

HOW MIGHT THE AYAHUASCA EXPERIENCE BE A POTENTIAL ANTIDOTE
TO WESTERN HEGEMONY: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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How Might The Ayahuasca Experience Be a Potential Antidote to Western Hegemony:
A Mixed Methods Study

By

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study researched people who have participated in traditional Indigenous Ayahuasca ceremonies to determine if the experience served as an antidote to dominant cultural hegemony. Forty-four participants completed the quantitative scaled questionnaire and 11 qualitative interviews were conducted for the study. Findings reveal five antidotal movements toward countering the uninvestigated assumptions dictated by hierarchical systems common to Western culture. These include self-determination; increased relationality; reduced anthropocentrism; reduced consumerism/materialism; movement toward more critical awareness of status-quo assumptions. The most profound transformations toward counter-hegemonic dispositions occurred in concert with certain dynamics I describe relating to several variables. I conclude that working with ayahuasca moves people toward Indigenous ways of understanding the world.

Keywords: Hegemony, Western hegemony, ayahuasca, Indigenous worldview

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Dedication

To my father, Jack Kaufman 1939-2013.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW

*I now do it. I make it.
With this song, I connect with the ayahuasca.
With much love in my body, mind, spirit, and with the body, mind,
and spirit of everyone in the group.
I connect with the medicine of ayahuasca to each of you.
I open the great vision of the medicine, and give strength to our bodies, and minds.
With this medicine I open the world of peace and happiness for all.*
(Shipibo ayahuasca ceremony song translated to English, in Gile 2008)

Contextualizing the Problem

As a citizen of Mother Earth, I try to walk my life path with open eyes and a soft heart, but sometimes the oppression, inequities, exploitation, ecological destruction, and violence overwhelm my senses. When this happens, I find solace in the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples who have long warned of the tragic consequences relating to the growing imbalances in the world. For example, the Hopi term, *koyaanisqatsi* translates as “life in turmoil,” “life disintegrating,” and “crazy life” (David, 2003, p. 1). Their giving voice and recognition to the problem makes me realize I am not alone in my concerns. In 1977, *A Basic Call to Consciousness* (in Sheehy, 1999) was written by members of the Iroquois tribe and presented at the 1977 United Nations Conference on Indigenous Peoples. The document states, “The technologies and social systems which destroyed the animal and the plant life are destroying the Native people” (p. 78). Deloria (1973) concluded, “The imminent and expected destruction of the life cycle of world ecology can be prevented by a radical shift in outlook...Making this shift in viewpoint is essentially religious, not economic or political” (p. 290). Deloria’s statement

drives home the significance of Indigenous viewpoints and the urgency to protect the natural world.

Similar assertions are being made by more and more Western scholars who suggest Indigenous wisdom may be a possible solution to the confluences of forces at this moment in history seen as the solution. For example, MIT professor Noam Chomsky writes,

the grim prognosis for life on this planet is the consequence of a few centuries of forgetting what traditional societies knew, and the surviving ones still recognize. We must nurture and preserve our common possession, the traditional commons, for future generations, and this must be one of our highest values, or we are all doomed. To regain this sensibility from those who have preserved it we must pay careful attention to their understanding and practices. (in Jacobs, 2013, p. back-cover)

The irony related to the growing number of Western people who are coming to recognize the importance of Indigenous wisdom is that, on the one hand, Indigenous wisdom is becoming more obscure and disappearing as Indigenous elders pass away, oftentimes without a new generation wanting to understand these ancient teachings and pursue Indigenous wisdom. At the same time, forces of Western hegemony and neoliberalism are creating more oppression, causing an ever-widening gap between those who have access to wealth and resources, and those who do not. The result is a variety of social, economic, political, and environmental conflicts at a time in which there seems to be little opportunity for Indigenous wisdom to play out.

My dissertation examines one possible option for implementing Indigenous wisdom as a solution to Western cultural hegemony in its various forms. It explores the possibility that

ancient wisdom found in the hallucinogenic brew *ayahuasca*, found in the upper Amazon of South America, may be a potential antidote to Western hegemony. The ayahuasca experience, I hypothesize, may have more potential for creating social awareness and providing motivation for life-changing behaviors than educational social change movements such as critical pedagogy. I am referring to the ayahuasca experience as the ceremonial use of ayahuasca. Later in this chapter I define ayahuasca and go into greater detail about the ceremonial and ritual uses. This dissertation research examines if ceremonies with the “plant medicine teacher” known as ayahuasca works to help people to become more aware of the subtle power of Western hegemony and take actions to move away from these destructive forces. My research question is, “How might the ayahuasca experience be a potential antidote to Western hegemony?” This is not to suggest that ayahuasca is some panacea, especially in the West. In fact, in Chapter 6, I investigate ways that the ayahuasca experience for Western participants may be a continuation or an expression of hegemony, as well as a counter to it.

Personal Statement

I entered the doctoral program at Fielding Graduate University with my eyes open to some of the effects of hegemony. My parents were both civil rights activists. As a kid, topics such as the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, sexism, racism, and classism were regularly discussed over the dinner table and became part of my awareness. As a teenager, being part of the American punk rock movement of the 1980s highlighted a mountain of discontent, hopelessness, and frustration felt by myself and my peers towards oppressive governmental policies, and forces that promote war, poverty, and the dumbing down of America. I attended a high school named after Malcolm X that taught courses about civil rights, American Indian

history, and social activism. These social change movements have been the impetus for some forward progress and incremental political and social changes. Unfortunately, these Western models of protest and social change have proven to be relatively ineffective at fighting hegemony. These social change models were conceived within a Western framework and worldview, along with Western models of politics and justice, and are steeped in Western beliefs and values. As a result, they have not transformed the deeper structure of oppression connected to the power of hegemony. In fact, the state of the planet continues to worsen. Missing from these change models is the power of Indigenous wisdom to challenge the Western worldview. An example of implementing change models from Indigenous peoples is the 2011 “Mother Earth Law” enacted in Bolivia, which grants rights to the earth as equal to humans. Indigenous wisdom and the Indigenous worldview hold important keys to creating sustainable and lasting social changes and to challenging Western hegemony.

I did not set out to study Western hegemony, nor did I intend to examine the effects of ayahuasca when I began my doctoral research at Fielding Graduate University. I came into the doctoral program with an appreciation and interest in Indigenous wisdom, and was curious how to preserve it in our technological era. In 2007, after my mother died, I went on a trip to Peru, where I experienced ayahuasca. Being in a jungle environment with elders who have been leading ayahuasca ceremonies for decades, in the natural habitat where ayahuasca grows freely and has been brewed and used for thousands of years, was a life-changing experience. While I only visited the area for a short time, the experience was galvanizing to my previous views of the world and my part in it. I walked away with reverence not only for the plant teacher ayahuasca, but reverence for the power and insight of leaders and elders and their knowledge and depth, the

beauty and power of the ayahuasca songs, and the cultural traditions surrounding ayahuasca. These experiences with ayahuasca in Peru showed me many ways in which I was previously unconscious of my own lack of relationship to the natural world. These experiences with ayahuasca showed me ways of looking more deeply at oppression on many different levels, and opened my eyes to the potential ayahuasca might have as a cultural change agent. Even with these profound experiences with ayahuasca, I did not think I would be researching the effects of ayahuasca within an academic context.

My experiences in Peru did, however, shape how I entered the Educational Leadership for Change program in terms of the types of questions I was asking as I began my doctoral research journey. The research I conducted for my master's degree thesis focused on exploring questions related to transformational learning. Specifically, I was interested in the tension points between personal transformational learning and social transformative acts, including social activism. The tension points include the following: Which one creates the most change? Is transformation most effective as an "outside in" process (transform a culture and, in the process, we will be transformed)? Or is transformational learning most effective "inside out" (as we transform and become more awake and aware people, our world will transform in the process)? These tension points seemed at the time to be polar opposites. An individual could focus on transforming himself or herself, on one hand, and therefore primarily have an individualistic worldview. Or, a person could focus outside himself or herself and exclusively look at political and social change. I could not see middle ground at the time, or examples of theories that posited models that showed the intersections between the two. My experiences in Peru with ayahuasca began to open my mind to the grey areas in between these two views. The ayahuasca experience

may possibly provide an opening both to provide opportunities to help individuals heal and change from inside out and also move towards becoming social change agents by providing more awareness of hegemonic oppression and opportunities to combat it.

My early doctoral research focused on examining issues related to the cultural preservation of Indigenous peoples. In my view, the Internet and Internet culture seem to be in opposition to Indigenous cultural wisdom, especially Indigenous rituals and ceremonies; specifically, how the process of digitization tends to remove people from direct experience and experiential learning situations. For Indigenous peoples, this seems to imply another form of assimilation. Technology is not neutral, but instead promotes Euro-American values (McLoughlin, 1999, p. 236). The Internet has promoted a form of globalization of local culture. Some have referred to globalization as the “McDonaldization” of symbolic life (Little, Holmes, & Grieco, 2001, p. 354), while Indigenous wisdom traditions are based on having direct and personal experiences as part of the premise of rituals, ceremonies, and various forms of Indigenous educational systems (Cajete, 1994). How can we, given the worldwide use of computer-based technologies, hold onto rituals and ceremonies that center around direct experiences, especially experience-based learning that creates awareness and appreciation for the earth and the natural world? I couldn't find many solutions to this question, only examples of cultural loss and struggle, which left me feeling pessimistic about the potential to remedy the challenges created by Internet culture. I was inspired by the Idle No More protest movement, organized by Indigenous women in Canada. This protest movement was organized on Facebook and spread all over the world, inciting different types of protests, in particular environmental protests, around the world on behalf of Indigenous causes.

Another theme that inspired me to look at Western hegemony as a destructive force is the prevalence of the stealing of Indigenous artistic, spiritual, and cultural traditions by the West. This type of misappropriation is another threat to Indigenous wisdom that is not commonly discussed. As I looked at American Indians and other Indigenous groups I found what seemed to be endless examples of Indigenous cultures and peoples being exploited and taken advantage of by Western hegemony. In these examples of Indigenous peoples being exploited there always seems to be a profit motive driving the exploitation, this underlying drive for profit without concern of how many people are harmed, the natural world that is destroyed, and the future damage caused by this drive for profit are all examples of hegemony.

In 2012, I conducted a pilot study, attempting to interview Indigenous people on how the Internet and computer-based technologies could possibly be used to preserve their culture/s and cultural wisdom. I had hoped to interview some of the founders of the American Indian Movement (AIM); some of these American Indian elders live near me in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I sent out dozens of requests to American Indians in the United States, including educators, those in academia, spiritual elders, and students. Only two people responded to the request for interviews. The first was a professor at University of Wisconsin, Madison in the American Indian Studies department, Patty Loew, and the other, controversial activist and scholar Ward Churchill. During the interview, Churchill argued, “The idea that American imperialism might exist and that America is the hub of the empirical matrix at this point in the globalization process, that’s all well and good. But there is globalization of other things, this techno-net being a key component of it” (personal communications, November 4, 2012).

Churchill's interview all came back to topics related to hegemony. This interview was part of my refocusing my work to hegemony and away from technology.

The lack of response to my interview requests left me puzzled about why my interview requests were being ignored. I had been ignorant to the many ways in which Indigenous people have been exploited and taken advantage of by researchers. No wonder no American Indians wanted me to interview them or participate in any more academic research studies by someone who is an outsider to their community. I then began to research the extensive history of Western researchers and Western research methods mistreating Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2009; Schnarch, 2004; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Research abuse has taken many forms, including harming human subjects during the research process, profiting from Indigenous knowledge, taking funeral and burial objects, and various forms of biocolonialism. Clifford Geertz (1995) posed these questions: "What gives us the right to study them? When we speak of others in our voice do we not displace and appropriate theirs? (p. 107). Geertz's questions point to some of the problems associated with outsiders researching Indigenous peoples and to the inherent challenges in applying Western research methods to researching Indigenous peoples.

