Seeking a Kaleidoscopic Lens: A Holistic Analysis of the Psychedelic Field

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts
Sociology and Equity Studies
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The psychedelic field has generated a vast body of work in terms of psychology, art, spirituality and understandings of the mind and consciousness. Having engaged with the field for the last ten years, I have been curious as to why issues of race, gender and class are not included in the analysis and theories that are generated from the field. My background in feminism, queer studies, anti-racism, critical theory and social justice, as well as my interest in consciousness and psychedelics, led me to conduct a literature review and analyze it with a critical framework. The literature showed an overwhelming gap in the field in regards to inclusion and analysis of issues pertaining to race, gender and class. This gap needs to be addressed and I look forward to conducting fieldwork in the future such as interviewing people about their experiences of race, class and gender and its intersection with psychedelics. I hope to contribute to the field in terms of creatively and productively including an analysis of race, class and gender to the psychedelics field.

Keywords: Psychedelics, Ayahuasca, Critical theory, Hippie, Race, Class, Gender, Tourism
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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my partner Sheila Banerjee for her patience and support. I would also like to thank Alessandra Renzi, Catalin Ivan, Chandra Siddan, Etienne Turpin, Indira Dutt, Johannes Zeidler, Keira Grant, Michael Bailey, Michael Vipperman, Salman Nensi, Seth Rowanwood and Shannon Kennedy for their generosity of spirit, time and energy in exploring some of my ideas for this thesis.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The problem field within which I will be working argues that the contemporary hegemonic bodies of knowledge generated through Western civilizations since the European Enlightenment Era in the disciplines of ontology and epistemology are essentially based on a partial understanding of the nature of reality. The knowledge developed during this period overlapped with Europe's imperialism and colonization of the land and indigenous peoples of the "New World". As such, European politics, values, beliefs, assumptions and knowledge were created and continue to be performed within a global system of contested discourses, even though they are the dominant worldview. My exploration of the Ayahuasca ceremony of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon regions of South America will illustrate how a broader understanding of reality can lead to a more dynamic experience of life and a broader understanding of reality.

This work is the beginning of a path I look forward to exploring to the fullest. I hope that it contributes to the psychedelic field of study by providing some analysis and background to the wealth of knowledge as well as addressing the gaps within the field so that others may engage with issues of race, class and gender as they think through these issues and explore them for themselves.

The researcher

As a racialized man who has been engaged with the exploration of altered states of consciousness for over ten years, I have always been curious about the lack of critical analysis with regards to issues of power and privilege within these fields of study and communities of practice. It has been intriguing to observe over time how whiteness is accepted as the norm within these events. Whiteness is normalized through a variety of subtle and obvious ways that include music, décor, conversations, philosophies, values, configuration of people in a given space and time, drugs of choice, as well as the appropriation and exoticization of racialized peoples and their cultures.

I have participated in a number of ceremonies where psychedelics were used for healing purposes; workshops where participants were exploring altered states of consciousness, as well as parties where the majority of participants were using various psychedelics for social and ecstatic, as well as consciousness exploration. I have also organized and hosted various ceremonies, workshops and parties myself where participants were invited to explore various altered states of consciousness, aesthetics, ecstatic states, tantra, as well as energetic dimensions of reality.

I come to this work as a community based researcher, activist, and participant. For many years I have been engaging with the theory and practice of self transformation as part of a process of liberation from socially constructed bounds of tradition, blind faith and uncritical acceptance of values, beliefs, and
assumptions. This engagement has been about the ontological and epistemological understandings of altered states of consciousness, the virtual and actual realms of reality as well as the political, ethical and moral relationships that are related to these processes.

Having conducted the majority of my field observations and explorations within the city of Toronto, which is a large multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, metropolitan city in Canada with a population of approximately 2.5 million inhabitants, and having grounded my academic studies within feminism, queer studies and anti-colonialism, I have struggled with the lack of critical analysis of gender, sexual orientation, race and class within the spaces, theories and art influenced by psychedelics.

As a researcher and educator who designs and facilitates training workshops on the impacts of power, privilege and marginalization which include an analysis of racism, sexism, homophobia and classism, I wanted to investigate the psychedelics fields with this critical analytical framework. To this end I have included a critical analysis of colonialism and knowledge production, epistemology, the North American and international hippy counter culture, and the evolving use of Ayahuasca as an intersectional critical ethnographic account of psychedelics.

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2 Toronto’s Racial Diversity. Retrieved on June 16,
Chapter 2

Theoretical framework

I will be using a critical ethnographical framework to analyze the articulation of 'set and setting' in the context of issues of race/ethnicity, gender, and class as they relate to psychedelics. I will analyze these from the perspective of an observer and participant of a variety of communities that engage with altered states of consciousness, spirituality, psychotherapy, personal growth, feminism, anti-colonialist understanding and practices.

Requa Tolbert, (2003) in *Gender and Psychedelic Medicine* states that "with rare exceptions, consciousness researches investigating psychedelic medicines are men with M.D.'s and Ph.D.'s - psychiatrists, medicinal chemists, rat psychologists, and Neuroscientists - working to further legitimate use of these agents in repressive social and legal climate"\(^3\). Talbot uses a gender analysis to analyze the discourse within psychedelics and looks at some of the consequences within the psychedelic field of having the primary leaders within this field being male MDs’ and PhDs’.

One of the early leading LSD clinician and researcher Stanislav Grof, states that:

... in my clinical experience with LSD, based on more than twenty five hundred LSD sessions that I conducted or was present for more than five hours, as well as having access to over thirteen hundred session ran by colleagues in Czechoslovakia and the United States, the majority of subjects in these sessions were patients with a wide variety of disorders, such as severe psychoneuroses, psychosomatic diseases, borderline psychosis, and various forms of schizophrenia,

\(^{3}\) Tolbert, (2003)
sexual deviations, alcoholism, and narcotic drug addiction. Another rather large category of subjects was that of "normal" volunteers - psychiatrists, psychologists, students and nurses who had LSD sessions for training purposes; painters, sculptors, and musician seeking artistic inspiration; philosophers and scientists from various disciplines interested in the insights that often emerge in the session; as well as priests and theologian wishing to explore the mystical and religious dimensions of psychedelic experiences. A small number of the sessions was conducted with patients suffering from a terminal disease and facing impending death - especially with cancer patients.

This is one of the few sources where demographic information is provided on the participants of the various LDS research. Given the time of this research, the 1940s – 1960s, I would speculate that the majority, if not the entire sample of subjects were white people. There is no mention of the power differentials between and among the subjects or of the impacts this may have on the theories developed from the field work conducted with these particular subjects.

Expanding on Tolbert’s gender analysis, I would include an analysis of race and class, and would also add that the majority of the “M.D. and Ph.D. men” that Tolbert are referring to are usually white and tend to be ethnocentric in their thinking, analysis, experience and articulation of the psychedelic experiences itself. Issues of power and privilege are not addressed or included in most articulation of psychedelic states and theories, which are typically presented in a neutral and objective manner.

Having conducted a psychedelics literature search for materials that include an analysis of power and privilege, race, class or gender I was astounded that there were only a few sources; Tolbert (2003), Saldanha (2005). This gap in

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the literature, though disappointing, and also encouraged me to continue, critically analyzing the psychedelic literature and advocating for an inclusion of diverse perspectives, voices and people within the field.

I will be including the work of Scheurich & Young (2002), on racially biased epistemology, Linda Martin Alcoff (2007), writings on Epistemologies of Ignorance and Arun Saldanha’s (2008), analysis of psychedelics in Goa, India which includes an articulation of race as being not only embedded in discourse and representation, but as being embodied. Saldanha (2008), argues that race is not just about the discourse of race but in fact also about the realities of embodiment, face and location (p.7) He also argues that the actual manifestation of race through embodiment, face and location does not necessarily mean that racism is a natural extension of this process. In fact he argues that it can be a rather creative process.

Psychedelics is not just the use of a particular psychoactive substance. In fact it is a process that includes the use of drugs, art, music, dance, psychotherapy, spirituality and travel for the purpose of self-transformation. The modern Western account of this process has primarily been articulated from a white man’s experience and perspective. I will be arguing that as creative, radical and non-conforming as psychedelics are, there were and still remain, numerous blind spots based on the lack of inclusion from individuals and groups that were not part of the white, male, academic, medical and research communities have dominated the field.
I will look at the psychedelic experience\(^5\) from a dynamic, integrated, intersectional analytical framework. I apply this understanding to analyze psychedelic research, experiences and perspectives as part of a history that has lacked critical theories such as anti-racism, anti-colonialism, queer studies, and feminist theories into its development as a field of study. I will further explore the possibility of using psychedelic experiences, understood within an intersectional analytical framework to advance an empowered state of liberation and transformation of the body/mind/spirit, i.e. of psychedelics itself.

**Colonialism and knowledge**

Modern Western colonialism has been impacting the world for the last five hundred years, since Christopher Columbus set sail for the “new world.” It was, and still is, a process of extracting raw materials, land and labour. In this sense it is still very much about the material realm. Vandana Shiva (2005) articulated this very succinctly when she stated:

The wealth accumulated by Europe and North America are largely based on riches taken from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Without the destruction of India’s rich textile industry, without the takeover of the spice trade, without the genocide of the native American tribes, without African slavery, the Industrial Revolution would not have resulted in new riches for Europe or North America. It was this violent takeover of Third

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\(^5\) Psychedelic experience here is referred to as an actual experience a person may have after consuming a substance that enables them to journey through different realms of reality and/or consciousness, wherein they have a direct experience of these different realms of reality and/or consciousness. It is a process which includes the use of drugs, art, music, dance, psychotherapy, spirituality and travel, for the transformation of self. Timothy Leary in *A manual based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* articulates a psychedelic experience as “… a journey to new realms of consciousness. The scope and content of the experience is limitless, but its characteristic features are the transcendence of verbal concepts, of space-time dimensions, and of the ego or identity.”
Colonization of the mind is an extension of colonization of the land and its people. This takes place by denying, ridiculing and even outlawing practices of Indigenous peoples globally. Simultaneously, the West has plundered the natural knowledge systems of Indigenous people in order to develop Western science’s knowledge about the natural world.

