

Analytical Transcriber's Statement – **Persistence of Memory: Recollections of Participation in the Janiger LSD Study**

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IN MY NEARLY TWO DECADES of participating in and conducting research on social science and public health issues, rarely have I been more compelled and moved to attempt to describe what I experienced as I listened to and transcribed each and every tape.

My participation in this MAPS Janiger Study was to perform analytical transcription. The analytical transcriber has become part of what many “cutting edge” qualitative researchers feel is a vital and key component of the research team. By definition, the analytical transcriber is a research assistant who has had intimate experience with the subject/nature of the research, has often interviewed respondents on other studies, and has complete familiarity with the terminology and “language” the respondents use to describe the nature of their experiences.

The analytical transcriber participates from the very beginning of each study by contributing ideas and suggestions—along with other members of the qualitative research team—as to what questions will be asked of each respondent, and how to phrase the questions to yield the most expansive and complete response.

But perhaps the most single, vital skill the analytical transcriber brings to the research team is that of being a perceptive listener. Once you place your headphones over your ears and begin to transcribe an interview, the outside world goes away and you literally “drop into” its setting. You become the “silent observer” who listens to and takes notes on the entire interview process. You observe and describe the nature of the relationship that develops between two strangers who suddenly become “intimates.” Questions and answers about deeply personal events and experiences begin and a dialogue is formed.

Because the analytical transcriber is one of the first on the research team to hear each and every word of all of the interviews, you are in a unique position to alert the team about early emerging data. Phrases, statements and themes that are repeated over and over again are brought to the attention of the team.

What I heard as I listened to each interview was the intensity and the emotional involvement each respondent had in describing their experience(s) of some forty years ago. The passing of time and life's events had not dimmed their recollection of the experience(s) they had with LSD. In fact, most every respondent vividly recalled their entire time spent under the effects of LSD, some forty-odd years later!

The emotional tone and affect of the respondents in the Janiger Study was one of excitement, wonder, intensity and clarity. In each and every interview the respondent would, at some point, begin to raise their voice in excitement as they recalled and then described for the interviewer what they saw, heard or felt under the influence of LSD. Their demeanor would become intense and aroused as they often stated that they hadn't thought about this event for years and years. Yet each insisted with great passion and certainty that what they were remembering was as sharp, clear and vivid as if it happened yesterday.

SOME WERE FILLED WITH AWE and a sense of delight and wonder at what they were experiencing; others recalled profound insights into themselves or other people, and others were filled with a sense of play and a letting go of their normal controls as they watched and listened in amazement to the inner dialogues or visions.

And so important for all of us to remember, these respondents took LSD during a time in history when there was no social stigma, no shame or feelings of participating in something illegal. This was a drug administered to them by a doctor, at a time in our cultural history when doctors were akin to God.

There was no unique language present that the media and pop culture would invent in future years to come that would describe or “color” or “flavor” their experience(s).

For many this was a singular event, and they did not know anyone else with whom they could discuss or compare it. For others, such as those who participated in the group experiments, or the clergy or the artists group, there were colleagues to talk to. But what they all have in common to this day is the clarity and sharpness of remembering their experiences, and the emotional intensity and passionate feelings that these engendered for them.

It is my fervent hope that more funding will be secured and made available to further interview and transcribe respondents in the Janiger Study. The importance of the event of taking LSD was many different things to each respondent, but all were profoundly moved and some were changed by this unique event in their lives. •