

# Psychedelic Soldiers: Beyond Psychotherapy

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## **Abstract**

Psychedelic drugs and their use are being increasingly ascribed with medical meanings as the psychedelic 'renaissance' continues to drive interest in their psychotherapeutic applications. Amidst the clinical contexts being explored the PTSD afflicted military veteran has become a key figure, both as an ideal psychedelic patient and as a narrative lynchpin of the associated advocacy efforts. This qualitative, ethnographic study challenges the dominate discourse of the medicinal paradigm by examining the unregulated, non-clinical psychedelic drug use of several former soldiers. Observation of the distinctive practices surrounding their procurement and use of wild psychedelic mushrooms highlights the prevalence of self-regulating rituals, informed by an existing subcultural folklore and further shaped by processes of individual and collective identity performance. The findings of this study point to new, critical criminological understandings of psychedelic drug use that place emphasis on the meanings being narratively constructed by non-clinical users. Such understandings should be incorporated throughout future psychedelic research, discourse, and advocacy efforts.

*Conference presentation abstract, 35<sup>th</sup> ESSD conference, 18-20 September 2024, Manchester (UK)*

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