The West has also attempted to claim ownership of this knowledge through global intellectual property rights. Tonina Simeone (2004) in *Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Property Rights* states that

> ... indigenous traditional knowledge systems contain a rich understanding of plant, crop and tree species, medicines, animal breeds, and local ecological and biological resources. They may also include useful technologies and adaptations to local environments. Traditional knowledge is not static, nor trapped in amber; it is often in current use. Sophisticated and adaptive, it evolves and responds to changes in the physical and social environment.\(^7\)

Various corporations are attempting to privatize this knowledge through global trade agreements even while Indigenous people and their allies are challenging this global system. Simeone goes on to argue that

Unlike the Western custom of disseminating knowledge through publication, traditional knowledge systems exist principally in the form of songs, proverbs, stories, folklore, community laws, common or collective property and inventions, practices and rituals. The knowledge is transmitted through specific cultural mechanisms such as those just listed, and often through

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\(^6\) Shiva, (2005)
\(^7\) Simeone, (2004)
designated community knowledge holders, such as elders. The knowledge is considered collective to the community, not private to one individual or small group.\textsuperscript{8}

This is what makes colonizing the minds of Indigenous people so difficult. Knowledge is kept alive because it is grounded in the community and in the practices of the community. Similarly, as the process of developing knowledge is a lived experience, so too is the process of liberating oneself from colonial knowledges and ways of thinking. This is why I approach anti-colonialism as a practice and not just a theoretical framework.

\textbf{Levels of racism}

Colonialism is based on a set of fundamentally racist assumptions, and some defining of racism is necessary to understand the assumptions made by colonizing forces, which led to the seizure and manipulation of Indigenous knowledges. Racism manifests in a variety of dynamic ways which are not always visible and overt. It plays out on different levels of existence on a daily basis. It functions like a Russian nested doll\textsuperscript{9} in that the different layers fit into and support each other. Scheurich and Young, (1997) illustrate this concept of the nested doll with the figure below.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{nested_doll.png}
\caption{The nested doll concept illustrating levels of racism.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{8} Simeone, (2004)
\textsuperscript{9} I use the imagery of the Russian Doll to illustrate the way we are influenced by the social, biological, environmental, cosmological perspectives of the societies we function within. Individuals are located within a series of spheres where they function at different levels that influence their values, beliefs, assumptions and behaviours.
This diagram demonstrates the way in which the various levels of racism inform and support each other.

Scheurich and Young (1997) articulate four levels of racism: Individual, Institutional, Societal and Civilizational Racism. I will focus on the civilizational level of racism, as this is the level from which epistemological racism emerges. Before taking this focus, it is worth noting the nature of institutional and societal racism as well.

According to Scheurich and Young,

Institutional racism exists when institutions or organizations, [...] have standard operating procedures (intended or unintended) that hurt members of one or more races in relation to members of the dominant race ... Institutional racism also exists when institutional or organizational cultures, rules, habits or symbols have the same bias (as above).\(^{10}\)

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\(^{10}\) Scheurich and Young, (2002). p. 54
The institutional level of racism is important to note as it is the level at which societal racism begins to manifest in structural ways. This means that the institutions that function within any given society, (government, religious organizations, police force, primary and high schools, universities, hospitals, courts, etc.) operate in ways that systemically discriminate, exclude and oppress.

For example, according to the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

… arbitrarily linking mandatory sentences to the quantity of drugs involved in an alleged offence has also led to racial disparity in sentencing. Based on faulty or outdated science, the U.S. [drug] policy mandates long minimum sentences for tiny quantities of crack cocaine; equivalent sentences apply only for much larger — 100 times larger — quantities of cocaine powder. Crack cocaine use is more widespread among low-income inner-city drug users and African-Americans; they have borne the brunt of these policies\(^\text{11}\).

This is not to say that all people that work or function within these institutions are acting in oppressive ways--- in fact some may be actively challenging these institutions so that they become more inclusive.

Like the Russian nested dolls analogy, individuals are nested within institutions, which are nested within society, which are nested within the overarching civilization. This civilizational level of racism is that which creates the racialized norms and values of a culture. Scheurich and Young state,

The civilizational level [of racism] is the level that encompasses the deepest, most primary assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the ways of knowing that reality (epistemology), and the disputational contours of right and wrong or morality and values (axiology) — in short, presumptions about the real, the true, and the good.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{12}\) Scheurich and Young, (2002). p. 56
For example, the contemporary Western scientific epistemological model is grounded in the legacy of the European Enlightenment period. In the process of European colonization, this model of epistemology was imposed on indigenous cultures worldwide, while indigenous epistemologies were devalued and often destroyed. More specifically, this process can be seen through the supplanting of indigenous knowledges and culture with colonial ones within the residential school system, adopted in 19th century Canada. Residential schools demonstrate the intersection of institutional and civilizational levels of racism in that First Nations children were forcibly removed from their families and communities, and traditional values and ways of life were taken away from them through the use of varying degrees of violence.

With the goal of civilizing and christianizing Aboriginal populations, a system of ‘industrial schools’ was developed in the 19th century which combined academic studies with “more practical matters” and schools for Natives began to appear in the 1840s. From 1879 on these schools were modeled after the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, whose motto was “Kill the Indian in him and save the man.”. It was felt that the most effective weapon for “killing the Indian” in them, was to remove children from their Native supports and so Native children were taken away from their homes, their parent, their families, friends and communities13.

This process involved the combined efforts of the Canadian state and Christian churches, (institutional racism), to eradicate First Nations systems of knowing, deemed barbaric (civilizational racism). The aim was to replace First Nations epistemologies with European ‘civilized’ ones.

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One impact of this process was that, over time, the racism of colonizing forces fundamentally shifted normative understandings about the nature of reality, and Indigenous methods of conveying understandings.

**A Partial Assemblage: Western Civilizations and Epistemologies**

Western civilizations and their underlying ontological and epistemological frameworks are in fact specific to the histories and context of Western civilizations and not neutral, objective and/or universal, as they are presented.

Vandana Shiva (1997), in *Educational Imperative* states that

Modern [Western] science is projected as a universal, value-free system of knowledge which has displaced all other belief and knowledge systems by its universality and value-neutrality, and by the logic of its method arrived at objective claims about nature. Yet, the dominant stream of modern science, the reductionist or mechanical paradigm, is a particular response of a particular group of people. It is a specific project of Western man which came into being during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the much acclaimed Scientific Revolution.\(^{14}\)

This reductionist or mechanical paradigm was universalised as part of the imperial/colonial systems of the Euro-American imperial empires which began to emerge in the fifteenth century and continues to be the dominant system of knowledge production, economics, politics and science today. Vandana Shiva (1997) quoting Carolyn Merchant (1980), articulates another detrimental impact of the modern western imperial civilization as

The removal of animistic organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature – the most far-reaching effects of the scientific revolution. Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert particles moved by external, rather than

\(^{14}\) Shiva, Vandana, (1997). p. 162
inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. Moreover, as a conceptual framework, the mechanical order had associated with it a framework of values based on power, fully compatible with the directions taken by commercial capitalism.\textsuperscript{15}

The combination of the re-conceptualizing and then universalizing the universe as a mechanical, dead, inert object that was inherently part of the modern western imperial system meant that other cosmological, ontological and epistemological systems of the colonized peoples and their civilizations were de-valued, negated and dominated by Western systems. Hence, colonialism was not only a domination of land and its people; it was a domination of the very understanding of the nature of reality and ways of knowing that reality.

Unlike Western civilization and its cosmological, ontological and epistemological systems, the majority of indigenous knowledge systems approach the universe as an animate consciousness that we learn from and are embedded within. It is grounded in an ecological understanding of reality and hence is locally lived and not presented as a single, neutral, objective, universal system.

To understand indigenous knowledge is to understand that there are multiple systems of knowledge, reality and ways of knowing. Marie Battiste & James Sa’ke’j Youngblood Henderson, in \textit{Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage} clearly articulates this when they state that “Indigenous knowledge is not a uniform concept that is [universalized] across all Indigenous peoples; it is a

\textsuperscript{15} Merchant, (1980), p.182.
diverse knowledge that is spread throughout different peoples in many layers”\(^{16}\)

Battiste & Henderson further argues that

The traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous peoples is scientific, in the sense that it is empirical, experimental, and systematic. It differs in two important respects from Western science, however: traditional ecological knowledge is highly localized and it is social. Its focus is the web of relationships between humans, animals, plants, natural forces, spirits, and the land forms in a particular locality, as opposed to the discovery of universal “laws.”\(^{17}\)

To bring some understanding of Indigenous knowledge into Western knowledge, different fields of ethno studies have been developed. However, there is a fundamental flaw to these fields of study in that they are using Western knowledge system to examine Indigenous cosmological, ontological and epistemological knowledge systems. Battiste & Henderson quoting Cajete states that

… the ethnoscience movement in Eurocentric thought has generated substantial research in such areas as ethnobotany, ethnopharmacology, ethnozoology, ethnomedicine, ethnopsychiatry, ethnoentomology, and ethnoastronomy. All these cultural sciences have attempted to present the “native perspective,” which refers to its “emic” (inside view) features. Yet, each of these sciences uses Eurocentric categories as both the framework and a point of reference. None of them respect Indigenous knowledge or the different ways in which Indigenous peoples develop their knowledge from their ecologies.\(^{18}\)

The field of psychedelic research draws upon a number of these ethnosciences and has tended to fall into the Eurocentric trap that Cajete articulates above,

\(^{16}\) Battiste & Sa’ke’j Youngblood Henderson, (2000). p. 35
\(^{17}\) Battiste & Sa’ke’j Youngblood Henderson, (2000). p. 46
\(^{18}\) Battiste & Sa’ke’j Youngblood Henderson, (2000). p.38
approaching Indigenous knowledge from a “native perspective” instead of as an actual independent and valid systems of knowledge. Indigenous civilizations have used psychoactive plants for millennia, yet these knowledge systems are generally seen as valid only if Western researchers and scientists are able to validate their efficacy. This validation by and through Eurocentric systems of knowledge ignores Indigenous peoples’ knowledge systems, developed through centuries of experience and exploration with the various sacred plants and medicines.

Modern Western epistemologies are grounded in modern Western civilization, which is itself immersed in the history of modern Western imperialism/colonialism. Though Western epistemologies may be racially biased, this is not to say that individual researchers may not engage in psychedelic research with various Indigenous communities in an ethical and respectful manner.

The epistemological and ontological frameworks of a number of different Indigenous cultures articulate that the universe is alive and we are part of a web of life. Certain plants and animals are viewed as sacred - or actual spirits - and impart knowledge/wisdom to the individuals and communities that use them. Psychoactive plants such as ayahuasca and peyote are traditionally used in sacred ceremonies for healing individuals and communities as well as exploring different realms of reality and consciousness (for information on the religious use of Ayahuasca see http://www.ayahuasca.com/). There is a knowing within various indigenous, as well as the psychedelic communities that the material
realm that we exist within is not the only level of reality that exist. In fact there are subtle energetic dimensions to reality that are just as real as the one we know through our five senses.

