

LSD, Psilocybin, and DMT

Frequency of Bad Trips and Spiritual Insights

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The *LSD, Psilocybin, and DMT User Survey* examined the estimated frequency of bad trips and spiritual insights associated with the use of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), psilocybin, and dimethyltryptamine (DMT) among a group of recreational users (N=3403). The data was collected through anonymous online self-reports during the month of April 2014. Respondents were recruited via posts on social media websites.

The survey contained filter questions asking respondents to report the number of times they consumed each drug. Those respondents who did not use a particular drug on at least one or more occasions throughout their lives skipped the questions regarding frequency of bad trips and spiritual insights for that drug. Since all respondents did not have a history of using all drugs, the number of participants who shared their experiences for each drug varied - LSD (n=2557), psilocybin (n=2601), smoked or vaporized DMT (n=1222), oral DMT with an MAOI (n=391).

Demographics

The mode age of the respondents was 18 to 24 years (n=1989). Nonetheless, data was collected from a number of other age groups including respondents whose age was 25 to 34 years (n=834), 35 to 44 years (n=322), 45 to 54 years (n=130), 55 to 64 years (n=99), and 65 years and older (n=29). Volunteers from 114 countries completed the survey with the majority residing in the United States, Australia,

Canada, or the United Kingdom. The gender of the sample was 19% female and 81% male.

Results

Table 1. Estimated Rate of Bad Trips on LSD, Psilocybin, Smoked or Vaporized DMT, and Oral DMT (in Combination with an MAOI)

	LSD		Psilocybin		Smoked or Vaporized DMT		Oral DMT	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never had a Bad Trip	1375	53.4	1409	54.2	890	72.8	268	68.5
Fewer than 10% of Total Lifetime Experiences	881	34.2	738	28.4	198	16.2	59	15.1
Around 25% of Total Lifetime Experiences	201	7.8	241	9.3	58	4.7	20	5.1
Around 50% of Total Lifetime Experiences	79	3.1	140	5.4	32	2.6	17	4.3
Around 75% of Total Lifetime Experiences	10	.4	37	1.4	17	1.4	6	1.5
All Experiences were Bad Trips	31	1.2	36	1.4	27	2.2	21	5.4
Total	2577	100.0	2601	100.0	1222	100.0	391	100.0

Table 2. Estimated Rate of Personally Meaningful Mystical and/or Spiritual Insights brought about by LSD, Psilocybin, Smoked or Vaporized DMT, and Oral DMT (in Combination with an MAOI)

	LSD		Psilocybin		Smoked or Vaporized DMT		Oral DMT	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never had Personally Meaningful Mystical and/or Spiritual Insights	196	7.6	231	8.9	151	12.4	51	13.0
Fewer than 10% of Total Lifetime Experiences	154	6.0	166	6.4	73	6.0	13	3.3
Around 25% of Total Lifetime Experiences	313	12.1	251	9.7	87	7.1	18	4.6
Around 50% of Total Lifetime Experiences	419	16.3	420	16.1	103	8.4	27	6.9
Around 75% of Total Lifetime Experiences	580	22.5	551	21.2	162	13.3	42	10.7
All Experiences brought about Personally Meaningful Mystical and/or Spiritual Insights	915	35.5	982	37.8	646	52.9	240	61.4
Total	2577	100.0	2601	100.0	1222	100.0	391	100.0

LSD

Figure 1. Total Number of Times Respondents Reported Using LSD throughout their Lives

