



Looking into the Rabbit Hole: The Psychedelic Renaissance

Re-tracing the role of discourse, policy, and socio-cultural factors in the transformation of psychedelic substances from 'social evil' to critical tools in contemporary mental health treatment



Objectives

The key themes of my proposed doctoral research:

- **(Re-)situating Psychedelics**
- **Psychedelics in Mental Health**
- **Psychedelics and Consciousness**
- **Psychedelic as Performance Enhancers?**



Understanding PSYCHEDELIC(s)

Different Types?

This or That?

What effects do they have?

What are they?

- What are Psychedelics?

- ❖ Do they have a definition? What are the definitions?

- ❖ Substance-wise classification (based on origin)

- Natural

- Semi-synthetic

- Synthetic

- ❖ On the basis of chemical characteristics:

- Serotonergic

- Catecholaminergic

- Empathogens

- Disassociatives





VS



What's the Difference?

Narcotics	Psychedelics
Derived from Greek word ' <i>Narkoun</i> ' which means to ' <i>make numb</i> '	A combination of the words ' <i>Psyche</i> ' and the word ' <i>Delos</i> ' (again Greek, meaning clarity)
Used in medical contexts as Analgesics (Morphine, Fentanyl, Methadone etc.) and Anesthetics (Ketamine)	Presently researched in medical contexts for treatment and management of mental distresses (MDMA for PTSD, Ibogaine and Ayahuasca for addiction, Psilocybin and Ketamine for depression etc.)
Considered 'hard drugs' which can have really unpleasant side effects and can cause substance dependency (which need not have a psychological angle to it)	Considered 'soft drugs', which can mainly produce psychological dependency
Effects are almost always 'euphoric' and give a 'rush'	Effects are unpredictable and can be dysphoric under the wrong circumstances of consumption (like the consumer's psyche, the set and setting of consumption etc.)

Why the bad press? =

A war no one won, comes to an end!



=>



DRUG-RELATED CRIMINAL LAW ENFORCEMENT COSTS THE UK **£3.3 BILLION** EVERY YEAR

\$51 BILLION SPENT ON THE WAR ON DRUGS IN THE U.S. EVERY YEAR

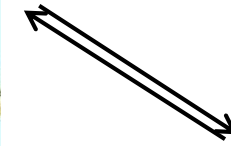
ENDING THE WAR ON DRUGS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION FROM **RICHARD BRANSON**

1.6 AMERICANS ARE ARRESTED EVERY YEAR FOR DRUG OFFENSES

100,000 LIVES LOST TO THE WAR ON DRUGS IN MEXICO IN THE LAST 9 YEARS

ILLEGAL DRUGS ARE WORTH LITERALLY MORE THAN THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD



What happened then?

Finally!



THE WAR ON DRUGS



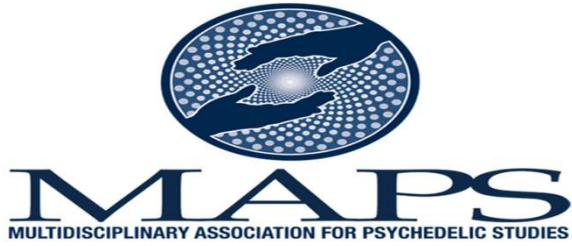
IS A WAR ON US

War on Drugs

- \$1 trillion** spent on drug war
- 1.6 million** U.S. drug arrests in 2010
- 8 million** arrested for pot since 2000

What's happening now?

At MAPS



Phase III Clinical trials!



Assisted Psychotherapy

LSD

Medical Marijuana

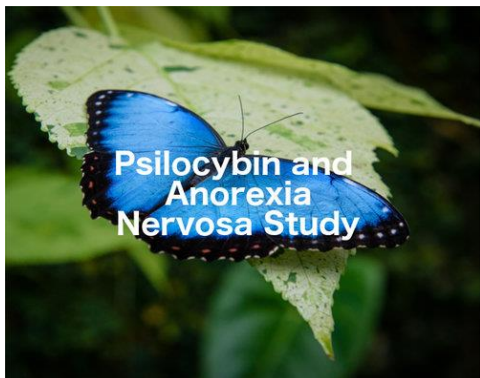
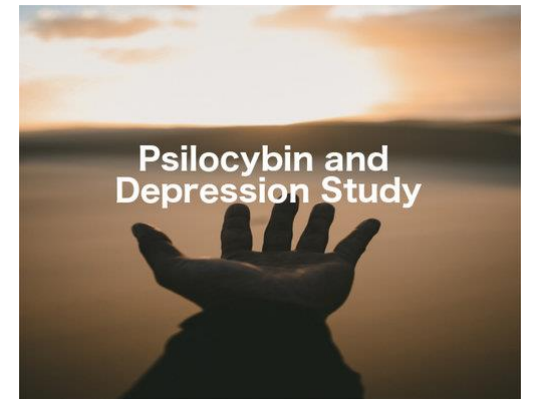
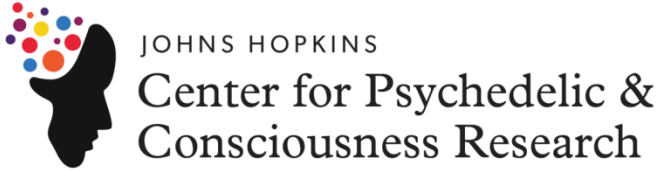
Ibogaine

Ayahuasca

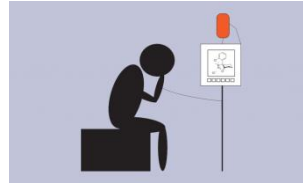


What more is happening?

