

May 2019

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### Recommended Citation

Bracco, Jessica M. (2019) "The United States Print Media and its War on Psychedelic Research in the 1960s," *The Exposition*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/exposition/vol5/iss1/2>

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# The United States Print Media and its War on Psychedelic Research in the 1960s

## Cover Page Footnote

1 "Letter to the Editor," *Harvard Crimson*, December 13, 1962. 2 Efreem Sigel, "Psilocybin Expert Raps Leary, Alpert on Drugs," *Harvard Crimson*, December 12, 1962. 3 "Letter to the Editor." 4 Matthew Oram, "Efficacy and Enlightenment: LSD Psychotherapy and the Drug Amendments of 1962," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 69, no.2 (April 2014): 223-224. 5 Terrence Mal, "LSD: Problem for Both Science and Law Drug Popular Among Young People Because of Mystic Hallucination Effect," *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1965. 6 Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain, *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties, and Beyond* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 6-8. 7 *Ibid.*, 89. 8 Ken Goffman and Dan Joy, *Counterculture Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House* (New York: Villard Books, 2004), 247-254. 9 Matthew Pollan, *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2018), 5. 10 Robert Greenfield, *Timothy Leary: A Biography* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc., 2006), 112-114. 11 Goffman and Joy, 249-250. 12 *Ibid.*, 250. 13 Janice Hopkins Tanne, "Humphry Osmond: Psychiatrist Who Investigated LSD," "Turned On" Aldous Huxley, and Coined the Word "Psychedelic," *British Medical Journal*, (March 20, 2004): 713. 14 Sigel. 15 Greenfield, 153. 16 Leary, 177. 17 Greenfield, 125-146. 18 *Ibid.*, 145-151. 19 Dirk Chase Eldredge, *Ending the War on Drugs: A Solution for America* (Bridgehampton, NY: Bridgeworks Publishing Company, 1998), 31. 20 Robert Greenfield, *Timothy Leary: A Biography* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc., 2006), 114-117. 21 Timothy Leary, Ph.D., *High Priest* (Oakland, CA: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 110. 22 Goffman and Joy, 249-253. 23 Robert C. Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'N' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 82-351. 24 Oram, 223-249. 25 "Letter to the Editor." 26 Mal. 27 *Ibid.* 28 Natalie Jaffe, "Stronger Curbs on LSD Proposed: Medical Society Committee Says Hallucination Drug is 'Most Dangerous,'" *The New York Times*, March 30, 1966. 29 *Ibid.* 30 William C. Selover, "Senators Press Campaign for Crackdown on LSD," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 25, 1966. 31 George Reasons, "LSD Capturing Some of Best Young Minds: Use of Illicit 'Happy Pill' Spreads from Universities to Junior High Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1966. 32 *Ibid.* 33 Rudy Abramson, "US Plans Intensive Campaign Against LSD: US Slates Intensive Drive Against LSD," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1966. 34 Murray Schumach, "Distributor of LSD Recalls All Supplies," *New York Times*, April 15, 1966. 35 Gladwin Hill, "'Turn On, Tune In and Drop Out': LSD Users Describe Their Experiences During a Psychedelic 'Trip,'" *The New York Times*, February 23, 1967. 36 *Ibid.* 37 Richard D. Lyons, "Genetic Damage is Linked to LSD," *New York Times*, March 17, 1967. 38 "Penalties for Possession of LSD Reluctantly Backed by Goddard," *New York Times*, February 27, 1968. 39 "Excerpts From Statement on Drug Abuse Heard by Senate Panel on Delinquency," *New York Times*, March 7, 1968. 40 Richard Somerville, "Demographic Research on Newspaper Readership," *Generations* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 27.