Awareness of research abuse led me to decolonizing methodologies, in particular the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). Her work and the work of others related to decolonizing methodologies brought biases within the Western academic model of scholarship to the forefront of my awareness. Smith, who is associated with Maori people of New Zealand, and other Indigenous scholars who discuss biases within Western academia, show how Western methodologies tend to be biased in their own epistemological views and tend to elevate their own

methods and sense of validity above those of other cultures and cultural ways of knowing. In the process of elevating their own views, Western epistemological views tend to devalue Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999).

These Western biases all point to various forms of Western hegemony that I previously could not see. I could see pieces of the puzzle, but the decolonizing methodologies clearly show bias that I did not find in the critical pedagogy nor critical theory texts and theories to which I had previously been exposed. The other influential person in my understanding of hegemony and Western hegemony has been my mentor in the Educational Leadership and Change program, Four Arrows. Through many lengthy discussions, email exchanges (sometimes heated), and his own body of research, I've come to see and believe that the biggest challenges to citizens of the world, the environment, and the ecosystem, are the forces of hegemony which shape the world more than the eye can see. These destructive forces work hard to create a stratified world, which manipulates people and takes away their freedom. I can now clearly see how hegemony, in particular Western hegemony, shapes my life, and how cultural and institutional forces shape my daily life and restrict my freedom.

In the process of my coursework, and dialogues with Four Arrows and other faculty at Fielding Graduate University, I came to the conclusion that ayahuasca may be one of the forces which could combat Western hegemony. Even making the slightest dent in weakening Western hegemony is a worthy dissertation research goal. Through this process, it has become impossible for me to live in denial any longer, and pretend the oppressive forces of Western hegemony do not exist and influence nearly every aspect of daily life. The only conclusion I draw is that a radical approach must be taken. A radical approach to me suggests implementing solutions and

wisdom found within an Indigenous context. The Indigenous plant teacher ayahuasca may have the power to shift human consciousness, and encourage individuals to re-examine their relationships, values, and lives. I believe ayahuasca may be a radical approach to combatting Western hegemony. This dissertation explores the question of how the ayahuasca experience may be a potential antidote to Western hegemony, even though ayahuasca and other Indigenous solutions are not normally thought of as solutions to the effects of Western hegemony.

About Ayahuasca

Ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is a hallucinogenic drink that is consumed throughout the upper Amazon region in South America including Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador, for medicinal and spiritual benefits (Freedland & Mansbach, 1999). Ayahuasca is predominantly used by Indigenous Amazonian tribes and by ayahuasca healers who use ayahuasca to heal a variety of ailments, including physical, spiritual, and emotional illnesses. Since the 1990s, usage has spread to the United States, Europe, and Asia. According to the Ethnobotanical Stewardship Council (2014), each year approximately 100,000 people visit Peru to specifically drink ayahuasca. Anthropological evidence of ayahuasca usage can be dated to 2000 BC (McKenna, D. 2004; Barbosa, Mizumoto, Bogenschutz, & Strassman, 2012). The term *ayahuasca* (pronounced ah-yuh-wah-sku) is a Quechua word meaning “vine of the dead” (Shanon, 2002), although other definitions of ayahuasca include, “vine of visions” and “vine of the soul” (Mizrach, 2003). It is commonly understood that *aya* means spirit or ancestor and *waska* refers to vine (Luna, 2011, p. 3). Ayahuasca is also known under several other names as well including *caapi*, *yage*, *hosca*, and *daipe* (Grob et al., 1996; Rivier & Lindgren, (1972).

For many Indigenous communities in the upper Amazon, ayahuasca influences nearly every aspect of daily life. Schultes (1982), an early researcher in the study of South American psychoactive plants, emphasized the significance of ayahuasca:

Probably no other New World hallucinogen – even peyote – alters consciousness in ways that have been so deeply and completely evaluated and interpreted. Caapi (ayahuasca) truly enters into every aspect of living. It reaches into prenatal life, influences life after death, operates during earthly existence, plays roles not only in health and sickness, but in relations between individuals, villages and tribes, in peace and war, at home and in travel, in hunting and in agriculture. In fact, one can name hardly any aspect of living or dying, wakefulness or sleep, where caapi hallucinogens do not play a vital, nay, overwhelming, role. (p. 205)

The ayahuasca brew itself is a combination of two essential ingredients, the first being the ayahuasca vine (*Banisteriopsis caapi*), along with the leafy plant chacruna (*Psychotria viridis*). Chacruna contains the psychoactive dimethyltryptamine (DMT) (D. McKenna, 1998). DMT is similar in structure to the neurotransmitter serotonin and alters brain chemistry along the lines of other natural hallucinogens (Metzner, 2005; Riba et al., 2003). The DMT found in the chacruna would normally be destroyed in the digestive system by a chemical called “mono-amine oxidase,” this would render the ayahuasca brew ineffective. However, the ayahuasca vine itself (*Baniseriopsis caapi*) contains a mono-amine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI), that allows the DMT to be digested, absorbed, pass the blood-brain barrier, and create an altered state of consciousness (Grob, 2005). According to Winkelman (2005), “Ayahuasca is considered to be the most widely employed hallucinogen in Amazonia, with combinations based on the

Banisteriopsis genus found in more than 70 different ethnic groups representing 20 language families in the Amazon basin and other areas of South America” (p. 210). The origins of ayahuasca usage are mysterious. Some researchers assert that ayahuasca has been used for over 5,000 years. Yet, ayahuasca scholar Beyer (2012) argues that ayahuasca usage may have begun as recently as the 17th century.

Using Respectful Terminology to Discuss Ayahuasca. It is important that I be respectful of the Indigenous use of plant medicines in how I frame my research and discussions about ayahuasca. In the West, ayahuasca may be considered a drug, yet to the Indigenous peoples of South America it is considered a sacred plant teacher, a wise elder, and a powerful healer (Harris & Gurel, 2012). Within ayahuasca cultures in South America ayahuasca is considered a plant teacher and a plant medicine. For members of the Santo Daime Church, ayahuasca is their sacrament (Tupper, 2011). Within a traditional context, ayahuasca is known as a living spirit capable of teaching and healing participants. By plant teacher, I am referring to ayahuasca within a tradition context, as a living spirit capable of teaching and healing people. Some ayahuasca traditions refer to ayahuasca as *Grandmother Ayahuasca*. Given this, gender is a way of referring to the sacred feminine quality of ayahuasca and the reverence given to both the power and wisdom of this plant teacher. This way of working with ayahuasca points to the spiritual quality of the ayahuasca experience and the ways in which ayahuasca ceremony leaders work on various levels of healing, including physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional.

Within this dissertation I use a few different phrases to describe the ayahuasca experience. The first one is *ayahuasca ceremony*. I describe what happens in a specific ayahuasca ceremony in the next section, but in short I am referring to the ceremonial use of

ayahuasca by a trained ayahuasca leader, not in a recreational context. Rather than use the phrase take ayahuasca or use ayahuasca, I refer to people *working with ayahuasca* in this dissertation presentation. I am using this terminology because within an Indigenous context ayahuasca is revered and viewed as sacred, and part of a long process of serious dedicated work and sacrifice. People who follow an ayahuasca path are usually committed to working on a long-term basis with ayahuasca as a plant teacher. As a result, the term *work with* seems to best describe their ayahuasca usage. The other terms I use at various parts in this dissertation is calling ayahuasca *medicine* or references to *medicine ceremonies*. Referring to ayahuasca, and in some cases other plant teachers as medicines, again points to these sacred plants being viewed as having the potential to heal people and communities at various levels. Referring to ayahuasca as medicine draws a clear distinction between ayahuasca being viewed as a drug or as something used recreationally versus a sacred medicine that is revered and worked with in a humble way to help individuals heal at various levels.

Ayahuasca Healing Techniques. Ayahuasca ceremony leaders employ a variety of healing techniques during an ayahuasca ceremony. According to Beyer (2007),

First among such substances is, of course, tobacco, which is ingested by indigenous shamans in every conceivable way, and by *mestizo* shamans primarily by smoking or by drinking cold infusions of tobacco leaves in water. Blowing tobacco smoke onto the body of a patient, or into the body by blowing the smoke into the top of the head, is part of the foundational triad of *mestizo* shamanic healing — *shacapar*, rattling; *chupar*, sucking; and *soplar*, blowing.

Other common healing techniques within traditional ayahuasca ceremonies are singing sacred songs (*icaros*), whistling, using sacred perfume as a way to invoke protection, massaging a participant's head or stomach, and sometimes counseling people during ayahuasca ceremonies. The ayahuasca experience is different for each person. Oftentimes people purge during an ayahuasca ceremony. Purging, or some groups call it "getting well," is viewed as the person letting go of heavy energy or negativity, and is part of the healing process facilitated by the wisdom of ayahuasca. There are generally four groupings of experiences people have during an ayahuasca ceremony. The first are visions, or hallucinations. Visions often include images of snakes or unusual entities, and can be scary and demonic or pleasant and soothing, depending on the night. The second grouping is experiencing ayahuasca on a mental level and describing the experience as more of a dialogue with a wise spirit or a wise being. The third grouping of experiences people report are primarily physical sensations during ayahuasca ceremonies. Physical sensations can be unpleasant or pleasant. Oftentimes people report pain in their stomach or a feeling of "buzzing" in a particular body part. These feelings are supposedly the ayahuasca opening up energy channels and helping the person heal on a physical level. Last, many people experience ayahuasca as though they are in a dream-like state and they simply are relaxed and in and out of wakeful consciousness. This type of healing is said to affect the subtle body of a person and act to heal all levels of healing; physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Ayahuasca is also said to happen and be experienced in "waves" throughout a particular night or ceremony. By waves, I am referring to the power and feelings of ayahuasca coming and going throughout a particular night, sometimes very strong and overwhelming and other times barely perceptible. At the same time, people report going through many different sets of experiences (combinations of

visions, physical sensations, a dream-like quality, and a dialogue with a more intelligent life form) throughout a particular night.

Ayahuasca is currently used in a variety of ways, including personal growth (Harris & Gurel, 2012; Kjellgren, Eriksson, & Norlander, 2009), healing from trauma (Mate, 2013; Nielson & Megler, 2014), treatment of addictions (Brierley & Davidson, 2012; Mabit, 2007; Thomas, Lucas, Capler, Tupper, & Martin, 2013), and treatment of depression (Palladino, 2009; Sobiecki, 2013).

What Happens During an Ayahuasca Ceremony. Ayahuasca ceremonies are usually led by a leader who conducts the ceremony, employs some or all of the healing techniques listed above, and functions as a facilitator ensuring safety and protection of all of the participants. Ayahuasca ceremonies typically are done in the dark and at night, oftentimes from approximately 10 p.m. until 3:00 a.m. Some traditions start at an earlier time and others start even later and end later. Some ayahuasca ceremonies are done one-on-one with a leader and participant, and others have 25 or more participants. Some traditions start at sunset and go until sunrise the next day. Each tradition is different and each group functions differently. People who experience ayahuasca are generally encouraged to be comfortable during the experience and either lie down and relax or sit up and be quiet and receive the teachings and healings from the ayahuasca. In some traditional ayahuasca traditions, only the ayahuasca shaman would consume the ayahuasca, not the participant. The ayahuasca shaman would consume ayahuasca as part of the process to diagnose and cure illness (Proctor, 2001, p. 15).