Unlike Eurocentric knowledge and epistemologies that presume to be a historical and universal in nature, Indigenous knowledges tend to be grounded in the local ecologies that they are derived from. As such there is tendency for greater interaction of multiple worldviews and hence a fuller understanding of reality and ways of knowing that reality.

**Epistemological ignorance**

Drawing upon the work of the previous section, which looked at issues of colonialism, levels of racism, as well as civilizations and epistemologies I would like to now highlight issues pertinent to epistemological ignorance. Linda Martin Alcoff (2007), chapter on Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types, in Shannon Sullivan & Nancy Tuana (Eds.) *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, articulates three types of epistemologies of ignorance: individual, group and institutional. Alcoff, argues that “differing social positions generate variable constructions of reality and afford different perspective on the world”\(^\text{19}\). This does not necessarily lead to a fundamentally relativist epistemology because decisions and constructions of reality made from any location must still be subject to

\(^{19}\) Alcoff, p. 40
challenge and verification. Alcoff further articulates that an adequate conception of epistemic situation should include two claims:

… most knowledge is a product of judgement call rather than deductive argument or simple perceptual reports. Second, any given individual who is called upon to make a judgment call will rely on her or his own specific experiences. These experiences are sometimes correlated to the individual social location or social identity, habits of perceptual attention, and also with the individual's own interests. Thus an adequate concept of epistemic situatedness must involve much more than the knower's position in time and space and must include individual factors about her or his history and experience.  

Individuals are constructed as knowers who are able to understand as well as construct their reality based on their social location and social identity. Two of the general conditions of all knowers that are relevant for my analysis are:

1. All knowers are situated in time and space, with specific experiences, social locations, modes of perceptual practices and habits, stylus of reasoning, and sets of interest that are fluid and open to interpretation but that have some objective elements in regard to the conditions of the knower's material reality.
2. This specificity of situatedness is relevant, at least in some cases, to the ways that a knower will make judgment calls about issues of coherence, consistency, relevancy, plausibility, and credibility.

Given the fact of our general situatedness, it follows that ignorance should be understood as contextual, since it does not accrue to a knower simply as an individual outside of their particular situation. For example, if I were to accompany a friend, who is a pilot, in the cockpit of a plane, we would have access to all the same instruments for flying the plane, but my ability to understand the meaning of what the instruments are reporting is not equal to

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20 Alcoff, p. 42  
21 Alcoff, p. 42
hers. I am not interchangeable with her as a knower in this context, I am in fact ignorant in regard to some important elements required for making judgment calls about flying the plane.

Another example pertaining to my studies would be if I were to attend a healing ritual and am able to identify all the tools and medicine the healer is using, I would still not be able to conduct the healing myself as I may not understand the inner meanings of the healing process nor be skilled in administering the medicines. In this example I am also not interchangeable with the healer.

The second level of epistemic ignorance that Alcoff articulates is that of groups of knowers who share a social location. Alcoff argues that groups of knowers who share a specific social location bring to the table a perspective that is unique to them as a group (p.43). These can be class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. Alcoff uses women’s experiences to argue that women living in patriarchal societies share a general common reality that is different than men in terms of access to power and their relationship to everyday life.

I agree with Alcoff about the shared perspective of particular groups, however, membership in any particular group does not necessarily mean a uniform, single perspective. There are usually multiple perspectives within any group. This arises as a result of there being multiple locations or intersections of locations that members of a group may simultaneously identify with. Women from different classes, sexual orientation, gender performance, age, ethnicity, etc. may
Feminists have argued that women’s experiences as women living in patriarchal societies are best articulated by women. There will be different experiences of women as a group of knowers due to race, class, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, etc. Given the significant ways in which systems of gender, class, race, and sexual orientation organize social life for children and adults, it makes sense then that these systems are going to be relevant to how knowers, individually and as groups make judgments.

The third level of epistemic ignorance that Alcoff articulates is ignorance at the institutional level, which plays an important part in how we understand the world we live in. This level of analysis focuses on the specific knowing practices inculcated in a socially dominant group. According to Alcoff, “here ignorance is not primarily understood as a lack – a lack of motivation or experience as the result of social location – but as a substantive practice that differentiates the dominant group.”

For example, as a male, I may lack an interest in pursuing all of the ramifications of social justice related to women’s rights, or I may lack experiences as a woman to critique accepted social conventions that I may take for granted. However, the structural argument suggests that as a member of a dominant social group (men), I also may have inculcated a pattern of belief-
formulating practices that created the effect of systemic ignorance. I may be actively pursuing or supporting a distorted or an otherwise inaccurate account of reality\textsuperscript{23}.

It’s at the institutional level of analysis that ignorance transitions from being a passive, negative or lack of knowledge to an active process, either internationally or not, whereby knowledge is created or interpreted and reality molded to fit the perspective of the particular dominant group. This does not mean that all individual knowers or groups of knowers will necessarily share in the hegemonic construction of reality of the dominant group.

The white experience, not just in terms of an ethnic category, but in terms of a social, political, epistemological, ethical, philosophical, technological and scientific project is hegemonic not only in North America and Europe but is projected onto the rest of the world through imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, and globalization as it strives to become a global norm. For example, the development of individualism and the individual in Western societies as the eventual primary unit of analysis comes out of the history of Western experience and is projected as a universal truth.

As power relations converge along social locations of race, class, gender and sexual orientation we emerge with an asymmetrical understanding of the world we live in. Specifically, the male white experience is constructed as a general experience of whiteness, as outlined above which is imbedded into the second and third level of analysis of ignorance, which are the social group and the institutions. Whiteness also heavily influences the first level of the general

\textsuperscript{23} Alcoff, p. 48
knower, for whiteness functions as a primary lens through which the knower is situated.

Group identity makes an epistemically relevant difference because “sometimes groups will operate with different starting belief sets based on their social location and their group-related experiences, and these starting belief sets will inform their epistemic operations such as judging coherence and plausibility”\(^{24}\). The three levels of ignorance that have been presented are to be understood as functioning as a dynamic system whereby each influences the other. The situatedness of individual knowers are grounded in the group of knowers that the individual is a member of and function within the institutions of the society and group that exist which support the perspectives of reality of individuals, groups and institutions.

The understanding of Epistemologies of Ignorance as it is outlined above is important to my analysis of the psychedelic field as it offers a possible framework for the understanding of how and possible why the field has been, and still is, predominantly male and White in terms of the individuals and their experience and analytic frameworks that they employ for exploring the psychedelic experience. Analysis of race, class and gender are missing from much of the experience and analysis in the field and I believe that this is a result of the ways Epistemologies of Ignorance function.

As intelligent, analytical and creative the white males who make up the majority of the theorists, writers, artists and researchers within the psychedelic

\(^{24}\) Alcoff, p. 45
field are they still tend to universalize their experience and theories without including the perspectives of people from different ethnicities, classes or genders. I believe that this is a function of individual, group and institutional Epistemologies of Ignorance as articulated by Alcoff. 

To recap, I have articulated briefly the impacts of modern Western colonialism on knowledge, its relationship to an analysis of racism at different levels and examine racism at an epistemological level. I also highlighted Alcoff’s analysis of epistemological ignorance at the individual, group and institutional levels. I will now outline an analysis of race based on Arun Saldanha’s analysis of race.

**Race as viscosity**

The third component of my theoretical framework is an inclusion and analysis of race. Arun Saldanha (2008), in “White Ravers in a Goan village: Race as Machinic Assemblage”, articulates an analysis of psychedelics as more than the use of a drug, but as a construction of a social subject that becomes ‘psychedelic’, and that the psychedelic subject is most probably a white bodied person. Saldanha (2007) writes, “insofar as whites use the pleasures of drugs, art, ritual, travel, the risky and the exotic to alter their minds and position in the world as whites, I call them psychedelic”\(^{25}\). He also articulates an analysis of race as being not only embedded in discourse and representation, but as being *embodied*. He writes:

Viscosity enables a rigorous grasping of social spaces by putting the dynamic physicality of human bodies and their interactions at the forefront of analysis. In basic terms, viscosity pertains to two dimensions of a collective of bodies: its sticking together, and its relative impermeability.26

Within the social sciences today, race is articulated as a social construction. As such it is analyzed and articulated through discourse, representation and analysis. Saldanha argues that race is not just about the discourse of race but in fact also about the realities of embodiment, face and location. Whereby, embodiment refers to what people actually do – consume drugs, created art in a variety of mediums, engaged with psychotherapy and spiritual practices – face, refers to who else is in the space and a sense of familiarity of these faces, and location refers to where the bodies in question came from – a sense of geography (p.5-7). Saldanha also argues that the actual manifestation of race through embodiment, face and location does not necessarily mean that racism is a natural extension of this process. In fact he argues that it can be a rather creative process.

Approaching an understanding of race through a series of events instead of exclusively through discourse and representation one can see how psychedelics exploration emerges out of the white experience in a rather “natural” manner and has been universalized. This universalized experience of the straight, white, middle and upper class male does not necessary reflect the interest, experience or understandings of the rest of us who are, queer, racialized, women and men of different classes.

Women feminists have argued that only having males write, theorize and experiment influences the results as they ignore, deny and do not include the perspective and experiences of women. Racialized people have argued that white theorists and even white female feminists similarly ignore, deny and do not include the perspective and experiences of racialized people. I am arguing that the psychedelic field and community will be richer as more racialized, queer, women and men from different classes are included in the field as writers, theorists, artists, academics, and leaders exploring the many aspects of psychedelics.

I am curious as to the impacts on the outcomes and theories developed as more academics, researchers, artists and community members include an analysis of race, class and gender into their studies, theories and art. How would our understanding of human consciousness become more dynamic building on, and including the works of Buddhist psychology and practices, Tantric theories and practices and other perspectives from cultures that have been exploring these phenomena for millennia without engaging in cultural appropriation or colonialization.
Chapter 3

Historical Growth Of Psychedelic Counterculture: A Race Analysis Of The Psychedelic Counterculture In America From The 1950’s To The Present

To say that the period of the 1950s - 1960s in America was a time of tremendous change is an understatement. The decades saw such powerful forces as the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Panthers, the New Left, (comprised of the Student Movement, the Women’s Movement, and the Vietnam Anti-War Movement), Rock and Roll, in addition to Psychedelic art, music and drugs. These were not necessarily separate movements, for there was a large amount of overlap and cross-activism and the general thrust was for societal change and social justice.

