Twelve Subjects and $30,000 needed for Ayahuasca/EEG Research in Florianopolis, Brazil, from January 7-18, 2005
Invitation to Participate and/or Donate

STUDY TITLE: Exploring Personality, Phenomenological, and EEG Correlates of the Ayahuasca Journey Experience to Facilitate an Individual's Spiritual Development

Echenhofer, F.G., Wynia, K., Luna, L.E., Gunkelman, J, and Whitehouse, W.G.

The research team and the ayahuasca research seminar setting: This research was designed to replicate and extend the EEG and ayahuasca research that was conducted in Brazil in 2000. Frank Echenhofer will be the principal investigator, Katee Wynia, MA will provide expertise in refining research procedures to create the optimal environment for conducting EEG recordings. Dr. Luis Eduardo Luna, an anthropologist, will create and lead an ayahuasca seminar which involves the sacred use of ayahuasca in Brazil from January 7 through January 18. The seminar will take place at Wasiwaska, Research Center for the Study of Psychointegrator Plants, Visionary Art, and Consciousness, a legally established non-profit organization located in Florianopolis, southern Brazil. The cost of this ayahuasca seminar is $1,600 and additional detailed information about the seminar can be obtained by contacting Dr Luna directly (leluna@wasiwaska.org). Donations are currently being sought to help offer scholarships for a limited number of qualified participants who cannot afford the airfare and seminar expenses. It is within the context of this seminar that the research project will take place. Jay Gunkelman, QEEGD has recommended and will continue to guide the EEG analysis for this study. Dr. Wayne Whitehouse has assisted in refining the research design and will edit the final journal article(s).

Individuals interested in participating: Contact Dr. Echenhofer (fechenhofer@ciis.edu) and you will receive in the mail an initial screening packet containing an informed consent form describing the study, a screening questionnaire and two psychological questionnaires, which take about 90 minutes to complete. The screening questionnaire includes: 1) questions about prior ayahuasca experience, 2) health history, and 3) current use of medications and remedies. These questionnaires help insure that participants recruited in this research have: 1) psychological and spiritual maturity, 2) had previous positive ayahuasca experience, 3) proficiency in English, and 4) familiarity and comfort with Western scientific research methods. This screening is designed to help minimize any risk associated with research involving ayahuasca. Participants receive a pre-addressed, stamped envelope to return the completed questionnaires. Potential participants can contact Dr. Echenhofer by phone or e-mail to have any questions answered. Participants who have been qualified to participate will then be contacted by Dr. Luna (leluna@wasiwaska.org) about registering for the seminar, within which the research project will take place.

The major EEG and ayahuasca research discovery: In August, 2000 Frank Echenhofer took an EEG system to the Brazilian Amazon with his doctoral student, David Stuckey, to examine the EEGs of two individuals very experienced in the shamanic use of ayahuasca. Aspects of this research were reported in David Stuckey's (2004) dissertation. The prior thirty years of EEG psychedelic research suggested that psychedelic substances tend to decrease alpha and theta power and enhance beta power in the EEG frequency spectrum. The work carried out by Echenhofer and Stuckey in Brazil in 2000 was ***the first research to reveal a major EEG correlate with any psychedelic substance. Very high coherence was discovered among the majority of EEG recording locations in the EEG gamma frequencies (from 36 to 64 Hz)*** during the eyes closed ayahuasca condition compared to the eyes closed baseline condition.

Implications this research discovery: Many neuroscience studies suggest that moderate levels of gamma coherence occur in the "binding" together of the many elements comprising normal consciousness into a unified experience. Richard Davidson reported preliminary EEG findings showing that highly advanced Tibetan meditators also have enhanced EEG gamma coherence during meditation. It is possible that high EEG gamma coherence may be a marker for states of heightened awareness common to the sacred use of meditation and entheogens and that these states involve enhanced binding processes.

The potential to access shamanic states using EEG biofeedback: The purpose of this proposed research is to further study the patterning and dynamics of enhanced EEG gamma coherence during the ayahuasca journey experience. If Echenhofer and Stuckey's prior research is replicated and extended, it may open important new lines of investigation for EEG and consciousness-oriented research. Clearly, robust EEG and experiential correlates can be used to develop biofeedback protocols, which, in turn, might be used for spiritual and therapeutic purposes to assist individuals to reproduce the specific patterns of EEG gamma coherence that occur during ayahuasca experience, thereby enabling them to voluntarily access shamanic states without using an entheogen.

Individuals interested in making tax-deductible donations: To support this research project contact MAPS, an IRS approved 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, and MAPS will allocate 100% of the donations ear-marked for this project as well as providing donors with needed documentation for tax purposes. It is important that you indicate to MAPS that your donation is for the Echenhofer Ayahuasca EEG Project. For any additional information about making a donation MAPS can be contacted at (941)-924-6277 or by mail at MAPS, 2105 Robinson Avenue, Sarasota, Florida, 34232. If you are considering making a donation and would like further information, please e-mail Dr. Echenhofer at fechenhofer@ciis.edu or call (510) 233-7195.

The proposal for this research project is on the maps.org website:
http://www.maps.org/research/ayahuasca/echenhoferproposal.pdf