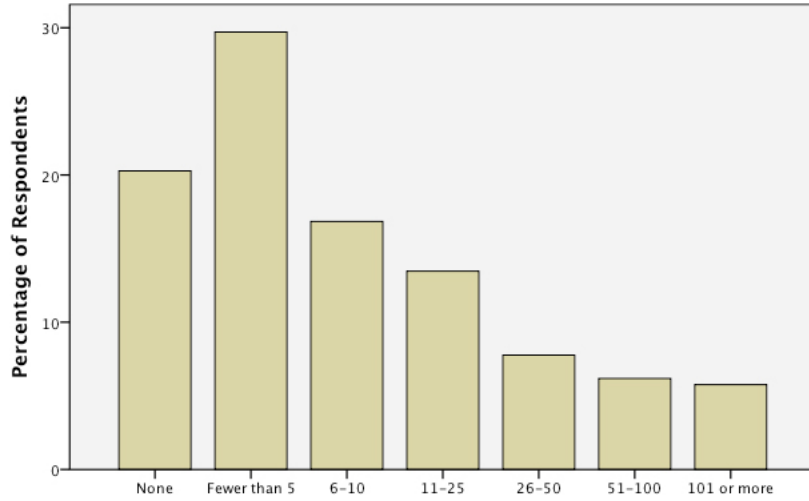


Figure 2. Estimated Rate of Bad Trips on LSD

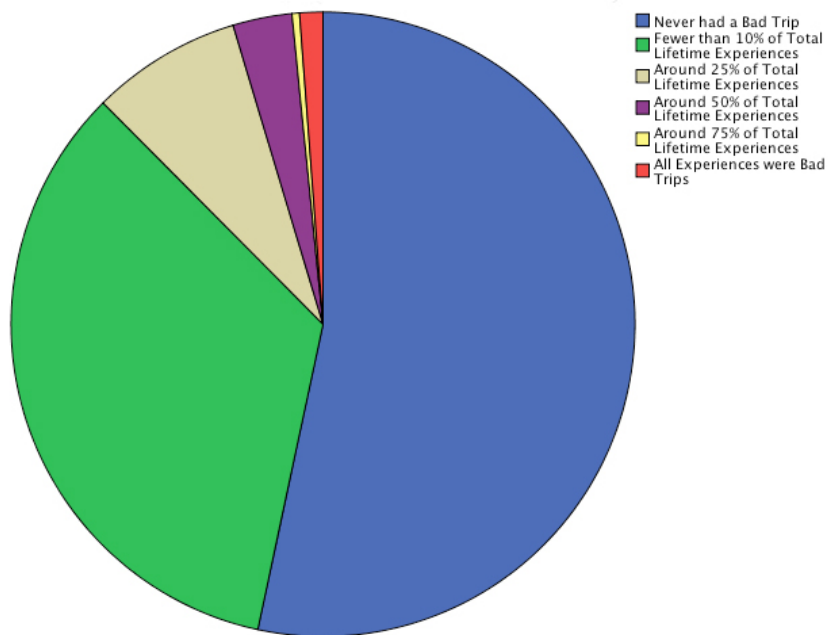
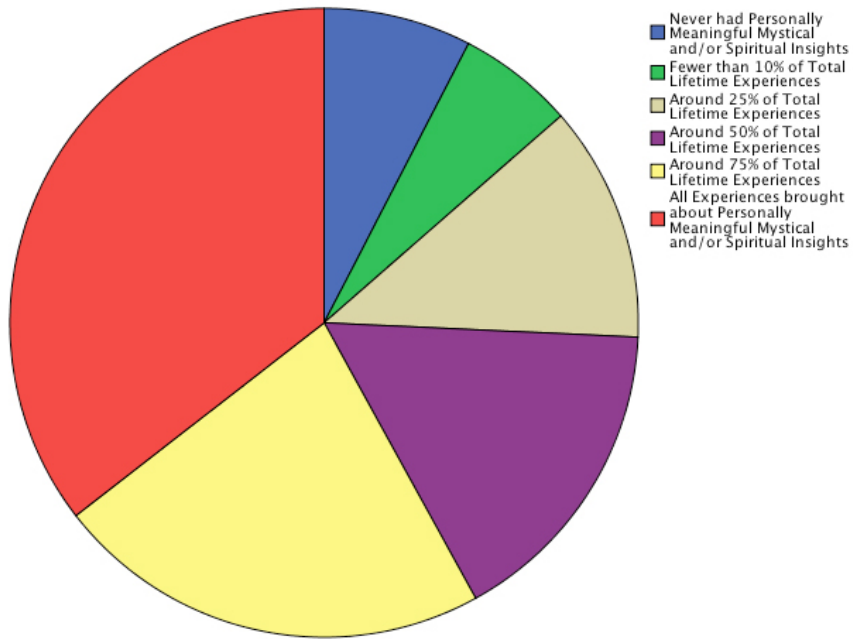


