based on its presumed dangers are undermined if the potential value is great enough, as evidenced by use of the automobile.)

Opponents of the drug were thus strongly motivated to perceive the claims about LSD's value for growth or insight as hypocritical. LSD users played into their opponents' hands on this issue. We noted earlier that motives for LSD use shifted from self-exploration to the pursuit of pleasure. No doubt the anti-drug public perceived this shift as confirmation that escapist kicks had been the real reason for LSD all along.

Still, as long as a drug is being described as useful and valuable by its users, the addiction hypothesis is very appealing to the drug's opponents. Believing that the drug is addictive enables the objector to deny that the experience is valuable or worthwhile; one believes that persons use the drug only because they are driven by terrible cravings, not because of any intrinsic value (or even pleasure) of the drug experience. Belief in addiction prevented dissonance in the minds of LSD's opponents.

In addition, one might speculate that the unfounded but presumably widespread belief in the addictive nature of LSD stems from a combination of projection and scapegoating. American society has certain addictive tendencies; many persons' attachments to cigarettes, coffee, television, spectator sports, alcohol, video games, and so on, resemble addiction. Other writers have remarked on the curious fascination with the relatively few heroin addicts instead of the far larger number of alcoholics as evidence of this projective scapegoating (Blum, 1964).

*(5) Association with politics.* It seems likely that much of the objection to LSD was only secondarily concerned with the drug experience. LSD came to be symbolically associated with the counterculture as a rebellion against American society, tradition, and values, because of the counterculture's rhetoric, its dropout lifestyle, its anti-Vietnam stance (which was equated with anti-patriotism for a time), its general liberalism, its sexual practices, and so on. Defensive hostility toward the counterculture may have focused on LSD as it most vulnerable aspect.

Leary's behavior certainly helped politicize LSD and antagonize the rest of society. His taunting predictions of sweeping social change based on drug use and his public exhortations to the young to "drop out" and "turn on" made LSD into an explicit threat to society instead of the implicit one it had been. There is indeed some truth to the complaints of some who were sincerely interested in the use of LSD to research and explore the mind that the politicization of LSD by Leary and others ruined LSD's best opportunities (Cohen, 1967; also Clark, 1975; Dahlberg, Mechaneck, & Feldstein, 1968; Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1979).

*(6) Traditional values.* Finally, one must consider the ways in which LSD represented an actual or symbolic threat to American values and society. Some have suggested that the Protestant Ethic condemned "undeserved pleasures" and therefore disapproved of drug use (Geller & Boas, 1969; also Blum, 1969; Blum, Blum & Funkhouser, 1964; Harman, 1963). We find this explanation inadequate; modern American society does appear to tolerate a great deal of self-indulgent pleasure-seeking, so the association of pleasure with evil was probably not a major factor in the position. However, the pleasures favored in modern America do not normally require people to forfeit control of themselves in the experience. This may be a remnant of the Puritan or Victorian attitude toward emotion and sex, which allowed the individual to participate but not to surrender totally to the experience. Drugs were of course perceived as losing oneself, and indeed many objections to drug use were phrased in terms of the evils of losing control.

Also, LSD proponents claimed that the drug was both fun and a worthwhile, valuable experience. The Protestant Ethic men-

tality tends to maintain a strict dichotomy between what "feels good" and what is "good for you," and therefore it was probably distrustful of the users' claims that LSD was good in both ways.

Others have suggested that American society is not tolerant of self-exploration. Harman (1963) in particular linked opposition to LSD to "the resistance to self-revelation so familiar in psychotherapy." This is an important argument but one that is difficult to evaluate. It is a commonplace observation that the American philosophical outlook has been dominated by the pragmatic orientation, emphasizing results instead of wisdom for its own sake. Except for the brief episode of Transcendentalism in the last century, the contemplative approach to life has never flourished in America. LSD represented the contemplative approach to life. Therefore it met some resistance, especially formulated in warnings about how LSD users would lose interest in achievement and ambitious striving.

