

Indigenous Psychedelics in the West

MAPS' Approach to Cultural Integration and Reciprocity

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Abstract

This research project examines the organization Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) and its demonstration of cultural reciprocity on its website, specifically concerning the acknowledgment of the cultural origins of psychedelics rooted in Indigenous traditions. The study evaluates MAPS' strategies for cultural sensitivity and reciprocity in its representations, aiming to identify strengths and areas for improvement in fostering inclusivity and cultural awareness. By coding the writings from MAPS' website, patterns are discovered and give a clear overview of which topics it seems to highlight the most. Through the framework of cultural appropriation, a tension between MAPS' narrative and its aim for inclusivity is discovered, revealing a power dynamic between MAPS and Indigenous knowledge. Research revealed that explicit presentations of Indigenous psychedelics in their cultural contexts may mitigate cultural appropriation.

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1. Introduction

The integration of psychedelic drugs into the West marks the start of a revolution when it comes to modern mental health treatment. The resurgence of interest in psychedelics is already supported by incredibly promising research results (Mitchell et al., 2023), whilst simultaneously touching upon many different dimensions of society such as medical, historical, cultural, and philosophical ideas. This project attempts to better understand the pioneering efforts of the non-governmental organization MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies), and how it deals with the idea of cultural appropriation. The organization's research for decades has been at the forefront of what has been called The Psychedelic Renaissance, and is therefore of great interest when trying to understand the subject (Hadar et al., 2023).

By analyzing sections of MAPS' website, the study seeks to examine how it presents its research as well as its psychedelic therapies, as well as dealing with the complex issue of intercultural exchange, and cultural appropriation of Indigenous practices and substances. The goal is to explore the complex issues that arise in the transplantation of a potentially groundbreaking practice that originates from distinct cultural contexts into the Western world. By looking at the field of psychedelic research and medicine, with MAPS as the medium we aim to gain insight into complexities regarding the transplantation of foreign traditions into modern Western medicine.

1.1 Problem Area

The focus is not on a single psychedelic drug but rather on the entire category of drugs. There will, however, be an increased focus on Ayahuasca which originates in South America, as well as other Indigenous plant substances, as this area is of great use in understanding the cultural issues inherent in the topic.

To understand the re-emergence of psychedelics, it is important to understand the historical context of the substances in the West. Psychedelics, such as ayahuasca (an Indigenous drink containing dimethyltryptamine), mescaline, and psilocybin have been used globally for millennia (Barker, 2018) in Indigenous cultures for varying purposes which include healing and spiritual development. In the West, the history of psychedelics has been deeply fascinating yet largely controversial and has

had profound impacts on Western society for nearly a hundred years (Lattin, 2017).

The middle of the 20th century marked an emergence of psychedelics into Western popular culture, spearheaded by figures such as Timothy Leary who (although mostly focused on LSD) proclaimed the potential for personal and spiritual exploration using psychedelics, which in turn also had a noticeable impact on the ongoing anti-war movement occurring in the USA (Pruitt, 2023). Psychedelics became emblematic of anti-establishment movements, and the drugs were therefore rapidly made illegal, and funding for researching the therapeutic benefits of psychedelics rapidly disappeared.

There is not a single reason for the abandonment of psychedelic research in the mid-20th century, though it has been argued that it was a mix of a strong initiative to deal with drug use in general, in the US, as well as tighter regulations and a lack of funding of research. It wasn't until recent years, and through the effort of organizations such as MAPS, that research into psychedelics re-entered the scientific world in the West and shifted societal attitudes towards the drugs (Hall, 2022).

There are four key points to consider when trying to understand the sudden re-emergence of this topic; first, the mental health crisis that the West is facing now is making it obvious that we do not possess the therapeutic tools or maybe even the framework to deal with it. Rates of depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance abuse are skyrocketing, and we simply do not know how to deal with it (Owens et al., 2022).

The transplantation of Indigenous practices into the West gives rise to questions concerning cultural appropriation, and to ethical dilemmas regarding the process of taking something from another culture and making it 'your own': *"lack of recognition of the sacred cultural positioning of these medicines, exclusionary practices in research and praxis, and patenting of traditional medicines. Indigenous voices and leadership have been notably absent from the Western psychedelic field currently widely represented by Westerners."* (Celidwen et al., 2023).

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the concept of cultural reciprocity, which aims to deal with the issue of cultural appropriation in a manner where all the parties involved gain something from the 'transaction'. This is increasingly important given the history of colonization that the areas from where these drugs derive have been affected. On their website, MAPS

emphasizes the importance of creating an interaction with the Indigenous communities that prioritizes their social, environmental, and economic stability, whilst simultaneously making it possible to make use of the traditions that the communities have developed over time (Mays et al., 2021).

Scientific Advancements

Advances in science and the change in public perception have rekindled interest in psychedelic research where newer findings show that psychedelic therapy provides a potentially groundbreaking alternative to the existing treatment options. As more data becomes available, the scientific and medical community is beginning to acknowledge the potential of these substances, and the possible addition of them to our arsenal of mental health treatment options (Tupper et al., 2015).

Changing Legal Landscapes

The aforementioned aspects are all contributing to a change in the legal status of psychedelics around the world. Such as the decriminalization of psilocybin in several states, and the direct legalization of regulated medical use of psilocybin in Oregon. The US FDA (Food and Drugs Administration) has also granted MDMA breakthrough therapy status, which is largely due to the work that MAPS has done with the drug in treating PTSD. All the factors mentioned above have created enormous momentum for the psychedelic movement which is now manifesting as concrete changes in how we conduct mental health research and therapy. But how is the momentum maintained, and how can an organization like MAPS conduct its efforts in an ethical way, which contributes to scientific advancement, whilst simultaneously honoring the Indigenous cultures that many of these drugs originate from (Belmonte et al., 2001).

Dimensions

The project is anchored in the dimensions of Culture & History as well as Philosophy & Science. With Culture & History, the project examines the transmission of psychedelics as cultural elements from Indigenous cultures into Western medicine. For Philosophy & Science, there is a focus on the ethical and moral considerations that cultural transmissions carry.

1.2 Problem Definition

This project seeks to explore how MAPS demonstrates cultural reciprocity on its website, specifically examining how it acknowledges the cultural context of psychedelics originating from Indigenous cultures. The research focuses on evaluating MAPS' approaches to demonstrating cultural sensitivity and reciprocity in its representations, with the additional goal of discussing areas for improvement in promoting inclusivity and cultural awareness.

1.2.1 Research Question

How does MAPS acknowledge and address the historical and cultural context of Indigenous cultures on its website, and does it ensure cultural sensitivity and reciprocity in its representations?

2. Definitions

2.1 Indigenous

As this project is situated in a Western context, this influences the trajectory and narrative. Indigenous as well as 'minority' are broad terms, encompassing diverse knowledge and cultures. This project consciously decides to not delve into the nuances. The tension arises from the dual objective of inclusivity and critique of Western frameworks against the application of said frameworks in understanding the issue at hand.

2.2 Psychedelics

Psychedelics are a unique class of mind-altering substances with a historical association with religious practices. They reliably induce altered states of perception, thought, and feeling, akin to experiences in dreams or moments of religious exaltation. Pioneering researchers describe a fundamental dimension of behavior termed 'portentousness,' revealing the mind's capacity to perceive beyond rational justification, leading to experiences of boundlessness (Nichols, 2016). Mechanistically, psychedelics act on serotonin receptors.

The effects of psychedelics are highly dependent on nonpharmacological factors, such as the mental state and setting of the user. Studies on substances like psilocybin and LSD highlight the importance of variables like personality traits, emotional state, and experimental setting in influencing the overall experience (Nichols, 2016).

2.3 Western Culture

"'Western culture' seems to be a somewhat arbitrary distinction used across academics to describe ideological, cultural, and ethnic uniformity amongst European and derivative nations." (Lyon, 2020)

In this project, the term 'Western' is used to point toward the culture of North American and European cultural perspectives and tendencies that affect the nature of the issues that are discussed.

2.3.1 Psychedelic Therapy

Psychedelic Therapy is the combination of *"Western psychotherapeutic techniques"* in combination with psychedelic drugs such as Ayahuasca, MDMA, LSD, or Ketamine (Tupper et al., 2015). Psychedelic Therapy has the

goal of treating illnesses such as addiction, depression, and PTSD, through sessions of treatment with psychedelic drugs accompanied by therapists trained specifically for this type of therapy (*Ayahuasca-Assisted Treatment for Addiction: British Columbia, Canada*, n.d.).

2.3.2 Culture

Culture is used to refer to practices, perspectives, systems, or structures that belong to a certain demographic ("Culture," n.d.). Culture is a nuanced and complex concept, but in this paper is used in its most general conception.

3. Background

In this section, the background on Psychedelics will be covered from a historical perspective, demonstrating how recent changes have led to what is referred to as a Psychedelic Renaissance. Additionally, MAPS' history and context will be covered, to demonstrate its goals, principles as well as some problems.

3.1 Psychedelics

Psychedelics as a term for substances that can alter the consciousness was first coined by Humphrey Osmond in the 1950s (Nichols, 2016), implying the substances' effects on the mind. In recent history, the discourse around psychedelics has shifted from a positive one, about the hippie movement during the 1960s, to one which was largely focused on the negative effects, with one of them being that they caused psychoses (Dupuis & Veissière, 2022).

Due to political reforms in the US during the late 1960s and 1970s, which could be understood as a reaction to the rise of drug use (in the case of psychedelics, LSD), there had up until recently been a lack of scientific studies on different types of psychedelics (Nichols, 2016). Moreover, the general mainstream attitude was at the time negative, which could arguably in part be attributed to the media's sensationalized portrayals of negative effects such as "*drug-induced insanity, chromosomal damage, attempts to fly*" (Nichols, 2016). As mentioned in the problem area, psychedelics along with other drugs were made illegal in the mid-20th century, one of the main causes of the lack of scientific studies as well as general knowledge on these types of substances.

Ever since the 1990s, the interest in psychedelics has been on the rise, arguably contributing to an increase in their usage (Stafford, 2013), with a new understanding that they are believed to be able to be used as a treatment for conditions such as depression, anxiety or trauma, among others (Dupuis & Veissière, 2022). Despite this change in attitude to psychedelics and their potential, scholars see some problems in an arguably unquestioning acceptance and desirability of them, as well as the commercialization of these substances that are yet to be well understood.

A number of these psychedelics are rooted in traditional, ritualistic, and spiritualistic cultures, and in psychedelic science, these contexts have mostly been overlooked (Dupuis & Veissière, 2022).