Figure 3. Estimated Rate of Personally Meaningful Mystical and/or Spiritual Insights brought about by LSD



Psilocybin

Figure 4. Total Number of Times Respondents Reported Using Psilocybin throughout their Lives

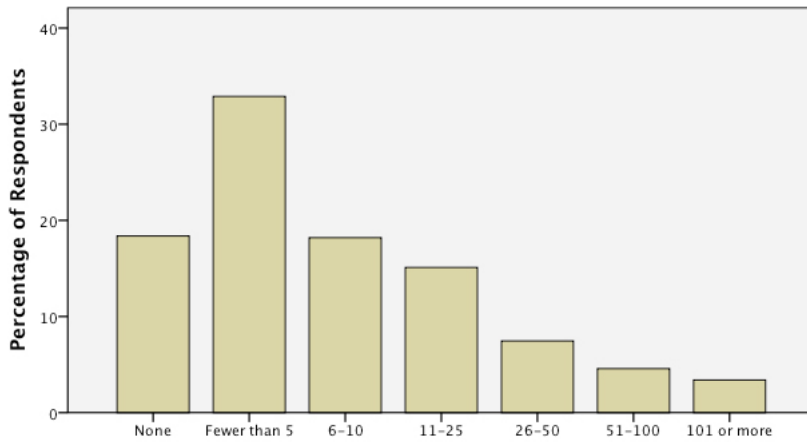


Figure 5. Estimated Rate of Bad Trips on Psilocybin

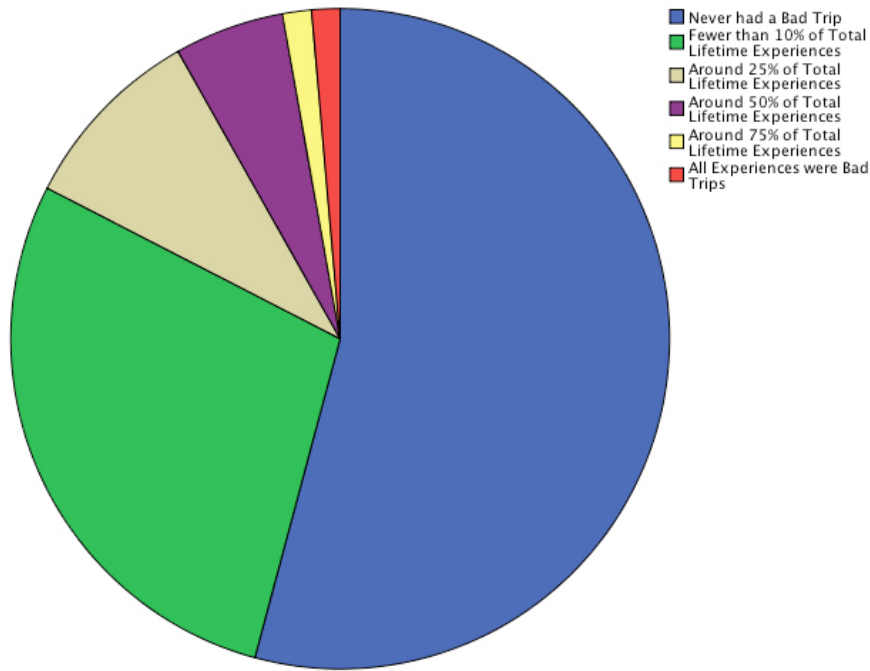
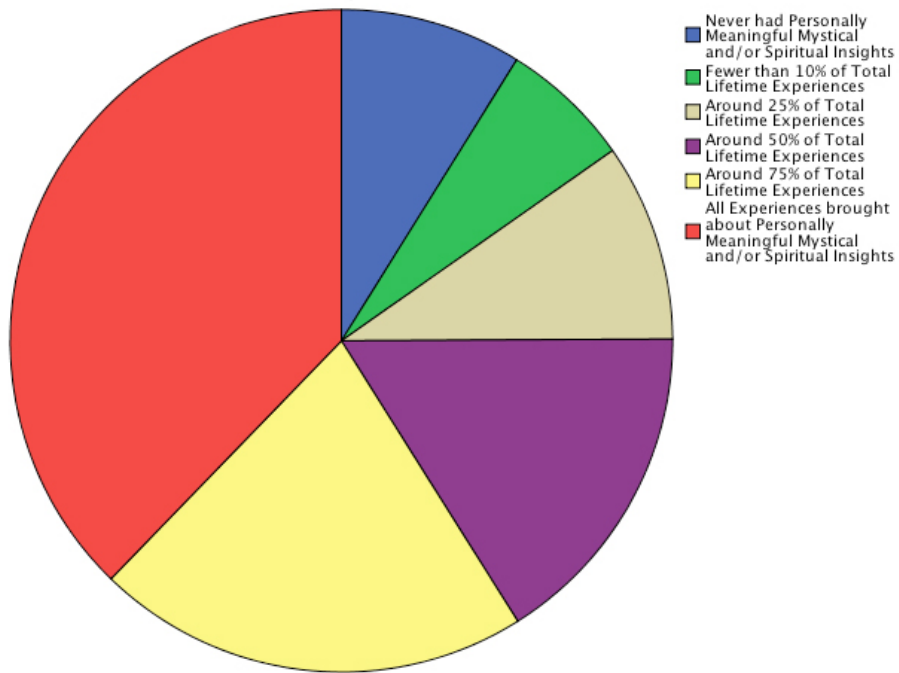


