Psychological Variables Predicting Transformative and Difficult Unresolved Ayahuasca Experiences: A Pilot Study

This pilot study aims to explore a possible connection between distinct psychological variables and subjective reports or themes experienced during shamanic ayahuasca journeys. While Westerners report ayahuasca elicits integrative experiences for journeymers, some re-traumatization occurs in a minority of cases. This investigation attempts to identify a psychometrically sound and reliable method for predicting the quality of the experiences people may have on ayahuasca and possibly other kinds of hallucinogenic drugs used in healing or experimental settings. The natural extension of this work is in the area of harm reduction. Investigation into the mysteries of psychedelic/entheogenic plants and substances has enjoyed a tenuous resurgence in recent years. Developing a clinically valid and reliable method for predicting a participant’s reaction to a psychedelic substance has potentially vast implications for the acceptance and proliferation of research with these substances.

I am truly honored to be a 2007 recipient of the Kranzke Scholarship. At the awards banquet I was afforded an opportunity to speak briefly about the scholarship and what it means to young researchers and the field of psychedelic studies. This money represents commitment that grassroots supporters like Robert Barnhart have to the cause of psychedelic research. Though organizations like MAPS have made important contributions in the public arena, it is really the people behind the scenes, with their courage and tenacity, who despite overwhelming odds continue to champion the use of entheogens as important methods of healing.

In person, Robert Barnhart is a kind and thoughtful man whose easy-going nature belies the impact he has had on my research and that of other Kranzke winners past and present. He allows the sum of our efforts to be greater than the individual parts.