3.1.1 In Western Medicine

LSD, or (5*R*,8*R*)-(+)-lysergic acid-*N*, *N*-diethylamide, was unintentionally discovered in the 1940s, and Nichols (2016) argues that this discovery led to further understandings of serotonin's role in the neuroscientific field. In Western medicine, psychedelics have in the last years become objects of study, despite the negative attitude that was fostered in the mid-20th century (Tupper et al., 2015). The psychedelic substances that have been studied (LSD, psilocybin, ayahuasca, mescaline, and MDMA) are used as pharmaceuticals in therapy to treat disorders such as addiction, anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Tupper et al., 2015), as they work in different ways to treat these various disorders. Due to the resurgence of the interest in psychedelics along with their therapeutic properties as well as the sensitivity of the substances originating from Indigenous practices, finding ways of protecting Indigenous knowledge and ensuring ethical Western practices becomes crucial.

3.1.2 In Indigenous Cultures

Ayahuasca is a type of infusion of two plants; *Banisteriopsis caapi* bark and *Psychotria viridis* vines and leaves (Nichols, 2016), and contains DMT, a hallucinogen substance, which is consumed in tea form. There is evidence which suggests that psychedelic drugs, such as DMT used for nearly 3000 years, originating in the North-Eastern Amazon as a medicine (Ogalde et al., 2017). Furthermore, it has been closely connected to the spiritual life and cosmology of the culture in which it has been used. Additionally, the ritualistic use of these drugs is associated with shamanism and the idea that nature is infused with spiritual energies (Gonzalez et al., 2021).

3.2 Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies

The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is a California-based non-profit educational and research organization, founded in 1986 by Rick Doblin which focuses on the study of psychedelic drugs (*About MAPS*, n.d.). MAPS research creates legal, medical, and cultural contexts for people to understand and benefit from the regulated use of these substances.

MAPS is particularly known for its research surrounding the therapeutic potential of psychedelics. This includes substances like MDMA (commonly known as ecstasy) for the treatment of mental illnesses such as PTSD. MAPS also engages in education and training related to conducting therapy using various psychedelic drugs (Doblin, 2002).

3.3 Chacruna & Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative

Concerning this, the Chacruna fund seeks to support grassroots organizations in solving local problems in communities that historically have been subject to injustices and inequalities (Mays et al., 2021). Chacruna has sought to support groups working on the ground to solve local problems in the regions that are scarred by historical injustice as well as the inequalities brought by psychedelic tourism itself (Mays et al., 2021).

Chacruna is an organization that researches plant medicines and psychedelics intending to disseminate knowledge to the public to create an understanding of these Indigenous plants, as well as the cultural contexts from which they stem (*About*, n.d.). The Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative of the Americas (IRI) is one of the programs created by Chacruna. Its purpose is described as not only seeking investments in Indigenous communities, by promoting reciprocity between the Western psychedelics industry and Indigenous communities but also encouraging individual acts of reciprocity from its readers (*Program*, n.d.).

On Chacruna's website, MAPS is listed as the top donor (*Allies & Donors*, 2020), which to us demonstrates that MAPS is not only talking about reciprocity as an ideal but has formed partnerships with initiatives working with putting these ideas into practice. Through Chacruna, many other smaller initiatives are funded which have the focus of creating sustainable development in communities and increasing the autonomy of Indigenous peoples through education and environmental preservation (Mays et al., 2021).

4. Theories & Concepts

In this section, key concepts and theories that will allow us to shed light on the transmission of psychedelic practices into a Western context are presented. Particularly, when it comes to issues regarding culture, we find it important to have the knowledge that is necessary to identify different types of cultural exchange and appropriation as well as their underlying power dynamics.

These theories provide a valuable framework for critically analyzing the cultural, ethical, economic, and societal aspects of such transplantation. They will help us to understand the multifaceted nature of cultural interactions and will provide a lens through which different aspects of the transplantation of psychedelic practices can be examined.

4.1 Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is a concept that historically has been loosely defined - involves the act of taking "*exclusive possession of*" elements from other cultures, and making them your own, to maintain your interests (Rogers, 2006). It often results in the misappropriation of intellectual property, cultural expression, practices, and rituals, to name a few. The idea of symmetrical and asymmetrical power relations is central to the concept of cultural appropriation. Understanding these power dynamics can help to categorize and understand the foundation of cultural appropriation. One crucial aspect is the power dynamic between the appropriating culture and the culture being appropriated. If the appropriating culture holds more power and privilege, it can reinforce existing inequalities and contribute to the marginalization of the culture being appropriated.

4.2 Categorizing Cultural Appropriation

The acts of cultural appropriation can't solely be determined by the intention of those involved; rather they are formed by the political, social, and economic frameworks in which they occur (Rogers, 2006). To understand this, it is necessary to understand power relations between different cultures, and by doing that you can further divide cultural appropriation into four sub-categories.

Cultural exchange involves the reciprocal exchange of artifacts, symbols, rituals, and much more (Rogers, 2006). The important thing to note here is that this cultural exchange should benefit both parties equally, and the process can be characterized as respectful and seeking compromise.

Transculturation occurs when elements from a culture are created from and by multiple cultures, making it very difficult to specify a single originating culture, as the 'birthplace' of a practice (Rogers, 2006). This context has become increasingly relevant in parallel with the globalization of societies.

Cultural dominance describes aspects of a dominant culture being adopted by the members of a subordinate culture by imposing the dominant culture upon the subordinate (Rogers, 2006, p. 477).

Cultural exploitation refers to a relationship between two cultures where one, usually the 'dominant' culture (Rogers, 2006, p. 486), takes an element from another culture and uses it to its advantage, this can be used to understand the transaction that occurs when psychedelic experiences as they exist in Indigenous cultures are taken into a Western medical context, and the substances are used differently than how they are used traditionally.

As our project's focus is taking one culture's traditions and introducing them, in another manner, into a different culture, this framework helps us understand not only how this can occur, but also better understand how this potentially can be done with no harm or negative impact on the culture from which one is taking.

4.3 Four Major Concerns Regarding Cultural Appropriation

According to Ziff and Rao (1997, as cited in Rogers, 2006, p. 486-487), there are four major concerns regarding cultural exploitation; *cultural degradation*, *preservation of cultural elements*, *deprivation of material advantage*, and *failure to recognize sovereign claims*. All of the concerns are seemingly related to the integrity of the group which is having its culture exploited – when the culture itself does not have control over the way it is being represented, or when it is not being compensated or reciprocated fairly by the dominant culture (economically or culturally), there is a chance that it may become distorted, and the group's and culture's identity can risk being fractured, causing it permanent damage.

4.3.1 Cultural Degradation

Cultural degradation refers to the damage to the integrity of a subordinated and exploited culture. Appropriation, Rogers (2006) cites Ziff & Rao (1997): "*can have corrosive effects on the integrity of an exploited culture because the appropriative conduct can erroneously depict the heritage from which it is drawn*". Distortions of cultural elements or even communities may lead to

false perceptions of them, misrepresenting them. The preservation of cultural elements contributes to a dilution of them, resulting in a loss of the essence and identity of the subordinated culture.

4.3.2 Preservation of Cultural Elements

In the field of cultural preservation, arguments against cultural exploitation support that *"cultural objects, symbols, and practices are best understood in their native contexts and that the priority should be the preservation of the integrity of marginalized cultures"* (Rogers, 2006, p. 487). The concern does not only refer to the physical taking of cultural objects but also the damage to the exploited culture, such as the disrespectful distortion of spiritual traditions. In our project, MAPS is constantly embedded in these types of conflicts, and this is a key aspect to observe: for example, when MAPS considers using Ayahuasca for therapy, part of – if not all – the spiritual aspect of it which belongs to the culture, may get lost in the process.

4.3.3 Deprivation of Material Advantage

The third concern regarding cultural exploitation according to Ziff & Rao refers to the deprivation of material benefits (Rogers, 2006, p. 487). Cultural products, whether from the past or contemporary living cultures, are being exploited for financial gain in ways that can be considered unethical. This issue introduces a complex legal landscape, both on a national and international level, where the concept of intellectual property, rooted in Western ideologies, becomes a mediator for conflicting claims of ownership.

Rogers (2006) references Wallis & Malm (1984) and Whitt (1995) when describing how copyright laws, which often prioritize individual ownership over collective ownership, contribute to placing 'traditional' cultural forms in the public domain. A practical example that we may observe in our project could be how MAPS approaches the capitalization of Indigenous elements from their culture into a Western context and how Indigenous communities are being compensated for this.

4.3.4 Failure to Recognize Sovereign Claims

The fourth concern linked closely to matters of material compensation, as identified by Ziff and Rao, revolves around the failure to acknowledge sovereign claims. While Western legal systems and ownership concepts facilitate the widespread appropriation of elements from traditional cultures without compensation, they also frequently hinder traditional cultures from

obstructing what they view as inappropriate uses or adaptations (Rogers, 2006, p. 487).

4.3 Commodification

Rogers (2006, p. 488) references Marx (1986) when describing commodification: *"In the conditions of capitalism, any object that enters the exchange system is inescapably commodified. Commodification abstracts the value of an object (or form or person) so that it can enter systems of exchange. In this process, the use-value and the specificity of the labor and social relations invested in the commodity are lost; it becomes equivalent to all other commodities."*

Within the field of critical/cultural studies, these types of acts of exploitative appropriation are discussed in terms of Commodification, and in this project, this perspective has been selected as it addresses both the material values of objects as well as considers other implications, such as religious aspects. This becomes particularly evident in instances where MAPS engages with substances and practices belonging to Indigenous cultures, which have spiritual or religious values. It also addresses the cultural degradation involved (Rogers, 2006, p. 487). For instance, the distortion of the image or meaning of an ayahuasca ritual, or even ayahuasca itself, when incorporated into Western therapeutic contexts. This extends beyond the therapy itself, to the sale, purchase, and understanding of any related objects associated with ayahuasca, that may take on a different meaning compared to the meaning which exists within the Indigenous culture.

4.4 Transculturation

Transculturation refers to the emergence of cultural elements resulting from interactions or exchanges between different cultures. In a global context, multiple cultural appropriations in the context and dynamics of globalization and transnational capitalism may create hybrid cultural forms. According to Lull (Rogers, 2006), transculturation is characterized as – *"a process whereby cultural forms literally move through time and space where they interact with other cultural forms and settings, influence each other, produce new forms, and change the cultural settings."*

Exploring previous classifications and maintaining a consistent emphasis on the contextual dimensions of appropriation leads to a crucial inquiry regarding transculturation as a manifestation of appropriation. The central question revolves around whether transculturation introduces a relatively

new set of circumstances for appropriation or represents a completely new paradigm that reassesses the legitimacy and assumptions of the previous classifications.

5 Methodology

Qualitative content analysis was selected as a method due to the project revolving around an in-depth examination of how the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) addresses cross-cultural aspects between Indigenous communities and Western science within the domain of psychedelic therapy.