## **The United States' Print Media and its War on Psychedelic Research in the 1960s**

**By**

**Jessica Bracco**

On Monday December 10, 1962 Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert sat down to write a scathing rebuke in the “Letters to the Editor” section of the *Harvard Crimson*. Leary’s attempts at research into psychedelics, psilocybin and LSD specifically, had come under fire from the administration of the school. Leary and Alpert were angered at the use of inflammatory language that the dean had recently used in a warning he had issued to the students at Harvard. Leary and Alpert claimed that if you want to test the “potentials [of psychedelic drugs] within the conventional institutional format you are sidetracked, silenced, blocked, or fired.”<sup>1</sup> On December 9<sup>th</sup> 1962 the *Harvard Crimson* foreshadowing the maelstrom of anti-psychedelic articles in national print media, an article was published that asserted Leary and Alpert were being investigated by the FBI and the FDA.<sup>2</sup> LSD and Psilocybin were drugs that were only available to researchers and not typically available to others. According to Leary, however, even researchers were now unable to obtain these drugs.<sup>3</sup> In 1962 the Kefauver Harris Amendments to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act were passed by the FDA. Under these new guidelines stricter efficacy needed to be proven before researchers could continue using LSD in testing, however psychologists were unable to apply these techniques for psychotherapy use.<sup>4</sup> Shortly thereafter, the “Dangerous Drugs Act” promised new controls over psychedelics. It became a felony to take, sell, possess, or manufacture these drugs.<sup>5</sup> In addition to these new regulations, the national media in the 1960s vilified research into psychedelics, regardless of their possible therapeutic properties.

The topic of governmental intervention in psychedelic research has been written about by journalists such as in Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain's book *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties, and Beyond*. In this text the argument is made that the government shut down LSD research to ensure its control over psychedelics.<sup>6</sup> The authors narrate that by the sixties LSD was beginning to be a well-researched drug by psychotherapists. In fact, they wrote that "more than one thousand clinical papers were written on the subject, discussing some forty thousand patients." Their political history makes the assertion that further research had been stymied by the new rules that the FDA had imposed on drug research because the results shown by psychotherapists were most often subjective.<sup>7</sup> Studying the topic of LSD research from a different perspective, is the social history written by Ken Goffman and Dan Joy, *Counterculture Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House*. In the chapter "When You Change With Every New Day" Goffman argues that "[d]rugs and rebellion became the thing that all young people do." By using the term "young people" Goffman focuses on the age groups of 16-22, typically high school or college students. Goffman brushes aside the notion that research into psychedelics could provide reliable results. Instead, he touts the official United States government and propaganda line about recreational drug use being prolific in the Sixties, thereby taking any rebutting the statements that these drugs could be useful for medicinal reasons. Goffman argues that when Leary and Alpert were fired from Harvard in 1962 what resulted was a rash of publicity for psychedelics, along with the former professors. He believes that this caught the fascination of college students which resulted in an increase in recreational drug use.<sup>8</sup> Scientists had not yet begun to publicly reopen research on the use of psychedelics for psychotherapy when Goffman's book was published. Another book written about psychedelic research is *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About*

*Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression and Transcendence* by Matthew Pollan, who argues that the media presented false science to the public in an effort “calculated to terrify.” While Pollan’s book focuses on current research on this topic, he does argue that although many scientific breakthroughs had been discovered in the 1960s, the media spread “moral panic” regarding these drugs which essentially stymied whatever support scientists had in the pursuit of using psychedelics to treat mental illnesses. Much of Pollan’s book argues that had print media and legislation not effectively killed scientific examination of the potentials of this class of drugs, scientists would be more advanced in their studies.<sup>9</sup>

The above texts argue that psychedelic research was shut down due to governmental interference. While this article agrees with generalizations found in these works, this paper will demonstrate that these government agencies worked together to cut off the supply and punish the demand of the drug. Little has been written by historians regarding the media’s portrayal of psychedelics in the 1960s and how it agreed with the government despite little or no scientific basis. This article will discuss this use of propaganda to frighten the white American middle-class to turn against a drug that had shown promise when used in the practice of psychotherapy. This resulted in psychedelics being criminalized and halted whatever progress had been made in discovering if they could provide help with combatting mental illnesses. They also actively worked to persuade the American people that these drugs were untestable and damaging, not only to people’s brains but also to middle-class society.