There is very little standardization in the format and setting of ayahuasca settings. Some styles of ayahuasca ceremonies are rooted in South American ayahuasca traditions and other

ceremonies are more Western inspired. Some groups in the United States, for instance, play pre-recorded music on an Ipod and all of the participants lie down and have their own ayahuasca experience. Some groups, inspired by the Church of Santo Daime, require that participants wear all-white clothes, the men and women are separated, song books are distributed, the lights are kept on, and music is played and everyone is encouraged to sing Christian-inspired songs. The Santo Daime Church, founded in Brazil, is a Christian-based religious organization that consumes ayahuasca as their sacrament. Other groups conduct ayahuasca ceremonies more like they do in rural Peru, where the ayahuasca healer sings *icaros* and the ceremony is conducted primarily in the dark. There are other groups in places such as Brazil and Colombia who come from their own Indigenous traditions and conduct their ceremonies within their own traditional context, with minimal influence of the West and Western ways of working with ayahuasca. There is a huge variety of settings in which ayahuasca is consumed in Western countries, as well. Some yoga centers sponsor ayahuasca sessions, as do some intentional communities. Some people participate in American Indian rituals and ceremonies and also attend ayahuasca ceremonies. There is simply no standard; there are many different templates for ayahuasca ceremonies, some more traditional than others. Some are more rooted in Indigenous structure and some more inspired by Western models of ayahuasca ceremonies. There is also no standardization in terms of strength of ayahuasca; by strength I am referring to the quantity of DMT that can be found in the actual ayahuasca brew. Some ceremony groups offer large quantities of potent ayahuasca and others offer small quantities of relatively weak ayahuasca; each group is different.

Ayahuasca and Legality. Ayahuasca is legal in Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia. In Brazil, the Federal Government ruled that ayahuasca was legal for religious uses (Barbosa, Mizumoto, Bogenschutz, & Strassman, 2012). Religious use of ayahuasca has also been granted in Canada to the Church of Santo Daime (Tupper, 2009a). In the United States, the Controlled Substance Act (CSA, 2000) bans DMT, mescaline, peyote, heroin, marijuana, and psilocybin (the psychedelic compound found in some mushrooms). DMT is considered a Schedule I drug. In 2006, however, after having a shipment of ayahuasca seized by the government, the Church of Uniao do Vegetal (UDV) in New Mexico first won their case for religious freedom in the Federal District Court of New Mexico, and then in the U.S. Supreme Court in February 2006 (Bullis, 2008). The same religious freedom act allows for American Indians to use peyote legally in their ceremonies in the United States. In 2009, the Santo Daime Church in Ashland, Oregon won a district court case that allows them to legally import ayahuasca and use it in their religious rituals (Labate, MacRae, & Goulart, 2010). However, many people in the United States and in Western countries drink ayahuasca in rituals and ceremonies that are not protected by the religious freedom afforded to Christian-based organizations who can legally use ayahuasca, such as the Church of Santo Daime and Uniao de Vegetal. Allowing only Christian-based organizations to legally work with ayahuasca is an example of hegemony, whereby only dominant and powerful groups can dictate legislation, such as Christian based groups, while non-dominant groups such as Indigenous peoples, are not afforded the same rights.

Since ayahuasca is considered a drug in the United States, none of my interviews took place during an actual ayahuasca ceremony or while participants were under the influence of

ayahuasca. All interviews were conducted outside of any ritual or ceremonial context of the ayahuasca experience. My goal in the presentation of my research is to avoid framing Western people who work with ayahuasca as drug users. Throughout my research discussions and presentations, my goal was to be respectful of the participants, and to not diminish their experiences, nor frame their experiences any differently than how they discuss them. In this process, my goal was to make sure I did not apply a Western cultural bias to the ayahuasca experience. Last, I tried to ensure that my role as a researcher was not in any way a conflict of interest to the research process. Throughout the research process I constantly monitored my own assumptions, beliefs, biases, and cultural biases about Indigenous healing practices, and ideas about Western hegemony

About Hegemony, Western Hegemony, and Colonization

Hegemony

Unlike other terms and distinctions that explain oppression, one succinct definition does not fully express what hegemony means, how it operates, and how it affects individuals on various levels. One of the focal points of hegemony is the process of power transfer and control. Antonio Gramsci coined the term “hegemony” and was able to put words to this concept. Hegemony in the Gramsci sense refers to the bridge between the Marxist notion of ideology and colonization through commodification—in particular how it affects all aspects of life (Gramsci, 1971; Brookfield, 1995). According to Brookfield (2005), “Hegemony is the process by which we learn to embrace enthusiastically a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of those who have power over us” (p. 93). Katz (2006) suggested, “Hegemony refers to a certain way of life and thought being dominant, which is

diffused throughout society to inform norms, values and tastes, political practices, and social relations (p. 335). Four Arrows (2006) suggested, “The term [hegemony] thus signifies the ability of the dominant social leaders to cultivate, through largely non-coercive means, a popular worldview that naturalizes their positions in a way that manipulates subordinate classes of people to consent to their own subordination and oppression, thinking that it ultimately serves their best interests” (p. 27). Hegemony also relates to “the process by which ruling elites secure consent to the established political order through the production and diffusion of meanings and values” (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, pp. 221-222). Therefore, from this point of view, hegemony results from a combination of coercion and consent. Consent in this case is generally achieved through cooptation of groups in civil society, resulting in “coercive orthodoxy” (Persaud, 2001, p. 65).

Puchala (2005) argued, “Hegemony connotes the domination of the weak by the strong, the many by the few. It implies the institutionalization of privilege, consequent inequality in the distributions of various values, and the injustices inherent in inequality” (p. 571). According to West (1982), hegemonic culture is “a culture successful at persuading people to consent to their oppression and exploitation” (p. 119). Hegemony occurs in such a complicated manner, and is so immersed in a culture, that it becomes difficult to define and challenge. Hegemonic views of the world simply become the norm until they are so accepted that people stop even questioning that point of view. Therefore, hegemony works on both subtle and gross levels in its all-pervasive nature, referring to a wide variety of patterns and methods in which the ruling group establishes and maintains rule (Robinson, 2005, p. 561). All of these definitions offer a sense of what hegemony means and how it may operate.

Western Hegemony

While I discussed hegemony earlier in more general terms, Western hegemony is a specific form of hegemony referring to Western values and culture operating as forms of domination and colonization on a worldwide level. At the heart of Western hegemony is Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism in this case implies the spread of European values, political systems, culture, language, Judeo-Christian beliefs, laws, philosophy, and epistemologies (NWAC, 2003, pp. 7-8)

There are multiple components that make up Western hegemony. Western knowledge and Western models of knowledge tend to position itself as the authority in areas such as learning and education. In the process, a polarized view of the world is accepted whereby Western, or in this case Eurocentric models of knowledge, are put forth as the only “valid” models. The result is that non-European ways of knowing are often trivialized and seen as simplistic and backward (Kovach, 2010, Wilson, 2008). As Blaut (1993) explained, “Eurocentric thought asserts that only Europeans can progress and that Indigenous peoples are frozen in time, guided by knowledge systems that reinforce the past and do not look towards the future” (p. 1). Indigenous knowledge, on the other hand, has been framed in binary opposition to “scientific,” “Western,” “Eurocentric,” or “modern” knowledge. Eurocentric thinkers have tended to dismiss Indigenous knowledge in the same way they dismissed any socio-political cultural life they did not understand. They found it to be unsystematic and incapable of meeting the productivity needs of the modern world (Battiste, 2005, p. 2). This is not to suggest that everyone within higher education exclusively subscribes to strictly Western paradigms and Western forms of learning and knowledge. There has been significant work done within many areas of academic

scholarship to change these paradigms; in particular through feminist studies, critical pedagogy, critical theory, LGBT studies, and American Indian studies. I am suggesting, however that this is a tendency within Western academia and certainly still exists today, often unchallenged.

Western cultural paradigms and values have crept into every corner of the globe, bringing along American values, tastes, esthetic, and epistemologies, all of which are forms of Western hegemony. Huntington (1996) illustrated Western dominance and hegemony:

Western, and more specifically American, popular culture is enveloping the world: American food, clothing, pop music, movies, and consumer goods are more and more enthusiastically embraced by people on every continent. ...the West has led the world to modern society, but that as people in other civilizations modernize they also Westernize, abandoning their traditional values, institutions, and customs and adopting those that prevail in the West. Both these project the image of an emerging homogeneous, universally Western world (p. 28)

Western epistemologies tend to support the notion that everything can be commodified, including activities, knowledge, and social relationships (Bowers, 2000, p. 74). American cultural paradigms tend to view human beings, cultures, and the natural world exclusively through the filter of their commodity value. Therefore, nearly everything in the West is reduced to its value in the marketplace (Welton, 1995). Bowers (2005) suggested the West spreads root cultural metaphors, along with economic and technological globalization. These root metaphors include thinking of everything, including plants and animals, as mechanistic in nature. Another cultural metaphor is the notion of anthropocentrism, that the environment is a resource for

humans. "Progress" is another root metaphor that refers to change being something which helps move a culture forward by including more Western conveniences. The last metaphor is "economism," reducing activities, relationships, and products down to a market value (pp. 11-12).

Another form of Western hegemony is the insistence that Western culture is the universal standard including demanding that English should be the universally standard language. The problem is that this push towards Western standardization has resulted in languages other than English being lost at a rapid rate. Language loss is often due to political forces. This means situations requiring people to speak English or a more "common" language than their native languages are more frequent. Approximately 80% of American Indian languages are lost. Nearly 50% of the world's languages are endangered (Cantoni, 2007, p. vii). As Harjo and Bird (1997) proclaim, "But to speak, at whatever the cost, is to become empowered rather than victimized by destruction. In our tribal cultures, the power of language to heal, to regenerate, and to create is understood" (p. 21). Loss of language and culture is again a form of colonization and hegemony against Indigenous peoples. Yet English continues to become the universal standard language. The widespread usage of the Internet and computer technologies has made English even more prominent because most software programs and websites are written in English. Anyone who is a non-English speaker is forced to either learn English or suffer the consequences (Dyson & Underwood, 2006, pp. 64-66). People with rich linguistic and cultural traditions of the world are forced to abandon their languages and cultural values to engage with computer technology, specifically the Internet (Gordon, 2009). Master (1998) explained, "The negative aspect of the dominance of English lies in the extent to which it denies access, guarding the status quo and

maintaining existing power structures” (p. 717). Along with most Internet and computer technologies being written in English is the implied spread of Western values. Technology is not neutral, but instead promotes Euro-American values (McLoughlin, 1999, p. 236). This type of hegemony means non-European, non-American people have to basically unlearn their own culture and assimilate different cultural values, a different language, and a different way of learning. Jiang (2011) noted that English cultural hegemony has already spread into China and Chinese life. There has been a quick permeation, which has had a direct influence on Chinese culture, ideology, and life (p. 194).

While it may not on the surface be a logical jump to include the influence of Christianity as a form of Western hegemony, I feel it bears exploring in this discussion. Underneath much of the cultural dominance of Western hegemony is the influence of Christianity on U.S. cultural values. The legality of the Church of Santo Daime and their ability to legally use ayahuasca is an example. According to Kivel (2013), “I define Christian hegemony as the everyday, systematic set of Christian values, individuals and institutions that dominate all aspects of U.S. society. Nothing is unaffected” (p. 3). Christian hegemony, therefore, is a worldview that works underneath the surface in American culture certainly, as part of Western hegemony.