Figure 6. Estimated Rate of Personally Meaningful Mystical and/or Spiritual Insights brought about by Psilocybin



Smoked or Vaporized DMT

Figure 7. Total Number of Times Respondents Reported Smoking or Vaporizing DMT throughout their Lives

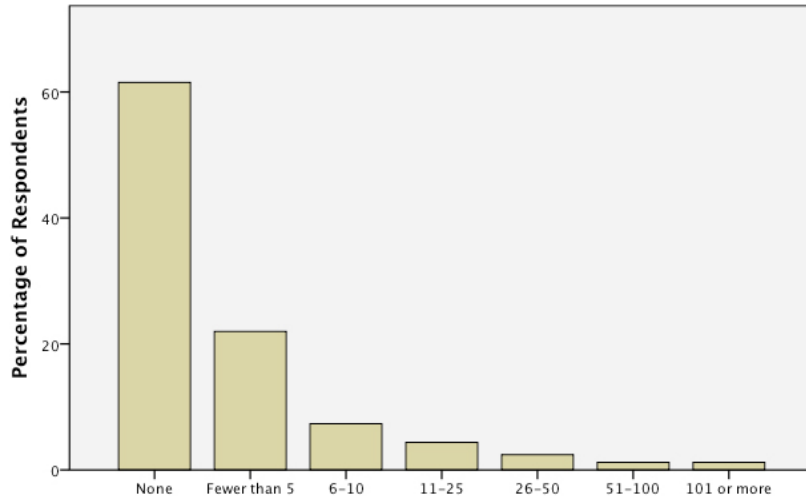


Figure 8. Estimated Rate of Bad Trips on Smoked or Vaporized DMT