In 1960 Timothy Leary, a moderately progressive Harvard professor in psychology had experimented with psilocybin mushrooms while vacationing in Mexico. This experience became a turning point in his career. Leary claimed to have learned more in this six- or seven-hour experience than all his time spent as a psychologist. It was due to this “psychedelic trip” that

Leary developed the idea to conduct experiments linking psychedelics, initially psilocybin mushrooms, to behavior change.<sup>10</sup> Leary was eager to share this life altering drug and became a “launching point for a major movement.” When he returned to Harvard after vacation he began doing background research and he found that “another group of psychiatric professionals had discovered that the drugs could evoke a positive, life-affirming, even spiritual experience with therapeutic results.”<sup>11</sup> In particular, Leary focused in on Aldous Huxley’s recorded experiences with psychedelics.<sup>12</sup>

Aldous Huxley, a novelist, had been introduced to LSD by Humphry Osmond. Osmond, a psychiatrist, coined the word psychedelic in 1957 by announcing it to the New York Academy of Sciences. He used the Greek root words “psyche” which means mind or soul and “deloun” which means to show. He believed that you could gain a deeper knowledge of your own mind by taking these drugs. Osmond treated approximately 2,000 alcoholics with psychedelics and found a success rate of about 40-45%. Osmond also worked for the CIA and M16 testing LSD as a possible truth serum and as a result he was able to have a supply of the drug readily available despite changing laws, when it became difficult for even researchers to possess it.<sup>13</sup>

Another researcher of psychedelics was Dr. Gerald K. Klerman, an outspoken critic of both Leary and Alpert. He had been researching psilocybin since 1954. Klerman asserted in 1962 that psilocybin, while more dangerous than aspirin, was relatively harmless. He did not, however, approve of Leary’s policy of taking the drug with his friends and graduate students while recording their findings and labeling this research. According to Klerman, these sessions were not consistent with the ethical and scientific rules regarding legitimate research. He disagreed with the subjects not being selected at random, along with those that were undergoing psychiatric treatment. He believed that the group leaders consuming the drug along with their

subjects “mad[e] an independent observation more difficult.” Although, he did allow that “some of their findings have been of interest.”<sup>14</sup> It was possibly through these practices of Leary that the government began to take an interest in recreational psychedelic use, despite Leary calling this research. Soon, Leary would move on to begin his “only attempt to bring about social change through the controlled use of psychedelics.”<sup>15</sup>

Leary believed that “the prison is the ideal place to do a study in psychotherapy behavior change, because when you try to rehabilitate prisoners, you’ve got an ironclad statistic you can work against.”<sup>16</sup> The statistic he was writing about was the recidivism rate, which measures a prisoner’s chance of reoffending. Leary wrote a three-page paper detailing his hope that this research would show how psilocybin would “broaden and deepen [the] human experience,” determine what type of person could benefit from taking the drug and show how to sustain these benefits to make them more lasting. Leary reached out to the Massachusetts Correctional Institute at Concord to find out if he could test his theories there. He was informed that he would need to obtain permission from the prison psychiatrist, Dr. Madison Presnell. Leary invited Presnell to his home, where they consumed psilocybin mushrooms together. As a result, Presnell granted permission for the study to take place.<sup>17</sup>

On March 27, 1961 Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Gunther Weil began their experiments on five volunteers. Presnell chose the volunteers and all of the men were due to be paroled within a year. The researchers were given access to room with four beds and a few chairs in which to perform the experiment. They decided to break up the session into morning and afternoon sessions. Leary was to take the drug with three inmates in the morning while Weil and Metzner observed and they would switch in the afternoon. The prison atmosphere almost ruined the experiment, as it made it difficult to be positive. However, they overcome this and

after three sessions the inmates were administered repeat personality tests that they had previously taken. Results showed greater optimism and less anger. Two years after the disbursement of the drug to these inmates the study was reported as a success. They released the following statistics: 73% remained crime free, 19% returned for parole violations, and only 8% returned for new crimes.<sup>18</sup>