The pervasive influence of Christianity on U.S. institutions can be specifically seen in accepted esthetics: laws pertaining to sexuality, morality, “foul language,” birth control, women’s rights, gay marriage, drug use, questions surrounding what constitutes an actual religion or not, and a myriad of other issues in everyday life in the United States. I am not arguing that all aspects of Christianity are necessarily wrong, nor that there is one set of Christians who all believe the same thing. That would be ridiculous. We can, however, look at

the pervasive influence of Christianity as a form of hegemony, as an overt and covert influence in American culture and values. Kivel (2013) offers insights into Christian hegemony in the following way:

Buried even deeper than policies and actions of institutions there seems to be a dominant Christian worldview that has shaped and skewed Western culture so profoundly that it is difficult to delineate fully. We have words for sexism, racism, and economic inequality, but what would we call the underlying, often hidden power of Christianity: Christianity? Christian dominance? Christian supremacy? (p. 2)

Colonization

Colonization is another damaging force of oppression, but different than hegemony. Colonization is all about one more powerful group taking over another people. Colonizers may use hegemonic tactics to take over, but colonization is a different form of domination. Yellow Bird (2005) defines colonization as “referring to both the formal and informal methods (behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous peoples, lands, and resources. Colonizers engage in this process because it allows them to maintain and/or expand their social, political, and economic power” (p. 2). Fanon (1994) explained the depths of colonization in clear terms:

Colonial domination, because it is total and tends to be over-simplified, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of conquered people. This cultural obliteration is made possible by the negation of natural reality, by new legal relations introduced by the occupying power, by the banishment of the natives and their

customs to outlying districts by colonial society, by expropriation, and the systemic enslaving of men and women. (p. 45)

To explore colonization, I want to look at the colonization of American Indians. Taking American Indian lands, and in the process displacing people, is colonization. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, the Dawes Act, the Indian Reorganization Act, and other regressive anti-Indian acts are all forms of colonization. Forcing American Indian and Native Canadian children into boarding schools and taking away their language and religion is colonization. Forcing American Indians to sign treaties, only to break them, is colonization. Deloria and Lytle (1983) sum up American Indian colonization: "Indians have discovered that far too often legal doctrines purported to ensure their political and treaty rights are used to confiscate their property, deny their civil rights, and deprive them of their benefits that accrue with United States citizenship" (p. 95). These examples from Fanon, as well as Deloria and Lytle, give clear examples of colonization.

Personal Biases

Given that this dissertation study explores ayahuasca, the Indigenous worldview has influenced how research is conducted and conceived, as well as the aims of the study. Critical qualitative research, under which Indigenous research falls, "embodies the emancipatory, empowering values of critical pedagogy" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 5). Critical qualitative research is conducted for political and liberatory purposes (Lather, 2007). Smith (1999) argued that the purpose of Indigenous research is different than Western research. An Indigenous research agenda is centered on self-determination, transformation, healing, recovery from colonization, and mobilization against oppression (Castellano, 2004; Kovach, 2010; Schnarch,

2004). Indigenous research methods are political by design and in nature, and their concentration on self-determination separate them from other forms of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). While I am not an Indigenous person, this research study is focused on combatting hegemony, in particular Western hegemony, and honoring Indigenous wisdom. As a result, my personal bias is to support Indigenous peoples and to work towards combatting Western hegemony. This personal bias influences how I conceived of and conducted the research.

Based on Marshall and Rossman's (2010) models on research design, this dissertation study was designed for both exploratory and emancipatory purposes. By exploratory, they define the purpose of the study "to investigate little-understood phenomena, to identify or discover important categories of meaning, and to generate hypothesis for further research" (p. 33). The purpose of this research study is also emancipatory, which they imply when suggesting, "to create opportunities and the will to engage in social action" (p. 33). This research study starts with a working theory that ayahuasca may be an antidote to Western hegemony. Starting the dissertation research with an existing hypothesis is also a form of personal bias and therefore important to state early on in the research process. I have already stated my goal to situate the research study as a form of social action, social engagement, and be part of an anti-hegemonic movement.

My gender, class, ethnicity, and geography influence my personal biases in the research process and how the dissertation question is conceived. As a Jewish male, growing up in Madison, Wisconsin, from a fairly in-tact home with a mother who had a master's degree in social work, and a father who had a PhD in social work, growing up in a primarily White,

middle- class city generally safe and free from crime, have provided me with privileges and influence how I view the world and academia, in general. I have experienced minimal discrimination throughout my lifetime and have rarely been a minority in any setting. I am not an Indigenous person, and I cannot begin to understand what it is like to be an Indigenous person growing up in South America and exposed from a young age to ayahuasca and the healers who work with this plant teacher. I cannot really understand what elders in the ayahuasca ceremonies experience, or understand. At the same time, I have gone to considerable lengths to be exposed and to understand Indigenous peoples, some of their rituals, ceremonies, and teachings.

Limitations of Study

This study suggests that ayahuasca may be an antidote to Western hegemony. There has been minimal research exploring these two topics together, as will be shown in Chapter 2: Literature Review. Previous literature has not positioned plant medicines, such as ayahuasca, as possible catalysts for social change on various levels. As a result, this is an emerging theory and is a first attempt to look at this issue. Given this is a first attempt to explore this theory, conceiving of the study variables and methods to employ is itself a limitation of the study, because prior to this study, I did not understand many of the connections between ayahuasca and Western hegemony. Given that this is my first attempt to look at this question my own research skills are also a limitation to this study.

Much of the ayahuasca experience is dependent on the setting and leader (Grob, 2014). This research study includes interviewing a variety of participants through both an online questionnaire and one-on-one qualitative interviews: There is no control, in terms of the baseline for both the setting of the ayahuasca ceremonies and the person guiding the experiences. Since I

do not have a baseline of experience for the research, participants may taint the data collected.

Given that ayahuasca is a combination of two plants, it is impossible that people who experience ayahuasca will all consume ayahuasca brews containing similar amounts of DMT. Many different people in various places in South America make the brew and use varying amounts of chacruna, and the DMT potency greatly varies, and therefore there is a lack of standardization. Since ayahuasca ceremonies are not conducted in a controlled environment with a standard dose of ayahuasca and a controlled quantity of DMT, participants may all be drinking different types of ayahuasca with different potencies, and again this may change their experience, and therefore taint the data.

Since ayahuasca is a hallucinogen and has been popularized in the West and associated with underground culture and Indigenous peoples, those who are attracted to work with it may already be politically and socially aware and perhaps more liberal in their political orientation. In other words, perhaps those who participate in ayahuasca ceremonies in the West are a self-selecting group, therefore it may be difficult to quantify changes related to Western hegemony. Furthermore, all of the research participants in my study are people who willingly agreed to be interviewed or take an online-scaled questionnaire. Perhaps people who are proponents of ayahuasca are more willing to discuss their experiences than those who have a negative view of ayahuasca. Therefore, having only proponents of ayahuasca participate in the research versus including people who may have a more negative view is a potential limitation of my research study. Another limitation is in how participants are recruited. In-person interviews were recruited through one ayahuasca ceremony leader. This is a limitation and potentially points to a self-selecting group of people who are not random. The leader may attract people of a certain gender,

income level, or perhaps are all members of one established group of people who work with ayahuasca, and this may also taint the data. Furthermore, participants for the online-scaled questionnaire were recruited through an ayahuasca Facebook group. People who join Facebook discussion groups and are willing to discuss ayahuasca in an online forum are perhaps a specific set of ayahuasca users and may not represent the larger community of ayahuasca users who would be unwilling to or uninterested in participating in a forum of this sort. In other words, it may be a self-selecting group of non-standard ayahuasca users. The Internet along with computer-based technologies are Western in design, which also creates a form of bias in that they favor Western forms of communication over Indigenous models that favor direct interpersonal contact. Last, this study is limited in the quantity of participants. This study only included interviews with 10 participants, one ayahuasca ceremony leader, and 44 people who took the scaled questionnaire. As a result, given the small number of research participants, there may not be enough data to establish trends or patterns, even when suggested.

Structure of Dissertation

This dissertation is presented in seven chapters.

Chapter 1: In Chapter 1 I provided an overview of my dissertation question about ayahuasca as a potential antidote to Western hegemony, including defining the problem of Western hegemony. I then defined ayahuasca and its use, legal status, and mentioned how I refer to ayahuasca throughout the dissertation using respectful language. Next, hegemony was defined along with Western hegemony, in particular. Colonization is also defined, as different than hegemony. Lastly, personal biases were presented, along with limitations of my study.

Chapter 2: In Chapter 2 I examine various fields of literature related to my research question. I look at ayahuasca in popular culture, anti-hegemonic literature, including critical theory, transformational learning, post modernism, and critical pedagogy. Next I examine Indigenous knowledge, American Indian studies, American Indian scholars, and decolonizing methods. I then explore hallucinogen, entheogen, and ayahuasca studies. Lastly, I examine doctoral dissertations that have researched ayahuasca.

Chapter 3: In Chapter 3 I present my research methodologies. I begin by describing that my study was conducted as a mixed-method study. Next, I present my research design and methodologies. This includes discussing the two types of qualitative interviews I conducted, short-qualitative interviews, and longer qualitative interviews inspired by grounded theory. I then describe the quantitative method portion of my study, which took the form of an online quantitative scaled questionnaire. I then present the process I went through to recruit research participants. Ethical considerations are discussed in depth. Next, I discuss the five-step data collection process I went through. In the last section of the chapter, I discuss my data analysis process.

Chapter 4: In Chapter 4 I present the data from my research study. I present the data from each of the five steps of my research process:

Step 1: Conduct a short-interview qualitative interview pilot study.

Step 2: Conduct a quantitative scaled questionnaire pilot study, and present graphs that represent each question asked on the scaled questionnaire.

Step 3: Conduct seven additional short qualitative interviews.

Step 4: Revise and re-open scaled questionnaire, and present figures that represent each question asked on the scaled questionnaire along with comments from participants who took the scaled questionnaire.

Step 5: Conduct four in-depth qualitative interviews with an anonymous ayahuasca ceremony leader.

Chapter 5: In Chapter 5 I present and analyze the data thematically. The major findings in this chapter are the five antidotal movements away from Western hegemony. With each description of the antidotes, I explore the corresponding form of Western hegemony, the antidotal movement found in the data, and when applicable I include an example of the antidotal movement found in the quantitative data.

Antidote 1: Movement from the personal trappings of Western hegemony towards self-determination.

Antidote 2: Movement from individuality and “survival of the fittest” toward relationality and kinship focused.

Antidote 3: Movement from anthropocentrism towards an anthropomorphic view of the natural world.

Antidote 4: Movement from being materially and commodity focused towards meaning and purpose found outside of consumerism and commodification.

Antidote 5: Movement from acceptance of Western hegemonic institutions towards criticality or rejection of these influences.

The chapter concludes with an exploration of the Western worldview compared to the Indigenous worldview.

