

PETR WINKLER

PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF HALLUCINOGEN USE AND AN APPROXIMATELY 40-
YEAR FOLLOW-UP STUDY ON LSD SELF-EXPERIMENTATION AMONGST
PROFESSIONALS IN THE MENTAL HEALTH FIELDS
(Study Program: Master Social Politics and Social Work)

Supervisor: PhDr. Jiřina Šiklová, CSc.

Adviser: Doc. MUDr. Miloř Vojtěchovský, CSc.

Opponent: Doc. MUDr. Jiří Horáček, PhD

Abstract:

The renaissance of hallucinogen research and use that has emerged in last two decades, introduces several challenges for the field of social work. Above all, these challenges are concerned with use of hallucinogens among laymen, for therapeutic, educational, autognostic, and heuristic purposes. The other challenge for social work is the conception, construction, and the influencing of drug policies, including programs of social prevention. Last but not least, there is the challenge of understanding and reflecting upon mental health fields' history and history of drug use in general. Hence, the goal of this paper is to provide necessary information, which will aid social workers in orienting themselves and competently handling the challenges mentioned above.

This work valuates the problems related to hallucinogens from the perspective of social work. The theoretical portion, based on rigorous analysis of available literature in both - Czech and English, is devoted to the phenomenology of experience with hallucinogens. It deals with the nature, characteristics, risks, and factors that have influence over it. Following is a treatise on the use of hallucinogens in mental health fields both - inside and outside of the former Czechoslovakia. Focus is on human experimentations both - on healthy volunteers and on people with psychological disorders. Of course, the problems of laymen' (ab)use is explored as well. Appearing in the 60's particularly in the USA, it is unprecedented in its nature, continues to this day, and should be of serious interest in the field of social work.

The practical portion (research) is based on semi-structured interviews (n = 22) approximately 45 - 60 minutes long and on questionnaire survey (n = 21). It consists of a follow-up study on the educationally and autognostically oriented LSD self-experimentation among prominent Czech professionals in the mental health fields, who researched this substance in the former Czechoslovakia.

None of the respondents claimed that the LSD experience would have had any long-term negative effect on him or her. Vice versa, the great majority of them (20 of 22) claimed that it had some long-term positive effect in their personal and/or professional sphere. Eighteen of 20 queried respondents also claimed that their experience helped them to better understand the world of those with psychological disorders. This too was reflected in the questionnaire survey. All of the respondents would, under certain conditions, accept the availability of LSD for didactic and autognostic purposes today, especially for people who work professionally with others - therefore even for social workers. Nearly all of the respondents warned against lay' use, but there was no consensus to the question, whether there should be any specialized social service for such lay users.

This paper exemplifies that the LSD experience, when under controlled and well prepared conditions is a great educational and autognostic asset and that it is particularly advisable for those who work professionally with other people. On the basis of study of available professional literature, we may also legitimately suppose that the hallucinogenic experience could be of great therapeutic potential even in cases, where the common psycho therapeutic method does not help. This is why in my view legal research of these substances should continue on a much greater scale than they currently are. Social work should, in my humble opinion, initiate a greater number of studies focused especially on the use of hallucinogens among laymen and on the evaluation of particular social and socio-political actions related to use of these substances.