The method proves advantageous in many ways. First and foremost, it enables a profound exploration of textual materials. It facilitates an in-depth understanding of MAPS' approach to cross-cultural considerations. Given the emphasis on deciphering the nuances and details of MAPS practices, this method's capacity for in-depth examination is indispensable. One of the most notable benefits is its aptitude for contextual understanding. By employing qualitative content analysis, the context in which MAPS operates can begin to be understood, as well as how it communicates its principles and practices related to cross-cultural aspects.

Moreover, this method excels in the identification of patterns and themes within the materials. This is invaluable for uncovering recurring strategies and values that MAPS employs in handling cross-cultural issues. It serves as a crucial tool for extracting meaningful insights and understanding the core of MAPS' approach. The qualitative content analysis method allows for flexibility in evolving the research question as an in-depth examination of the data progresses. This adaptability is crucial, as it ensures that the discovery of new angles or areas of interest during the analysis process is considered in the research. Additionally, the method encourages the integration of other knowledge and theories into the analysis, providing a solid foundation for interpreting the data and drawing well-informed conclusions.

Furthermore, an additional method was selected, namely 'Suspicious' Interpretation (Willig, 2014). This method allows for an analysis of the instances with no cultural transmission, providing a more nuanced insight into how MAPS presents Indigenous psychedelics and their associated practices. A detailed explanation of this method will be provided in section 5.2 'Suspicious' Interpretation.

5.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is concerned with describing meaning in context, relevant context should therefore always be made available in or with the material (Flick, 2013).

It is made up of the following 8 steps:

1. Deciding on a research question.
2. Selecting material.
3. Building a coding frame.
4. Segmentation.
5. Trial coding.
6. Evaluating and modifying the coding frame.
7. Main analysis.
8. Presenting and interpreting the findings.

5.1.1 Deciding the Research Question

The analysis begins with a clear research question guiding the process:

How does MAPS acknowledge and address the historical and cultural context of Indigenous cultures on its website, ensuring cultural sensitivity and reciprocity in its representations?

5.1.2 Selection of Material

Ensuring that the material reflects the full diversity of data sources while remaining manageable in volume is crucial. Therefore, the decision has been made to use all the relevant data that can be found on MAPS' website, as this is limited but it will provide a fuller picture of perspectives and values within MAPS. Utilizing MAPS' official website, and therefore its representations of the issues at hand aligns with the purpose of the project, namely understanding the way MAPS portrays its methods, ethics, and standpoints.

The material collection involved going through MAPS' website thoroughly and picking out any quotes, words, or sentences that exhibit cross-cultural elements between the West and an Indigenous community in any way, making sure to label them to be able to find them again. Several instances of cultural transmissions were found in various informative sections on MAPS' website; About MAPS (n.d.), Policy & Advocacy (n.d.), Open Science, Open Books (n.d.), Health Equity (n.d.), Ayahuasca (n.d.), Ibogaine (n.d.) and Marijuana/ Cannabis (n.d.). These sections do not have specific authors,

the texts represent MAPS and its research and practices. Furthermore, several articles were discovered on MAPS' website, including: '*Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative of the Americas: A Respectful Path Forward for the Psychedelic Movement*' (Mays et al., 2021), '*Sacred Peyote Conservation: Respecting Indigenous Traditions*' (Iron Rope et al., 2020), '*Indigenous Medicine Conservation: Foundational During the Psychedelic Movement*' (Volat, 2022), and finally '*Not Like a Trip Away: Proper Relationship With Plant Medicines*' (Yunkaporta, 2023).

Each of these articles addresses topics seemingly relevant to our research question, making them substantial components of the overall material. The articles were meticulously examined, individually, incorporating all parts that could be considered cross-cultural between Western and Indigenous cultures.

It's crucial to emphasize that the initiatives discussed in the articles are not facilitated by MAPS themselves, however, they are initiatives that they support in one way or another. Specifically, in the article '*Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative of the Americas: A Respectful Path Forward for the Psychedelic Movement*' (Mays et al., 2021), the initiatives discussed are facilitated by the Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative of the Americas (IRI), under the ownership of Chacruna.

Notably, MAPS stands out as a significant contributor to Chacruna, as indicated in the '*Allies & Donors*' report (2020), thereby providing partial economic support for these initiatives. Donations to the IRI Program's pool of funds are equally distributed between all of their organizations, with Chacruna retaining an administrative fee of 7.5%. However, a more in-depth analysis will be provided later. The collaborative authorship of the article involves Joseph Mase (IRI), Daniella Paluso (Chacruna), and Dr. Beatriz Ciauby Labate. Dr. Labate holds the roles of a public education and culture specialist at MAPS and the executive director of the Chacruna Institute for Psychedelic Plant Medicine. Consequently, it can be asserted that the article represents the perspectives of both Chacruna and MAPS.

The article '*Sacred Peyote Conservation: Respecting Indigenous Traditions*' is written by Sandor Iron Rope, Author at Chacruna. He serves as President of the Native American Church of South Dakota and former chair of the Native American Church of North America. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Indigenous Peyote Conservation Initiative (Iron Rope et al., 2020).

'Indigenous Medicine Conservation: Foundational During the Psychedelic Movement' is an article written by Miriam Volat, M.S., who serves as a Co-Director with Cody Swift of the philanthropic RiverStyx Foundation, Interim Executive Director of the Indigenous Peyote Conservation Initiative, Co-Director of the Indigenous Medicine Conservation Fund, and she is on the board of directors of MAPS Public Benefit Corporation) (Volat, 2022).

'Not Like a Trip Away: Proper Relationship With Plant Medicines' is an article written by Tyson Yunkaporta (2023) who is an Australian aboriginal academic, art critic and researcher who belongs to the Apalech clan in far north Queensland. He works as a senior research fellow at the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Lab at Deakin University in Melbourne.

It is important to recognize that although the articles are not directly authored by MAPS, their relevance is still highlighted in this project as MAPS' website serves as a platform for grassroots organizations, such as Chacruna's IRI, to publish their diverse perspectives. By publishing these articles on its website, the perspectives of MAPS and the different organizations seemingly align.

5.1.3 Building the Coding Frame

Constructing a coding frame involves the subsequent steps: selecting material; structuring and generating categories; defining categories; and revising and expanding the frame (Flick, 2013).

The coding frame plays a central role in this method and comprises at least one main category and a minimum of two subcategories (Flick, 2013). Main categories represent aspects of the material that necessitate additional information, while subcategories specify what the material conveys concerning these main categories. Each main category should exclusively cover a single aspect of the data, adhering to the principle of unidimensionality. In other words, it should only pertain to a single dimension.

Subcategories must exhibit mutual exclusiveness, meaning that a unit (quote or section of text/data) can only be coded once within the same main category. However, it may be coded more than once if it belongs to different main categories (Flick, 2013). To ensure the success of the coding process, subcategories have been carefully chosen to avoid overlapping content. The segmentation of the data itself has been conducted with the coding frame in mind. It is crucial to note that all data is covered by the categories. If a unit

cannot fit into any of the subcategories, adjustments are made to facilitate coding for all data. This ensures that there is no selective influence on results by picking and choosing materials (Flick, 2013).

5.1.3.1 Structuring and Generating the Coding Frame

The process of structuring involves identifying primary categories and subsequently determining subcategories. Two approaches can be employed: concept-driven or data-driven (Flick, 2013). It is cautioned against exclusively using a concept-driven approach, as it may overlook portions of the material and fail to provide a comprehensive description, a key objective in qualitative content analysis.

The data-driven approach has been adopted for the qualitative content analysis, aligning with the interest in exploring meanings within MAPS' data rather than starting with preconceived hypotheses. This approach allows for the discovery of new insights not anticipated beforehand. A subsumption strategy is employed, reading the material to identify relevant concepts, checking if existing subcategories covered them, and creating new subcategories as needed. This data-driven approach continues until saturation is reached, meaning no new concepts emerge (Flick, 2013).

For our study, the selected categories are as follows:

Main Category 1:

Reciprocity and Solutions

Subcategory 1.1: Indigenous Autonomy

Empowering Indigenous Communities, Cultural Preservation

Subcategory 1.2: Grassroots Initiatives

Community-Led Projects, Regenerative Psychedelic Industry

Subcategory 1.3: Environmental Stewardship

Conservation of Plant Medicines, Environmental Well-Being

Subcategory 1.4: Commitment to Reciprocity

Ongoing Commitment to Reciprocity, Decolonization

Subcategory 1.5: Economic Aspects

Capitalism, Commodification, Financial Support

Subcategory 1.6: Legal Aspects

Laws, Regulatory Agencies, Legal Framework

Subcategory 1.7: Spreading Knowledge

Education, Knowledge Transmission, Historical Context

Main Category 2:

Challenges and Issues

Subcategory 2.1: Environmental Aspects

Environmental Degradation, Economic Insecurity

Subcategory 2.2: Social Aspects

Cultural Appropriation, Lack of Political Autonomy

Subcategory 2.3: Economic Challenges

Wealth Disparities, Psychedelic Commodification

Subcategory 2.4: Legal Complexities

Criminal Justice Reform, Global Capitalism

5.1.3.2 Defining the Coding Frame

After determining the structure, whether data-driven or concept-driven, categories are defined by providing a name, description, indicators, and a clear example. Names should be concise yet clear, avoiding unnecessary crypticity. Descriptions serve as definitions, indicating the category's meaning and characteristic features. Indicators are signs pointing to the presence of a phenomenon, while examples clarify category concepts.

Presented below are summaries of the descriptions, indicators, and examples formulated for all 8 subcategories.

Main Category 1:

Reciprocity and Solutions

Subcategory 1.1: Indigenous Autonomy

Empowering Indigenous Communities, Cultural Preservation

Description: This subcategory relates to efforts that empower Indigenous communities, support cultural preservation, and ensure autonomy for Indigenous groups. It includes initiatives that aim to protect and promote the rights and self-determination of Indigenous communities in the context of psychedelics. If the initiative is taken by an indigenous group, it goes in the grassroots initiative.

Indicators: Presence of projects focused on Indigenous empowerment, cultural preservation, and initiatives designed to give control back to Indigenous communities.

Example: In the text, Chacruna's Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative (IRI) is an example of supporting Indigenous autonomy, as it aims to ensure accessible portals for reciprocity, not strictly entrenched in the psychedelic industry, but in the broader worlds from which psychedelics originate.

Subcategory 1.2: Grassroots Initiatives

Community-Led Projects, Regenerative Psychedelic Industry

Description: This subcategory includes community-led projects and efforts toward building a regenerative psychedelic industry. It encompasses initiatives driven by grassroots movements and local communities to create a more just and sustainable framework for psychedelics.

Indicators: Presence of projects initiated by local communities, sustainable practices within the psychedelic industry, and efforts to create regenerative models.

Example: The Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative (IRI) represents a grassroots network supporting community-led initiatives that address various aspects of social and environmental well-being.