In 1938 a Swiss Chemist, working for Sandoz Laboratories, had accidentally ingested a drug he was working on. Albert Hoffman had discovered d-lycergic acid diethylamide, or more commonly known as LSD. The scientist knew he had hit upon an important breakthrough while experiencing hallucinations. He tried the drug again, on purpose this time, to confirm his suspicions. Sandoz Laboratories immediately began marketing the drug as a possible aid in treating some forms of mental illness.<sup>19</sup> According to researchers, such as Timothy Leary, all a researcher had to do was write to Sandoz that they wanted a supply and immediately some would come in the mail. When he had learned about LSD, specifically how the properties associated with the drug were akin to experiences he had had with psilocybin mushrooms in Mexico, he fired off a letter on Harvard letterhead and easily procured the drug.<sup>20</sup> Leary believed that “Sandoz knew they had patented the most powerful mind changing substance known to man.” He argued, in his book *High Priest*, that Sandoz proceeded to spend millions on the research of LSD and believed that they stood to recoup this and make more once psychiatrists discovered how to use the drug.<sup>21</sup> Leary moved away from his prison experiment to return to his previous research methodology, now with LSD instead of psilocybin. This included Leary along with his friends and some graduate students at Harvard, consuming LSD and recording their findings. Leary had an eager supplier in Sandoz Laboratories. When rumors began circulating that Leary was taking the drugs with undergraduate students the Dean decided to act. As a result, Leary and



Alpert had their psilocybin confiscated and then in 1962 both professors were fired by Harvard. This firing released Leary and Alpert to publicly reveal their feelings regarding psychedelics.<sup>22</sup> They eagerly proclaimed to the world the possibilities in life that can be discovered by imbibing these mind-altering drugs.

Now freed from his proverbial academic chains, Leary embarked upon a movement that helped coin him “the ‘Pied Piper of psychedelic 60s.’” In fact, the same day that the firings of Leary and Alpert were announced, an article was printed in the *Harvard Review*, written by the “architects” of the Harvard Psilocybin Project that stated, “the game is about to be changed.” Indeed, underground press began circulating information regarding the counterculture which included psychedelic use. Leary and Alpert had found allies in this movement among writers. Kesey and Ginsberg, for example, were known for their opinions on psychedelics due to their borderline advertisements on positive effects they regarded in the drugs. As a result, national mainstream print media went on the offensive to protect the white middle class from the deprivation of counterculture and the drugs it touted.<sup>23</sup>

In 1962 the Kefauver Harris Amendments to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act were passed. This amendment set up stringent regulations on experimental drugs and to legislate the way in which they were used in research. Requiring stricter proof that a drug was efficient before it could be used was central to the regulations that this law hoped to impose. The difficulty for researchers attempting to navigate this law, such as Leary, was that it was to prove definitively that this drug was useful in psychotherapy. Psychotherapists tended to use psychedelics as supplemental to the therapy patients received. Resultant from this law, psychotherapists felt forced to abandon therapeutic methods that had shown positive results. James Goddard, director of the FDA, appeared before three congressional hearings investigating

the regulation of LSD.<sup>24</sup> As a result, Sandoz began to feel pressure to limit their supply of the drug and to be more discerning in what type of researcher would be able to obtain the drug.<sup>25</sup>

The threat of the counterculture movement combined with new legislation enacted to attempt to control its spread, provoked media attention. In an article published in the *Los Angeles Times* entitled “LSD: Problem for Both Science and Law” the evils of LSD begin to be mapped out for society. The article reported on new laws called the “Dangerous Drugs Act” which would provide “new controls over LSD.” The article provided anecdotal proof that there was a necessity for these new laws. First, it established the proclivity of LSD on college campuses and how it was a major issue. The article reported that most college students had taken the drug. In fact, the author asserted that multiple people who had been interviewed knew “dozens” who had tried it. He also recited a story told by a UCLA student, who had repeatedly taken LSD, where an interviewer on campus asks 10 random passersby if they had ever tried the drug. According to the article, four refused to answer, four said that they had, and two offered to sell the interviewer capsules of the drug. Offering a rebuttal to these arguments is LSD researcher Dr. Cohen. Dr. Cohen discussed the benefits found in using the drug to help combat alcoholism. However, Dr. Cohen continued to warn readers about the harmful effects that could exist if not taken in properly controlled atmospheres. In fact, Dr. Cohen referenced a “young man” who took the drug and committed suicide because of a flashback. He did make the allowance that this was an extreme case but warned “psychological damage from the drug [is] not unusual.”<sup>26</sup>