As important as all of these movements are, I will be focusing on the psychedelic aspect of this period and tracing its history from the 1960’s to the present. My interest in this aspect of the psychedelic counterculture is part of my larger interest in how and why diverse global cultures use psychoactive plants in the context of psycho-spiritual exploration. Psychedelic drug use in the 1950s-1960s became a widespread practice for a large portion of the counterculture in America. There was enough cohesiveness of practice for it to be analyzed as a distinct community.

The 1960’s psychedelic community does not fit easily into the definition of ‘social movement’. This is the case because it was not necessarily fighting against the state or other institutions of society. It was more a convergence of individuals and communities who were engaged with the praxis of creating
alternative ways of living. This praxis is a tapestry of non-confrontation/non-violent, personal and collective artistic and expressive creativity, and a withdrawing from society to create alternative spaces and ways of living.

Goffman and Joy, (2004) argue that countercultures are dynamic and lived as being more than “a culture with a lifestyle that is opposed to the prevailing culture”27. Building on the work of Theodore Roszak (1970), Goffman articulates that countercultures have three primary characteristics:

1. Countercultures assign primacy to individuality at the expense of social conventions and governmental constraints
2. Countercultures challenge authoritarianism in both obvious and subtle forms
3. Countercultures embrace individual and social change28

Along with these three primary characteristics are a set of features that are present in countercultures. These are:

1. Breakthroughs and radical innovations in art, science, spirituality, philosophy, and living
2. Diversity
3. Authentic, open communication and profound interpersonal contact. Also, generosity and the democratic sharing of tools
4. Persecution by mainstream culture of contemporaneous subcultures
5. Exile or dropping out29

It is clear that the psychedelic community was and still is a counterculture and not a social movement. There was no “sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities”. However, there was certainly a primacy of a singularity of individuals and a definite challenge to social conventions and governmental constraints. The psychedelic community, as it was manifested

29 Goffman & Joy, (2004), 33
through the Beatniks of the fifties and the Hippies of the sixties, was certainly anti-authority and expressed this value through the use of art and performances which ridiculed the establishment and the values and expected norms of the conservative white middle and upper class American society\textsuperscript{30}.

The Hippies developed innovative psychedelic art, music and drugs which included mind and consciousness exploration and different ways of living. Though they were not organizers or activists in terms of mobilizing against the state, they did advocate an active individual and collective withdrawal from society. For these reasons, the psychedelic community is more a counterculture than a social movement.

**Archaeology of the Hippie movement**

Dr. Albert Hoffman first synthesized lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) in 1938 and accidentally came into physical contact with the substance in 1943, which was the first time the effect of LSD was documented\textsuperscript{31}. LSD became the main drug of choice for the psychedelic counterculture of the late 1950s and sixties and has carried through to contemporary times. People like psychologist Timothy Leary and author Aldous Huxley were the main intellectuals during the early phase of psychedelics, advocating the use of psychedelics for the exploration of consciousness and the human mind. They were challenging the very fabric of the conservative values and institutions of post WWII American

\textsuperscript{30} Goffman, 280-281.
\textsuperscript{31} Dyck, (2008), p.13
The psychedelic counterculture of the 1950s and 60s existed in the background of the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War. During this time the American government exercised a tremendous amount of social control over the populace in the guise of protecting the nation from the social unrest and the Communists. An example of this control was government investigation into employee loyalty. Anderson writes:

The Truman and Eisenhower administrations established the most sweeping inquiry into employee loyalty in American history. From 1947 to 1956 the federal government fired approximately 2700 workers: fearing investigation and dismissal, another 12000 employees resigned.\(^{32}\)

I can only speculate that the employees that resigned did so due to the rather invasive nature of the inquiry of government employees. As this was at the height of the Cold War era being suspected as a “communist” was rather damaging to ones career and personal safety.

From the late 1940s to the late 1950s, Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy became very prominent with his anti-Communist agenda. To this day, this period is associated with McCarthyism. During this time thousands of Americans were accused of being Communists or Communist sympathizers, and became the subject of aggressive investigations and questioning before government committees and agencies. This was a time of intense state

investigations and surveillance of government employees and the general public.

According to Anderson,

The government began an inquisition; critics labeled it a witch hunt. During the Truman administration alone the FBI conducted 25,000 full-scale investigations, [while] … all state and federal agencies during those years checked over 6.5 million Americans for loyalty.

There was a pervasive conformist mentality being imposed by the state through its local and national apparatus. The Beatniks of this era, who influenced the Hippies of the 1960s, attempted to disengage from this conformist mentality. ‘Dropping out’ of the dominant culture became a pillar of both the Beatnik and Hippie countercultures.

The call to “drop out” of society and create alternative communities was heeded by lots of people who were using psychedelics as a path to spiritual, personal and group development. These alternative communities were physical spaces where people felt safe to explore different ways of living from the mainstream and as such became sites for congregating. Yet, once again it was primarily white people who “dropped out” and created a number of these alternative spaces.

Another contextual piece for the psychedelic counterculture was the beginning of the Vietnam War and the anti-war movement. As many white Americans were “dropping out” of mainstream society, there were also a politicizing of segments of the American population in terms of the anti-war movement and the Civil Rights movements. On one level, there was a sharp

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33 Anderson, (1995), 11
divide between the anti-war movement and the psychedelic counterculture. The anti-war movement was a decidedly political social movement which met the criteria outlined by Tilly in the previous section. The psychedelic counterculture, on the other hand, was decidedly anti-political, and hence there was a complicated relationship between the two movements. According to Adam Garfinkle (1997), “the flower children, with their drugs and acid rock, did as much to hurt the image of the anti-war movement in the country at large as Senator Fulbright’s hearings had done to help it”. The popular image of the hippie was of a person who was more interested in consuming drugs and did not care about anyone else. And the ones that “dropped out” of mainstream society would have added to this image as they literally left and created alternative communities and spaces.

Despite their differences, the Hippies of the late sixties saw their numbers grow through their association with the anti-war movement and the draft resisters. The praxis of dropping out from society and populating alternative communities created ideal refuges for draft resisters who were essentially evading the law. This provided draft resisters and other individuals who were opposing the war and the mainstream society with a space to live and create alternative communities in.

The Hippies also brought their creative, artistic performances to the anti-war movement. In Counterculture Through the Ages, Goffman writes

In October 1967, Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman concocted a plan to bring the Hippies, and their subversive sense of fun into the Pentagon.

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34 Garfinkle, (1997), p. 91
protest. So Hoffman announced that a group of freaks would “levitate the Pentagon” and “exorcise the evil spirits.” The building would rise three inches in the air, the demons would flee and the war would be over. Approximately 75,000 Hippies and peaceniks showed up for the October event.\(^{35}\)

The psychedelic counterculture through the Hippies used this type of performance to demonstrate the absurdity of the values and norms of society as a whole and the Vietnam War specifically in this instance.

Obviously, the use of drugs played a role in the psychedelic culture. According to Jay Stevens, “one of the areas of interest involved using psychedelic drugs as a catalyst toward permanent change, which required a restructuring of society’s values and institutions.\(^{36}\)” The ‘change’ that Stevens alludes to took many forms. Some saw this as an internal process of exploration of mystical states of consciousness that was apolitical in nature, believing that as individuals evolved to higher levels of consciousness, so would society. Others saw this to be a political process which would facilitate the challenging and changing of institutions, policies and values of the time. The ethos of the hippies and the psychedelic counterculture were aspiring towards a less materialistic society where relationships and community were the main focus.

The psychedelic counterculture was not a counterculture which functions in a vacuum; it was part of a larger constellation of movements. Psychedelics were seen as a means to facilitating a change process of individuals and society at large.

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\(^{35}\) Goffman, (1997) p. 95

\(^{36}\) Stevens, (1997)
The Reproduction of Whiteness

Goffman, (1997) quoting Frank Zappa captured a sense of the hippie drive:

On a personal level, Freaking Out is a process whereby an individual casts off outmoded and restricting standards of thinking, dress, and social etiquette in order to express creatively his relationship to his immediate environment and the social structure as a whole … On a collective level, when any number of ‘Freaks’ gather and express themselves creatively through music or dance … it is generally referred to as a Freak Out. The participants already emancipated from our national social slavery, dress in their most inspired apparel, realize as a group whatever potential they possess for free expression.37

This ethos of getting out of ones “outmoded and restricting standards of thinking, dress, and social etiquette” is to a large degree what the free love philosophy of the Hippies was about. Yet, at the same time there was not much of an analysis of marginalization and the various struggles at the time within the psychedelic communities. There was little discussion of the ways in which the predominantly white university students from middle and upper class families who constituted the Hippies in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s were either advertently or inadvertently being exclusionary.

According to Stuart Hall (1969) in *The Hippies, an American Moment*, the phrase “turn on, tune in and drop out” coined by Dr. Timothy Leary was the clearest articulation of the Hippie way of life. Hall states that to “turn on”, literally invites the Hippie to switch to the use of mind-expanding drugs, and to turn on as many other members of straight society as he can reach. But metaphorically, it means to switch to a more authentic mode of experience, to leave the safe routes of middle class society … To ‘tune in’ means, literally, to ‘attune’ oneself to another way of life … There is, the phrase suggests, more than one ‘channel of perception’ through which to experience the world. … To ‘drop out’ means [that] the Hippie should reject the structures of middle class experience, the way of life oriented towards

work, power, status, consumption – goals which have been discredited within
the counter-value system of Hippie sub-culture.\textsuperscript{38}

The use of psychedelic drugs to “turn on” and the option to “drop out” of the
white, middle class experience, which was the main hallmark of Hippie culture,
were not accessible to all. Choosing to drop out of mainstream society and
create alternative communities was generally a privilege of members of the white
middle class themselves. Many other segments of society who were already
disenfranchised were in fact struggling to have access to the rights, privileges
and resources that the white middle class male hippies were eschewing. In order
to be able to “drop out” of society, one needed enough cultural capital to ensure
that one’s basic needs would be met, or that an encounter with the police would
not have dire consequences compared to other marginalized members of
society.