Chapter 6: In this chapter I critique how Westerners use ayahuasca. This chapter examines the ways in which ayahuasca in the West does not always work to counter Western hegemonic forces, but in many cases enhances or supports and is influenced by Western hegemony. The chapter begins with an exploration of how ayahuasca cannot be understood by the Western worldview and how attempting to understand it within this guise may be counterproductive and culturally inappropriate. The next area of exploration is ayahuasca and cultural appropriation. This section includes looking at the romanticization of Indigenous peoples, and the noble and ignoble savage myths. I then look at the destructive influence of Christian hegemony on ayahuasca legality. Another area I explore in depth is the role of commodification on the ayahuasca experience by Westerners. Drug tourism is looked at in this section, along with the lack of ecological respect for the ayahuasca vine. A major area of exploration is an abuse of power by ayahuasca leaders; in particular, the ways in which ayahuasca leaders have abused women, both sexually and emotionally. Psyconauts and the ways in which they tend to casually experiment with drugs without any respect for traditions or ceremonial context is examined. The last area I explore is the potential harm it causes Westerners to work with ayahuasca without any social support or cultural context to have unusual or challenging experiences with plant medicines.

Chapter 7: The last chapter presents additional analysis and concluding thoughts. The structure of the chapter is to re-examine the five antidotes and look for other potential antidotes to Western hegemony that may be found outside of the ayahuasca experience. In this chapter I explore the role of gender and age as influences on the data. I then present the limitations and

challenges I faced during the research process, and conclude with some ideas for further research on ayahuasca as a potential antidote to Western hegemony.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Ayahuasca brings us to the boundaries not only of science, but also of the entire Western world-view and its philosophies. (Shanon, 2002, p. 39)

This chapter explores various fields of literature related to my dissertation study to show why it offers a unique contribution to the studies of ayahuasca, hegemony, and Indigenous worldviews. It also demonstrates the timeliness of the questions I am raising regarding ayahuasca. Ayahuasca has become a popular media topic and interest in it is rising. The questions I am asking about ayahuasca as a potential anti-hegemonic force are thus both and relatively unexplored within the literature.

The ayahuasca experience is able to both highlight some of the invisible forces of hegemony and also assist in individual-level healing and change. The fields of ayahuasca and psychedelic studies tend to paint a picture of hallucinogens as exclusively used to help individuals heal on both medical and emotional levels, to understand themselves at a deeper level, and to assist in helping individuals change their personal lives. Missing from much of the ayahuasca literature is the contextualization of ayahuasca as a potential agent of social and political change, and a possible vehicle to bring about hegemonic awareness. Last, as a way to demonstrate the timeliness of my dissertation question, some exploration of ayahuasca in popular culture, including print media, television, and other mediums, reflect an increase in Western participation in ayahuasca ceremonies and an increase in interest about ayahuasca.

Ayahuasca in Popular Culture

Over the past decade there has been a sharp increase in interest in ayahuasca noted in the West, specifically in the United States. A quick Google search shows dozens of centers in South America advertising ayahuasca retreats to people from the West, offering plush retreats with English-speaking ayahuasca healers. Twenty years ago, ayahuasca was relatively unknown and rarely mentioned within popular culture. Today ayahuasca is mentioned in various media outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal* (Haskell, 2014) and the *Los Angeles Times* (Picallo, 2008). The National Geographic television network has documented several ayahuasca ceremonies on various television shows they run such as their *Drugs Inc.* series. In 2014, the *New York Times* ran an article describing one person's account of attending an ayahuasca ceremony (Morris, 2014). Anthony Bourdain (2013) filmed his experiences taking ayahuasca as part of his travel show, *Parts Unknown*. During season 4 of the television show *Weeds*, the star drinks ayahuasca with her boyfriend. Jennifer Aniston drinks ayahuasca in the romantic comedy called *Wanderlust*. An award-winning, one-person performance entitled *Ceremony* is currently travelling around the United States. The humorous performance depicts one person's experiences with ayahuasca ceremonies (Zimskind, 2013). These examples of ayahuasca coverage within popular culture point to some of the more dramatic elements of the ayahuasca such as vomiting, unusual visions and hallucinations, and the therapeutic and existential value of the ceremonies. There is no discussion of the possible social or political changes that could arise from ayahuasca usage, which is what my dissertation explores.

NBC news correspondent Brian Alexander (2014) stated that Lindsay Lohan has used ayahuasca to cope with depression. Susan Sarandon has publically discussed using and benefitting from ayahuasca (Romano, 2014). Godfrey (2014) discussed the healing process for post-traumatic stress disorder CNN news anchor Amber Lyon went through using ayahuasca; she is now a proponent of ayahuasca. According to Bain (2013) celebrities such as Paul Simon and Tori Amos have used ayahuasca and publically spoken about the benefits of the experience. In an interview in *Rolling Stone* magazine 20 years ago, Sting said, “it’s not a frivolous pursuit...there’s a certain amount of dread attached to taking it—you have a hallucinogenic trip that deals with death and your mortality. So it’s quite an ordeal” (Dunn, 1998, p. 26). Mixed martial arts fighter Kyle Kingsbury publically stated that after using ayahuasca he could no longer be a professional fighter because he no longer wanted to hurt anyone (Fowlkes, 2014). Ayahuasca has been discussed in pop-culture women’s magazines *Elle* (Cohen, 2014) and *Marie Claire* (Aguirre, 2014). *Men’s Journal* has written about ayahuasca (Zaitchik, 2013). Lesser-known papers in places like Minneapolis, Minnesota have featured in-depth articles about ayahuasca ceremonies (LaVecchia, 2013).

One problem with discussions about ayahuasca in popular media is that various forms of Western media tend to support Western hegemonic forces. Western media tends to exist to sell products and frame experience in terms of their commodity value. Media coverage of ayahuasca ultimately comes down to creating television shows for people to watch and magazines for people to purchase and read, and has very little to do with connecting to the spirit of ayahuasca. Furthermore, looking to famous people to learn about ayahuasca supports another hegemonic structure which entails social dichotomy whereby those with status can dictate to those without

status how to live their lives, which products to buy, which experiences to explore, and so on.

The assumption is that if an Indigenous person recommends people experience ayahuasca, s/he is not credible, but somehow a Hollywood celebrity is credible, simply because s/he is famous.

All of these examples show that ayahuasca has become part of popular culture in the West. While 10 years ago, there were virtually no references to ayahuasca outside of scholars discussing its healing properties for addiction and other illnesses, suggesting its role within an anthropological context; there has been an increase in interest in ayahuasca. What is evident from this small listing of the various references to ayahuasca within popular culture is that it is a timely topic and worth studying within a doctoral dissertation research study, and that within the framework of popular culture there is virtually no discussion of the counter hegemonic potential of the ayahuasca experience.

Anti-Hegemony Literature, including Critical Theory, Post Modernism, Paulo Freire, and Critical Pedagogy

Anti-Hegemony Literature

Gramsci (1971) argued, "Every relationship of hegemony...occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations" (p. 182).

Gramsci's work was important in his contribution to notice and describe the forces of hegemony.

Just as Gramsci was able to understand and present a way to conceive of hegemony, Foucault was a pioneer in understanding the forces of power and control, specifically institutional forms of power and how they affect individuals, groups, and cultures (Foucault, 1980, 1994). Foucault (1980) asserted, "Power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and

inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (p. 39). This definition of power ties directly into how individuals experience hegemony as an external limitation of individual freedom and self-determination. The value in the work of Gramsci and Foucault is how they both were able to identify patterns of domination, which previously were undistinguished. Both of these theorists worked to unmask hegemony and its subtle manner of hiding. Of course, neither of these authors discusses ayahuasca as a potential antidote to hegemony, but their ideas show how changes in mental states may be an important step.

More recently, Noam Chomsky has discussed hegemony in more accessible language, exposing corporate domination, struggles between the "haves" and "have-nots," and oppressive governmental forces (Chomsky, 2002, 2007, 2011; Chomsky & Barsamian, 2010). For example, Chomsky (1999) stated, "The 'principle architects' of the neoliberal 'Washington consensus' are the masters of the private economy, mainly huge corporations that control much of the international economy and have the means to dominate policy formation as well as the structuring of thought and opinion" (p. 20). This example points to hegemony in the sense of corporate economics. Parenti (1995) also points to the corruption of Western hegemonic forces in American corporate domination: "The exercise of U.S. power is intended to preserve not only the international capitalist system but the U.S. hegemony of that system" (p. 3). One of the pieces that holds Western hegemony in place is media forces that support hegemonic structures. Herman and Chomsky (2008) examined in great detail the media in the United States, which often operates as a form of propaganda, whereby those who make the news have the power to define it. In the process, large corporations also profit from the news and/or select which news is

reported and news which is not. This connection between corporate control over the media which simultaneously profits and controls the messages put out to the general public, which then influences what people believe about certain political and social topics, points directly to the power of hegemony to control people and work covertly. Chomsky, however, is also a proponent of Indigenous wisdom as part of the solution to the social problems in our world. While Chomsky does not directly discuss ayahuasca in his work, he does stress the value of Indigenous wisdom and thereby the Indigenous worldview as significant.

Other theorists have focused their work on issues related to Western hegemony, economic domination, and imperialism. Amy Goodman (Goodman & Goodman, 2004, 2008; Goodman & Moynihan, 2012), for instance, is journalist, and director of Democracy Now! an independent, daily news program. Democracy Now!'s *War and Peace Report* "provides our audience with access to people and perspectives rarely heard in the U.S. corporate-sponsored media" (Democracy Now!, 2014). Other significant authors in this area of study include Perkins (2004), Pilger (1998), and Zinn (1990, 2003). Kivel (2013) has written extensively about the effects of Christian hegemony. Chomsky and the others mentioned have been instrumental in shedding light on global dominance along with various forms of oppression, hegemony, and Western hegemony. These investigators have worked to uncover current examples of hegemony at play and expose hidden abuses. These researchers and authors are doing hard work to bring about social justice. These theorists are not, however, presenting solutions based on Indigenous wisdom. Nor are they looking for change tactics or antidotes rooted in ritual and ceremony, as this dissertation aims to promote. My research aims to fill in the gaps between ceremony and hegemonic awareness.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is derived from German philosophical and social theorists, who in the 1920s, were part of the Neo-Marxist Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School examined philosophy, taking a meta-analysis view of society, in regard to the combined political, economic, and social systems (Brookfield, 2005). Critical theory is a social theory that aims to critique and change society through decreasing various forms of domination and increasing freedom (Geuss, 1981). Horkheimer (1986), one of the founders of critical theory explained, “The social function of philosophy lies in the criticism of what is prevalent...the chief aim of such criticism is to prevent mankind from losing itself in those ideas and activities which the existing organization of society instills in its members” (p. 264). In a different essay, Horkheimer (1982) argued that the purpose of critical theory is to “liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (p. 244). The ideas within critical theory are rooted in Horkheimer’s work, along with those within the Frankfurt School, to critique and change society. These aims of social transformation all connect to a critique of hegemony and hegemonic structures. Furthermore, critical theory is significant in that later, it paved the way for applications of critical theory such as critical media studies, and feminist, queer, and post-colonial theories. Critical theory presents ways to understand hegemony and its workings; it does not however, look to Indigenous solutions to these problems. Specifically, critical theory is rooted to the Western academic model of understanding and not the Indigenous worldview, which integrates ceremonies and rituals as part of the change model.

Kaupapa Maori. The Maori of New Zealand have their own version of critical theory called Kaupapa Maori theory. This theory, like critical theory, focuses on analyzing existing

power structures and inequities and creating an agenda focused on the needs of the Maori people (Smith, 1999, p. 185). Kaupapa Maori research embraces traditional Indigenous ethics and beliefs, while striving towards self-determination and empowerment for Maori people (Bishop, 2008; Henry & Pene, 2001). Kaupapa Maori theory seems to go a step further to create social change for the Maori people. This model, however, notes the significance of ceremonies and rituals as part of the change process but does not include usage of plant medicines or discuss tribal education found within plant ceremonies.