Terrence also interviewed a police chief in the article, a Lt. Guidon, who claimed that “officers could detect LSD users because there is no smell of alcohol on the suspect’s breath, he has a weak pulse, and dilated pupils as in users of a drug and an unusual responsiveness to

religious or mystic suggestions.” He continues by describing people high on LSD as “kind of weird saints.” The author then reiterates that some users had “harrowing seemingly schizophrenic nightmares.” He then includes a quote from Dr. Cohen who used such words as potent, danger, and concern to describe LSD.<sup>27</sup> The words chosen by the doctor, author, and police lieutenant were specifically chosen to mold society’s opinion of the drug. Dr. Cohen, a researcher of LSD for 12 years, was a contradiction as he informed the reporter that he was currently involved in a two-year research project involving LSD and UCLA students. Furthermore, he described “constructive work” that had been gained in the use of LSD paired with therapy in combatting alcoholism. Despite including this benefit to using LSD, the article fails to create the perception of unbiased reporting and when examined closer the attempt at persuasion is easily seen.

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1966 the *New York Times* published an article titled “Stronger Curbs on LSD Proposed” which quoted a report submitted to news agencies by the New York County Medical Society during a press conference. The chairman of the society’s Narcotics Committee, Dr. Donald B. Louria, deemed LSD more dangerous than marijuana in this report. He estimated the use of LSD to be between 1,000 and 10,000 people in New York City. He argued that LSD was detrimental because one use “can produce permanent personality changes or prolonged psychological damage.” He backed this up with the narrative of 75 people who had been admitted to Bellevue Hospital within a year who had experienced “acute psychoses” which could be attributed to LSD use. Most recovered within a week, however, five had to remain in a mental institution for prolonged periods of time. The New York County Medical Society asserted that LSD had no beneficial medical use, disputing the arguments of several researchers.<sup>28</sup> Dr. Louria and the author of the article used provocative language meant to deter

potential users of LSD. In describing the patients that were hospitalized after using, sometimes only a single dose, the commission reported that “twelve of the patients experienced ‘overwhelming fear’ while under the influence of LSD, nine reported uncontrollable impulses toward violence, two attempted murder and one jumped in front of a subway train after ‘hearing a voice’ that told him to.” They do note, however, that this last patient “escaped injury.” The report also noted that according to hospital records “most of the LSD users were white middle-class youngsters.”<sup>29</sup>

While the FDA feared the impact that LSD was having on white middle-class society, it at times disagreed with the criminalization of the drug. On May 25, 1966 a report in *The Christian Science Monitor* quoted Goddard as disagreeing with the Senate’s move toward tightening drug control laws on “so-called consciousness-expanding chemicals.” Instead, he believed that the FDA regulations were enough, and the illegalization would draw in a larger audience. Meanwhile, the Senate subcommittee believed that the “stigma of criminal behavior” would work best among the habitual LSD user, “middle-class, educated young people.” A sociologist, unnamed, argued that people from the poorer classes would likely avoid LSD because it would augment their dismal environment detracting from any pleasure derived by the drug. Clearly believing this to be true, the FDA had begun an educational campaign against the drug at universities arguing that after 28 years of experimentation no medicinal qualities had been discovered. Despite these comments from the FDA director, Robert F. Kennedy is quoted in the article stating that the government has “an important medical interest in LSD.”<sup>30</sup>

An inflammatory article warning of the dangers of LSD distorting young minds was published in the *Los Angeles Times* on July 10, 1966. The title of the article was “LSD Capturing Some of Best Young Minds: Use of Illicit ‘Happy Pill’ Spreads from Universities to