At John Hopkins:



What more?



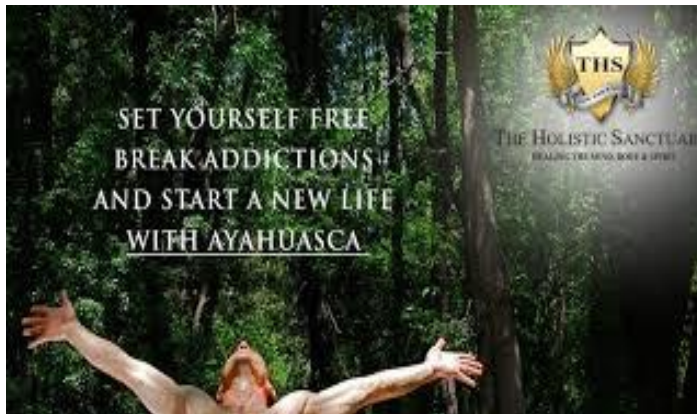
Rest of the world



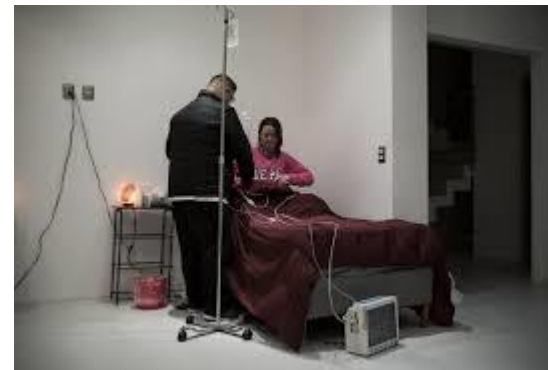
Ketamine Infusion Therapy



Ketamine Clinic



Ayahuasca Retreats



Addiction treatment

Rationale?

A few reasons why?

- The perspective with which mental health and its various distresses are viewed in the world (especially the third-world)
- Ending the stigma against psychedelics
- Promote safe use practices
- Unlock previously unknown potential of the brain.
- The war against 'drugs' continues in several parts of the world (especially the developing world)
 - The developing world (the erstwhile colonized industrialist societies) is refusing to accept the potential in drugs
 - The meanings implanted into the minds of the people through various discourses are still holding strong
 - Governments are still actively involved in persecuting drug trafficking and thereby increasing the growth of the black-market, which leads to loss of revenue (owing to the infrastructure and resources needed to monitor, contain and process these 'peddlers')



Part One: **Epistemology**

- Clarifying and problematizing the terminology and taxonomy of 'psychedelic' substances
- Shifts in the meaning of 'psychedelics': the 60s to the 80s to the 21st century
- Trace and outline the historic and micro-historic accounts of usage of psychedelics by communities and individuals and its relevance to them.
- Specific pharmacological nuances of the substances which makes them useful in mental health treatments.
- The occurrence of psychedelics in literature, mass and popular media, and other knowledge systems
- What meanings have been perpetuated? What effects did they have on our understanding of psychedelics.
- Meaning makers of psychedelics: their possible agendas behind the creation of and dissemination of such meanings.
- Discussing why the use of psychedelics in context of mental health treatment may bring hope to some people.



Part Two: Fracturing Consciousness



- What is ‘Consciousness’?
- Western vs. Eastern ideas of the mind: coming to a new understanding of consciousness.
- Where does subjectivity begin and how does one identify oneself (personally and in relation to society)?
- The subject under the influence of psychedelics: what are the differences in reaction, behavior, motivation levels, priorities etc., understanding the psychedelic ‘trip’ and the changes it causes to the subject.
- Do psychedelics ‘expand’ the mind? Discussing neuroplasticity and psychedelics, the impacts of psychedelic use in different parts of the brain and how they can modulate behavior.

Finally— ‘bio-hacking’ the mind:

- Consuming psychedelics outside medical contexts.
- Safe-use practices
- What to do about a ‘bad-trip’? etc.
- Substances in combinations, and safe poly-drug combinations



- Methods I'll use:

1. Discourse analysis
2. Archival Study
3. Interviews
4. Observation
5. Participation in Research (in whichever capacity possible)

(More to be added after consultation with supervisor(s))

Potential Directions for Future Research/Investigation

Does knowledge have an end?

- This research hopes to:
 1. Open up new avenues of thought and inquiry into the field of discourses, psychedelics and mental health and better understand the relationship between power/culture.
 2. Contribute in whichever small way possible to the latest developments in mental health research.
 3. Re-situate psychedelic substances
 4. Open up new ways of enquiry into topics which permeate several disciplines.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone present here!

I owe this opportunity mainly to two people:



Dr. Christopher Smith
My Primary Supervisor,
School of Social Work



Ms. Rochelle Baker,
Manager, Communications
& Partnerships,
NLCAHR

My warmest regards to the Harm Reduction and Critical Drug Studies Research Exchange Group for giving me this opportunity.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to this center, Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research, for this wonderful opportunity.

Please give me your valuable questions and feedback...

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That's all Folks!