Hegemony and Racism. There are many social and political academic theorists who have written about the social effects of hegemony, specifically racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism. Hegemony, in the case of social issues, is the force that uses the legal system, power, and cultural compliance to hold biases in place. For instance, Ladson-Billings (1998, 2003) and Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) have proposed critical race theory (CRT), a form of analysis that examines how race, power, culture, and the law all affect one another. This form of critical analysis aims at combating racism on an institutional level in the United States. Racism continues to be a destructive force of hegemony, however. Omi and Winant (1994) conclude, “In the U.S., race is present in every institution, every relationship, every individual. This is the case not only for the way society is organized— spatially, culturally, in terms of stratification, etc.— but also for our perceptions and understandings of personal experience” (p. 158). Memmi (2000) poignantly noticed, “There is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still, racism persists, real and tenacious” (p. 3). McIntosh (1989) also explored issues of race in the form of White privilege in her essay *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, which describes racism in terms of

privileges that go unquestioned for Whites versus non-Whites, specifically African Americans. McIntosh argues, “Since some hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege which was similarly denied and protected” (p. 1). These hierarchies McIntosh mentions are forms of hegemony.

Hegemony and Sexism. McIntosh focuses her essay on White privilege and points to some of the ways racism plays out in terms of benefits for Whites, and therefore deficits for those from other cultures; the lens could just as easily show how sexism functions to promote stratification. Cultural hegemony has kept various forms of sexism in place, such as in demeaning media depictions of women, lower pay for women in the marketplace, and religious misogyny. Furthermore, rape and rape culture, oversexualization of women, in particular young women and girls, perpetuate cultural hegemony via sexism. In addition, notions of beauty reduce women to sex objects as opposed to being valued for their intellect or other forms of capability. These examples, along with other forms of sexism, are unfortunately commonplace (Peters & Wolper, 1995; UNO, 2010). As LaDuke (1999), an Indigenous activist, concluded,

We, collectively, find that we [women] are often in the role of the prey, to a predator society, whether for sexual discrimination, exploitation, sterilization, absence of control over our bodies, or being the subjects of repressive laws and legislation in which we have no voice. This occurs on an individual level, but equally and more significantly on a societal level. (p. 42)

All of these examples mentioned by LaDuke offer ways of looking at hegemony and how it operates. These all show the complexity of hegemony and how it functions. LaDuke’s comments suggest that sexism happens on multiple institutional levels simultaneously. Sexism

and mistreatment of women is particularly severe for Indigenous women. With both sexism and racism, there is an implied power balance and homogenization that comes from hegemony. I have included these examinations of racism and sexism as forms of hegemony in this section because these definitions point to an interlocking set of institutional forces that hold racism and sexism in place. These hegemonic forces seem almost impossible to disrupt. One of the findings of my ayahuasca research is that the ayahuasca experience and those who participate in it, move towards relationality, and towards a way of interacting with the world that makes no distinctions or separations as pertains to sexuality or race.

Transformational Learning

Transformational learning is another examination of hegemony, which like critical theory, encourages looking critically at the world, but in the case of transformational learning, also examining one's self in the process. Transformational learning looks at issues related to transformation within the context of adult learning. Part of that learning process includes critical reflection, examination of meaning schemas, along with examination of assumptions about one's self and the world. O'Sullivan (2003) suggested,

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness, ... and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p. 203)

Mezirow (2000) asserts, “Learning occurs in one of four ways; by elaborating on existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind” (p. 19). Welton’s work could fall into both categories of critical theory and transformational learning. Welton (1995) mentioned, “critical educators and theorists argue that people are victims of causal processes that have power over them because they are unaware of the precise ways they have been implicated in the processes that oppress them” (p. 13). Other theorists within the field of transformational education include Brookfield (1987, 1995), Cranton (1994), Daloz (1986), and Kegan (1992, 1994). Each of them, from academically driven schools of thought, offers solutions based in the notion that teaching the ability to think critically, along with fostering awareness of various forms and causes of oppression, may help liberate individuals and groups from institutional-level coercion and oppression frameworks. These models of combatting oppression are based in academic realms of knowledge, rather than Indigenous realms of social change, however. My research study shows that the ayahuasca experience consistently helps people challenge their assumptions about themselves and the world, and walk away from the experience with a greater sense of critical reflection.

Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Freire (1998) originated the concept of “liberatory pedagogy.” The first stage in this pedagogical model is to unveil the world of oppression to those who are oppressed so that they can understand the ways in which they are oppressed. The second component is praxis (action and reflection), which then hopefully leads to a focus on transformation (p. 54). Another central concept from Freire is the notion of “conscientization,” or the process of developing critical

awareness of one's self (Freire, 2004). Critical awareness, within the framework Freire discussed, refers to being critical of oppressive institutional forces, including classism, racism, and social, political, and capitalistic influences (Mezirow, 1981). Freire's work is instrumental in bringing the forces of hegemony and oppression to the forefront of educational scholars.

The field of critical pedagogy has produced a wide range of theorists and activists within the educational realm to both change the educational system, in general, and teach criticality to help challenge students to be more aware of social issues. Shor, for example, is not only a proponent of teaching criticality within the classroom context, but has been an outspoken critic of the American educational system in general, and its mistreatment of minorities and those living in poverty. Shor (1992) explains, "This kind of critical education is not more political than the curriculum that emphasizes taking in and fitting in. Not encouraging students to question knowledge, society, and experience tacitly endorses and supports the status quo" (p. 12). Other notable theorists within critical pedagogy include Denzin (2003), Giroux (2011), and McLaren (1998).

Freire's work, along with critical pedagogy, has been effective at developing educational models to discuss and learn about the forces of oppression and how individuals can help remedy their part in that oppression. These theories go a long way to grant voice to those who are oppressed. Critical pedagogy, however, is generally taught and presented within academic settings and within a Western academic model of education. Much of Freire's writing is theoretical, abstract, difficult to understand, and generally requires a Western academic education to understand and put into practice. Freire's work seems to ignore the wisdom found within Indigenous cultures to potentially combat oppression and hegemony. As Indigenous

scholar Kincheloe (2005) argues, “One of the greatest failures of critical pedagogy...involves the inability to engage Indigenous scholars” (p. 11). My dissertation research on ayahuasca and the Indigenous worldview shows that hegemony can be successfully challenged drawing on Indigenous wisdom as a template.

Indigenous Knowledge, American Indian Studies, Decolonizing Methodologies

Indigenous Knowledge

The field of Indigenous research and Indigenous knowledge is wide and deep. Various theorists discuss and refer to various types of Indigenous “knowing,” wisdom, healing, and understanding. Indigenous knowledge is holistic, relational, and sacred (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). At the same time, Indigenous knowledge is locally oriented and unique to each culture and society (Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000). According to Semali (1999a), “Indigenous knowledge does not derive its origins or meaning from the individual but from the collective epistemological understanding and rationalization of the community” (p. 309). Indigenous peoples have produced and constructed various cosmologies, ontologies, and epistemologies that involve knowledge protection about plant and animal life, medicines and remedies, historical information, and cultural knowledge (Mercer, Kelman, Taranis, & Suchet-Pearson, 2009). As a body of knowledge, Indigenous knowledge is distinct from modern, scientific, formal knowledge (Semali 1999, Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Indigenous knowledge is experiential, oral, personal, holistic, and conveyed through metaphoric language and narrative. Indigenous knowledge and knowing involves making connections between things, valuing relationships, storytelling, and artistic expression (Cajete, 1994; Castellano, 2000; Maurial, 1999). Indigenous knowledge is constantly evolving, updated, and reinvented by Indigenous peoples (Fletcher,

2004). This exploration of Indigenous knowledge is included as a way to more deeply understand the importance and depth of Indigenous knowledge. At the same time, most discussions of Indigenous knowledge do not discuss specific healing rituals such as the ayahuasca ceremonial experience.

Indigenous Ritual and Ceremony. Within the field of Indigenous literature, there are many references to the Indigenous use of ritual and ceremony as important forms of cultural expression and pedagogy (Cajete, 1994, Kovach, 2009). For some Indigenous peoples from the Australian Aboriginal communities, for example, ceremonies were conducted to heal illnesses, connect with the cycles of nature, to bring healing and positivity to community members feeling helpless or distressed, and to help reconcile conflicts (Atkinson, 2002, p. 33). Public ceremonies and private rituals provide an opportunity to directly experience Indigenous teachings, which in turn can be integrated into family and community relations (Castellano, 2004, p. 101). Renfrey (1992) mentions that within American Indian traditions, healing ceremonies may have a generalized therapeutic effect because they often include the participation of family and community members to increase the social support of the individual in need (p. 330). All of these definitions and examinations offer a broad look at Indigenous knowledge based on generalizations and observations of Indigenous cultures. While some of these definitions include the use of ceremony and its importance, none of these definitions explore Indigenous ceremonies in depth, nor do they propose that ceremonies could be viewed within the scope of political and social change. None discuss the potential social and political value of plant ceremonies. I hope my research study is a bridge between Indigenous wisdom and potential antidotes to Western hegemony.

American Indian Studies

American Indian scholars have extensively documented the oppressive and exploitive forces and actions taken by the United States government against American Indian tribes and American Indian peoples; many of these historical forms of oppression are still happening today. Celebrated American Indian scholar and activist Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969, 1973, 1983) documented various forms of oppression American Indians suffered at the hand of the United States government and other hegemonic institutions. Deloria's work includes discussing topics such as land stealing, treaty breaking, cultural appropriation, institutional discrediting of American Indian social and spiritual knowing and understanding, and the influence of Western and Christian hegemony on American Indian peoples. For instance, Deloria (1969) attacked some of the stereotypical ways American Indians have been depicted in the American cultural narrative, showing how the image of the Tonto character, for example is linked to an unrealistic cultural mythos about American Indians:

Tonto was everything that the white man had always wanted the Indian to be. He was slower, a little dumber, had much less vocabulary, and rode a darker horse... Tonto was a cultureless Indian for Indians and an uncultured Indian for whites. Tonto cemented in the minds of the American public the cherished falsehood that all Indians were basically the same—friendly and stupid. Indeed, the legend grew, not only were the tribes the same, but all Indians could be brought to a state of grace—a reasonable facsimile of the white—by a little understanding. (pp. 200-201)

Ward Churchill is a more controversial and outspoken American Indian activist and scholar. Churchill writes not only of the treatment of American Indians by the American

government, but his work examines other forms of political dissent as well, such as documenting the Black Panther movement and the American Indian Movement (AIM). Churchill (1997, 1998, 2002) has written about a range of American Indian issues including the ways American Indians have been misrepresented in literature and the cinema in the United States, which translate to colonization. According to Churchill (2003),

I have identified myself as being “Indigenist” in outlook. By this, I mean I am one who not only takes the rights of Indigenous peoples as the highest priority of my political life, but who draws upon the traditions-the bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of value-evolved over many thousands of years by native people the world over. (p. 13)

Deloria and Churchill are only two scholars out of thousands who have written extensively about the oppression, trauma, and exploitation American Indian peoples have experienced. Many tribes, individuals, and movements (such as AIM) have devoted their lives to correcting these injustices. American Indian Studies scholars have exhaustively documented these abuses. However, this type of documentation of abuses does not focus on the use of ceremony as a way to combat these oppressive forces, or a way that activists can find greater inspiration outside of political outrage.