Subcategory 1.3: Environmental Stewardship

Conservation of Plant Medicines, Environmental Well-Being

Description: This subcategory pertains to the conservation of plant medicines and the promotion of environmental well-being. It includes actions

aimed at preserving the natural resources used in psychedelic practices and ensuring a harmonious relationship with the environment.

Indicators: Initiatives focusing on the protection of plant medicines, environmental conservation, and sustainable practices.

Example: The text emphasizes the need to support the environment and vulnerable communities impacted by deforestation, economic instability, and other environmental challenges.

Subcategory 1.4: Commitment to Reciprocity

Ongoing Commitment to Reciprocity, Decolonization

Description: This subcategory involves an ongoing commitment to the principle of reciprocity. It includes initiatives that consistently prioritize righting imbalances, decolonization, and maintaining relationships among diverse stakeholders.

Indicators: Demonstrated dedication to reciprocity, ongoing efforts to address imbalances and consistent commitment to ethical practices.

Example: The text highlights the concept of 'reciprocity' as a meaningful and enduring principle that informs various efforts within the psychedelic community.

Subcategory 1.5: Economic Aspects

Capitalism, Commodification, Financial Support

Description: This subcategory pertains to mentions of references to the economic aspects of the issue of cross-culturation and the resurgence of the psychedelic movement in society. This includes mentions of how economics and capitalism affect, whether it be positively or negatively the parties involved.

Indicator: Mentions of financing, economic issues, or possibilities, and how this shapes the movement.

Example: The text mentions how a specific organization is funded or is being funded by specific actors in the psychedelic environment. This subcategory also includes the implications of the commodification of traditional medicine.

Subcategory 1.6: Legal Aspects

Laws, Regulatory Agencies, Legal Framework

Description: This subcategory refers to specific mentions of laws or policies that affect the way a society views and deals with the 'issue' of psychedelics. It also includes mentions of the regulatory demands that governmental institutions have in approving new drugs on a federal level.

Indicators: Mentions of specific agencies or organizations that are currently in some way affected by, or are attempting to influence how laws or policies are made about psychedelics

Example: The text highlights a specific law or policy, and how it affects the topic. It can also be a mention of an individual or collective attempting to affect lawmakers or specific laws.

Subcategory 1.7: Spreading Knowledge

Education, Knowledge Transmission, Historical Context

Description: This subcategory covers areas of the material whose aim is to spread knowledge that has been deemed useful or necessary in understanding the complex issues surrounding cross-cultural exchange. This covers historical contexts or data that allow the reader to understand the topic more broadly.

Indicators: Data and facts, mentions of specific dates or events, first-hand accounts from Indigenous people, and the effects of psychedelics - all to provide the reader with a larger perspective of the topic.

Example: Highlighting a specific event, individual, or perspective that gives the reader a more nuanced perspective on the topic.

Main Category 2:

Challenges and Issues

Subcategory 2.1: Environmental Aspects

Environmental Degradation, Economic Insecurity

Description: This subcategory pertains to challenges related to environmental degradation and the economic insecurity arising from it. It includes issues such as deforestation and other ecological concerns.

Indicators: Presence of problems related to environmental harm, degradation, or instability.

Example: The text mentions the devastating impact of deforestation and its consequences on the environment and local communities.

Subcategory 2.2: Social Aspects

Cultural Appropriation, Lack of Political Autonomy

Description: This subcategory encompasses social issues like cultural appropriation and the lack of political autonomy faced by certain communities, especially in the context of psychedelics.

Indicators: Instances of cultural appropriation, lack of self-governance, or social injustices.

Example: The text discusses the vulnerability of marginalized communities to cultural appropriation and the need to address these social injustices.

Subcategory 2.3: Economic Challenges

Wealth Disparities, Psychedelic Commodification

Description: This subcategory relates to wealth disparities and challenges associated with the economic aspects of psychedelics, including concerns about psychedelic commodification.

Indicators: Indications of wealth disparities, economic inequality, and discussions on profit-driven motives.

Example: The text raises questions about whether the commodification of psychedelics can avoid recreating inequalities inherent in conventional capitalism.

Subcategory 2.4: Legal Complexities

Criminal Justice Reform, Global Capitalism

Description: This subcategory involves challenges linked to criminal justice reform, global capitalism, and the legal intricacies associated with psychedelics.

Indicators: References to legal issues, criminal justice reform, and global economic systems.

Example: The text mentions the complexities of navigating the legal and economic aspects of the psychedelic movement.

5.1.3.3 Revising and Expanding the Coding Frame

Following the definition of all categories, a crucial step involves revising the coding frame. The revision aims to provide a thorough overview and convey the broader context. At this point, an assessment was made, determining

the coding frame's adequacy in covering all the identified aspects. However, a readiness for additional categories remained as the process continued.

5.1.4 Segmentation

Segmentation involves dividing the data into 'units', ensuring each unit aligns with one subcategory of the coding frame. The unit's size is immaterial; the key criterion is its alignment with a category description (Flick, 2013).

Two criteria for segmentation are formal and thematic. Thematic criteria were chosen, systematically dividing the data into units whenever a change in topic was observed. This method corresponds well with the coding frame and suits the data, primarily singular quotes from the website or articles in the bulletin, covering various aspects of cross-culture. By using thematic criteria, the focus was on identifying themes and topics, making it easier to ensure that each unit fits into a single subcategory.

5.1.5 Trial Coding

After establishing the coding frame and completing segmentation, a pilot phase is crucial for testing its effectiveness before analyzing all the data (Flick, 2013). A selection of material was chosen, covering most of the categories as well as being representative of all the material. The group was divided into two for two trial coding, ensuring everyone became comfortable with the method before doing the final coding. The trial coding aimed at assessing consistency; if the results of the coding were similar it would ensure valid results, while discrepancies would indicate issues in need of resolution (Flick, 2013).

5.1.6 Evaluation

Following the trial coding, a thorough evaluation of the coding frame is imperative. Inconsistencies or issues identified during trial coding are reviewed, and modifications are made accordingly (Flick, 2013). Notes were taken during the trial coding, followed by discussions that facilitated an exploration of the coding and the reasoning behind them, leading to a collective understanding of how to modify the frame.

The trial coding revealed that around half of the units were coded similarly, falling below the preferred standard. However, satisfaction was found in the trial coding process, as the instances of different coding led to mutual agreement on the necessary changes to address the identified issues.

Specifically, some of the subcategory descriptions required not only information on what it should contain but also specifying the criteria for when the units belong to another category.

Additionally, it was identified that some units needed to be re-segmented, either by adding two together or by splitting them down further to avoid units fitting into multiple subcategories. It was noted that although all units technically could fit within the categories already made, a more precise and in-depth analysis could be achieved by introducing additional subcategories. One example of this was the subcategory 'Spreading Knowledge' (under the category of 'Reciprocity and Solutions').

Following these adjustments, the coding frame was refined to satisfaction.

5.1.7 The Main Analysis Phase

In preparation for the main analysis phase where all material was coded, a reliable and valid coding frame was essential. Having revised the frame, the need for two coders was obviated (Flick, 2013). The remaining units were systematically coded into the coding frame in groups, with the belief that discussions and shared perspectives would yield the most precise result. The coding process took place in a coding sheet to provide a comprehensive overview of all the data. The material was set up to address the research question effectively.

Challenges were encountered in coding certain units due to the interconnected nature of the concepts. Some units tended to reference one topic about another. Ultimately, the preferred approach was to code a unit into the category that corresponded to the emphasized point, ensuring alignment with the overarching topic.

5.1.8 Presenting Findings: Interpretation by 'Suspicion' and 'Empathy'

In certain instances, the coding frame or coding sheet itself can serve as the presentation; however, in other cases, it may be more suitable to present it through text, and that is the approach chosen. The findings are presented through an analysis where the data is interpreted to address the research question and the problem formulation.

Preserving the original intent is a pivotal consideration within the sphere of interpretation, where two primary orientations come to the fore:

"interpretation propelled by 'suspicion'" and "interpretation propelled by 'empathy'" (Flick, 2013).

For the analysis of the coding, the chosen method is empathetic interpretation, underscoring and explicating the explicit meanings embedded within the data. This approach emphasizes the characteristics, qualities, and patterns discernible in the dataset. The primary objective is not to unveil concealed elements but rather to bring clarity and illumination to aspects that might be less immediately evident (Flick, 2013).

5.2 'Suspicious' Interpretation

Upon completing the coding process, the limitations of the qualitative content analysis method became apparent. This approach attempts to categorize the information, thus resulting in the nuances of certain quotes being eliminated due to them being taken out of a bigger context, making them possible to interpret in several ways.

Despite adhering to the method according to its directions, presenting a comprehensive understanding of how MAPS engages with Indigenous cultures proved to be challenging, as the data would have to include elements of cultural transmissions if it is to be applied in the coding frame. The challenge arose from the instances of MAPS mentioning substances rooted in Indigenous cultures with no element of cultural transmission. To address this, an additional method was incorporated; namely 'Suspicious' Interpretation (Willig, 2014). Combining this method with qualitative content analysis would allow for an analysis of the instances with no cultural transmission, aiming for a nuanced exploration of how the aspects are presented.

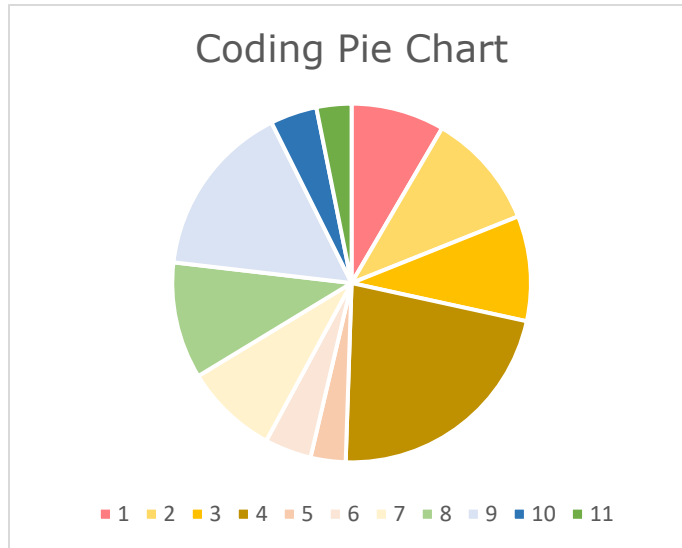
The method of 'Suspicious' interpretation was selected as it *"aims to reveal hidden truths"* (Willig, 2014), where texts are not simply read but understood through their deeper meanings. As this method relies on the selected theory to understand the deeper, hidden meanings, there is a risk of subjective interpretation and confirmation bias, where the researchers' expectations of the texts could be reflected, leaving little room for potential complexities within the texts. However, it was deemed essential to reflect on instances of transmissions of culture on MAPS' website, as well as on the instances which were perceived to be related to Indigenous cultures without an explicit reference to them.