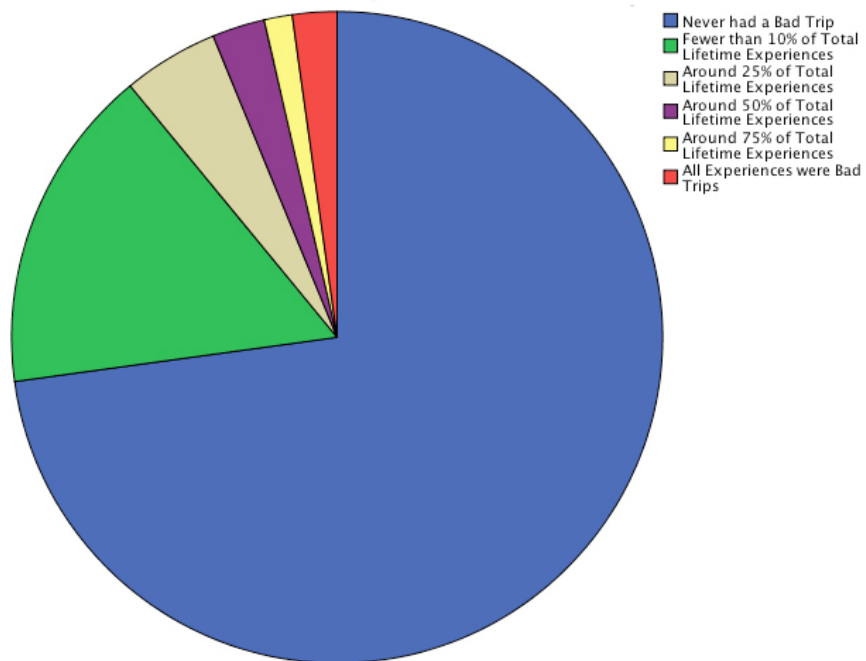
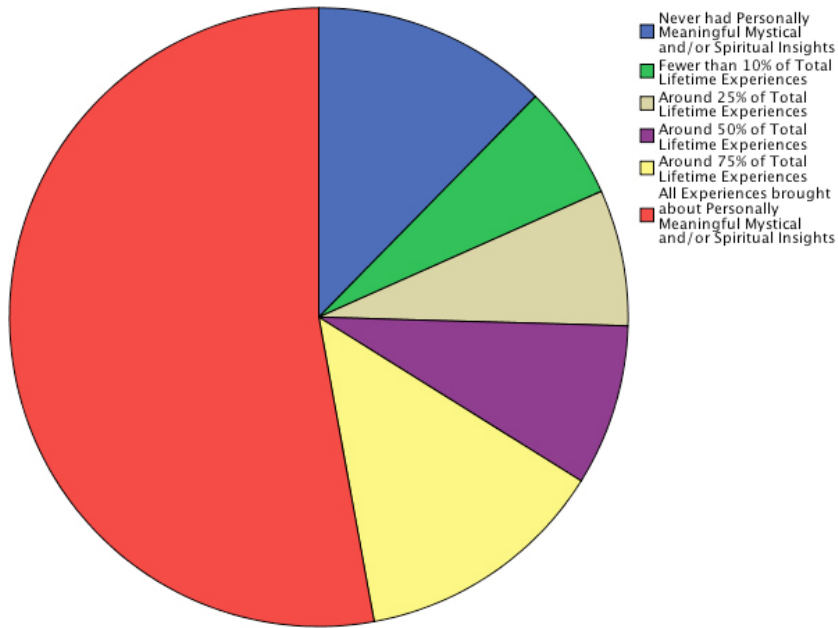


Figure 9. Estimated Rate of Personally Meaningful Mystical and/or Spiritual Insights brought about by Smoked or Vaporized DMT



Oral DMT in Combination with an MAOI

Figure 10. Total Number of Times Respondents Reported Using Oral DMT in Combination with an MAOI throughout their Lives