It is probably necessary to consider the particular generation of American parents who formed the opposition to the LSD movement (see Elder, 1974, for a detailed study of this generation). Growing up during the Great Depression and World War II, they were perhaps unusually sensitive to the importance of hard work, self-sacrifice, and proper behavior. They helped make the 1950s the era of conformity epitomized by the "organization man." Having devoted much of their lives to providing their children with a secure path to middle-class success, they were shocked and outraged that the young would gamble this on illegal, unproductive, seductive, and probably dangerous activities, and would vocally criticize and reject the values to which the parents had dedicated their lives. Thus, a mother wrote the following to one of our interviewees in justifying her inquisitive concern about the daughter's possible drug use: "You have no idea how many people our age who have been good parents according to anyone's standards who are now saying 'Where did I go wrong?' and who are shocked when their kids 'blow it'."

A last line of resistance to drug use is the assertion that it is unreal or delusional. The principal complaint here is that people who take drugs become "out of touch with reality." One's ability to act, to make choices and decisions, is thereby impaired, and life decisions are likely to be mistakes. This brings up another fundamental aspect of Western ideology that contributed to opposing drug use: the disparagement of the subjective aspect of experience (Jung, 1939). In this view, reality is equated with

"objectivity" so that alterations in subjective factors are seen as induced unreality. This view provides the philosophical foundation for rejecting arguments that LSD could produce valid insight. Alterations in consciousness are seen as random and meaningless (or evil) delusions and not as the operation of any projective or mind-revealing process.

These differences with traditional American values do not seem individually potent enough to engender the hostility that characterized the opposition to LSD use. Together with the parental anxieties, however, they made LSD seem a powerful threat. LSD came to represent the possibility that one's adolescent offspring would give up control of their minds to an agent that would cause them to lose their ambitions (nourished since birth by the parents) for middle-class achievement and to spend their lives idly contemplating unreality.

## Why Did LSD Use Decline?

By 1970, various processes were in motion that, in combination, were to lead to the downfall of LSD as a popular drug. Probably no single factor would have accomplished this. For example, the legal and publicity campaigns had some effect, but such measures alone have generally failed, as evidenced by Prohibition, by the recent campaign against marijuana, and by the first few years of LSD's illegality.

Two things must be kept in mind. First, the reasons that we have given build upon each other. Second, they explain not a cessation of drug use but a shift from LSD to other drugs.

*(1) Frightening publicity.* Young adults in 1967 were saying "Never trust anyone over thirty" and were skeptical of LSD's adverse publicity. Of course, as suggested in the previous section, parents were not so skeptical and were even eager to hear of LSD's dangers. Perhaps their grown children would not listen, but their younger ones would. People who were age ten or so at this time were exposed at a much more credulous age to the warnings about LSD. When they began to consider LSD use, six years later, they already had well-established blocks against the experience and fears of it. They believed LSD was dangerous. People we interviewed who first used LSD after 1970 said that they had feared its dangers, but when they met older users who seemed in perfect health, they began to doubt the warnings.

*(2) Change in "set".* The publicity of the dangers of LSD, especially concerning bad trips, affected users as well as nonusers. By 1970, it is probable that the majority of persons taking LSD did so with a clear sense of risk and danger. When they discussed LSD use, others asked them anxiously if they had had bad experiences.

The importance of "set" (the user's expectations and mental attitude) on LSD experience is universally and strongly attested by drug researchers. Thus, a shift toward the expectation of danger and risk must have had serious consequences on LSD trips. The Consumer Reports editors, in their treatment of LSD, noted that LSD use had become in fact more hazardous during the 1960s decade, and the "increased expectations of adverse effects" topped their list of causes (Brecher et al., 1972, ch. 51).

Of course, most LSD users did not have bad trips, but they were affected by the new "set." They began to take smaller doses than earlier users had. They made preparations to ensure a good experience—a "good time"—by procuring candy, toys, and music, by taking other drugs at the same time as LSD, and by surrounding themselves with friends. Such steps may have helped prevent bad trips, but they had another, more subtle and insidious effect on the LSD experience. They minimized the introspective possibilities of the LSD experience and changed its emphasis from self-encounter to pleasure. The meaning of the experience changed fundamentally.