This example of the articulation of the white experience as universal
reveals the manner in which issues of class, racialization and gender were
excluded from the analysis of the psychedelic counterculture. The tendency to
universalize the white experience can be seen in the concepts of set and setting
as outlined by Dr. Timothy Leary. Leary, one of the main thinkers of the
psychedelics counterculture, and psychology professor at Harvard University,
articulated two major methodological concepts influencing the way psychedelics
were used for research. These were \textit{set} and \textit{setting}. The concept of ‘set’ referred
to the user’s emotional, psychological and mental state at the time of taking any

\addcontentsline{toc}{section}{Notes and References}
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  \item \textsuperscript{38} Hall, (1969), p. 173
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psychedelic. ‘Setting’, on the other hand, referred to the physical environment in which one engaged with the psychedelic experience. This included features such as the lighting, background sound, type of music, art, as well as location (i.e. indoors, outside, office, home, clinical setting).

Timothy Leary's, The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, articulates that

… the first and most important thing to remember in preparation for a psychedelic session is to provide a setting which is free from one’s usual social and interpersonal games and which is free as possible from unforeseen distractions and intrusions. A period of time (usually at least three days) should be set aside in which to experience will run its natural course and you'll have sufficient time for reflection and meditation. It is important to keep schedules open for three days and to make these arrangements before hand. Setting can also include time of day or night. Similarly, there are differences between sessions out-of-doors and indoors. Natural settings such as gardens, beaches, forests, and open country have specific influences which one may or may not wish to incur a familiarity with the surroundings may help one to feel confidence in whose memory.'

As the influence of the articulation of set and setting became established, it was presented in a value free manner as though anyone could have access to spaces where psychedelics were used. However, I contend that given the macro context I have been articulating in terms of colonialism, epistemological racism and ignorance as well as issues of race, class, gender and sexual orientation, spaces where psychedelics were used were primarily available to certain individuals and groups, mainly white, middle and upper class men.

39 Leary, Metzner & Alpert, (1992)
Psychedelics and race – a macro setting

Dr. David Pilgrim, Professor of Sociology at the Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan writing about the Jim Crow Laws and etiquette in the US clearly articulated that it was the praxis of racism, moral and ethical construction of white and non-white subjects, as well as religious beliefs which lead to a worldview where “whites were superior to blacks in all important ways, including but not limited to intelligence, morality, and civilized behavior” 40

Pilgrim further illustrates how pervasive the impact of the Jim Crow laws was by highlighting a series of social etiquette that were extension of the Jim Crow laws. These social norms regulated how whites and blacks were to relate to each other. These norms were:

a. A Black male could not offer his hand (to shake hands) with a White male because it implied being socially equal. Obviously, a Black male could not offer his hand or any other part of his body to a White woman, because he risked being accused of rape.
b. Blacks and Whites were not supposed to eat together. If they did eat together, Whites were to be served first, and some sort of partition was to be placed between them.
c. Under no circumstance was a Black male to offer to light the cigarette of a White female -- that gesture implied intimacy.
d. Blacks were not allowed to show public affection toward one another in public, especially kissing, because it offended Whites.
e. Jim Crow etiquette prescribed that Blacks were introduced to Whites, never Whites to Blacks. For example: "Mr. Peters (the White person), this is Charlie (the Black person), that I spoke to you about."
f. Whites did not use courtesy titles of respect when referring to Blacks, for example, Mr., Mrs., Miss., Sir, or Ma'am. Instead, Blacks were called by their first names. Blacks had to use courtesy titles when referring to Whites, and were not allowed to call them by their first names.
g. If a Black person rode in a car driven by a White person, the Black person sat in the back seat, or the back of a truck.

40 Pilgrim, (2002)
h. White motorists had the right-of-way at all intersections\textsuperscript{41}

Stetson Kennedy, author and human rights activist, first published in 1959 his book, \textit{Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was Before the Overcoming}, in which he organized into a coherent list the rules as a critique, that Blacks were supposed to observe in conversing with Whites:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) Never assert or even intimate that a White person is lying.
  \item b) Never impute dishonorable intentions to a White person.
  \item c) Never suggest that a White person is from an inferior class.
  \item d) Never lay claim to, or overly demonstrate, superior knowledge or intelligence.
  \item e) Never curse a White person.
  \item f) Never laugh derisively at a White person.
  \item g) Never comment upon the appearance of a White female\textsuperscript{42}
\end{itemize}

The work of Pilgrim and Kennedy outlined above illustrates some details in the ways that blacks were discriminated against. I highlighted these to demonstrate how social conventions and subtle ways of relating with each other can lead to systematic discrimination. This is linked to the work outlined earlier by Scheurich and Young on levels of racism and Alcoff on Epistemologies of Ignorance as examples of how individual, institutional and societal levels of racism and ignorance intersect to create privilege for some members of society and oppression for others.

Pilgrim and Kennedy both elucidate aspects of the social, economic, and political environments that existed and governed the respective lives of whites

\textsuperscript{41} Pilgrim, (2002)
\textsuperscript{42} Kennedy, (1959/1990), p. 216-117
and blacks, as well as the relationship between them in the US for over four hundred years, which was built on the reality and legacy of slavery.

One consequence of this reality was that members of racialized communities were absent from the psychedelic counterculture of the 1950s and 60s. Their voices, experiences, and bodies were not included in the articulation of the various psychedelic art, psychological theories and experiences that were developed through the use of psychedelics. As Alcoff had articulated in the section on epistemologies of ignorance, here the individual, group and institutional levels of ignorance converged to produce individuals who were members of certain groups within institutions who were not including an analysis of power, race or gender as they were not impacted by being marginalized, racialized or women. They were able to enjoy the privilege of being ignorant.

An intersection of race, class, gender and psychedelics

The intersection of race, class, gender and psychedelics may bring to the field some interesting questions, analysis, theories and experiences. The remainder of this paper will explore the way that social location informs the way we approach psychedelics, its use and the creative processes that may be derived from the use of them.

In the 1960’s, poorer whites and black communities did not necessarily have access to the spaces and the opportunities to explore with psychedelics in the ways that the predominantly white middle and upper class Hippies did. Though the Hippies had an aesthetic of poverty, this was a self-imposed poverty. The Hippie identity was very much against the values, norms, consumerism and
materialism of the mainstream middle class life. They created an alternative way of living that was not necessarily directly challenging mainstream society. Rather, it was oriented towards withdrawing and creating alternative communities.

Part of this alternative was a form of renunciation of not only the values and norms of middle class life but also the consumerism and materialism of the system as well. The Hippies as a community did not originate on the margins of society. On the contrary, they came from the very centre of power and privilege. The Hippie counterculture in America was the “… return of an otherwise affluent, middle class and potentially ‘arrived’ group to the disguise of poverty”.

The psychedelic community, as it manifested through the Hippies in 1960’s America, was an appropriating counterculture. It may have shunned the values and outlook on life from its middle class roots, but in the process it consumed and appropriated certain cultural meanings from the poor, Native Americans, Blacks, and later East Indians in its journey into mysticism.

There was collaboration in the sixties between whites and blacks in America through the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-Vietnam War. The onset of the civil rights movement, led by black communities for equal rights, had a lot of white student movement participation. However, there was a divergence manifested through the Black Muslim movement, African-American nationalism, the ghetto rebellions, and finally Black Power. Writing in 1969, Hall stated that “the Negro has reached for and achieved, if not a real, then certainly a potential

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43 Hall, (1969), p. 175
imaginative liberation from the cultural imperialism of white racist and white fellow-traveler alike. Though white Hippies might consider themselves to be in solidarity with Black activists, Blacks were now less willing to tolerate subtler forms of racism exemplified by cultural imperialism.

The different political processes and histories of the Black communities and the Beatniks of the fifties, (who where the progenitors of the Hippies in the sixties), meant that the psychedelic experience and communities were essentially a part of white, middle class America. This is not to say that there were not Black people and other people of colour participating within the psychedelic, Beatnik, and Hippie communities of the fifties and sixties, but rather, that those that did were on the margins of these communities.

This reproduction of whiteness is sustained through time and space to contemporary psychedelic countercultures. According to Hall,

[[I]n its more active mode, Hippies and “flower power” are a way of carrying on a sort of spiritual politics by “other means”. Instead of taking society from in front, like campus militants, or burning it baby, to the ground, like black ghettos militants, they mean to unravel it from within, destroying the rational, undermining the legitimacy, the social ethic, which is the moral cement which holds the whole fabric together]

This is a philosophical stance that continues to be present in contemporary psychedelic communities. It comes from a sense of what is possible for white bodies and communities. Other communities generally have to fight from the margins to participate as equal members of society then fight to have safe spaces to explore mind expanding psychedelics. When ethno-racial individuals

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44 Hall, (1969), p. 177
45 Hall, (1969), p. 196
engage with the psychedelic communities, they are still seen as outsiders within the psychedelic community.

The phenomena of marginalization of people based on class, gender and race is not exclusive to the North American experience. Issues of power, privilege and marginalization are replicated at various locations, especially where these issues are not analyzed. Given the pervasive nature of the impacts of colonialism, racism, patriarchy and capitalism, certain aspects of specific experiences are universalized, and with them the discourse and experiences of certain bodies and ways of life. Issues of power, privilege and marginalization that may be grounded in time and space geographically are transported to other locations, as people, ideas and ways of life move from a local to a global context. In the next section I will look at some of these issues as they arise in the context of tourism and psychedelics.

The emergence of mass tourism in North America and Europe

This section will explore the relationship between tourism and the Hippie movement of the 1950s and 1960s, two factors which converged and created the quintessential international Hippie, who traveled and continues to travel the world in search of new experiences, self-realization, peace, love and happiness. In addition, this section will examine the impact of this phenomenon on indigenous cultures and practices. I will explore the discursive formations within these fields, not with the intention of creating a synthesis, but with the intention of understanding the construction of a Western subject as tourist and explorer of psychedelics. This will necessarily require an examination of the intersection of
consumer capitalism and globalism in the context of class and white privilege, which create tourist-psychedelic subjects who are able to travel globally and access knowledge and practices that may be illegal in their country of origin.

The international tourist, as constructed as a subject, began in earnest in the post World War II era in Europe and North America. As these Western societies began to rebuild their economies after WWII, more people had a greater amount of disposal income in addition to “free” time.

Gareth Shaw and Allan M. Williams (2002) in Critical issues in Tourism: A Geographical Perspective, argue that mass tourism in the twentieth century had a “virtuous circle” - at least in economic terms – of falling real cost, rising demand and economies of scale. They outline five main phases of this “virtuous circle” of tourism. I am particularly interested in the third phase but will briefly highlight the five phases.