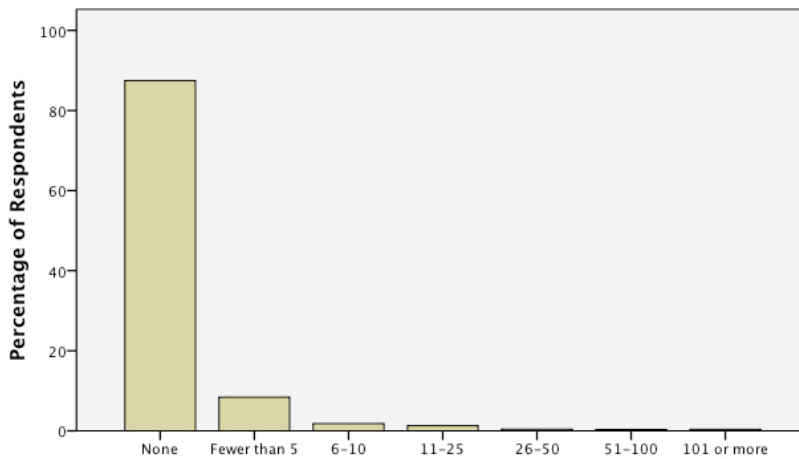


Figure 11. Estimated Rate of Bad Trips on Oral DMT in Combination with an MAOI

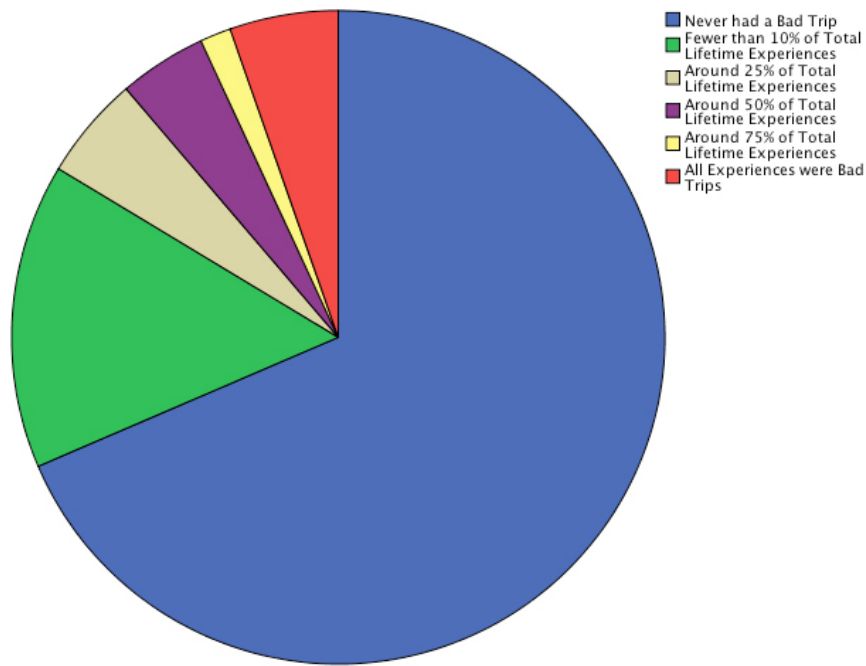
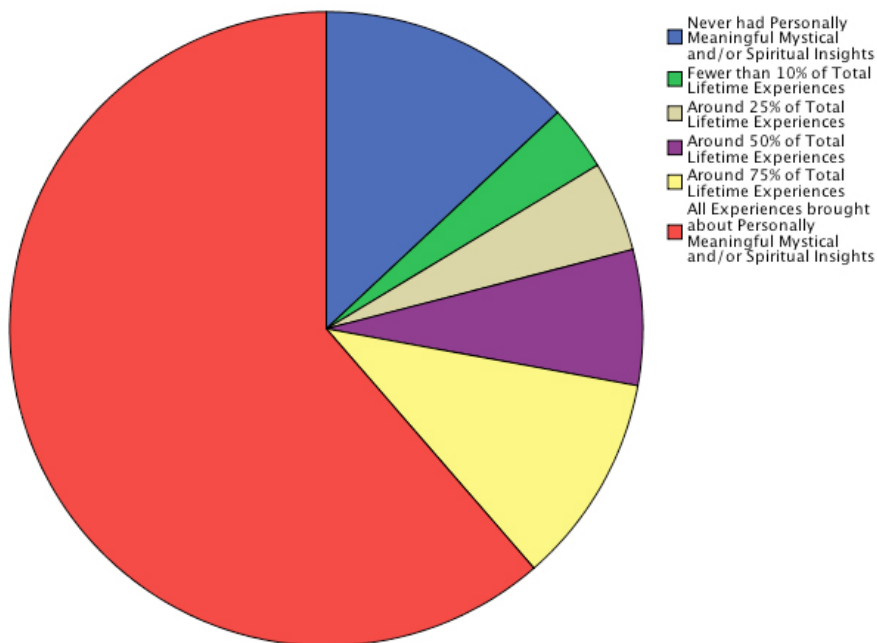


Figure 12. Estimated Rate of Personally Meaningful Mystical and/or Spiritual Insights brought about by Oral DMT in Combination with an MAOI



Discussion

Understanding more about the consequences of hallucinogen use is a pertinent social issue. In the United States alone, it is estimated that approximately 32 million people have used hallucinogens at least once in their lives (Krebs & Johansen, 2013). Of course, psychedelics can bring about both positive and negative effects. Thus, this survey aimed to examine both sides of the spectrum.