Learning to think primarily in terms of good and bad trips introduced, as it were, a hedonistic and decadent orientation toward LSD use. To earlier users, unpleasant LSD experiences were accepted as legitimate risks, and even as aids in self-exploration. Brecher et al. (1972) noted that "Before 1962, when LSD bad trips occurred, they were accepted as an inherent part of the total LSD experience; sometimes they were even perceived as therapeutic in themselves, and therefore welcomed" (p. 378). Mogar (1965) contended that it was the intensity of the experience, not its affective quality, that determined its lasting value; "in other words, painful experiences can be as personally revealing and permanently beneficial as experiences of great joy . . . and beauty" (p. 161). (Some case reports illustrating the value of unpleasant LSD experiences are given by Hofmann, 1983, esp. pp. 87-94.) Walsh (1982) reported that the few persons who used

LSD in connection with traditional spiritual disciplines similarly felt that painful experiences could bring valuable insights. In short, many early users sought a powerful and insightful experience without requiring it to be fun. But later users, increasingly aware that LSD experiences could be quite unpleasant, increasingly came to require and to ensure that the experience would be enjoyable. We shall argue that LSD is far less reliably suited to provide pleasure than to provide a powerful and insightful experience. This shift in emphasis thus prepared for the drug's fall from popularity.

Mysticism and self-exploration usually entail risks—perhaps necessarily so (Blofeld, 1970; Underhill, 1912). Strong doses of LSD combined this potential for insight with risk. The concern to make one's LSD trip free of psychological risks had the side effect of minimizing its mystical or spiritual potential. The LSD mysticism all but disappeared in the early 1970s.

*(3) Vietnam: the existential cue.* The spread of the LSD movement in the 1960s coincided roughly with the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam. The end of the war in Vietnam, in 1972-1973, coincided with the beginning of LSD's decline. The coincidence makes it plausible that there was a connection between the two.

Some might suggest that Vietnam alienated youth and induced them to reject society, and that the rejection took the form of counterculture membership and LSD use. However, the end of the Vietnam war was not followed by any surge of patriotism among youth. It seems more plausible to us to say, rather, that what Vietnam meant to youth was the military draft and thus the possibility of death. We suggest that the foremost psychological impact of the war was practical, not ideological; and that the really significant event in 1972-1973 was the end of the possibility of being killed, rather than the end of an unpopular political situation.[2]

There is experimental evidence that the psychological impact of a given risk or threat can be independent of the probability that the catastrophe will actually occur (Monat, Averill, & Lazarus, 1972). It is entirely plausible, then, that a generation of young people was affected by the possibility of military death even though relatively few were actually killed in Vietnam.

We contend, therefore, that the hint or chance of death was associated with interest in LSD. This is not the only connection between LSD and the concept of death. Grof and Halifax (1977), Louria (1968), Pahnke (1970), and others have described how an LSD experience can help dying patients accept and adjust to their impending deaths. This effect of LSD deserves some consideration, because the normal collective consciousness of our society has great difficulty facing the thought of death (Aries, 1981; Becker, 1973).

The awareness of death has a great effect on one's perspective and values; it raises existential questions about one's meaning of life and one's identity, and it devalues issues like material acquisitiveness and petty vindictiveness. Blofeld (1970), James (1929), and Underhill (1912) have described the central confrontation with death in religious mysticism and spiritual development. Castaneda's (1972) purported mystical spokesman Don Juan advocated cultivating a constant awareness of one's own death and mortality as an aid in spiritual development. From a secular perspective, existentialism has also stressed the importance and value of awareness of death. Heidegger (1927) described the individuating influence of death: one's death defines one's self because it encompasses the totality of oneself and nothing else, and because no one else can substitute. Camus' (1946) novel *The Stranger* portrayed a man leading a bored, alienated, and empty life who only awakened to existential authenticity when he was condemned to death.

The possibility of death, represented by the Vietnam draft, may thus have functioned as an existential cue. LSD and other psychedelics were popular in part because they were a means of exploring and dealing with the existential issues raised by the death cue. When the war ended and the draft stopped, death became remote and lost its impact on youth, who reverted to more conventional concerns and preprofessionalism. The removal of the principal existential cue coincided with the abrupt loss of interest in chemical mysticism as a means of self-exploration.