The emergence of paid holidays, combined with mass car ownership provided the conditions for the first phase of mass tourism in the 1920’s and 1930’s. This boom developed into the second phase in the 1950’s with the growth of leisure time and the accessibility of domestic tourist locales. Tourism became increasingly internationalized in the ‘50’s and ‘60’s, which Shaw and Williams call the third phase. Between 1950 and 1988, the number of international tourists increased from 25 million to 389 million. They describe the fourth phase as being tourism that occurred mostly within Europe, followed by the fifth phase, occurring in the late twentieth century, involving a globalization of

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46 Shaw & Williams, (2002), p. 178
the tourism industry. In this phase, increasing numbers of countries began to partake in international tourism, including Japan, Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand\(^47\).

As more Western tourists began travelling internationally, local populations, communities and governments began to respond to the growing demands of the tourist. Local governments saw this tourism as a means of addressing internal issues of unemployment and poverty, and they began to earmark funding for tourism oriented investment and infrastructure.

The third phase of the development of mass tourism was from the late 1950s to the 1960s, and coincided with the Hippie movement in North America and Europe. This was an important convergence of tourism with a mass scale social movement, one which had engaged with the widespread use of psychedelics. For even though the bulk of international tourists moved between the USA, Canada and Europe, there were a small yet substantial number of tourists who traveled to “Third World”\(^48\) countries. The majority of people in this sub-group of international tourists were Hippies who saw themselves as being on a self-realization journey. The ‘Third World’ became constructed as providing the means for the mystical and exotic experiences believed necessary for such self-realization.

\(^{47}\) Shaw & Williams, (2002
\(^{48}\) The term “Third World” is not universally accepted. Some prefer other terms such as - Global South, the South, non-industrialized countries, developing countries, underdeveloped countries, undeveloped countries, mal-developed countries, emerging nations. The term “Third World” is the one most widely used in the media today, but no one term can describe all “less-developed” countries accurately. Third World: definitions and descriptions, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/General/ThirdWorld_def.html (Retrieved on 01-10-09)
The Hippie as a social subject was engrossed with self-realization as well as engaged in a process of differentiation from the conservative and conforming tendencies of their parents’ generation of the 1940s and early 1950s. The class background of most hippies, along with their white ethno-racial privilege, allowed them to access financial means for travel to the exotic East, and to learn the mystical ways of these “other” cultures. As such, they could pursue in a leisurely manner their self-realization without the burden of having to work or be stressed about basic needs.

The Hippies and their way of life were an export of the North American experience that facilitated the creation of spaces in other parts of the world which provided opportunities for international tourist and local inhabitants to congregate. This was and remains a dynamic relationship whereby issues of racism, sexism and classism are replicated as well as challenged at the local sites. The exploration of psychedelics do have the potential to create spaces for explorations that locals may want to engage with in a manner that may not have been possible prior to the arrival and establishment of certain hippie culture.

**Hippie Culture and International Tourism**

The convergence of the international tourism industry of the late 1950s and into the 1960s, along with the Hippie culture with it’s penchant for psychedelic and mystical experiences, engendered the Hippie as an international psychedelic tourist subject. As Hippies started to travel internationally to further expand their quest for personal growth, spirituality and new experiences, many of
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them traveled to India. India represented the land of mysticism and wild new experiences. It was also inexpensive, as the cost of living in India was and still is relatively low for a foreigner functioning in a European currency or the US dollar. A “poor” Hippie in North America or Europe would be able to live very comfortably in India for an extended period of time, able to pursue spiritual/mystical practices without the hindrance of needing to work to support her/himself.

Leading Hippie intellectuals and artists were the main driving force behind the initial internationalization of the Hippies in the late 1950s and 1960s. People like psychologist Timothy Leary, Harvard professor Richard Alpert, as well as authors Aldous Huxley and Allen Ginsberg all traveled to “the East” and specifically to India as part of the drive to engage with Eastern mysticism. These academics and artists brought back to America narratives from ‘the East’ which inspired others to make similar journeys. According to the website “Hippie”, traveling to ‘the East’ became sort of a pilgrimage, where a common travel route is described, one which was undertaken by many Hippies.

One travel experience, undertaken by hundreds of thousands of hippies between 1969–1971, was the Hippie trail overland route to India. Carrying little or no luggage, and with small amounts of cash, almost all followed the same route, hitch-hiking across Europe to Athens and on to Istanbul, then by train through central Turkey via Erzurum, continuing by bus into Iran, via Tabriz and Tehran to Mashad, across the Afghan border into Herat, through southern Afghanistan via Kandahar to Kabul, over the Khyber Pass into Pakistan, via Rawalpindi and Lahore to the Indian frontier. Once in India, hippies went to many different destinations but gathered in large numbers on the beaches of Goa, or crossed the border into Nepal to spend months in Kathmandu. In Kathmandu, most of the hippies hung out in the tranquil
surroundings of a place called Freak Street (Nepal Bhasa: Jhoo Chhen) which still exists near Kathmandu Durbar Square.\textsuperscript{49}

Though they carried little with them in terms of luggage and cash, their sheer numbers most certainly impacted the locations in which they congregated. The Indian state of Goa highlights the impact of the Hippie movement on a local community. Seth Sherwood, writing for the New York Times travel section (2006) writes:

The Indian Army seized Goa from Portugal in 1961\textsuperscript{50}. But new colonists, the Haight-Ashbury crowd [i.e. Hippies], soon showed up. Seduced by the same landscapes that appeared in Portuguese spyglasses centuries earlier — untouristed beaches, green jungle, dramatic cliffs — the former flower children traveled overland on “magic buses” from Europe and created in northern Goa a free-spirited, budget-friendly new world among the laid-back native Goans ... Since then, each generation of global nomads has carved its niche: New Age devotees of the 1980’s; global ravers and electro music pioneers of the 1990’s (who initiated a tradition of all-night beach parties and made Goa trance music a worldwide phenomenon); and the yogaphiles and Burning Man groupies of today. The result is the globe’s most enduring and constantly adapting tropical getaway for alternative living. When the summer monsoon blows past, the world’s fringes unite.\textsuperscript{51}

The legacy of international Hippie tourism continues, as demonstrated by the contemporary creation of phenomena like psychedelic tourism in Goa. The impacts of tourism are multifaceted and dynamic, for they engender numerous relationships and structures of power at various levels of society. Foucault writes


\textsuperscript{50}This author offers the perspective that the Indian Army did not “seized” Goa from Portugal in 1961, but rather liberated it from Portuguese colonizing forces which ruled Goa for over 400 years. See “Goa's Freedom Movement” by Lambert Mascarenhas
\url{http://www.goacom.com/culture/history/history4.html}

\textsuperscript{51}Sherwood, (2006)
"… what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly or immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or future." Power in this sense is applicable to the phenomenon of the international tourist, for the actions (and non-actions) of international tourists have multiple direct and indirect impacts on the actions of local individuals and communities. Goa developed as a destination for tourist post independence, specifically for past and present day Hippies and other tourists seeking a combination of relaxation and psychedelic experiences/parties. The local community accommodated the influx of tourist for a variety of reasons.

The impact of tourists on local communities in terms of economics and culture, as well as on the physical landscape, has been analysed within the field of tourism studies. A main feature of analysis is the tourist-host relationship, as this relationship tends to be asymmetrical, whereby the tourist tends to have more power in relation to the host individual and community. Mathieson & Wall argue that “the larger the cultural and economic difference between tourists and local residents, the more obvious and more significant these changes are”⁵³. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) articulated that “the tourist-host relationship is characterized by four major features: it is transitory, unequal and unbalanced, lacks spontaneity and is limited by spatial and temporal constraints”⁵⁴.

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⁵³ Mathieson, (1982)  
⁵⁴ UNESCO, (1976)
In Goa, the tourist-host relationship is further complicated by the availability and use of psychedelics. Tourists traveling to Goa to party will most likely have experience using psychedelics and possess a cultural knowledge of the workings of all night parties, which facilitate the enjoyable use of psychedelics. This is information/experience that many members of the host population may not have. Also, if the host population’s drug of choice and history of use is primarily alcohol, then the introduction of psychedelic substances may lead to further alienation of the host population from the tourist, based on the different drug of choice being used.

Hippies may have been the initial psychedelic tourists but they are not the only ones. In contemporary times, many more psychedelic subjects are traveling the world in search of psychedelic experiences and spaces. Among these, some travel to West Africa, to participate in ceremonies where Ibogaine, a powerful psychedelic plant extract, is used in both religious practice and traditional medicine. [Ibogaine is also being used in the West as a treatment option for dependencies to opiates, cocaine, and alcohol]. Other psychedelic tourists travel to Mexico to explore the use of peyote and magic mushrooms in traditional religious ceremonies with indigenous communities. Still others travel further south, to South America (Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) to participate in Ayahuasca ceremonies.

**Contemporary Psychedelic Tourists and Ayahuasca**

55 Ibogaine FAQ,
The historical events that led to the internationalization of the psychedelic tourist have a contemporary manifestation. Present psychedelic tourists are building on the knowledge, experiences and processes of the past, while engaging with present dynamics. The trend toward globalization over the past few decades, along with increased consumerism, contributes to the commodification of ways of life and practices of many people. Like other methods of consumer capitalism and globalization, the commodification of indigenous knowledge and practices has predominantly flowed from “Third World to First World” peoples and communities.

Consumer capitalism, globalization, and the racial and class privileges of Westerners converge with Westerners’ feelings of alienation from self and others. The legacy of imperialism and colonialism, combined with Westerners’ desire to feel connected and have a sense of purpose, contributes to the cultural appropriation of the knowledge and practices of “other” peoples. Westerners tend to consume not only products but also experiences. These are some of the ingredients that are combined to create the international psychedelic tourist subject.

Ayahuasca presents an opportunity to further analyze the convergence of a number of the seemingly divergent discourses and practices that I have been discussing so far. The popular 1963 book, *The Yage Letters*, by William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, was the first book that was wholly about ayahuasca. Terence McKenna also wrote on this topic. According to John N. Grunwell,
The most influential books of the last decade and a half are likely those of Terence McKenna, author of such works as “Food of the Gods”, “The Archaic Revival”, and “True Hallucinations”. Perhaps the most popular of McKenna’s books, True Hallucinations is a wild, exciting retelling of his apparently true journeys through Amazonia in the early 1970s. Many internet accounts of ayahuasca experiences frequently mention McKenna as an inspiration for their physical and mental journeys56.