One of the significant issues that American Indian scholars have faced is anti-Indianism within academia. Many of these anti-Indian arguments center on positioning Western view and Western values as superior to Indian and Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding (Jacobs, 2014). This sort of critique of American Indians is another form of Western academic hegemony that dictates which forms of knowing and scholarship are “valid” and which are not. These sorts of anti-Indian sentiments then extend outwards into ongoing policies to ignore

Indigenous peoples' legal rights, ongoing legislation to deny federal support to American Indians, exploiting reservation lands for resources, while simultaneously polluting and poisoning such lands (Four Arrows, 2006, p. 14). The complicated set of arguments that hegemony makes to justify poisoning and polluting lands where families and communities live is a form of hegemony; in that those in power justify their actions whereby they profit, while others suffer while the entire situation is framed necessary for "progress."

There is also a distinct lack of Indigenous voices and faculty within academia. Non-native peoples staff most of the Native American studies programs, for instance. These primarily White scholars tend to be more connected to the academic culture than identifying with First Nations and Indigenous peoples (Cook-Lynn, 1997). There is a distinct difference between American Indian scholars interpreting and portraying their histories versus the ways in which non-native peoples describe the same events (Miheisah, 1998). Literature and research on Indigenous peoples often comes from outside researchers, and in the process, the events and the voices of Indigenous peoples are watered down, altered, sanitized, and misunderstood (Wilson, 2008). When non-native people teach American Indian studies or other programs about cultures to which they do not belong, stories and histories are, more often than not, taught from an outsider perspective. People who participate in ayahuasca ceremonies, however, are often exposed to authentic Indigenous viewpoints and worldviews as part of the ceremonial experience. Some ceremony leaders, for instance, tell Indigenous cultural and teaching stories during ayahuasca ceremonies, which help pass on Indigenous values. Furthermore, an important component of all ayahuasca ceremonies are healing songs that also serve to inform participants

about cultural values. These examples from ayahuasca ceremonies are ways in which Indigenous ayahuasca cultures are able to stay intact and not be watered down.

Another group of tribal activists are deeply involved in, and at the forefront of, the fight for environmental and human rights. These activists and scholars have written a large body of work on issues such as how to develop sustainable environmental practices and to protect the environment from more destruction. LaDuke (1994, 1999) has written extensively about how the United States has exploited tribal lands. Other scholars such as Wildcat (2009) have documented how tribal peoples have fought against mining on tribal lands and corporations dumping toxic waste (Wildcat, 2009). A few examples of American Indian scholars who have written about environmental issues from an American Indian perspective include Berkes (1999). Grinde and Johansen (1995), Loew (2014), Whaley and Bresette (1994). Environmental protection and having respect for the earth is one commonality among many Indigenous peoples around the world. Basso (1996) concluded that most Indigenous peoples are intrinsically connected to place, and therefore to sacred ecology. Indigenous peoples' relationship to place and land informs not only their language patterns, but also their culture and cosmological understanding. My research study shows how the ayahuasca experience inspires participants to shift their consciousness towards viewing nature as sentient.

American Indian Issues Scholars

There is a small group of scholars discussing issues related to American Indian studies and Indigenous peoples, oftentimes, particularly the effects of hegemony on American Indians within American culture, and the value of Indigenous wisdom and worldview to help alleviate many of the world's pressing problems. These scholars discuss in depth not only the effects of

hegemony on American Indians and American culture, but also the value of Indigenous wisdom and an Indigenous worldview to solve some of the world's problems. Jacobs (2001, 2002, 2013) argues that tribal knowledge should be incorporated into the Western classroom and be integrated into classroom learning. Tribal knowledge, he suggests, should be applied to character education, and utilized to empower students through Indigenous knowledge. Other scholars argued that the Cartesian, Western academic model of education and learning is biased in a Western academic worldview and that Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and cosmologies tend to be ignored in Western educational models (Cajete, 1994, 2000; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008).

American Indian people can feel and see clearly the effects of hegemony on their culture, communities, and people. Therefore, they know firsthand the destruction caused by Western hegemony. American Indian scholars discuss and show the value of Indigenous wisdom. Some discuss the value of ceremonies, rituals, and art creation as part of Indigenous models of learning, cultural preservation, and healing. Few, however, make a connection between participation in Indigenous ceremonies and rituals, social and political change, and challenging hegemony. I have found none that refer specifically to ayahuasca as a counter-hegemonic agent.

Decolonization Movement

Yellow Bird (2005) defined colonization as, "Referring to both the formal and informal methods (behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous peoples, lands, and resources. Colonizers engage in this process because it allows them to maintain and/or expand their social, political, and economic power" (p. 2). Out of the forces of colonization a movement of Indigenous peoples to

reclaim research for the purposes of decolonization has emerged. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), Indigenous methodologies can be defined as, “Research by and for Indigenous peoples, using techniques and methods drawn from the traditions and knowledge of those peoples” (p. x). Smith (1999) argued that an Indigenous research agenda is centered on self-determination, transformation, healing, and mobilization. This agenda includes cultural survival, recovery from colonization, improving tribal conditions, and development and stabilization of community. An Indigenous research agenda is advanced through community action projects, local initiatives, and tribal research. Crazy Bull (1997) contended that Indigenous academic researchers should promote and encourage research and scholarship that preserves, maintains, and restores traditions and cultural practices (p. 20). Indigenous research methods are political by design, and the focus on self-determination and empowerment of Indigenous peoples separates them from other forms of research (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008). An overarching theme of decolonization research is that non-Western knowledge (such as Indigenous knowledge) tends to be marginalized and excluded by Western academia. Decolonizing research methods also recognize the role that colonization has had on perpetuating oppression and silencing the oppressed (Brown & Strega, 2005; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). As a result of colonization, one of the unique features of decolonizing research methods is the focus on activism as an outcome from the research.

The decolonization movement is effective at pointing out the Eurocentric biases found within academia (Blaunt, 1993). These biases are connected to hegemony in terms of which types of knowledge are accepted as “valid” and which are not (Smith, 1999). In this case, Indigenous knowledge is seen as inferior and less “scientific” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

This movement has opened up doors to look at these biases and open up a dialogue to look at different views on Indigenous knowledge and ways of understanding the world. However, the decolonization movement and the work presented do not focus on the power of ritual, ceremony, and artistic expression as topics within decolonizing methodologies.

Ayahuasca, Hallucinogen, and Entheogen Studies

Within academia, hallucinogens have been researched and often viewed as having the potential to create change. Early researchers who explored lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) include: Grof (1975), Hofmann (1970), Leary (Leary & Weil, 1968), Alpert (Alpert, Cohen, & Shiller, 1966) and Lilly (1972). Many of these early explorations of LSD posited that LSD could help individuals understand themselves at a deeper level. Others such as Grof, argued that LSD could be used effectively in combination with psychotherapy. Grof (1973) argued:

If we accept the basic premise that psychedelic drugs make it possible to study the content and dynamics of the unconscious in areas and levels of the human personality that are difficult to reach with less powerful techniques, the heuristic value of these substances becomes immediately obvious. This capacity of psychedelic drugs to exteriorize otherwise invisible phenomena and processes and make them the subject of scientific investigation gives these substances an unusual potential as research tools for exploration of the human mind. (p. 18)

One of the problems with the position taken by early LSD researchers was their focus on helping individuals expand their “mind.” These models of self-focus are far from my research on ayahuasca whereby ceremonies are done to help families and communities heal and expand. Instead, the Western hegemonic notions of individualism seem entrenched in the worldview of

the LSD research and of hallucinogen research in general. While some of the early LSD explorers were integrating Eastern philosophical perspectives and accessing “cosmic consciousness” I argue that those influences were still conceived of within a Western worldview and not within an Indigenous worldview.

The next wave of theorists focusing on hallucinogenic studies include Metzner (1999, 2005), Terence McKenna (1999), Grob (2005), and Dennis McKenna (1998). Terence McKenna died in 2000, but his research of hallucinogens included looking at them from both scientific and esoteric perspectives. For example, at a lecture entitled *Space Time Continuum: Alien Dreamtime* at the Transmission Theater, San Francisco in 1993, McKenna asserted,

I think of going to the grave without having a psychedelic experience, like going to the grave without having sex. It means that you never figured out what it was all about. The mystery is in the body, and the way the body works itself into nature. What the archaic revival means is shamanism, ecstasy, orgiastic sexuality, and the defeat of the three enemies of the people, and the three enemies of the people are hegemony, monogamy, and monotony. And if you get them on the run, you have the dominators sweating, folks. Because that means that you're getting it all reconnected, and getting it all reconnected means putting aside the idea of separateness and self-definition through thing.

McKenna's comments about the use of psychedelics as a possible remedy to hegemony are mentioned, but his method for challenging hegemony is not grounded within an Indigenous framework. His focus seemed to be on personal transformation and self-exploration, as opposed to using plant medicines to combat hegemony on a social or collective level. Terence McKenna was Dennis McKenna's older brother. Dennis McKenna, an ethnobotanist, as of 2014, continues

to write, research, and publish articles and essays about the usage of hallucinogens, in particular ayahuasca. Strassman (2001) conducted one of the most well known medical experiments using DMT. He used synthesized DMT for his experiment, not ayahuasca. Strassman's research, performed at the University of New Mexico, researched hallucinogenic states of consciousness. The states of consciousness Strassman describes are similar to some of the experiences people report while working with ayahuasca. Nearly all of the participants in his study reported the experience to be one of the most meaningful experiences of their lives. Strassman's research study did not happen within a ceremonial context, however. Instead, his research was conducted within a medical clinic setting. While the participants found the experience to be meaningful, we have no idea how much more or less the experience would be meaningful had it been conducted within by a leader with years of experience leading ceremonies and working with a distinct healing intention in mind.

The organization called Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is a "non-profit research and educational organization that develops medical, legal, and cultural contexts for people to benefit from the careful uses of psychedelics and marijuana" (MAPS, 2014). In 2014, MAPS supported ayahuasca research for addiction treatment. The Heffter Research Institute co-founded by Dennis McKenna, Charles Grob, and others, focuses on "developing knowledge regarding, and standards of practice for, the appropriate and safe use of classical hallucinogens in a medical context" (Heffter, 2014). Winkelman (2005, 2014) and Winkelman and Roberts (2007) have researched and found that ayahuasca has the potential to help drug addicts overcome addictions. The psychotherapeutic along with some of the potential medical uses of ayahuasca have also been explored and documented (Barbosa, Cazorla, Giglio,

& Strassman, 2009; Bouso & Riba, 2014; De Rios, 1984, 1996; Frecska, White, & Luna, 2003; Labate & Cavnar, 2013; Topping, 1998; Tupper, 2002, 2008 2009a, 2009b). Researching the medical and psychotherapeutic potential of ayahuasca, and attempting to legalize hallucinogens as potential healing remedies, is noble work. This focus, however, is not the same as researching the social change aspects of hallucinogens or ayahuasca, which I am examining in my dissertation question. Furthermore, researching ayahuasca within a clinic setting or within a Western academic model as a remedy to a specific ailment is not the same as understanding the way it is used within a ceremonial context, or by people who have been conducting ayahuasca ceremonies for decades.

There is another category of books and research about ayahuasca that focus on anthropological exploration, ethnographic descriptions of visits to meet ayahuasca healers, and speculative books that explore the esoteric aspects of ayahuasca. Anthropologist Michael Harner (1973) examined shamanic use of hallucinogens including ayahuasca and other entheogens. Hancock (2006), Narby (1999), and Pinchbeck (2002) all reference ayahuasca within the context of a spiritual exploration of plant medicines and plant teachers. Hancock (2006) suggests there is a correlation between ayahuasca visions and encounters with extraterrestrials:

In my ayahuasca visions, the being who most frightened me, and who indeed had seemed about to abduct me to the sky, had the look of “some sort of huge insect with humanoid features.” Another had eyes that I described in my notebook at the time as, “multi-segmented, like those of a fly” (p. 153).