Strassman (1984) explained that bad trips are comprised of a variety of symptoms including frightening visual or auditory hallucinations, overwhelming anxiety, panic reactions, aggression, violent behaviors, depressed mood with suicidal ideations, confusion, and paranoid delusions. Hemsley and Ward (1985) also found the frequency of bad trips to be associated with the later development of Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD). HPPD is the "transient recurrence of disturbances in perception that are reminiscent of those experienced during one or more earlier hallucinogen intoxications" (APA, 2000, p. 232-233).

Bad trips are a very real risk for a portion of individuals. In fact, some respondents within the sample reported experiencing bad trips during *all* of their LSD (1.2%), psilocybin (1.4%), smoked or vaporized DMT (2.2%), and oral DMT (5.4%) experiences. More respondents reported experiencing bad trips during at least half of their LSD (4.7%), psilocybin (8.2%), smoked or vaporized DMT (6.2%), and oral DMT (11.2%) experiences. Still, most respondents in the sample *never* experienced bad trips on LSD (53.4%), psilocybin (54.2%), smoked or vaporized DMT (72.8%), or oral DMT (68.5%)

With regard to one of the positive aspects of the psychedelic experience, most respondents in the sample reported meaningful mystical and/or spiritual insights during at least half of their LSD (74.3%), psilocybin (75.1%), smoked or vaporized DMT (74.6%), and oral DMT (79%) experiences. As well, a large portion of the sample reported meaningful mystical and/or spiritual insights during *all* of their LSD (35.5%), psilocybin (37.8%), smoked or vaporized DMT (52.9%), and oral DMT (61.4%) experiences. Regardless, some respondents *never* experienced meaningful mystical and/or spiritual insights from using LSD (7.6%), psilocybin (8.9%), smoked or vaporized DMT (12.4%), or oral DMT (13%).

Considering the extensive historical and present-day use of psychedelics among religions throughout the world, it is not surprising that LSD, psilocybin, and DMT brought about personally meaningful mystical and/or spiritual insights for most of the respondents. Initiates in ancient Greece consumed hallucinogenic kykeon at Eleusis while worshipping the goddess Demeter, and the ritual ingestion of the visionary substance soma was described in the Hindu Rig Veda (Ruck, Hofmann, & Wasson, 1978; Wasson, Kramrisch, Ruck, & Ott, 1992; Wasson, 1972). Examples of the more recent spiritual use of psychedelics are also quite prevalent. Just to name a few, these include the peyote ceremonies of the Native American Church, the ayahuasca ceremonies of the Santo Daime, União do Vegetal, and Barquinha, the sacramental use of DPT by the Temple of the True Inner Light, and the use of LSD by the League for Spiritual Discovery (Barbosa, Giglio, & Dalgalarondo, 2005; Calabrese, 1997; Callaway, Brito, & Neves, 2005; Garrity, 2000; Lander, 2012; Pauli, 1997; Shanon, 2002).

That having been said, it is also important for recreational users to be mindful of the potential health consequences involved with the use of LSD, psilocybin, and DMT. Although these substances often bring about meaningful mystical and/or spiritual insights, they can also cause bad trips and possibly even HPPD.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

A variety of factors are involved in the emergence of bad trips as well as mystical and/or spiritual insights during the psychedelic experience. Set, setting, and substance quality are thought to be interrelated with these outcomes (Cole, 2011). Still, research has been inconclusive with regard to pinpointing the precise etiology of bad trips (Ungerleider, Fisher, Fuller, & Caldwell, 1968). This survey focused on exploring the prevalence of bad trips and mystical/spiritual insights in general without taking set, setting, or any other aspects of psychedelic trips into consideration. Future research is needed to further examine the factors involved in the prevalence of these types of psychedelic experiences.

The findings are also based upon self-report data, which is another limitation. Self-report data can affect the validity of a study, as instances of data fraud and bias due to self-selection may be increased (Strickland, 2003). Nonetheless, when asking sensitive questions pertaining to drug use, self-administered surveys can also provide the most accurate and truthful responses (Groves et al., 2009).

Additionally, there is no way to be sure that the respondents actually used LSD, psilocybin, or DMT. With the large number of new psychoactive substances in

circulation, it is likely that a portion of the respondents' experiences may be attributed to these substances rather than the psychedelics examined within this survey.

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