The fact that contemporary psychedelic explorers draw upon the works of people like McKenna, Burroughs and Ginsberg demonstrates the living legacy of the Hippies in terms of how current international psychedelic tourism is still influenced by the discourses of the 1960s.

Grunwell, sourcing an unpublished survey conducted by his colleague Kim Kristensen of participants who attended an Ayahuasca ceremony, stated that “Kristensen found that there were four main reasons why people became ayahuasca tourists: self-exploration and spiritual growth, curiosity, physical and emotional healing, and the desire for a vacation to an exotic location”.57 These reasons combine to create differential power relationships between tourists and host communities, as the various needs and demands of the tourists and host communities are negotiated and contested on a regular basis.

Ayahuasca is the name of a specific plant, as well as a medicinal and sacred magical drink. It incorporates two or more distinctive plant species capable of producing profound mental, physical and spiritual effects when brewed together and consumed.

56 Grunwell, (1998)
57 Grunwell, (1998)
Ayahuasca is an Amazonian plant [as well as a] mixture that is capable of inducing altered states of consciousness, usually lasting between 4 to 8 hours after ingestion. Ranging from mildly stimulating to extremely visionary, ayahuasca is used primarily as a medicine and as a shamanic means of communication, typically in a ceremonial session under the guidance of an experienced drinker [medicine man/woman].

Many indigenous people of the Amazon revere ayahuasca, believing it to be a sacred plant, imbued with a living spirit that speaks to them when they enter into discourse with it. The plant spirit(s) imparts knowledge and wisdom to the individuals and communities that use them. Ayahuasca is traditionally used in sacred ceremonies for healing individuals and communities, as well as exploring different realms of reality and consciousness.

The shaman drinks Ayahuasca so he [she] can see the spiritual causes for his [her] patient’s illness. Sometimes the patient drinks as well. Most of the time the shaman is singing *icaros* or ‘power songs’ to invite good spirits and to perform healing. Sometimes patients are invited to sit with the shaman, who will then sing softly especially for each one of them.

The business of ayahuasca tourism, like other aspects of psychedelic tourism, has not only recreational overtones but also a larger propensity towards a spiritual practice and/or experience. Ayahuasca tourism has a tendency to facilitate personal growth, self-realization, psycho-education and even therapy, as well as exploration of consciousness and reality itself.

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58 Ayahuasca Info. – Introduction.
59 Author’s conversations with Ayahuasca medicine men, 2007
60 Ayahuasca Info - Rituals and Ceremonies.
The practice of ayahuasca ceremonies conducted by indigenous communities in the jungles of the Amazon has been going through a series of changes as Westerners have sought out the healing qualities of this medicine. John N. Grunwell, argues that “Our culture has no all-encompassing model for controlling and ritualizing psychoactive drugs beyond alcohol, so those who wish to use ayahuasca often seek out what they imagine to be a proper set and setting, in this case Amazonia”.

Today, you will find ayshuasca retreats which cater to Westerners, who pay between US$1500.00 – US$2500.00 for a 7–15 day retreat. There are also white Westerners going to the Amazon region and “studying” for a few months with local medicine men/women and becoming “shamans”. This is a phenomenon that is very controversial and has been labeled “plastic shamanism”. Plastic shamanism is:

a pejorative colloquialism used for individuals who are considered by those using the term to be attempting to pass themselves off as shamans, or other traditional spiritual leaders, but who may actually have no genuine connection to the traditions they claim to represent. Rather, “plastic shamans” are believed by their critics to use the mystique of these cultural traditions, and the legitimate curiosity of sincere seekers, for personal gain. In some cases, exploitation of students and traditional culture may involve the selling of fake “traditional” spiritual ceremonies, fake artifacts, fictional accounts in books, illegitimate tours of sacred sites, and often the chance to buy spiritual titles.

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61 Grunwell, (1998)

This is not a new phenomenon, but with the increased global nature of travel and the contemporary spread of consumer capitalism, the values and impact of power relations of Western, First World subjects on Eastern/Southern Third World subjects are manifested through tourist-host relationships. A re-articulation of imperial and colonial subjugation is configured for the otherizing of Third World individuals, epistemologies, cosmologies and societies as a whole.

Ayahuasca practises, settings and ceremonies have changed in contemporary times to meet the needs of psychedelic tourists, who tend to be predominantly white Westerners. One can see the direct impacts of the actions of one set of people (international tourists) on the actions of another (host communities). Though the tourist-host relationship is dynamic in nature, it is also a power relationship. And with any power relationship people react and respond in dynamic ways.

Rachel Proctor, writing in *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, argued that “because foreign consumers of ayahuasca often come with romanticized images of what a South American shaman should be, shamans have an incentive to alter their discourse to fit expectations.” Mateo Arevalo, an indigenous healer from Peru who was interviewed by Proctor for her article, states that “the young who ask me to teach them do not want to be curanderos,” … “They are only interested in giving ayahuasca to the tourists.” The payment these young people make from performing ayahuasca ceremonies for tourists is substantially more then they would make at other tourist-oriented jobs or living in the jungles.

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64 Proctor, (2000).
Young indigenous people, and some of the healers, are leaving the jungles of South America to live in the urban centres, and so are becoming part of the tourist industry.

The tourist-host relationship is an example of how the immediate actions of individuals and communities are configured within a functionality of power, and how this power relationship functions within larger power dynamics such as consumer capitalism, globalism, classism, racism, sexism, imperialism and colonialism.

If Western tourists are not able or willing to analyze the motive for their travels, or see how their actions are impacting the communities with which they are engaging, then no matter how self-realized, they are still engaged with subjugating others for their own benefit. However, despite the numerous negative impacts of psychedelic tourism, there are potential positive outcomes as well. Many Western tourists participating in traditional healing methods from other cultures are able to heal their illnesses and return to their countries of origin with a more connected and peaceful sense of themselves. This could translate to concrete changes in the Western tourist lifestyle. This would be considered a part of healing the larger community of humanity and of the planet, which is also a foundation of the discursive formations of Ayahuasca tradition of individual and community healing.

Like all discursive formation, there are dissenting opinions and theories that did not become part of the established and widely recognized discourse. I have attempted above to draw upon seemingly divergent discourses to
demonstrate that there is in fact more convergence in regards to issues of international tourism, past and present Hippie culture, and contemporary psychedelic tourism. These are tied up with consumer capitalism, globalization, imperialism, colonialism and cultural appropriation.
Chapter 4

The Use of Psychedelics Among Indigenous Peoples: A Deeper Experience of Reality Through the Use and Practice of Ayahuasca Ceremonies

In this section I will explore how the use of Ayahuasca can be conceptualized, articulated, and most importantly, engaged with as a practice not only in it’s traditional role as a healing medicine, but, in contemporary terms, as a method of exploring consciousness and enlightenment. This is a contentious point as I am not advocating for the misuse, cultural appropriation or colonizing of ayahuasca ceremonies by westerners, including racialized westerners like myself. I am curious as to the application of this medicine and guide that may be used for the healing of mind/body/spirit of westerners in a manner that includes a critical analysis of the power and privilege that comes with being a westerner.

Is sensory perception all there is to reality? Western civilization's hegemonic philosophical and scientific discourse on ways of knowing and the nature of reality has maintained that we can know everything about reality primarily through our five senses using Reason and Logic. However, there are always bodies of knowledge outside any hegemonic discourses. Even within Western discourse, there are thinkers who challenge the primacy of Reason and Logic and propose other ways of understanding the world we live in. Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, and Spinoza are but a few Western thinkers who not only challenge the hegemonies of Reason and Logic, but also postulate alternate ways to look at the very nature of thinking and intuition as means of understanding reality.
Reality, or at least our individual and collective perception of reality, is dependent on the interplay of a dynamic set of values, beliefs, and assumptions. These are assumptions about who we are as human beings, as well as our relationship with the world we live in and how we can know this world. We still live with the legacy of the European Enlightenment period, specifically the dualistic split of body and mind, and the view of the world as an inanimate object. However, there are many other perspectives from cultures around the world that see the mind and body as non-dual, as extensions of the same phenomena. I would like to highlight one artifact from these worldviews. The ontology and epistemology of many indigenous peoples are based on the fact that the universe is a living entity and that actual reality is an interconnected creative process. The universe itself is seen as a living consciousness of which humans are a part.

Our understanding, beliefs, and assumptions about the nature of reality and how we situate ourselves within that reality is influenced by a dynamic interplay of social, historical, energetic and biological forces. How we understand these forces and the values we place on them influence the way we preserve reality and our relationship with it. As such each culture and the worldviews that emerge from them are valid expression and understanding of the world we live in yet do to issues of power, privilege, oppression and marginalization some cultures belief that their version and understanding of the nature of reality and our relationship with it are the only or most valid version and others are not. This line of thinking when coupled with racism, colonialism, globalism and capitalism led to the devaluing of other people and their cultures.
A Line of Flight: The European Enlightenment Era

The European Enlightenment Era was a breaking away from the Europe of the “middle ages” and is usually referred to as the period that brought Europe into the “modern” era. It is important to note that it was not one “new” unifying system of thought replacing an old one. There is no consensus as to the exact beginning and end dates of the Enlightenment Era; scholars usually refer to the period as roughly encompassing the mid-to-late 17th century, (typically known as the Age of Reason), into the late 18th century. The Enlightenment Era does not represent a single movement or school of thought, for these philosophies were often mutually contradictory or divergent. The Enlightenment was less a set of ideas than it was a set of attitudes. At its core was a critical questioning of traditional institutions, customs, and morals.65

This epistemetic shift of the Enlightenment Era was dramatic and relatively fast. It established an European world-view with sets of conditions for how people think, know and write. It established what was knowable, what was real and how we can know/access reality. Though this epistemetic shift was generally a very invigorating process for European thinkers and civilization, it was detrimental to the “New World”, for this was also the age of European colonialism and imperialism.

Much European Enlightenment knowledge was influenced by encounters with indigenous peoples. Indigenous civilizations were often a testing site for the various theories being postulated at the time in Europe. Colonialism was and is

a dynamic system of control, domination, and rule. I will be drawing upon just a few pertinent aspects in order to link it back to the epistemic shift of the European Enlightenment Era and how these systems created a nexus of praxis that resulted in the establishment of a set of discursive frameworks. These colonialist frameworks valued and legitimated European knowledge and worldviews while excluding and devaluing indigenous knowledge and worldviews.