The parallel application of two methodological approaches to different sets of data may not provide a seamless integration of results, however, the rationale underlying this approach is rooted in the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of MAPS' approaches to cultural sensitivity and reciprocity for Indigenous cultures, and how this is communicated on its website. Through the application of two methods, the objective is to achieve a nuanced exploration of how the aspects are presented.

6 Analysis

Figure 1

Coding Pie Chart



Note. This chart shows the distribution of quotes into subcategories. The colors and numbers correspond to the table (Figure 2) below, where the names of the categories can be found. The warmer tones correspond to main category 1 'Reciprocity and Solutions', while the blue and green tones correspond to main category 2 'Challenges and Issues'.

Figure 2

Coding Table

Category	Sub-category	Number of quotes	Percentage %
Reciprocity & Solutions	1. Indigenous Autonomy	8	8%
Reciprocity & Solutions	2. Grassroots Initiatives	10	11%
Reciprocity & Solutions	3. Environmental Stewardship	9	9%
Reciprocity & Solutions	4. Commitment to Reciprocity	21	22%
Reciprocity & Solutions	5. Economic Aspects	3	3%
Reciprocity & Solutions	6. Legal Aspects	4	4%

Reciprocity & Solutions	7. Spreading Knowledge	8	8%
Challenges & Issues	8. Environmental Aspects	10	11%
Challenges & Issues	9. Social Aspects	15	16%
Challenges & Issues	10. Economic Challenges	4	4%
Challenges & Issues	11. Legal Complexities	3	3%

Total	95
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Note. This table presents the allocation of quotes among categories, providing the count of units in each category and the corresponding calculated percentages. Additionally, it displays the titles of subcategories along with their respective main categories.

6.1 Reciprocity & Solutions

Within the two primary categories under consideration, there was no doubt that MAPS' website places greater emphasis on 'Reciprocity and Solutions'. In our coding analysis, a substantial 66% of our units were allocated to this particular category (see Figure 2). The interpretation of this distribution is multifaceted; one plausible theory posits that it represents an intentional effort to portray a positive frame. In the realm of communication theory, framing refers to the deliberate selection and emphasis of certain aspects to convey a specific perspective on a problem, including its causes, moral judgments, and potential (Entman, 1993).

By leaving a significant portion of the website's space to discussions on reciprocity and solutions, MAPS reinforces these thematic elements. This sheds light on MAPS' priorities and advocacy, influencing the reader as it affects how people perceive and remember information. The alignment of the frame with the reader's perspective enhances the text's ability to exert influence (Entman, 1993). Essentially, the more agreeable MAPS appears to the reader, the higher the likelihood that the reader will develop a sense of credibility and trust towards MAPS. It is essential to note that frames are culturally determined, and in contemporary societies, where there tends to be a growing focus on equality, equal rights, and reciprocity, chances are that this is more socially accepted.

An additional perspective worth considering is that a solution inherently implies the existence of a problem, whereas the inverse is not necessarily true. Each mention of a solution indirectly alludes to an associated problem. Therefore, from a logistical standpoint, it is reasonable that a majority of units would be categorized under Reciprocity and Solutions, as the very nature of addressing solutions inherently involves acknowledging corresponding problems meaning that there is a natural inclination to focus exclusively on the problems.

6.2 Challenges & Issues

To understand the transmission of psychedelic practices into a Western context, it is important to remember that this includes dealing with a wide variety of challenges and issues. This part of the analysis delves into general concerns identified with our theoretical framework and our chosen method, qualitative content analysis.

The occurrence of economic, legal, social, and environmental issues among Indigenous cultures (*Challenges and Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples' Sustainability*, 2021), which is arguably affected by the profit-driven motives of Western medicine entities, leads to the conclusion that these issues are nuanced and might not be easily understood. MAPS acknowledges the risk of exploitation (Carlin & Scheld, 2019) and they display attempts to raise questions and create solutions as to how you create an exchange that is equally beneficial to all paved in this quickly expanding movement.

"Will it lead to increased pressures and another colonial imposition on our medicine? Or will this new movement respect indigenous sovereignty and responsibility? We do not want our way of life and our medicine to be part of the sixth wave of species extinctions happening today." (Iron Rope et al., 2020).

6.3 Grassroots Initiatives

The subcategory 'Grassroots Initiatives' refers to community-led projects and efforts towards building a sustainable and reciprocal psychedelic industry. It includes initiatives driven by grassroots movements and local communities to create a more just and sustainable framework for psychedelics. Approximately one-tenth of the units analyzed ended up in this subcategory. 'Grassroots Initiatives' may have some overlap with 'Indigenous Autonomy'; therefore, this subcategory consists mainly of instances with specific mentions of donations or direct connections to

organizations and movements driven by grassroots movements (see Appendix).

Regarding cultural degradation and cultural preservation, MAPS appears to identify a number of these issues under the subcategory 'Grassroots Initiatives'. It acknowledges them by highlighting how the various organizations and initiatives are encouraging and developing a protective cultural stance towards the process. For example, it is mentioned how the use of different medicine plants is being protected and supported by the IMC (Indigenous Medicine Conservation). The following quote is being analyzed, as it addresses, most if not all, the cultural concerns when it comes to cultural appropriation according to Ziff and Rao:

"(...) The IMC Fund is an Indigenous-led philanthropic vehicle working to ensure the resilience of traditional medicine holders in the face of cultural pressures, environmental extractivism, human rights violations, and climate change. The IMC Fund directly supports the biocultural conservation of five keystone (fundamental) psychedelic medicines: Peyote, Iboga, Ayahuasca, Toads, and Mushrooms. These medicines all have generations upon generations of historical traditional use as part of living biocultures – inseparably intertwined people, territories, and medicines – and the unbroken lineages of spiritual-medical practices."(Volat, 2022).

Focusing on cultural preservation, IMC takes a serious stance on protecting and asserting the importance of cultural preservation within its diverse elements: climate change, human rights violations, the resilience of traditional medicines with its historical trajectory, cultural pressure, and environmental extractives. In addition, IMC's recognition of the importance of the relation all of these elements have on the communities' cultures is crucial, this is specifically expressed at the end of the previous quote. Another association – IPCI – specifically refers to the conservation of the Native American psychedelic cactus peyote in its native habitat (Iron Rope et al., 2020).

The previous quote also addresses the economic dimensions of culture, reflecting a similar protective stance. Furthermore, as MAPS identifies the economic issues resulting from the transculturation process, it highlights how other associations and initiatives, such as IRI address these concerns by allocating the donated economic resources equally to be, equitable, and transparent.

"In the first three months after being launched, IRI raised \$60,000 for Indigenous initiatives; providing donations that support the invaluable work of the communities involved without imposing outside agendas(...)" (Mays et al., 2021)

MAPS appears to recognize the importance of promoting local communities involved in the transculturation process, self-development, and independence not only economically, but in every cultural aspect. Associations other than MAPS address this through the means of MAPS' website. (Volat, 2022) However, despite this recognition, a clear perspective on how MAPS will manage this if its objectives are realized is not being identified. It is essential to consider that the process of implementation of Indigenous cultures' resources into Western medicine could eventually lead to massification, with potential negative consequences possibly being amplified. A further analysis of this economic aspect is explored in section 6.7 'Economic Aspects & Economic Challenges'. A fair and reciprocal transculturation process will require an even more careful procedure.

6.4 Spreading Knowledge & Social Aspects

When using the term 'Social Aspects' we mean to refer to the ramifications of issues caused by the involvement of Western institutions with psychedelic tourism and psychedelic commodification. This set of data is analysed through the theoretical framework of Commodification and Cultural appropriation as we consider the data to be relevant to both theories.

Commodification theory states that when an object enters the capitalist market it risks becoming detached from its cultural values (Rogers, 2006). This poses a substantial risk when considering incorporating significant important cultural elements such as psychedelics into the Western economic system, possibly detaching them from their traditional contexts of use. The Western economic system can arguably be understood as desensitizing, creating distance between the consumer and the origin of products. Consequently, the consumer may find it challenging to be mindful and aware of the sourcing and distribution of a particular product. This phenomenon is evident in various aspects of our daily lives, from buying tomatoes at the grocery stores to engaging with culturally significant practices or traditions. Elements on MAPS' website indicate its willingness to *spread knowledge*, as suggested by articles published in collaboration with Indigenous associations.

Within this specific category, quotes have been grouped based on their perceived role as educational tools utilized by MAPS to inform possible patients or readers about the importance of the conservation of psychedelic plants and the culture surrounding them. Additionally, these quotes address the threats posed by psychedelic tourism to both the plants as well as the Indigenous population who depend on them.

To begin this section of the analysis, a quote from the article *Sacred Peyote Conservation: Respecting Indigenous Traditions* (2020) is referenced, applying the framework provided by the theory of commodification.

"Rather than feel entitled to this medicine, it would be good to support indigenous communities the way they want to be supported, by allowing them to regulate and have jurisdiction over this medicine in a way that is entwined with their community, mental health needs, and the futures of health and cultural vitality they seek for their grandchildren. The community engaging in the psychedelic renaissance has the choice to allow this cultural change to happen without stealing, once again, from the Native peoples of the Americas. [...] Be an example of support from brothers and sisters of different backgrounds, and support keeping this way of life alive through respect. (Volat, 2022)

In analysing this quote, the goal is to understand how MAPS addresses the issue of peyote plant exploitation. Despite acknowledging the limitation in stating MAPS' true intentions behind the portrayal of their activities, our analysis of their articles suggests a genuine effort to confront these concerns, by publishing them on its website. It is essential to keep in mind that the author, Sandor Iron Rope, is not employed by or representing MAPS.

The following quote seems to underscore the importance of supporting Indigenous communities' jurisdiction and authority over psychedelic medicine. This approach, in contrast to Western entitlement, is seen as a way of supporting these communities according to their preferences. MAPS publishing this article on its webpage seems to show its commitment to collaborating with Indigenous peoples and disseminating existing knowledge, rather than attempting to establish proprietary knowledge.

Looking at the first part of the quote it underlines an approach to avoid the potential misuse of psychedelics within the Western economic system, the article published highlights the willingness to collaborate with Indigenous

communities, prioritizing the sharing of knowledge over attempting to appropriate and exploit it.

As described in our theory chapter, cultural appropriation is explained as taking exclusive possession of elements from a certain culture, for personal gain and interest (See Theory, 4.1 Cultural Appropriation). One of the concerns regarding this theoretical perspective is the preservation of cultural elements. Rogers states that *"cultural objects, symbols, and practices are best understood in their native contexts, and that the priority should be the preservation of the integrity of marginalized cultures"* (2006, p. 487). This issue is particularly relevant in the context of the psychedelic renaissance.

