

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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Buoyed by calls for medical access, social justice, and regulation, psychedelic substances and products are becoming more socially acceptable in various jurisdictions, and support for regulatory changes continues to grow in some countries. Several estimates suggest that the psychedelic industry may generate roughly \$10 billion annually by 2027. Recent scholarship germane to psychedelics is expanding rapidly but has remained largely North America-centric and focused on medicoscientific and sociopolitical developments rather than business history.

The goal of this special issue is to contribute to critical discussions around relatively underexplored socioeconomic, business, and capitalist histories of psychedelics. Such substances—broadly conceived—exist at the intersection of legality and criminality, domestic and transnational markets, medicine and recreation, and scientific study and sensationalism. To build on recent literature and foster new critical dialogues, we propose a business/economic history approach that connects circuits of psychedelic capitalism to engage with themes of commodification and coercion, as well as the open scientific questions and ongoing struggles in politics and society that will affect psychedelics in the marketplace.

This special issue of *History of Pharmacy and Pharmaceuticals* addresses some of the following questions: How have these businesses evolved, and who has

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directed and financed this development? What methods and models are being used in pharmaceutical and recreational enterprises to promote, sell, or study the drugs? How has the media participated in selling psychedelics to new consumer markets? Are there parallels between movements of enclosure and the commodification of Indigenous psychedelic medicine and religious traditions? How are Indigenous approaches to psychedelics being appropriated to administer and sell psychedelic services? How will the concept of social justice fare under an increasingly profit-oriented system? What contributes to the belief that psychedelics would be different than any other commodity in capitalism? Are we witnessing the development of new psychedelic empires, and—if so—what will the effects of this development be? How are mental and public health issues being treated, and what happens to patient-consumers in a legalized personal use market? What are the international effects of a shifting market, and how does legalization—along with a growing gray market—affect issues like access and adherence in the medical marketplace? Given that for-profit healthcare functionally denies care to millions, should psychedelics continue to be touted as a solution to the mental health crisis?

In “Tending a Vibrant World: Gift Logic and Sacred Plant medicines,” Keith Williams and Suzanne Brant center Indigenous relationality and the logic of the gift as a counterpoint to the logic of extraction underpinning the Western psychedelic medicine industry. Their analysis contributes to an “ontological turn” in psychedelic studies and critical plant studies that recognizes plants and fungi as relations with “their own habits, dispositions, and agency,” and they consider the implications of this turn for the history of pharmaceuticals. Drawing on teachings from their own Haudenosaunee ancestry alongside other Indigenous knowledges, the authors describe all life as characterized by “movement and flux,” such that blockages and imbalance can lead to death and disease. Elaborating on these ideas in conversation with Achille Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics, they characterize the capitalist impulse to contain and enclose plant medicines as pharmaceuticals as inherently anti-life. The authors suggest that because the context and ceremonies of plant medicine are integral to the outcomes of their use, deploying plant medicines according to neoliberal priorities of capital accumulation will necessarily obstruct their collective healing potential. Neoliberal capitalism is imbued with a colonial orientation that projects a “hierarchization of all life”—which includes radicalized hierarchy—to render some aspects of the world as subaltern and thus justify the instrumentalization of those at the bottom of that hierarchy by those at the top. While continuing a colonial pattern of theft and exploitation, the psychedelics industry mobilizes one-dimensional representations of figures like María Sabina alongside a decontextualized imagination of a global Indigenous culture to present their extractive behavior as continuous with

Indigenous aims. In reality, Indigenous knowledge systems are “fundamentally incompatible” with these contemporary Western worldviews, which means that true reconciliation with Indigenous peoples “requires restructuring the dominant norms around kinship and . . . being” that operate in the psychedelic industry and all other capitalist systems. The authors close by asserting that to realize the potentials of plant medicines, the field must embrace laws, policies, and cultural practices that are rooted in the particularity of local place and that promote circular reciprocity with all relations.