*(4) Mismanagement of the LSD spiritual movement.* Although Leary is generally perceived as one who did his best to promote LSD use, and although that was probably his intention, some have suggested that the acts and policies of him and his group were often ill-advised and counterproductive. As Cohen put it,

"Some of the best friends of LSD are its worst enemies" (Alpert, Cohen, & Schiller, 1966, p. 10). Two major errors deserve mention.

The first error was seeking publicity, including controversial publicity. De Ropp (1979) described Leary as afflicted with the "missionary disease" and outlined the disastrous fallacy in Leary's attempts to establish a spiritual community based on LSD:

> The kind of operation he contemplated required the utmost discretion. The group should disguise its aims, never mention LSD or psychedelics, let people think it was down in Mexico to enjoy the fishing or the climate. But here was Leary . . . madly proclaiming the aims of his group from the rooftops, inviting *Time, Life, Saturday Evening Post,* and even CBS television to observe his marvelous experiment. It was obvious to any normally intelligent being that Leary's group in Zihuatenejo would bring down upon itself the wrath of the establishment . . . [p. 281].

Publicity had never mixed well with mysticism, after all.

The second error was to encourage the general use of LSD by anyone for any reason. Leary's partner Alpert advocated that "anyone that wants it" should have LSD (Alpert et al., 1966). Grinspoon and Bakalar (1979) noted that Leary "replied to the criticism that LSD was used indiscriminately and for kicks by writing that it should be indiscriminate and for kicks, like life itself" (p. 70); hence, the movement tended to attract thrill-seekers, drop-outs, and lunatic fringe elements, rather than serious users intent on spiritual or intellectual discovery. This open-door policy may be contrasted with the approach of legitimate spiritual disciplines like Zen, which shun proselytism and place obtacles in the path of the would-be novice. The initial barriers help weed out unfit persons as well as increase the commitment and seriousness of those who persevere (cf. Aronson & Mills, 1959).

Advocating frequent use of LSD probably also undermined its value. Insight may facilitate growth, but discipline and "working through" are necessary; continually returning to the drug every few days hopng for more insight is not a reliable or promising path to personal development. The Native American Church uses mind-altering substances (peyote) as spiritual aids, but only once or twice per year.

The LSD movement, like its opposition, apparently indulged in over-attribution to the drug. Inspired by a few good experiences, the movement's leaders adopted the attitude that the drug would be good for just about anyone, anytime. By encouraging indiscriminate use of LSD, the movement evolved into a pathetic caricature of itself and made itself vulnerable to the wrath of the establishment. The mismanaged movement lost its credibility, its leaders were jailed, and it collapsed.

*(5) Drug appetites and social conditions.* One person we interviewed who stopped using LSD in the early 1970s attributed the decline of LSD to the loss of a general sense of optimism among youth. "We got the feeling that the Aquarian revolution would *not* come to pass," he said, "the feeling that you can't let your defenses down any more." The willingness to undergo a strong, mind-revealing experience, including its risks, was enhanced by a general optimism. The more cynical youth of the 1970s was less willing to gamble on things that provoked the enthusiasms and activisms of the 1960s, including LSD. The optimism of Reich's (1970) *Greening of America* was lost and his prophesies disconfirmed. Ashley (1972), Rueger (1973), and others have also suggested a link between the loss of faith and hope and the decline of LSD.

Economic conditions became harsher in the 1970s. To some extent the optimistic flavor of the 1960s was a product of the inflationary boom, which ended abruptly. The 1970s saw a series of recessions and shortages. Whereas 1960s students trusted that jobs would be waiting for them, 1970s students lost that assurance. They began majoring in economics and business administration instead of psychology and sociology. As death (the existential cue) became remote, pragmatic and financial concerns became problems. And as Maslow (1962) argued through his "hierarchy of needs," pragmatic problems tend to take precedence over self-actualization concerns.

The influence of social and economic conditions on drug preference should not be underestimated. The evidence suggests that LSD was never popular among disadvantaged or oppressed minorities, who were prone to narcotic abuse instead (Ashley, 1972; Blum, 1969; Helmer, 1975). Blum's quotation that the disadvantaged regarded LSD as "not their kind of drug" (1969, p.