Junior High Schools.” The author, George Reasons, claimed that LSD usage began with small collections of intellectuals taking the drug and spread to colleges, with some users as young as junior high school students. He asserted in his article that “the evidence that LSD use has mushroomed out of control is mounting daily.” He interviewed Dr. Reverend Carlo Weber, a Loyola psychologist, who claimed to know at least 25 students who use LSD. He added that these students were “among the university’s brightest scholars.” The article included a statistic from the County Probation Department which claimed that approximately 3.11% of their juvenile drug cases involve users of LSD. It also claimed that there was 100 times increase in drugs like LSD.<sup>31</sup>

The reporting also contained typical horror stories found in many other articles. The first account was about a person who was high on LSD and attempted to enter a pilot’s cabin during a flight. The author was illustrating the danger of people on LSD to society, as many people’s lives were in peril on this flight. Another story found in the article was an anecdote about a daughter who said she wanted to slip her mother LSD because she believed it would help their relationship. The media’s scare tactics in relaying this statement were two-fold. First, is the fear of being unknowingly slipped this drug. The fact that LSD was potent in small quantities was a well reported fact. Thus, a person could be easily given this drug against their will, which given the reported risks, could be exceptionally frightening. Furthermore, the idea that a daughter was willing to endanger her mother illustrated the dangers of psychedelics to the American family.

This article by George Reasons also included a description of the type of people who might turn to LSD use. It described this epidemic to be mainly an urban problem, centered among white middle-class students. It designated LSD users as unhappy, dissatisfied,

impetuous, and searching for a better understanding of the world and themselves. On the contrary, it labeled the non-user as possessing a “high degree of self control” and exhibiting better ways to solve his problems.<sup>32</sup> Despite the title, it only mentions one time the idea that students in junior high are partaking of LSD. This personalization of LSD users is an example of the use of propaganda to sway the reader to believe that the drug was a threat to the nuclear middle-class white family.

Similar propaganda can be found in various news articles published during the 1960s. In an article entitled “US Plans Intensive Campaign Against LSD: US Slates Intensive Drive Against LSD” written by Rudy Abramson in the *Los Angeles Times* the government’s war against LSD was detailed. First, it describes how the FDA is investigating the drug and if it decided that there were no legitimate uses for the drug it would seek to ban the acid. Secondly, it described how Goddard had sent out 2,000 letters to school administrators warning them about how available and easy to obtain this drug was. Goddard strove to highlight the dangers to white society, particularly within college students. The article also described where LSD can be found naturally. LSD comes from ergot which is a fungus that grows on rye. The FDA would be seeking out all producers of ergot and lysergic acid to determine what the possible uses of these would be other than for LSD. If none were discovered, then the FDA would also seek to outlaw them. From a propaganda standpoint, the article does warn that LSD can invoke suicidal tendencies in its users.<sup>33</sup> The public could infer from articles like this that if the FDA, a trusted governmental agency, believed that the drug was dangerous then such assertions must be true.

Following these articles was one written by Murray Schumach in the *New York Times* about Sandoz Pharmaceutical’s decision to pull its supplies of LSD from researchers. According to this article, Sandoz was concerned by the amount of “Black Market” LSD that was being

distributed. Sandoz also reiterated that it does not sell its supply, rather it gives it to “authorized and carefully checked research programs.” The article asserts that while there will be a few researchers still able to continue to have access to the drug they will be required to conduct their research under the supervision of the FDA. This article also takes its turn warning the public about how “LSD can produce reactions ranging from intense joy to terror.” It also describes the drug “extremely dangerous.” It ends with a story of a 30-year old medical student, with a history of LSD use, who was charged in the death of his mother-in-law. Apparently, when he was arrested he was so intoxicated on psychedelics that he was unaware that they had committed the crime.<sup>34</sup> Informing the public that LSD required close supervision by the FDA in order to be researched, while telling a horror story about an unnamed man committing murder while under the influence, was propaganda aimed at limiting society’s use of the drug.

