

LSD: PERSONALITY AND EXPERIENCE

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Wiley-Interscience

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NEW YORK • LONDON • SYDNEY • TORONTO

Preface

This book describes a research study into the nature of altered states of consciousness, the personality factors related to the specific manifestations of such states as experienced by a given person, and the manner of functioning in these states. It dates back some years when members of the staff at the Research Center for Mental Health of New York University became interested in an experimental approach to the psychoanalytic theory of consciousness. These interests led to a search for a means of producing an altered state of consciousness in which it would be possible to enlist the cooperation of a subject in a range of psychological tests of his imagination, fantasies, and cognitive and other functioning. We inevitably came upon the early literature on the effects of mescaline and then the rather substantial literature describing the effects of a then unique drug, d-lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25). At that time the drug was something of a scientific curiosity and relatively unknown to the public. It was, however, a substance par excellence for our purposes and, after some preliminary testing with staff members, we undertook the controlled research study whose major findings are presented here.

The subsequent widespread use of this drug and the confused public and governmental response to it should not detract from its usefulness as a research tool that permits the scientific study of aspects of human behavior and functioning that are otherwise difficult to approach.

Our data had all been gathered long before 1967, when a rash of reports were published that raised the spectre of genetic damage from the use of LSD. A recent judicious survey and critical evaluation of all the evidence (Dishotsky et al., 1971) has come to the reassuring conclusion that "pure LSD ingested in moderate doses does not damage chromosomes in vivo, does not cause detectable genetic damage, and is not a teratogen or a carcinogen in man. Within these bounds, therefore, we suggest that, other than during pregnancy, there is no present contraindication to the continued controlled experimental use of pure LSD" (p. 439). We got in touch with as many of our subjects as possible during a period from 6 months to

several years after the experiment, and in no case did we observe or learn about any untoward sequel that could in any way be attributed to the drug experience. Neither, we should add in fairness, did we observe any lasting benefit from what had been planned not as a therapeutic but as a purely investigative study, despite the claims of several subjects immediately after taking the drug that they had gained remarkable and personally useful insights.

We hope that this book will serve as firm evidence of the value of LSD as an investigative instrument, and that it may help lead to a reconsideration of the use of psychedelic drugs for scientific inquiry.

The work reported in this book was so completely a team endeavor, representing the major effort of the entire Research Center for Mental Health for several years, and that of the senior authors for a longer period, that it is not easy to specify the contributions of each member of our group; some of them, however, are clear.

The original impetus for this research came from George S. Klein's interest in the possibilities of using psychoactive drugs to study states of consciousness and their effects on thinking and attention. This interest dates back to the early 1950s, when he and Robert R. Holt carried out preliminary investigations of the effects of mescaline at the Menninger Foundation. He played a major part in the planning and conduct of the research, and in the analysis and interpretation of its findings. Our deepest regret is that he did not live to see the final product of his work.

An important stimulus for beginning this research was Robert R. Holt's interest in manifestations of primary-process modes of functioning and, in particular, in developing a thorough and objective system for scoring such manifestations in the Rorschach test. Under his supervision, Anthony F. Philip began a doctoral study, investigating the effects of LSD on Rorschach manifestations of the primary process, which was the starting point for the larger investigation.

The entire senior staff of the Research Center for Mental Health participated in planning the study, the experimental testing, and the personality assessment. Certain portions of the study were the special province of certain staff members, however: the Color-Word test and the Uloomoo-Takete experiment, George S. Klein; the Color-Form test, George S. Klein and Leo Goldberger; the Rorschach test and planning the Personality Assessment, Robert R. Holt; the development of the questionnaire, Harriet Barr and Robert J. Langs; the Human Figure Drawings and the development of the empirical questionnaire scales, Harriet Barr; earliest memories, Robert J. Langs; the cognitive test battery, Leo Goldberger and Robert R. Holt; the theme list task, Irving H. Paul and Robert J. Langs; medical histories and physical examinations, Robert J. Langs. Donald P. Spence,

Fred Pine, and Mor
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Research Program

September 1971
Eagleville, Pennsylv
Glen Oaks, New Y
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Fred Pine, and Morris Eagle shared in the work of assessment and screening. Special credit is due to Walter S. Boernstein, whose Verbal Self-Portrait test contributed to our interpretation of the personality effects, and whose advice and experience were most helpful to us.

Of the many research assistants, now members of our profession, who did much of the day-by-day work of testing subjects and scoring the test protocols, Lester Alston, who supervised the testing schedules of the subjects and guided the complex sequence of testing, deserves special thanks. We wish to thank Sheldon Bach, Elena Barnet, Joanna Bressler, Phebe Cramer, Anne DeGersdorff, Carol Eagle, Harry Fiss, Arthur Goldweber, Bernice Hamerling, Helene Kafka, Harriette Weintraub Kaley, Anthony Philip, Norman Reiss, Reeva Safrin, Rita Simon, and Rebecca Strunsky.

Martha Gillmor showed us how to bring a complex mass of data and interpretation into what we trust is an intelligible form through her invaluable editorial advice. The administrative work of William Francis kept both the project and us from chaos over the years, and Melanie Chussid's zealous guardianship over our data files has countered the mysterious tendency of crucial data to vanish.

Finally, we wish to thank the National Institute of Mental Health for their support, over what is probably a longer haul than they originally anticipated, under the following grants: Research Grant MY-3670, Primary Process Thinking in the Effects of LSD-25; Program Grant MH-06733, Psychoanalytic Studies in Cognition; and Program Grant MH-17545, A Research Program in Cognitive-Affective Processes.

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*September 1971
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