365) is important. The ghetto has preferred "downers," or consciousness-restricting drugs such as alcohol, heroin, barbiturates, Dilaudid, and others. These drugs became much more widely used outside the ghetto as well during the 1970s, as mainstream publicity shifted from LSD to heroin, quaaludes, and PCP. Ashley (1972) and Rueger (1973) described how heroin tended to replace LSD in the youth culture. This was not indicative of the (discredited) "stepping stone" hypothesis (the belief that LSD use led to use of other drugs), but rather indicated a change in what people wanted from drugs.

The effect of heroin, PCP, quaaludes, and similar drugs is arguably opposite to that of LSD. LSD undermines one's mental defenses and asks one to re-evaluate one's way of life; the former drugs seem to facilitate one's defenses by rendering the mind unable to dwell on anything, especially one's problems in life. One interviewee described the appeal of PCP thus: *"You just don't know what's going on"* (emphasis his). Such appeal is obviously different from what LSD had to offer.

When life is hard or harsh, people seem to turn to drugs for escape (also known as "relief"). Escape entails reducing awareness so that one does not think about one's problems. Alcohol heroin, and tranquilizing drugs are good at this. LSD is not, because it increases the mind's vulnerability to worries, thoughts, and anxieties that one normally represses and subdues. In other words, the mind-revealing LSD experience is suited to persons who have a reasonably comfortable life but suffer from existential discontents, restlessness, and curiosity. It is not suited to persons who need relief from everyday worries and just want to forget them and have fun. In Grinspoon and Bakalar's words "LSD was not a reliable pleasure drug; ecstasy is not fun" (1979, p. 85). Attempts were made to adapt LSD to the new drug appetites by reducing the dosage (so that only sensory effects were felt, without swamping the mental defenses) and by combining its use with alcohol and marijuana use. Still, these were less than successful. Apparently, LSD just did not do as well as other drugs what people now wanted their drugs to do.

Along with the harsher social conditions, the nature of the LSD experience itself may have contributed to the growing preference for drugs that facilitate rather than undermine defenses. Although Rueger (1973) and Ashley (1972) focused on

loss of optimism as the negative effect that motivated the counterculture's shift to heroin, repeated and enforced self-encounter can leave a person anxiety-prone. One user we interviewed said that a series of LSD trips in the early 1970s left her feeling "defensive" and "exhausted of thinking about deeper things"; she went into "reds" (barbiturates), "the only thing I felt safe with." Thus, repeatedly undermining one's intrapsychic defenses with LSD may take its toll, so that the user develops an appetite for "escape" (defense-facilitating) drugs.

The spread of LSD to high school students led to its decline in a similar fashion. Self-consciousness is the curse, not the desire, of the early adolescent. The motivation to take LSD among high school students was probably to escape the pervasive boredom of high school (Larkin, 1979), to emulate older role models such as musicians and college students, and to prove something about themselves, rather than to have a mystical or mind-revealing experience. LSD use thus created a dilemma for high school users: there were social pressures and incentives to take it, but the experience itself was not desirable. The solution, again, was to reduce the dosage and increase the distractions (such as by doing it at parties) so that the experience would be mildly euphoric rather than intensely introspective.

Finally, it must be noted that a small part of the population was not seriouly affected by the pessimism and economic troubles of the 1970s. Drug users in that situation (such as in the entertainment industry) shifted into cocaine, a drug of euphoria and style rather than self-encounter.

Thus, social conditions and prevailing mentalities changed in the early 1970s. People stopped wanting to confront themselves with the aid of mind-revealing drugs; instead, they wanted pleasure and escape from burdensome everyday worries. Attempts were made to adapt LSD use to the new appetite, but the drug itself had become obsolete. The best that it offered, people no longer wanted; what people wanted, it could not provide as effectively as other drugs.

## DISCUSSION

Early use of LSD was motivated by curiosity and adventure-seeking. The often unexpectedly profound and pseudo-profound experiences led users to describe them in terms of religious

spirituality and self-actualization. Often the experience was also fun; when it was not, the unpleasantness was often accepted as meaningful or appropriate. The novelty and power of the experience surrounded the drug with an aura of tremendous potential value and uses.