A quote from MAPS' website further aligns with this theoretical standpoint; *"For the psychedelic field to be truly successful, and for us to be deeply proud of what we are creating and how we are bringing healing to individuals and communities, we have to consider the impact of this movement on traditional knowledge-holding communities, ancestral medicines, and their ecosystems. [...]"* (Volat, 2022). MAPS' recognition of the importance of safeguarding traditional Indigenous practices, ancestral medicines, as well as ecosystems and their preservation, is arguably an element that is crucial to consider for MAPS, indicating its commitment to responsible practices.

The quote extends to advocates of adopting frameworks that honour the principles of maintenance of respectful and non-harmful relationships in various aspects of psychedelic research.

"What if the way we increase access and integrate these modalities into society – medical, legal, commercial, social norms, knowledge, etc. – can be done in such a way that honors the principles of Do No Harm and maintenance of Respectful Relationships" (Volat, 2022)

MAPS seems to address the need for systemic healing beyond individual well-being.

"We want to be able to look back and say that the psychedelic movement, in its quest for societal healing, did not harm these still-vibrant traditional biocultures, but actually led to an increased potential for future healing for everyone involved" (Volat, 2022)

By publishing this article, MAPS emphasizes the role of the psychedelic movement in healing the relationship between the dominant cultures and

cultures with generational colonial trauma for supporting Indigenous decision-making, guidance, and sovereignty, highlighting the importance of not further exploiting aspects of traditional cultures (Volat, 2022). This approach is seen as a step toward systemic-level healing and seems to align with the theoretical perspective on the preservation of culture.

6.5 Indigenous Autonomy & Commitment to Reciprocity

In this specific section of the analysis, quotes from the categories Indigenous Autonomy and Commitment to Reciprocity will be analysed. MAPS appears to have left space for Indigenous Associations to advocate for the emancipation and respect of Indigenous communities, through its website analysis. It is crucial to note that while the quotes found in these categories are sourced from MAPS' website, they do not describe MAPS' actions but rather the actions of other associations, such as the IRI. MAPS utilized its platform to share articles discussing the path to establish reciprocal and respectful relationships with Indigenous communities, particularly those utilizing ancestral medicines. However, apart from MAPS being a donor to these associations, no shared project or work could be found (*Allies & Donors*, 2020).

The theoretical framework applied in the analysis is cultural appropriation, with a specific focus on concerns of *deprivation of material advantage* and *the failure to recognize sovereign claims*. This framework is particularly relevant to this category as reciprocity and the pursuit of Indigenous autonomy are seen as essential strategies for addressing the challenges that MAPS encounters in its research and work.

"This way, IRI is inclusive of Indigenous communities and movements that may not already be known to the psychedelic community and the global North in general. It also avoids creating an atmosphere where different groups struggle for the spotlight and compete to have their priorities recognized by an audience with different incentives than their own." (Mays et al., 2021)

"At the same time, it brings in groups that may have been cut off from their ancestral lineages or lands due to legacies of colonialism and displacement, avoiding the limitations of intellectual property or access and benefit-sharing schemes." (Mays et al., 2021)

In these quotes, IRI's promotion of inclusivity by encompassing not only Indigenous communities engaging in psychedelic known global North but

also those less popular ones are highlighted. This approach aims to prevent the marginalization of specific Indigenous groups and movements, fostering a more representative perspective. The IRI also includes communities that have experienced disconnection from their ancestral lands due to historical legacies of colonialism and displacement, overcoming limitations related to intellectual property. This resonates with the Deprivation of Material Advantage section of the Cultural Appropriation theory, where the concept of intellectual property being a Western ideology that often acts as a mediator for conflict of ownership is explained (Rogers, 2006). The system is inevitably in Favor of Western companies, which navigate in the same system they created which values private versus collective ownership, making it difficult for Indigenous communities to claim fair compensation and acknowledgment.

"At the same time, it brings in groups that may have been cut off from their ancestral lineages or lands due to legacies of colonialism and displacement, avoiding the limitations of intellectual property or access and benefit-sharing schemes." (Mays et al., 2021)

Although MAPS arguably does leave space for an Indigenous Association to speak about this issue, what was puzzling was that the selected quotes from MAPS' website not written by Indigenous Authors utilize words that hint at a commitment to reciprocity, however, not in a specific Indigenous context.

6.6 Environmental Stewardship & Environmental Aspects

The two subcategories 'Environmental Stewardship' and 'Environmental Aspects' were amongst those with a substantial number of units. While 'Environmental Stewardship' has 9% of units, 'Environmental Aspects' has no less than 11% (See Figure 2, *Coding Table*). This is seemingly an aspect of importance to MAPS.

Unavoidably, the environmental elements will have significance for MAPS, or anyone interested in using psychedelic plants. Without the preservation of the plants, their benefits cannot be experienced, and MAPS would face challenges in its operations. However, this perspective is simplified. When looking at the units within the two environmental subcategories in the coding sheet (See Appendix) several different themes can be identified. Some of the units are centered around the global climate crisis (Mays et al., 2021; Volat, 2022; Iron Rope et al., 2020). It should therefore be noted that the percentage also represents this aspect, meaning that not all units in these

subcategories focus on the environmental aspect regarding the psychedelic plants and Indigenous lands.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that one of the most repetitive themes categorized as Environmental Aspect is the preservation of psychedelic plants, more specifically the sacred Peyote.

"The PRP showed us that the sacred plant Peyote was threatened, both in terms of populations and quality of the plant, and also in terms of the expression of indigenous sovereignty over the medicine, pilgrimage, and spiritual harvest. It was time to reconnect to conservation, direct responsibility, and renewed spiritual relationship to the entire growth cycle of our medicine." (Iron Rope et al., 2020)

As the quote states, Peyote plants are threatened and this is partially due to overharvesting resulting in reduced amounts of harvestable biomass per plant, affecting the overall health and size of individual peyotes. Peyote populations are facing threats due to various activities, including harvesting, land development, and brush clearing (*Peyote Crisis*, n.d.). These activities, particularly when driven by economic motives, can be seen as exploiting cultural products (Peyote in this case) for financial gain (Rogers, 2006). If the harvesting and utilization of Peyote is not conducted sustainably, it may lead to a depletion of this culturally and ecologically significant resource, affecting the material benefits derived from it (*Peyote Crisis*, n.d.).

To facilitate sustainable growth requires care, time, and resources, something that MAPS seems to prioritize based on the statements they publish.

"...we learn how to listen, conserve, and protect this sacred plant for our continued way of life." (Iron Rope et al., 2020)

Furthermore, the results of our coding (See Figure 1, *Coding Pie Chart*, and Figure 2, *Coding Table*) ¹/₂. Connecting this to the broader concept of preservation of cultural elements, Peyote's precarious situation underscores the urgency of protecting not just the plant itself but also the spiritual and cultural heritage woven into its existence.

This aspect is also present on MAPS' website as it mentions the spirituality connected to caring for nature and the specific harvesting process of Peyote (Iron Rope et al., 2020). Safeguarding practices like the respectful use of Peyote becomes paramount, ensuring that the integrity of Indigenous

traditions remains intact amidst the challenges posed by environmental pressures and economic interests (Rogers, 2006). MAPS seemingly acknowledges this strong connection to nature as a cultural element and leaves space for highlighting this as a factor that needs to be taken into consideration (Iron Rope et al., 2020).

The conflict regarding the sustainable preservation of psychedelic plants is intricately linked to the concept of commodification, as highlighted by (Rogers, 2006) in reference to Marx (1986). This involves reducing the plants to marketable items, to some extent erasing their cultural and ecological significance, and potentially compromising their sustainable preservation. To use psychedelic plants regularly in therapy in a Western context would require a large amount produced, meaning that it would most likely need to be made synthetically. While MAPS states that:

"Even when using a synthetic psychedelic, or any other synthetic product, that relationship is further obscured, but it is still there at its core. Every scrap of plastic or wood or metal we see or touch comes from somewhere in the broader ecosystem, and there is no aspect of human life that is not ultimately reliant upon nature." (Mays et al., 2021)

Hereby implying that MAPS will care for the ecological aspects no matter the process; however, the idea of providing synthetically made psychedelics can be understood as problematic. According to Rogers, this could be defined as Cultural appropriation (See theory, 4.1 Cultural Appropriation) as it would require using elements from the Indigenous culture and making them Western in order to serve the interests of the West (Rogers, 2006).

If the synthetic equivalents and their use is seen as a third, separate culture, which is created by the articulation of sacred Indigenous psychedelic practices to Western medicine, the emphasis is instead on preserving the ecological balance and the cultural significance of plants while still incorporating their therapeutic properties into Western medicine, avoiding their exploitation. This alternative perspective could be understood as a form of transculturation and allows for a more collaborative approach, respecting both the cultural and environmental dimensions of Indigenous knowledges and practices.

In summary, MAPS portrays a notable focus on environmental stewardship and aspects, constituting a significant portion of their discourse. While the coding analysis underscores their commitment, a closer look reveals a

nuanced approach. Some units extend beyond the immediate psychedelic plant context, touching on the broader global climate crisis. Yet, MAPS consistently emphasizes the preservation of sacred Peyote, highlighting its dedication to addressing specific environmental challenges. However, it is not clear how MAPS plans to keep up with these demands when it comes to the actual implementation, and hereby use of, the psychedelic plants in a Western medicine context, creating concerns regarding potential cultural appropriation and the compromise of cultural and ecological significance as an effect of mass production.

6.7 Economic Aspects & Economic Challenges

Applying the method, seven quotes specifically related to economic aspects were identified. In these categories, emphasis is placed on instances where MAPS recognizes economic issues as well as proposing solutions. The focus lies on understanding how these issues and solutions are related and aimed at the cultures being involved, rather than delving into broader economic concerns. Specifically, the analysis does not extend into exploring aspects such as how companies will compete to participate in the process or the impact of psychedelic capitalization on the current pharmaceutical/medical market. Attention is directed toward these factors only when seemingly impacting minority cultures.

These categories are fundamentally important, especially when acknowledging the inherent power dynamics between cultures (Bowman et al., 2016). The first culture, typically Indigenous, is economically vulnerable when its knowledge or resource is being used, contrasting with the second, Western medicine culture. In the economic context, the term 'Western medicine' encompasses not only medical practices but also any participating company with the goal of profitability. This may involve exploiting a vulnerable culture without considering the potential repercussions, extending across economic, environmental, and social dimensions. The objective is to comprehend MAPS' stance on this approach – does it acknowledge these concerns, and what solutions does it propose? Most of the quotes being analyzed are taken from the article 'Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative of the Americas: A Respectful Path Forward for the Psychedelic Movement' (Mays et al., 2021). Despite this, if we consider that this is on MAPS website, we can reflect on MAPS's stance on these issues. Although it may also represent that, MAPS is not directly addressing these issues, but only indirectly through IRI.