Colonizing nations generally dominate the resources, labor, and markets of the colonial territory, and may also impose socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic structures on the indigenous population. It is essentially a system of direct political, economic, and cultural intervention and hegemony by a powerful country in a weaker one... The term colonialism may also be used to refer to an ideology or a set of beliefs used to legitimize or promote this system. Colonialism was often based on the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized; some observers link such beliefs to racism and pseudo-scientific theories dating from the 18th to the 19th centuries [Enlightenment Era]. In the western world, this led to a form of proto-social Darwinism that placed white people at the top of the animal kingdom, "naturally" in charge of dominating non-European aboriginal populations.⁶⁶

The dynamic interplay of the generation of European knowledge through the Enlightenment period, the separation of Church and State, Religion and Science, coupled with European imperialism and colonization of the land and indigenous peoples of the “new” world, created a set of discursive frameworks. These spanned various disciplines, dictated what and who could speak about any given subject and what was considered legitimate knowledge.

⁶⁶ Colonialism http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonialism
These European discursive frameworks in relation to ontology and epistemology are grounded in a particular limited understanding of reality. Europe was coming out of the “middle ages” and into a new era where Reason and a deductive scientific method were to become pillars of knowing and engaging with the world. Due to the history and success of the European Enlightenment Era, “modern” Western science as a project has had a tremendous impact on the world we live in, how we interact with this world and what is considered to be ‘real’ within this world. It has done this at the expense of other cultures and their sciences, epistemology, and ontology within a political, economic and social order.

A Fuller Assemblage: Ayahuasca – Plant Spirits

The epistemological and ontological frameworks of a number of different indigenous cultures articulate that the universe is alive, conscious, and unfolding. This is viewed as a creative process that we humans have the capacity to co-create, with the rest of life. The immanence of life is experienced directly and held as sacred.

As I said earlier, the sacred Ayahuasca plants are actual spirits. They impart knowledge and wisdom to the individuals and communities that use them. In a Western context, plants like Ayahuasca are understood to be and characterized as psychoactive substances. For example, consciousness researcher Ralph Metzner states that: "Ayahuasca is a hallucinogenic Amazonian plant concoction that has been used by Native Indian and mestizo shamans in Peru, Colombia and Ecuador for healing and divination for hundreds,
perhaps thousands of years.” When Ayahuasca is talked or written about from a Western world-view, generally the aspects of the plants being spirit guides and being able to actually communicate with those that ingest the plants are silenced. They do not fit neatly into Western epistemology and understanding of reality. Consequently, Ayahuasca is brought into Western discursive frameworks and constructed in a mechanistic and inanimate manner. It becomes a chemical, a hallucinogen.

The Ayahuasca plants are in fact spirits that communicate with those that ingest the plants. These spirit plants take the ceremony participant on a personal journey that reveals insights as well as allows the medicine men/women to perform healing at an energetic level that affect the mental, social, and physical body.

There is a knowing within various indigenous communities that the material realm within which we exist is not the only reality. In fact there are subtle energetic dimensions to reality that are just as real as the ones we know through our five senses. Unlike Eurocentric knowledge and epistemologies which are presented as ahistorical and universal in nature, indigenous knowledge tends to be grounded in the local ecology that it is derived from.

As such there is a tendency for a greater interaction of multiple worldviews, especially if indigenous peoples cross paths regularly and share information. Hence a fuller understanding of reality and ways of knowing that reality may develop in time due to this sharing and valuing of various indigenous knowledges.
The plant spirits of Ayahuasca have been communicating with indigenous peoples for millennia. The medicine men and women who use this plant for healing and exploring other dimensions of reality have broadened their understanding of reality and their/our connection to the world we live in on more levels than the material realms we can perceive with our five senses. They perform healings on energetic levels, communicating with the plant spirits as well as other entities.

As the Ayahuasca plant takes whoever partakes in its medicine on a journey into altered states of consciousness and subtler levels of reality, the imbibber is able to perceive more of reality than typically meets the senses. Shamans or medicine men/women take Ayahuasca in order to access subtler realms of reality and to see what is causing a patient’s illness on a spiritual level. In Brazil, several religions can be found which pivot around gatherings where Ayahuasca is taken by all participants. Drinking Ayahuasca and singing together takes participants into a healing and inspiring trance.

A medicine man or woman in this context is a person who knows, from experience, how to navigate within these altered states of consciousness. S/he enters these states to heal patients as well as explore and experiment. Typically induced by a combination of psychoactive plants and music, the shamanistic trance enables one to perceive parts of reality which can't be perceived in
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ordinary states of consciousness. This is usually performed for the purpose of healing, divination, or communication with the spirit world. 67

Many indigenous peoples of the Amazon region use Ayahuasca in ceremonies for treating physical, mental, emotional and spiritual imbalances through a holistic approach to healing. Ayahuasca as a medicine and the ceremony in which it is used are as varied as the indigenous Amazonian communities that use them. The traditions, songs, prayers, histories, customs and practices that make up the ceremonies are embedded in the particular cultures as well as in the approach of the particular medicine man or woman that is leading the healing ceremony. Since these ceremonies are created for specific treatments, no two ceremonies are the same.

Ayahuasca is widely recognized as being the most powerful and widespread shamanic medicine. In the tribal societies where these plant medicines are used, they are regarded as embodiments of conscious intelligent beings that only become visible in special states of consciousness, and who can function as spiritual teachers and sources of healing power and knowledge. The plants are referred to as 'medicines,' a term that reflects that the plant is more than a drug: something like a healing power or energy that can be associated with a plant, a person, an animal, or even a place. They are also referred to as 'plant teachers' and there are still extant traditions of many-years-long initiations and trainings in the use of these medicines.

67 Information for some of the details for this section were synthesized from conversations with medicine men and the website: Ayahuasca Info - Rituals and Ceremonies. http://www.ayahuasca-info.com/ritual/
Social implications on the use of psychedelics: A fuller multiplicity; decolonizing the mind/spirit/body through psychedelic exploration

The process of modern Western colonization of peoples, lands, minds, and hearts has been happening for over five hundred years. As this system of domination and oppression is passed down through generations, the roots of the colonial system grow deeper into the land and people’s body/mind. This is not to say that we are necessarily bound to this system because we are born into it. There are systems of liberation that have been developed throughout the ages by various Indigenous cultures. Some of these include meditation, yoga, tantra, as well as the use of psychoactive plants to journey into different realms of reality and learn from the spirits that dwell within these realms.

Many peoples experience with sacred psychoactive plants and other psychedelics have demonstrated that they are powerful tools for liberation. They have created spaces for the exploration of a broader experience of reality and also shown different realms of reality. People have used this knowledge to de-colonize their body/mind/spirit, and to know for a fact that all of reality is connected, alive and creative. Participants in contemporary Ayahuasca ceremonies have experienced firsthand the energetic systems that numerous indigenous cultures talk about. They affect and are affected by a deepened experience of reality..

As much as Western civilization suggests that these experiences are not real or are hallucinations, many ayahuasca users challenge that assertion. They
know that that is how colonization has devalued the knowledge of Indigenous peoples globally, denying their lived experience as well as the knowledge, values, science, and philosophy.

However, even Western science is currently “confirming” what Indigenous people have been articulating for ages. Modern quantum physics has demonstrated that matter is in fact not as solid we may experience it as being. Quantum physicists have demonstrated in laboratories that there is more “space” between the molecules of any given object than we think. Physicist Barbara Brennan (1988) states:

Through experiments over the past few decades physicists have discovered matter to be completely mutable into other particles or energy and vice-versa and on a subatomic level, matter does not exist with certainty in definite places, but rather shows ‘tendencies’ to exist. Quantum physics is beginning to realize that the Universe appears to be a dynamic web of interconnected and inseparable energy patterns. If the universe is indeed composed of such a web, there is logically no such thing as a part. This implies we are not separated parts of a whole but rather we are the Whole.68

Reterritorialization: Expanding our Understanding and Experience of Reality

A fuller understanding of reality and a genuine articulation on a fuller multiplicity of knowledges, values, and world-views will hopefully lead to a more dynamic experience of reality. How do we develop this fuller understanding while living within the hegemonic discursive set of frameworks of Western

epistemologies? Western thinkers such as Spinoza, Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari have articulated alternative ways and strategies of being, thinking, and feeling that are more aligned with those of indigenous people, even though they are functioning within Western European world-views.

As a practice, the use of Ayahuasca has led to the development of experiential knowledge and processes that allow participants to directly experience a broader reality than the one articulated through most fields of Western study.

Deleuze has provided some tools to think through some of the logic of Western epistemology in order to see how it was created, as well as to articulate other world-views within a Western epistemology. Deleuze’s conceptualization of immanence, multiplicity and assemblages has been influential in thinking through and linking indigenous knowledges. Fundamentally including the world-views of indigenous peoples as equal and valid to Western world-views will only mean that humanity as a whole will have a fuller understanding of the world we live in.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

I believe that living from the perspective of multiple worldviews is part of the project of Deleuze in the context of developing multiple practices that one can employ as needed to break free from the dictates of social constructions and set ways of thinking, feeling and being. In the West, philosophy and ethics are used to talk about ways of living. In other parts of the world sages and medicine men/women are the ones that articulate ways of living, not only in terms of theory but also as a set of practices.

In this sense, Western thinkers like Spinoza, Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari are following in a long tradition of stepping outside of conventional wisdom through contemplation and practice. They articulate a set of frameworks that have to be used and developed into practice. Their theories are not just to be understood intellectually, but must actually be practiced. A wealth of experiential knowledge exists from indigenous peoples, which articulate similar support for practices of liberation.

I sincerely feel that the psychedelic field has tremendous potential for continuing the exploration of human consciousness, philosophy, spirituality, art, psychology, social sciences, healing and subtle realms of reality. My analysis of the literature confirmed that a lot of work has already been done in these areas. There are still gaps to be addressed especially in terms of including a critical analysis of issues of race, class and gender. The intension of my study was to engage with the literature and contribute towards developing that critical analysis.
I look forward to continuing my exploration of the psychedelics field and conducting field studies to further explore and understand how issues of race, class and gender would influence the field.
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After a very successful previous event "ONE SOUL", we thought, you people deserve more & you deserve the best. Here we are again, to give you our best. The best DJ's, Live acts from across the globe, music, decorations, comfort, visuals, stalls & many more. the list never ends. Psy-Mela welcomes everyone to our next party to stomp your soul out & feel the, "Consciousness of Unity"
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Buddha

Ganesh by Frank Kozik - Blue Signed

Ganesh by James Clements - Signed

Shiva
Art influenced by Ayahuasca.

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