Opposition to the drug began as skepticism, motivated in part by the implausible and apparently exaggerated claims of the drug's users, and in part by the desire to rationalize one's nonuse of the drug by disparaging its alleged value. As LSD use spread among youth, it became a focus for parental worries about their children's health and morals, for generational conflict, and for general anxiety. The public came to regard LSD as causing intentions and motivations in the user. LSD's newfound attributional utility resulted in its involvement in the public mind with fear of crime, fear of the stranger, and youthful rebellion. The apparent rejection of the American values and way of life by the youth counterculture was threatening to the status quo. To some extent, the threat was handled by attributing it to insidious drugs instead of any possibly well-founded or legitimate disaffection of youth with the status quo. Many of the drug's opponents, as well as its most vocal proponents, represented LSD as a threat to the American way of life.

As the prevailing mentality shifted from self-exploration and self-actualization to hedonistic narcissism (self-indulgence and self-promotion), LSD use became increasingly oriented toward pleasure and fun. Users' steadily increasing fear of bad experiences with LSD led them to approach the experience by trying to make certain it would be fun. Social conditions changed, so that the existential concerns of the 1960s were supplanted by pragmatic concerns. People wanted drugs not as a means of self-exploration but for temporary relief of mundane troubles and worries. The LSD spiritual movement discredited itself by indiscriminate membership and indiscriminate drug use, and by getting its leaders jailed. Attempts were made to make the LSD experience less powerful and more enjoyable, in keeping with the new appetite, but LSD was not really suited to such use, and its use declined in favor of other drugs.

The behavior of the opponents and that of the proponents of LSD use were similar in several respects. Both showed evidence of selective attention about the drug's effects and both tended to

overattribute the experiential effects to the drug. Both sides exaggerated their claims about the drug. As the exaggerated claims proved false, each side regarded the other as deluded and hypocritical.

LSD's capacity for stimulating insight and self-encounter was its initial source of appeal and was arguably its most valuable effect. But the attention of both sides of the LSD controversy gradually abandoned concern with that effect, as users shifted toward hedonistic enjoyment and the opponents focused increasingly on the drug's symbolic and attributional baggage. Each side seemed to forget what the controversy was originally about. Perhaps this was because the two sides never quite recognized a common ground on which to do battle. Early in the controversy, each side tried to formulate the controversy on its own terms, for example, internal freedom and the right to private experience, as opposed to moral and physical dangers and irresponsible behavior.

Not surprisingly, both sides sought to portray themselves as the "good guys" according to some accepted values. Users sought links to religious seekers, creative thinkers, and the American democratic ideals (pursuit of happiness, liberty, and love); opponents of drug use sought justification by invoking the importance of social responsibility, of maintaining control of one's mind and body, and of objective reality.

Yet neither side really won the argument. LSD use subsided not because the arguments of its opponents prevailed but because its competitive appeal vis-a-vis other drugs faded. What distinguished LSD and the psychedelics from other drugs was the potential for self-encounter through projective transformation of one's perceptual world and through disinhibited mental rambling and perspective taking. But drug-induced self-encounter was mismanaged and discredited collectively, undermined individually, and rendered obsolete and irrelevant socially. Still, social conditions and drug appetites may change again, and there is reason to fear or to hope that our society has not heard the last of this powerful drug.

## NOTES

1. Among the differences between LSD trips and schizophrenic or psychotic experiences noted by these researchers are the following: LSD

users have visual distortions, whereas schizophrenics have auditory hallucinations; LSD users are far less troubled by the experience itself; LSD users are more aware of their inability to communicate the experience to a normally conscious person. Hollister (1968) demonstrated that hospital staff members could discriminate accurately and reliably between taped comments made by LSD users and those made by schizophrenics.

2. The revival of interest in LSD during 1980 has not been documented to our knowledge, but it was regarded as common knowledge by drug users and was confirmed for us by local drug abuse authorities. If there was indeed a resurgence of interest in LSD during 1980, it coincides curiously with President Carter's instigation of draft registration.

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