One particularly provocative article aimed at furthering this propaganda was an article also found in the *New York Times*, “‘Turn On, Tune In and Drop Out’: LSD Users Describe Their Experiences During a Psychedelic ‘Trip.’” Written by Gladwin Hill, this article used an ironic play on Timothy Leary’s coined phrase to describe the drug in a negative light. It called LSD the “nation’s newest scourge.” This sentiment is found throughout the article, in which there are interviews of psychiatrists and law enforcement individuals. Dr. J. Thomas Ungerleider describes the LSD problem as an epidemic. He narrated a story about an “LSD victim” who was “gripped by the horrible psychoses” of the drug but had to be turned away from the Neuropsychiatric Institute at the University of California due to overcrowding of other LSD patients. He continued by describing a mother how used LSD as a tranquilizer for her baby. In another tale of an LSD user who had to be flown in from King’s County Hospital in New York for treatment, she is described as a “straitjacket case.” Another user hallucinated that he was an

orange, and if anyone touched him that juice would spray. Other consequences of the drug reported in the article were that the drug caused lack of focus and the loss of objective decision making.<sup>35</sup>

This article addressed the issue of the lack of definitive data on the scope of actual LSD users. However, it followed that statement with “except that it is deplorably extensive.” Hill quoted an LSD expert Dr. Donald Louria of Bellevue Hospital as stating that he “guesses” that LSD use has extended to “no more than 1% of the population.” However, Hill called this an “alarming number.” The article also explained that there were no crime statistics available which excluded other drugs. Instead it furthered the anti-psychedelic propaganda by making the claim that the long-term effects of the drug are “chronic mental derangement.”<sup>36</sup> Although promised in the title, this article failed to chronicle any LSD users describing their experiences with LSD. Instead, it promulgated the agenda of the government which aimed to keep the American public from having access to this drug or even wanting access to it by having doctors opposed to LSD recount their experiences.

Another article focused on terrifying American readers was entitled “Genetic Damage is Linked to LSD.” This article was written by Richard D. Lyons for the *New York Times* and is centered around Dr. Malmon M. Cohen’s research. Dr. Cohen injected LSD into human cell cultures to observe any chromosomal changes that may occur. What he discovered was that the LSD caused the chromosomes to change which could cause mental retardation and physical abnormalities. Dr. Cohen discussed his findings but is quick to add that any such change occurring in humans lacks data. The article provided the claim that “many psychiatrists” have claimed that the drug has led to “suicide and accidental death.” There is a rebuttal psychiatrist interviewed in the article. Dr. Keith Dittman reported that he had “observed the babies of several



women who had taken LSD during their pregnancies and found them to be normal.” In fact, Dr. Dittman found that 50% of his subjects improved when treated with LSD for alcoholism.<sup>37</sup> Although this article provided refutation of the claims of Dr. Cohen, the author chose the more alarming study to title the piece. Aside from catching the attention of the readers, it was more believable to the American public that LSD would cause these repercussions to people who chose to use the drug. This was also a way that misinformation, or more accurately incomplete information, was distributed.

In February of 1968, a law regarding punishing the possession of LSD was being written into a bill. In an article written in the *New York Times* James L. Goddard, the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, was interviewed and discussed his opinion of the new law. While, he backed the bill that would criminalize the sale, possession, and manufacture of LSD he did allude to how prohibition as a policy was ineffective. Goddard identifies LSD as “one of the most dangerous drugs with which I am acquainted and of which I have professional knowledge.” He believed in educating the public of the dangers of the drug, rather than just outlawing it.<sup>38</sup> Albeit, reluctantly, Goddard’s decision to back the illegalization of LSD swayed the American public to believe that the drug was dangerous.

