Guided and Structured Use of Entheogenic Substances in Western Culture.

For my doctoral dissertation in the clinical psychology program at CIIS, I looked at therapeutic psycho-spiritual issues in guided, group settings (what Metzner has called “hybrid shamanic psychotherapeutic rituals”) utilizing psychedelic substances. These groups are hybrid in that they incorporate some shamanic or indigenous techniques with a western psychological orientation.

My interest in these groups began with my work with Pablo, the guide in one of the groups analyzed in my dissertation. Pablo’s work was an adaptation of the earlier work of Mexican psychiatrist Salvador Roquette. (Roquette had a psychiatric background and incorporated the indigenous teachings of Mazotec Indian healer Maria Sabina.) I was always interested in the development of the varying approaches of different groups as well as the implications for results.

My interest was further piqued by the fact that because these groups are underground, research had been minimal to non-existent since the 1960s. There has been sizable literature on the psychedelic experience, but other than the cut-short research in the 1960s, most of it has been personal, theoretical and anecdotal.

Effects of Calea Sacatechichi on the Human Electroencephalogram: A Single Subject Design EEG Gamma Coherence and Other Correlates of Subjective Reports During Ayahuasca Experiences

I was supported by the Kranzke research scholarship twice; once for a project studying the effects of calea zacatechichi, and the second for my dissertation research with ayahuasca. The scholarships were very important in allowing me to move forward with the research I was doing with Dr. Frank Echenhofer at CIIS. Brainwave (EEG) research requires a lot of lab equipment and supplies that would have been prohibitive without this type of financial support.

My research reiterated and developed some familiar points such as the importance of preparation, integration, and the complex dynamics of the relationships between participants and guides, etc., as well as some less familiar themes that point toward future research questions, such as: what is the psycho-spiritual and therapeutic difference in the impact of one medicine from another, the relationship of ecstatic or transpersonal experiences to the psychological. Another important focus was the relationship of the psychedelic experience to work with addictions.

With the support and encouragement of a school like the California Institute of Integral Studies in combination with the financial support of Robert Barnhart’s generous gift of the Kranzke endowment, the psychedelic experience has, since 1998, been regularly researched at the graduate level. Thanks to CIIS and Mr. Barnhart’s creative and generous idea, there is now a significant and growing body of psychedelic research residing in one place.

(Roger has a chapter, co-written with David Lukoff, in the new two volume set, *Psychedelic Medicine*, edited by Winkleman and Roberts.)

I began with an interest in researching visual imagery and lucid dreaming. I came to understand how difficult it was to lucid dream on command in a laboratory setting. At the time, I did not have the available connections with expert dreamers who could be flown in for such an undertaking. I decided to get some help in the task of inducing lucidity by using shamanic dream-inducing (oneirogenic) herbs. Calea zacatechichi was chosen. It was at that time that we came to understand that the Kranzke scholarship was available to support such work, since our interest included the assistance of an entheogen.

As it turned out, the calea research did not prove fruitful and it was therefore decided to move into researching a much...
stronger imagery experience that could be induced using psychedelic substances. I was also becoming fascinated with the subjective reports of people using ayahuasca and intrigued by the comparison of the ayahuasca journey with lucid dreaming. The Kranzke scholarship then supported my research with ayahuasca, which became my dissertation work and was later published in an abbreviated form in the Journal of Psychoactive Drugs. The abstract from the journal article and the caelea research are posted on the MAPS Website: maps.org/stuckeyabstracts.

The scholarship also sparked further good fortune, in that by receiving it, the CIIS administration became aware of the project and made a further financial contribution. MAPS contributed financial support as well. With this combined support, we were able to take the project to the Amazon jungle for proper field research. I was very grateful for the generous support and continue to be grateful that the Kranzke scholarship is available for current students.

I am now in private practice as a clinical psychologist in Southern California. I use what I have learned through my use and research with psychedelics and lucid dreaming to inform my work with my clients. I also continue to do EEG research with entheogens. For example, I just recently led a panel at the annual conference of the International Society for Neurofeedback and Research. We presented our pilot research on EEG findings and subjective reports of salvia divinorum experiences.

Touched By Spirit: A Heuristic Study of Healing Experiences in Peyote Ceremonies

This dissertation is a qualitative, psychological investigation exploring the experience of healing in peyote ceremonies using Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic research methodology. The unique contribution of this research project is the use of a psychological approach to the study of peyote ceremonies that honors people’s subjective experience. This study draws on interview data collected from nine participants of peyote ceremonies. The co-researchers were five men and four women in the age range between their late twenties and early sixties. Five of the co-researchers were Euro-Americans, three Native Americans and one mixed Euro-Native American.

The data analysis resulted in the identification of seven core themes of the experience of healing in peyote ceremonies. These were: spiritual connection; enhanced self-esteem; emotional release, sense of community; physical recovery and support; insight and heightened awareness; and enhanced environmental sensitivity. Participants in peyote ceremonies reported becoming aware of a deeper spiritual reality within as well as around them. The peyote ceremonies instilled in them a sense of sacredness and reverence for life. They also reported increased mental clarity and a sense of heightened awareness. On the emotional level they reported the release of repressed feelings, a new level of self-acceptance and heightened self-esteem. They stressed the importance of the experience of solidarity and fellowship, of love, unity and belonging in the circle. Participants in peyote ceremonies also reported sudden cures of diseases and physical ailments, as well as being able to overcome drug and alcohol addiction. They also reported an increased awareness of their connection to the natural world and an increased environmental concern as a result of their participation in peyote ceremonies.

By providing accurate accounts of healing experiences and in-depth portrayals of individual cases this study aspires to contribute to a better understanding of the therapeutic potential of peyote ceremonies and the religious use of entheogens in general. It is the primary researcher’s hope to thereby stimulate a renewed dialogue on the constructive use of entheogens in contemporary society.