From the commodification theory perspective, any element from a culture entering the market becomes commodified (Rogers, 2006). In this case, this inevitability is particularly pronounced due to the potentially significant impact it may have if successfully applied in Western medicine within a globalized context. One potential dimension of this impact may involve the possible replacement of Indigenous substances with their Western medical alternatives. This substitution could not only alter the current market and economy, but also assign a material value to the natural element being introduced having consequences on the culture where the element is taken from. The commodification of these elements may lead to at least three of the four issues identified in the theory – cultural degradation, preservation of cultural elements and deprivation of material advantage. MAPS seemingly recognizes these concerns, as can be seen in the following quote:

"It is also recognizing the skewed power relations between individuals and business owners who depend on the know-how of their workers to generate the wealth they accumulate and the products they consume, within the greater framework of the tendency of the Global North to extract labor and resources from the Global South and, in turn, weakening local communities that depend on the biosphere for everything that sustains them." (Mays et al., 2021)

In other quotes, a similar problem is identified. However, MAPS remains ambiguous on how the process of inserting cultural elements and practices into the capitalist market will be:

"Whether dealing with plant medicines or synthetic, second-generation psychedelics, the question of whether "psychedelic capitalism" can avoid recreating the same inequality endemic to conventional capitalism remains unanswered. Dave McGaughey of the Aurn Project questions whether any amount of good intentions can trump the inevitable consequences of a profit-driven industry that siphons resources from communities in the ultimate pursuit of shareholder returns." (Mays et al., 2021)

According to the theory of commodification, it considers not only material elements such as medicine plants, but also subjective elements such as knowledge, religious and spiritual elements (Rogers, 2006). In the previous quotes, these kinds of issues are being identified. Even though it is not directly addressed by MAPS, but only through IRI, we can suggest that MAPS is also considering them as important. Although it does not explicitly address

how the use of any of these elements can impact the culture and what measures can be taken to prevent adverse effects.

For instance, the use of ayahuasca and its related rituals is a solid element of certain Indigenous cultures, being sold, marketed, or used for commercial purposes. Transplanting ayahuasca and its rituals from an Indigenous culture into the capitalist system may alter the original meaning of the ritual and the substance itself, when removed from its natural context. While MAPS may not have specific intentions in this regard and seemingly recognizes the problem, the globalized context makes it susceptible to commodification. Addressing these issues without the seriousness required, could result in irreparable damage to some Indigenous cultures.

These quotes acknowledge the issues identified in the theory – commodification, cultural degradation, and deprivation of material advantage – especially when introducing natural elements, such as ayahuasca, into the market and the potential for companies to take an appropriative stance toward minority communities.

From the data that was found and analyzed, only a few, 7% (See Figure 2, Coding Table), address economic solutions and issues. This suggests that MAPS may not view these considerations as fundamentally significant. Furthermore, a closer examination of specific quotes found in the 'Reciprocity and Solutions' category reveals a level of uncertainty and ambiguity (Mays et al., 2021; Volat, 2022)

Again, if we consider that MAPS aligns with IRI's stance over these cultural issues, the economic dimension of the transculturation process remains uncertain and ambiguous. Despite MAPS' careful positioning in relation to transculturation issues, it arguably fails to have a clear perspective on the process and its implications for the affected minorities.

6.8 Legal Aspects & Legal Complexities

As mentioned in the background, psychedelics have had a mainly illegal status ever since the mid-20th century. This illegality led to nearly no funding being given to researching the effects on psychedelic substances, which MAPS aims to challenge. While MAPS has made progress in terms of reconsidering the legal status for both psilocybin and MDMA in therapy, the legalization of Indigenous psychedelics raises questions about its effect on the originating cultures.

Legalization of Indigenous elements, such as ayahuasca or peyote, may be linked to the theory of cultural appropriation, a connection which arises from the tendency to define these substances within a Western framework, irrespective of the cultural contexts from which the substances originate (Rogers, 2006).

The legalization of Indigenous psychedelics poses a critical question; can the incorporation of Indigenous substances into Western contexts be done in an ethical manner? By examining the transmission of this cultural element and practice, from Indigenous to Western, we can begin to analyze how legal frameworks influence the dynamics of cultural exchange.

As MAPS seemingly aims to legalize or reconsider the legal status of Indigenous psychedelics within a Western legal framework — as opposed to creating a fusion of legal systems within which elements from both Indigenous and Western cultures may be seen — the legalization of Indigenous substances can be understood as a form of cultural exploitation. In this scenario, these substances are commodified and integrated into the Western, dominant culture for its benefit. A fusion of legal systems could, on the other hand, have been understood as a form of transculturation, where a separate, third culture is formed through the merging of elements from the originating cultures. (Rogers, 2006).

Although this part of the analysis is focused on the impact of the legalization of Indigenous psychedelics, the effects of this could extend beyond the legal as well as the theoretical considerations, to where it affects the Indigenous communities directly in terms of representation, compensation and shaping of their discourse. The legalization of Indigenous psychedelics can arguably be understood as a failure to recognize sovereign claims if the Indigenous cultures are not written into the laws relating to the substances, resulting in an appropriation of their culture which may have negative impacts on the communities from which the substances originate.

"Decriminalizing" and *"criminal justice reform"* are some of the phrases which can be observed under the subcategories of 'Legal Aspects' and 'Legal Complexities'. And although these can be understood as vague, they offer insight into how MAPS sees the relationship between the legal frameworks in which they exist as well as the Indigenous cultures from which some psychedelics originate.

However, the quote "*Reshaping the framework of psychedelic use*" (Policy & Advocacy, n.d.) can at the same time be understood as an awareness of the necessity of reshaping the Western legal paradigm within which the use of psychedelics may exist. This could perhaps entail the recognition of the necessity of inclusion, moving away from a potentially exploitative legal framework.

When looking at the quote "*Ayahuasca is legal in many countries in South America...*" (Ayahuasca, n.d.), this can be understood as contrasting with the other mentions of psychedelics' legal status. It underscores a variation within legal frameworks in different regions and can be argued to reflect an aspect of transculturation due to ayahuasca being integrated as an Indigenous practice within the existing legal structures of the regions. On the other hand, it could also be understood as cultural exploitation according to cultural appropriation theory, as the substance is brought from its original cultural context into a dominant one. (Rogers, 2006).

6.9 Indigenous Omissions

There is a recurring narrative on MAPS' website, where there are hints or ambiguously understood references to Indigenous cultures and practices, such as "*A brief history of psychedelics, from the earliest known human uses to today's cutting-edge research*" (Psychedelic Fundamentals, n.d.-a). This quote includes an acknowledgment of psychedelics' historical use; however, it does not explicitly recognize the Indigenous cultures which historically have used substances such as ayahuasca.

"From sacred rituals to counterculture movements, psychedelics have had one strange trip. Now, our research shows their potential goes beyond public perception." (Our Research, n.d.).

This quote can be found on MAPS' website, on a page titled Our Research. While this overview mentions the history of psychedelics, it lacks explicit mention of their Indigenous cultural roots.

Ayahuasca, like MDMA, marijuana, LSD and ibogaine, has its section on MAPS' website (Ayahuasca, n.d.). Here, one can find ayahuasca's chemical formula, drug class, as well as information regarding its effects. The word 'Indigenous' is notably omitted, however, it is mentioned that in the US, the use of ayahuasca for religious purposes has in some cases been granted legal freedom (Ayahuasca, n.d.).

MAPS' commitment to mental health is evident when reading their section on Health Equity (n.d.). On MAPS' website, the Health Equity Program is described as an inclusive program which both aims at treatment as well as training therapists, supervisors and trainers (*Health Equity*, n.d.) from marginalized communities. Here, the Indigenous community is mentioned as one of the beneficiaries of MAPS' initiative.

There is a contrast to be seen regarding MAPS and how it acknowledges Indigenous cultures on the different sections of its website. The omission of ayahuasca's Indigenous roots is seemingly notable, as we on the other hand have an explicit mention of Indigenous communities when related to MAPS' Health Equity Program. The dichotomy can seemingly be understood as a reflection of inconsistencies in terms of recognizing or acknowledging the (Indigenous) cultural contexts of the substances that MAPS advocates for.

Through the lens of cultural appropriation, the selective inclusion of references to Indigenous cultures and communities suggests an effort to recognize as well as empower. On the other hand, the absence of explicit acknowledgment of ayahuasca's Indigenous roots may be understood as either an oversight or a lack of emphasis on the substance's cultural origins. According to cultural appropriation theory, marginalized cultures can often face appropriation of their practices, without reciprocity or recognition (Rogers, 2006).

Furthermore, MAPS' overall narrative appears to primarily be focused on achievements and research endeavors (*About MAPS*, n.d.), regardless of the emphasis on diversity and inclusivity. The use of inclusive terms such as "diversity" (*About MAPS*, n.d.), "inclusive" (*Health Equity*, n.d.), and "empower" (*Health Equity*, n.d.), throughout the website might be seen as conveying an image of openness, while avoiding more specific cultural acknowledgments. There is a tension between the organization's commitment to inclusivity and the potential strategic omissions of explicit cultural contexts which raises questions about the underlying motivations or priorities in MAPS' public narrative.

A focus on the therapeutic potential of Indigenous substances with a lack of explicit acknowledgment of their cultural contexts leads the reader to an incomplete understanding of the substance. This could possibly be understood as MAPS inadvertently undermining the integrity of Indigenous cultures. This cultural degradation could occur solely due to MAPS' focus

being on the 'scientific' elements of the different substances that it focuses on in its research and therapies. Conversely, the lack of emphasis on the preservation of the integrity of the Indigenous, marginalized cultures seemingly disassociates the substances or elements from their native contexts, losing their spiritual or traditional aspects.

Furthermore, in terms of the deprivation of material benefits, the commodification of psychedelic substances and therapies could arguably lead to Indigenous communities not being adequately compensated (Rogers, 2006). In addition, if there is a failure to recognize sovereign claims through the legalization of Indigenous substances, this could lead to ethical challenges in terms of respecting the autonomy of Indigenous communities.

In the US, some Native Americans have been working against different states' decriminalization of peyote, a psychedelic cactus which has historically been that by Native Americans in religious ceremonies (Sahagún, 2020). The Native Americans opposed to the possible decriminalization of peyote argue that the impact of decriminalization would lead to the Native American communities losing legal rights to the substance, in addition to the cactus possibly being commodified due to its decriminalization, it could lead to a decline in the population of the peyote cactus. As mentioned in the theory, cultural products which are exploited for financial gain can be considered unethical. The opposition to peyote, as well as other Indigenous substances, being decriminalized stems from a broader apprehension of the potential consequences, both in terms of legal rights as well as the preservation of the cactus.

When examining MAPS' overall narrative there is a tension between the commitment to inclusivity and the omission of specific cultural contexts regarding Indigenous substances. The use of inclusive terms, such as 'diversity', 'inclusive', or 'empower', conveys an image of openness, however, the lack of explicit cultural acknowledgment leads us to question the underlying priorities in MAPS' public narrative. When juxtaposing MAPS' focus on achievements or research with the potential commodification of psychedelic therapies in Western contexts.