An article detailing the Statement on Drug Abuse that had been heard by the Senate Panel on Delinquency written in 1968 specifies reasons why LSD should be illegal. It perpetuated the idea that LSD caused psychotic reactions, chromosomal changes, and difficulty with hearing following use. Although lacking evidence, the myth that chromosomal changes passed down from a mother that used LSD to her children was reported to this panel, which demonstrated the governmental focus on the danger to the family. The panel also heard that “although a continuing problem, admissions to psychiatric units of persons with so-called ‘bad trips’ are

declining” despite being reported that this number was increasing a year prior. Lacking conclusive evidence of the risk taken when using these drugs, the panel nevertheless was told that there are “possible hazards.”<sup>39</sup> The media reported on this senate hearing on psychedelics and focused on the negative attributes of the drugs, despite there being research to the contrary. The threat to the American family was central to this attack on psychedelics, particularly when reporting that genetic damage had been found in cells injected with LSD. LSD is not an injected drug, rather it is ingested, and no chromosomal damage had been reported by users or their children. The media, however, had no qualms about relaying incomplete information to the American people, attempting to sway their opinion on LSD.

It is through these news articles that the attack on psychedelics in the 1960s is witnessed, specifically through the word choices in the various articles which were meant to derail white American middle-class society’s opinion on the drugs. Print media was well acquainted with its primary demographic, which were “consumers over 50.”<sup>40</sup> Certainly, printing denunciations about these drugs were intended for this demographic. The articles were meant to be warnings for the parents of high school and college-aged youngsters because they were deemed most at risk for experimenting with these drugs. Meanwhile, the FDA believed that with its education policy, along with its new rules regarding research of psychedelics, that it could end the use of this drug. Despite there being some evidence of the usefulness of these drugs in psychotherapy, the FDA believed that it could combat even recreational use through the stringent new research rules. There is a similar vein through these reports that, while occasionally providing a rebuttal to the official line on psychedelics, sensationalize the ill effects of the drug. They focus on suicide, murder, deaths, psychotic episodes, and demonize the mystical qualities of the drugs. Many of the reports describe people going into mental institutions as a result of trying the drug

once. The lack of names in the articles specifying these so-called victims of psychedelics makes it difficult to examine these instances closer.

It was not until the 1960s, when psychedelics had begun to be used by white middle-class society recreationally, that the vilification of psychedelics began. Leary's promotion of the use of psychedelics resulted in a backlash from print media along with anti-drug legislation. Before the potentials of psychedelics in psychotherapy could be properly examined, the Commissioner of the FDA went on record labeling LSD as a serious issue plaguing society. Simultaneously, the government was on the offensive in the war against psychedelics by passing laws that criminalized psychedelics. News articles were published almost daily chronicling the dangers of psychedelics. However, the common thread found in each news article has been the lack of definitive knowledge about the hazards associated with the drug. There were also many generalizations about the quantity of people who used the drugs and if that number was growing as was being reported. Despite a lack of statistical data regarding drug use from the 1960s, many interviewees made sweeping statements of the proclivity of psychedelic use to frighten society into taking counteractions. Contemporarily, psychedelic research has found a resurgence among psychologists for use in combatting mental illness, most notably PTSD and depression. However, the 1960s government and the media vilified psychedelic research, while attempting to rescue white American middle-class society from the grip of these drugs and ignored any possible positive therapeutic properties psychedelics had.

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- <sup>10</sup> Robert Greenfield, *Timothy Leary: A Biography* (Orlando: Harcourt Inc., 2006), 112-114.
- <sup>11</sup> Goffman and Joy, 249-250.
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- <sup>15</sup> Greenfield, 153.
- <sup>16</sup> Leary, 177.
- <sup>17</sup> Greenfield, 125-146.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-151.
- <sup>19</sup> Dirk Chase Eldredge, *Ending the War on Drugs: A Solution for America* (Bridgehampton, NY: Bridgeworks Publishing Company, 1998), 31.
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- <sup>21</sup> Timothy Leary, Ph.D., *High Priest* (Oakland, CA: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 110.
- <sup>22</sup> Goffman and Joy, 249-253.
- <sup>23</sup> Robert C. Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'N' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 82-351.
- <sup>24</sup> Oram, 223-249.
- <sup>25</sup> "Letter to the Editor."
- <sup>26</sup> Mal.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
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<sup>40</sup> Richard Somerville, “Demographic Research on Newspaper Readership,” *Generations* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 27.