In “Moving Forward by Looking Back: What Can the Critiques of Commercialized Mindfulness Teach Us about a Future of Commercialized Psychedelics?” Patrick Elf, Amy Isham, and Dario Leoni similarly argue that the processes involved in commercializing psychedelics are likely to limit their personal and societal benefits. Because psychedelic commercialization is in a nascent stage, they draw comparisons to the more established field of commercialized mindfulness, which is reputed to share key similarities regarding its mechanisms and benefits. In particular, psychedelics and mindfulness are both associated with “self-transcendent experiences,” mental health benefits, and prosocial and proecological outcomes, and these fields have appropriated cultural practices that predate the rise of capitalism and market-based economies. While popular media and corporate actors have presented psychedelics and mindfulness as “quick paths” to wellness or as “panaceas for . . . multiple ills in societies,” the authors argue that any positive potentials likely depend on specific societal contexts of their use. Since commercialization and its neoliberal logic of individualized self-optimization are major components of their mainstream societal context, the purported benefits of both are likely limited by the pressures of living in capitalist social relations. Already, critiques of commercialized mindfulness (“McMindfulness”) have outlined ways that neoliberal logics and incentives have undermined the effectiveness of mindful practices. The presence of these neoliberal logics in the psychedelics industry signals that commercialization is likely to result in similar reductions in efficacy. Particularly, the authors identify three themes that coexist across the commercialization of psychedelics and mindfulness: the separation of practice from spiritual traditions, the use of such practices to reinforce neoliberal priorities, and the watering down of practices to increase financial profits for corporate actors. In deploying psychedelics and mindfulness to boost productivity and resilience in unequal societies, corporate actors are effectively promoting practices that stifle the motivation to create positive social change. If these approaches become dominant norms for use, psychedelics—like McMindfulness—could become yet another tool for maintaining a dysfunctional status quo, thereby reinforcing (rather than curing) the root causes of distress.

In “The Zihuatanejo Project: Timothy Leary’s Psychedelic Center in Mexico,” Nidia A. Olvera and Zinnia Capó explore the significance of Timothy Leary’s brief Zihuatanejo Project experiment in the context of Mexico’s developing tourism industry. The authors take an innovative methodological approach that blends archival research in the New York Public Library’s Timothy Leary Archive with accounts from historical newspapers alongside original ethnographic fieldwork in Zihuatanejo. They situate Leary’s project within a broader history of Westerners traveling to Mexico in search of traditional medicines and the ritual use of plants and fungi, most notably in the wake of R. Gordon Wasson’s 1957 *Life* magazine article about María Sabina, which originally drew Leary to Mexico in search of mushrooms. Aware of the tourism trends bringing young foreigners to Mexico in search of life-changing experiences, Leary’s group anticipated a steady flow of volunteers to partake of psychedelics for behavioral observation and analysis. The center positioned its guests as test subjects for the purpose of developing the group’s expertise as psychedelic “guides,” which situates this experiment as an early attempt to formalize the training of psychedelic guides in a non-Indigenous context. The authors note that the high price point meant that participation was limited to foreigners in the upper middle class, drawing attention to the ways that supported adult use models (to use an anachronistic term from present-day context of Oregon Psilocybin Services) have histories of inaccessibility beyond already-privileged groups. The authors suggest that Leary’s abstract view of Zihuatanejo as “isolated and free” contributed to the group’s disbanding by the Mexican government, since Leary neither applied for the requisite business permits nor made meaningful connections with the local community. As such, their behavior arguably follows a pattern of colonial orientations by majority-white psychedelic groups, as described by Arun Saldanha in *Psychedelic White* (2007).

In “Learning about STP: A Forgotten Psychedelic from the Summer of Love,” Matthew J. Baggott excavates the history of 2,5-dimethoxy-4-methylamphetamine (DOM), which was introduced to the San Francisco public in 1967 as STP. Baggott positions the emergence of STP as a definitive and historic case study of how society responds dysfunctionally to new psychoactive substances. Hitting the street market before any description of its effects or chemical structure was entered into the pharmacological literature, STP seemingly came out of nowhere. Because the debut of STP in Haight-Ashbury transpired amidst a roiling nexus of youth counterculture in the neighborhood, the heightened media and governmental scrutiny generated uniquely rich source material for this case study. This history documents the outsize influence of local activists (arguably counterculture members themselves) and public health first responders (such as members of the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and the University of California San

Francisco Psychopharmacology Study Group) in shaping public opinion and awareness of STP. At times, this included authoritatively presented misinformation on topics ranging from basic features of STP's pharmacological action to treatment options for users in distress. Yet STP was a product of industry as much as prohibition, as it originated in Alexander Shulgin's Dow Chemical Company-funded laboratory and only found its way to users after the banning of LSD. Though invented by Shulgin, it was "Acid King" August Owsley Stanley III who produced and distributed STP for public consumption, and Stanley's LSD-informed preference for distributing higher doses contributed to the resulting public health crisis. Making comparisons with today's synthetic cannabinoids and novel opioids, the author situates new psychoactive substances like STP as ersatz drugs—riskier and less enjoyable than the criminalized drugs they aim to replace, while simultaneously misunderstood, underappreciated, and misapplied. Nevertheless, Baggott shows how the standpoint and assumptions of prominent actors of the era affected the reception of STP and overshadowed its pharmacological merits. In the context of the LSD prohibition and corporate ownership of novel psychedelics, STP emerged through the actions of two men whose beliefs about psychedelics influenced the way they chose to provide it to the public, which reveals how the ideological frames of key actors in psychedelic innovation and distribution can be extremely consequential—even to the point of threatening public health.