The incomplete understanding of Indigenous substances, which arguably is a result of the omission of cultural contexts, could inadvertently undermine the integrity of Indigenous cultures. The detachment of the substance from its native context arguably neglects its spiritual or traditional aspects (Rogers,

2006). Furthermore, the possible commodification of psychedelic substances, without adequate compensation for the Indigenous communities where it is a reciprocal exchange, adds an ethical consideration to the discussion. On one hand, failure to recognize sovereign claims through legalization or decriminalization may challenge the autonomy of Indigenous communities. On the other hand, there are nuances to the legalization itself which, as can be observed in the case of the decriminalization of peyote for non-Native Americans, could lead to unintended consequences, such as the decline in the peyote cactus population, which arguably puts the preservation of cultural as well as ecological integrity at risk.

7 Discussion

Theoretical Perspective

The perspective adopted in our research is acknowledged as one of several ways to approach the project. The choice of theory implies the exclusion of others, each of which could offer relevant and valuable approaches. It is important to recognize that our discourse originates from a Western standpoint, influencing the development of the project. Specifically, this acknowledgment entails recognizing the limitations of the chosen perspective when identifying, analyzing, and reflecting on cultural issues. The selected approach is influenced by the cultural backgrounds of the group members, which may differ from the cultures under analysis. A perspective originating from any minority culture affected by the transculturation process would offer a distinct viewpoint. Additionally, as the project engages with concepts where Indigenous knowledge is concretely present, the inclusion of 'minority' knowledge perspectives could provide interesting and diverse insights.

By acknowledging the inherent impossibility of attaining absolute truth and objectivity, the aim is to utilize the existing bias without denying it. This bias is exemplified, for instance, in the motivations that are leading us to research this field.

Empirical Data

The collection of second-hand empirical data is driven by the objective of accumulating sufficient information to address the question of whether MAPS is genuinely capable of facilitating the transfer of elements like psychedelics to Indigenous knowledge and communities in an ethical manner on its website. It is acknowledged that these data may not necessarily reflect absolute truth; however, they represent how MAPS chooses to portray this.

Ethical Approach

Ethical considerations prevalent in the project are particularly pertinent to the representation of Indigenous cultures and practices on MAPS' website. The project aspires to adopt a respectful and culturally sensitive approach, cognizant of the potential risks of researching cultural transmissions from Indigenous cultures to Western science. Being mindful of the sacred and traditional aspects of Indigenous practices, the research aims to ensure that it avoids negative impacts on Indigenous cultures as well as the

understanding of them negatively through misrepresentations or misappropriations of their knowledges.

On one side of the spectrum, there is MAPS, a Western organization with the possibility of being recognized and legitimized due to its access to scientifically supported and heavily funded research. On the other side, there are the Indigenous communities, among the most vulnerable demographics, whose knowledge lacks scientific backing and is often considered non-valid (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Navigating this power dynamic, MAPS arguably expresses the desire to acknowledge and integrate Indigenous knowledge in its research. However, the organization's commitment to a scientific and research-oriented approach is evident on its website. This is exemplified by the quote from Professor Shirelle Noble "... *I want more people to learn about psychedelics from an educational perspective backed by science.*" (*Psychedelic Fundamentals*, n.d.).

The paradox emerges in MAPS' apparent pursuit of validating Indigenous knowledge while heavily relying on terms such as 'research' or 'science' for credibility, which are considered dirty words in Indigenous vocabulary (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Furthermore, the lack of explicit acknowledgment of communities or practices on several parts of MAPS' website that are dedicated to informing readers about Indigenous psychedelics raises questions about the depth of integration and accurate representation. The tension between MAPS' professed commitment to acknowledging Indigenous knowledges and the influence of a Western scientific paradigm which could inadvertently marginalize or misrepresent Indigenous knowledge systems is emphasized through these failures of acknowledgement.

Finally, there are both nuances and limitations within our selected approach. By adopting the framework of cultural appropriation theory, the objective is to deal with complex issues while still acknowledging the inherent subjectivity of said choices. Shaped by a Western perspective, the project's efforts to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity may regardless risk overlooking certain nuances present in Indigenous knowledge systems.

Reflection on Analysis

During the analysis, it was noted that MAPS does not present a concrete solution for the sustainable incorporation of psychedelic plants into a Western medicine context. Cultural appropriation theory posits that by

assimilating elements of a minority culture into a dominant culture for the dominant culture's own advantage constitutes cultural exploitation (Rogers, 2006) By reducing the plants to marketable products, their cultural and ecological significance may be erased, risking their sustainable preservation.

Challenges and Conclusions

The majority of data that was coded through a qualitative content analysis method can be understood as second-hand data, as the texts were not written by MAPS' employees or representatives, but by members of various Indigenous grassroots organizations. A crucial factor to consider is whether the ethical facilitation of Indigenous practices and cultural considerations via MAPS is ensured for its readers. Digital spaces, although not physical, have a significant role in terms of shaping people's perceptions, and ensuring ethical representation of Indigenous communities and practices through MAPS involves acknowledging MAPS' potential influence on the readers' perceptions. As a Western entity, MAPS becomes the representation of the power dynamics prevalent in the (psychedelic) research field. The challenge then lies in assessing whether MAPS as a privileged Western organization can accurately communicate intricate Indigenous practices while remaining sensitive and respectful to their marginalized and vulnerable communities.

MAPS' narrative is arguably clashing with its desire to be inclusive and reciprocal. The desire to be a diverse organization can be observed in the use of inclusive words in addition to MAPS allowing for Indigenous sources to write on its website, while we find the clashing narrative throughout MAPS' website as it describes its goals and ambitions in science and research. This paradox brings us to once again reference Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 1):

"From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful."

This leads us to the question: Does MAPS' focus on scientific research devalue Indigenous knowledges?

Moreover, the combined methodological approach poses risks of potential confirmation bias and interpretations. Although the objective is to remain self-aware and culturally sensitive, the project's ethical considerations may

not represent the historical injustices or power dynamics within the field of psychedelic research without fault.

Caution in this project is imperative due to the potential effects of research made in the complex field of cultural exchange and appropriation. Therefore, adjustments in methodological approaches as well as theoretical frameworks are a necessity to represent the complexities of cultural exchange and appropriation.

Future Research Directions

Since we have specifically investigated how MAPS portrays its ideals and initiatives regarding reciprocity, and as the timeline of these initiatives is limited, we are not able to speak about the direct impact, how these initiatives evolve over time, and whether they are effective or not.

In further research it could be enlightening to dive into specific initiatives and the people engaged in them, meaning both the Indigenous peoples as well as the 'Western actors', to see if there are measurable long-term benefits for both MAPS and the Indigenous communities.

By focusing on specific initiatives such as the conservation of the Peyote cactus, it will be possible to conduct research that is in direct contact with the people working with this. This would help by giving a more nuanced perspective on the issues that we have investigated by gathering first-hand perspectives on how these initiatives are regarded by the very people they are supposed to support.

An obvious disadvantage of our chosen method of research is that we are basing our research on what MAPS themselves are claiming on their website, and their ability to curate which perspectives to share on their website, which gives them the ability to portray themselves in a flattering light.

Engaging with people through interviews will give us the ability to cut out the middleman, giving insight into the broader impacts of the changing legal landscapes. This could happen by talking to Indigenous peoples, but also by talking to the receivers and practitioners of psychedelic therapy in the West, and how both the culture from where the psychedelics originates, as well as the one that it is being integrated into, are being formed by this change in the legal landscape. This approach could give valuable insight into how legal changes influence the perception of psychedelic therapies within different

cultural contexts, as well as create a conversation about the ethical aspects that naturally occur within a complex issue like this.

Another important thing to consider while analyzing is that most of the quotes are taken from the article '*Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative of the Americas: A Respectful Path Forward for the Psychedelic Movement*' (Mays et al., 2021). Although it is not written by MAPS, the fact that this is on its website can be understood in the sense that MAPS does recognize these issues, leaving an open space to address them transparently. However, this could only be one perspective, another way to understand this is MAPS' attempt to represent an image of itself by doing this. This opposite perspective suggests a certain ambiguity in MAPS' true stance and thus a diverse way to approach the analysis.

Why does MAPS itself not explicitly write and act upon these issues? MAPS is being referred to as identifying these issues, but this does not mean the institution is considering them as relevant as it seems. We are including some of these quotes in the analysis, but the focus on this section is primarily on what MAPS has written.

8 Conclusion

In examining the initiatives of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), it was found that it exhibits a clear commitment to Indigenous autonomy, emphasizing cultural preservation and autonomy in multiple sections of its website. However, there is still contemplation on the role of reciprocity in shaping this journey.

Within the environmental domain, MAPS demonstrates a dedicated stance on environmental stewardship, particularly in preserving psychedelic plants such as the sacred Peyote. The urgency to protect these plants underscores the delicate balance between environmental conservation and the demands of Western medicine, with potential conflicts, including commodification and cultural appropriation, arising from mass production and synthetic alternatives.

Turning to economic considerations, MAPS exhibits an awareness of power dynamics and potential issues tied to commodification. While acknowledging concerns of cultural appropriation, the organization leaves questions about the integration of transcultural elements into the capitalist market unanswered. Economic challenges faced by Indigenous cultures are acknowledged, yet MAPS' solutions remain veiled in uncertainty.

Navigating the legal landscape, MAPS portrays an aim to challenge the legal status of psychedelics, raising intricate questions about cultural exploitation and commodification. The need for reshaping legal paradigms is acknowledged, yet the specific strategies to prevent unintended consequences remain elusive.

Examining MAPS' narrative reveals a tension between inclusivity and selective acknowledgment of cultural contexts. The absence of explicit recognition of Indigenous roots, particularly in the context of ayahuasca, prompts queries about MAPS' underlying priorities. The potential unintended consequences of the detachment of substances from their native contexts pose ethical challenges, especially in terms of cultural and ecological preservation.

The ethical considerations are crucial to ensuring that Indigenous cultures and practices are described through respectful and culturally sensitive approaches, due to the potential risks of misrepresentation and misappropriation. Moreover, the power dynamic which exists between MAPS,

a Western organization, and Indigenous knowledges, often considered as lacking scientific validation is prevalent, highlights the paradox within MAPS' mission of validating and sharing Indigenous knowledges while concurrently relying on scientific terms and research for its own credibility.

In essence, MAPS' initiatives showcase commendable efforts in Indigenous autonomy, environmental conservation, economic considerations, and legal advocacy. However, the nuanced challenges demand a more explicit and comprehensive approach to navigate potential pitfalls such as cultural appropriation and environmental degradation. As psychedelic therapies move into broader acceptance and use, MAPS stands at a crucial juncture, requiring clear articulation of strategies and solutions to navigate the intricate intersection of cultural, environmental, economic, and legal dimensions.

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