In "The Evolving Role of History in the Past, Present, and Future of Psychedelic Patenting," Shahin Shams, Amanda Rose Pratt, Sisi Li, and Tom Isenbarger outline how corporate actors are marshaling industry-standard aggressive patent strategies to monopolize aspects of the developing psychedelic medicine industry—and how psychedelic experts, archivists, and intellectual property activists are countering spurious claims. In pursuit of new sources of profit in the mental health sector, many firms are now competing to amass patents to bolster intellectual property portfolios and to gain exclusive rights to profit derived from the sale, manufacture, or administration of psychedelic drugs and related medical services. They position patents as key selling points to potential investors, who are motivated by the temptation of high returns. As a result, they argue that acquiring patents is incentivized, even in the absence of legal markets to exert patent rights. The authors argue that based on the two cross-jurisdictional criteria for patent validity—novelty and inventiveness (or alternately, "nonobviousness")—some granted patents and pending applications lack merit, and therefore infringe on the public domain by laying claim to prior art. This issue has been complicated by ongoing prohibition and colonization, which have marginalized documentation of relevant prior art in psychedelics to atypical repositories of information. Even

when these repositories are publicly accessible, specialist patent examiners are generally not aware of their existence, let alone familiar with them. For example, archives documenting Indigenous practices and online drug forums are rich with varied accounts of the psychedelic use and unique techniques for augmenting experiences. The authors demonstrate how Porta Sophia, a nonprofit online psychedelic library, seeks and digitizes prior art documents for aiding patent examiners and thwarting applications without novelty or inventiveness. They note that Porta Sophia has already been successful in opposing such claims, citing how their direct action interfered with COMPASS Pathways' attempts to claim innovation over basic components of underground psychedelic therapy, such as use of music and eyeshades. They argue that sustained direct action of this kind will be necessary to preempt threats to the public domain and to resist the corporate appropriation of Indigenous peoples' cultural traditions.

Ido Hartogsohn's commentary, "The Corporadelic Set and Setting: On the Consequences of Psychedelic Commodification," explores how the rise of corporadelia in the early twenty-first century is positioned to shape and color the substance of psychedelic experiences for individuals and society at large. In considering "corporadelic" agents as imposing significant constraints on the set and setting of the psychedelic renaissance, Hartogsohn draws together some of corporadelia's critics to discuss how its capital-driven, medicalized approach aims to displace, erase, and subsume Indigenous, countercultural, and community models that favor a praxis of decriminalization and legalization. Emphasizing how psychedelics are sensitive to context and expectancy, the author argues that inserting psychedelics into the business model of ever-increasing profit is unlikely to produce the profound experiences and outcomes that are leading to investment in the industry today. In doing so, Hartogsohn casts doubt on the healing promise of commodified psychedelics, and he argues that market-driven approaches obscure other, more meaningful possibilities for psychedelics in society.

In an interview, David Nickles questions the framing of psychedelics as medicines even as he acknowledges the profound shifts that psychedelics have facilitated in his own life. In contrast to corporadelia's positioning of psychedelics as tools for achieving greater optimization and efficiency in the existing capitalist order, Nickles characterizes his initial psychedelic insight as a revelation of the systemic harms caused by capitalism's brutal efficiency. Describing a vision that transformed his longtime existential anxiety, Nickles shares the contours of his psychedelic realization: that industrial civilization parasitizes life to serve its own ends, accumulating and concentrating capital even at the expense of life. From this insight into the interrelationships between capitalism, industrial society, and dominant culture, Nickles developed the framework he later used to produce

the earliest comprehensive critiques of corporate psychedelia. At its core, the premise of Nickles' analysis is that psychedelics are not an exceptional industry within capitalism. He predicted that the same issues that plague other industries—from negative externalities to regulatory capture—would inevitably play out in psychedelic capitalism. For Nickles, addressing these issues in psychedelia will require systemic changes to dismantle systems of oppression of all kinds.

In another interview, Rafaela Zorzaneli speaks with historian and anthropologist Susan R. Whyte about perceptions of health and illness; managing threats to health in an unequal and globalized world; and intersections between capitalism, imperialism, and Western pharmaceutical frameworks. This interview discusses medicine broadly, and many of Whyte's insights can be applied to thinking about psychedelic and psychoactive substances.

In the Visual Pharmacy section, Mary Magnuson, Hannah Swan, and Lucas Richert explore the history of peyote and its introduction into pharmaceutical frameworks in the late nineteenth century using materials from the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy's George Bender Collection. These materials include letters from pharmacists and researchers to pharmaceutical giant Parke Davis Co. as these scholars attempted to determine therapeutic potentials of the psychoactive peyote cactus.

As the interest in psychedelics grows and policy shifts, intersections with the market economy of global capitalism will continue to diversify. Historical work on the material relationships of commodifying psychedelics is a crucial part of understanding the dynamics of a nascent industry, and more interdisciplinary research will be necessary to track these developments and their effects on society.