These authors discussing ayahuasca are not academic and their work contains speculative assumptions about the origins of ayahuasca and the implications of using plant medicines. These

authors do not dig into the potential social impact ayahuasca could have, nor on the ancient traditions from which ayahuasca comes.

The website *Reality Sandwich* (2014) hosts blog posts, interviews, podcasts, and information about alternative consciousness. There is a section on their website devoted to “psychedelic culture,” which includes many podcasts and interviews with Western authors. A few examples include, “Is ayahuasca an alien intelligence?”, “Is ayahuasca grooming a new generation of healers?”, and “Legal, ethical, and political dimensions of ayahuasca consumption in Brazil.” Reality Sandwich also opens up doors to discussing various issues related to psychedelics. However, like many of the other discussions on the more esoteric aspects of ayahuasca, they rarely examine the social and political aspects of plant medicines, or other anti-hegemonic themes.

Several books have been published that contain the art and commentaries of Pablo Amaringo, a celebrated ayahuasca artist from Pucallpa, Peru (Eduardo, Luna, & Amaringo, 1999; Charing, Cloudsley, & Amaringo, 2011). These books are powerful documentaries of the master artist and ayahuasca healer, Amaringo. Throughout the world Amaringo’s paintings are associated with ayahuasca and the stunning images he has created document his visions in ayahuasca ceremonies. Amaringo (in Charing, Cloudsley, & Amaringo, 2011) articulates his spirit vision for life, inspired by ayahuasca: “The best thing you can leave is a seed for others to work with. I’m not just a person: I’m a spiritual person. I always communicate with the great universal force, which is the rock of perfection—Dios—that I have seen in my ayahuasca visions, and which has always spoken to me” (p. 1). Amaringo’s stories, however, are not about

social issues. Instead, they are all directly related to ayahuasca ceremonies and his visions during his experiences as a healer and ceremony leader.

Beyer's (2010) work extensively documents ayahuasca shamanism in Peru. Beyer's work not only presents an exploration of ayahuasca healing techniques and an examination of Peruvian shamanism, but also does so in a scholarly and comprehensive manner; his decades studying ayahuasca are obvious in this work. Beyer's work combines anthropological accounts, historical research, and autoethnographic commentary. For example, Beyer explains, "Ayahuasca teaches many things--what is wrong or broken in a life, what medicine to take for healing. It teaches us to *see through* the everyday, to see the world is meaningful and magical; it opens the door to wonder and surprise" (p. xii). Shoemaker (2014) covers similar terrain to Beyer, examining both his experience in the Amazon as a participant in ayahuasca ceremonies, and explaining the lives of some of the healers along with the healing techniques and traditions. One of the few scholarly examinations of ayahuasca is by Shanon (2002), who conducted a phenomenological study exploring the various states of mind that people experience in ayahuasca ceremonies from a cognitive psychological perspective. Shanon's work is extensive in its exploration of the connection between ayahuasca and consciousness. With the rise in popularity of ayahuasca, there has also been a swell of books written about the ayahuasca experience, which are generally autoethnographic tales of ayahuasca experiences. Most of these books are less comprehensive and detailed than those by Beyer and Shoemaker. Some of these researchers include Campos (2011), Davis (2010), Gorman (2010), Luna and White (2000), Perkins and Chumpi (2001), Taussig (1987), and Topping (1998). These approaches to ayahuasca catalog and document the methods and personal experiences of those who lead and

attend ceremonies. They do not look at the social or political implications of the ayahuasca experience, nor the possible anti-hegemonic affects.

Dissertations Researching Ayahuasca

ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database lists 19 doctoral dissertations written about ayahuasca. My search focused on titles that included ayahuasca in the dissertation title. The titles of these dissertations include

1. *Psychological variables predicting intensity and contents of consciousness during ayahuasca experiences: A pilot study* (Burton, 2009). California Institute of Integral Studies.
2. *Spirituality for sale: An analysis of ayahuasca tourism* (Holman, 2010). Arizona State University.
3. *Vine of the soul: A phenomenological study of ayahuasca and its effect on depression* (Palladino, 2009). Pacifica Graduate Institute.
4. *Ayahuasca entity visitations: A thematic analysis of Internet-reported encounters* (Heuser, 2006). California Institute of Integral Studies.
5. *Healing from the gods: Ayahuasca and the curing of disease states* (Quinlan, 2001). California Institute of Integral Studies.
6. *A phenomenological study of ayahuasca and its effect on anxiety* (Osborn, 2012). The Wright Institute.
7. *EEG coherence biofeedback to facilitate ayahuasca-like transformative experiences: A pilot case study* (Kotlik-Konev, 2011). California Institute of Integral Studies.

8. *Changes in spirituality among ayahuasca ceremony novice participants* (Trichter, 2006). Argosy University/San Francisco Bay Area.
9. *Path to treatment in ayahuasca users: Understanding the presenting problems, insights gained, and implementation of insights* (Enyart, 2013). The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.
10. *EEG analysis of ayahuasca experience to develop biofeedback protocols for visionary experience* (Benitz, 2007). California Institute of Integral Studies.
11. *The effects of participation in ayahuasca rituals on gays' and lesbians' self-perception* (Cavnar, 2011). John. F. Kennedy University.
12. *Psychospiritual integration of an ayahuasca retreat experience* (Quevedo, 2009). Institute of Transpersonal Psychology.
13. *The healing power of the icaros: A phenomenological study of ayahuasca experiences* (Bustos, 2008). California Institute of Integral Studies.
14. *EEG gamma coherence and other correlates of subjective reports during ayahuasca experiences* (Stuckey, 2004). California Institute of Integral Studies.
15. *An MMPI-2 study: Personality traits of North American ayahuasca drinkers* (Surprise, 2007). California Institute of Integral Studies.
16. *A ritual key to mystical solutions: Ayahuasca therapy, secularism, & the Santo Daime Religion in Belgium* (Blainey, 2013). Tulane University.
17. *Images of healing: Spontaneous mental imagery and healing process of the Barquinha, a Brazilian ayahuasca religious system* (Mercante, 2006). Saybrook Graduate University and Research Center.

18. *Ethnopharmacology and stress relief: The spiritual experience of practitioners in the Santo Daime Church* (Panneck, 2014). Walden University.
19. *The system of healing used in the Santo Daime community Ceu do Mapia* (Sulla, 2005). Saybrook Graduate University and Research Center.

The titles and research studies presented within this listing of dissertations seems to roughly mirror the groupings I discussed in looking at ayahuasca, hallucinogens, and entheogens. There are several studies looking at the therapeutic and medical potential of ayahuasca to help with depression, anxiety, and stress relief. One study looks at the potential of ayahuasca to help in diseased states. One study used EEG gamma coherence during ayahuasca experiences. Two dissertations utilized EEG methods in their research. Another study conducted an MMPI-2 personality study on ayahuasca users in North America. One dissertation looked at possible changes in self-perception in gay and lesbian participants in ayahuasca experiences. A different study looked at changes in spirituality among novice ayahuasca users. Yet another dissertation looked at ayahuasca healing songs (*icaros*). One dissertation looked at entity visitations. Four dissertations researched members of the Brazilian Santo Daime Church (a church that legally uses ayahuasca in their church services and uses ayahuasca as their sacrament). These four dissertations each researched different topics within the guise of the Santo Daime Church cosmology. The only dissertation that seems to present any exploration of the negative influences of the West is the dissertation looking at ayahuasca tourism. None of these dissertations look at the possible connection between ayahuasca as a potential remedy to the effects of Western hegemony. In fact, any sort of connection between ayahuasca and social or political awareness seems missing from the overall examination of the various roles and applications of ayahuasca.

The majority of these dissertations are based on Western academic research models. There is little attention paid to either decolonizing methodologies, or Indigenous ways of understanding the world, in particular how Indigenous people use ayahuasca in a ceremonial context. As discussed in Chapter 1, Indigenous research agendas have a political, social, and community focus. Only one of these dissertations, however, seems to focus on creating social awareness or aiming to help Indigenous people. These dissertations seem to line up with the typical goals of Western research, which is to benefit the researcher without being concerned about those being researched. Looking for solutions to anxiety and depression, for example, is important work; taking ayahuasca out of its ceremonial context, however, and using it within a Western clinical research context, takes away from the spirit of the ayahuasca experience. Furthermore, suggesting that ayahuasca experience be done without the supervision of a trained ayahuasca healer fails to respect time-tested ayahuasca healing methods and ignores the ayahuasca ceremonial context. Western personality tests such as the MMPI-2 seem to ignore Indigenous methods of looking at personality and changes in individuals after Indigenous healing ceremonies. These are just a few examples of imposing a Western worldview on an Indigenous process, which in itself is a form of Western hegemony.

The other issue with most of these dissertations, aside from Holman's (2010) work on drug tourism, is that none of these works explored the potential downside to using ayahuasca. None look at how ayahuasca is being misused by people in the West. The dissertations examining the Santo Daime Church, for example, did not examine the possible hegemonic influences of Christianity on the ayahuasca experience. Nor do they look at why ayahuasca is only legalized within a Christian context, but not within an Indigenous context. Furthermore,

they do not look at how Indigenous peoples may view the Santo Daime Church and how they are using or misusing ayahuasca. Finally, aside from the dissertation examining drug tourism, none of the others examine any of the social problems associated with ayahuasca. Ayahuasca is not a panacea. There are many problems associated with cultural misappropriation, the influence of Western hegemony in the form of commodification, and misuse by Western peoples. The majority of these dissertations do not explore the larger contextual issues associated with the social and political elements of working with plant medicines such as ayahuasca. My dissertation research examined these connections between ayahuasca and its potential to combat Western hegemony.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how my research on ayahuasca makes a unique contribution to the literature about ayahuasca, hegemony, and the Indigenous worldview. In this chapter I have shown that various fields of study attempt to explain the forces of hegemony, but are not rooted within an Indigenous worldview nor draw encouragement from Indigenous wisdom. At the same time, the broad fields of Indigenous studies and American Indian studies critique hegemony and also stress the value of ritual and ceremony within Indigenous cultures, but do not discuss the ayahuasca, or other plant medicine ceremonies as ways to encourage participants to be liberated from these forces. Last, the field of ayahuasca and hallucinogen studies explores and documents the use of hallucinogens in a variety of settings, from clinical experiments to Indigenous ceremonial use of plant medicines such as ayahuasca. Within this field of scholarship, however, there are very few research studies that explore the social and political aspects of plant teachers and plant medicine ceremonies. As a result, the purpose of my research study, whether

ayahuasca may be a potential antidote to Western hegemony, is to explore a relatively unexplored topic within this field of study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*Now this very beautiful night
I am going to ordinate your body and your mind
Giving happiness
So that you will feel well
Giving strength to your body and mind
Connecting to the energy of the plants with much aroma
I connect it to your body
I work for you to connect to the energy of the ayahuasca and the chacruna
With all of these I ordinate it in your body
With these plant spirits we all connect with the big vision
So you will have a good vision
So that you will have an opening to the world of medicine
So you will feel happy and strong filled with a good vision of the plant
On this very night.
(Shipibo ayahuasca healing song, translated to English; Gile, 2008)*

My dissertation question, as indicated and discussed in Chapter 1 is, “How might the ayahuasca experience be a potential antidote to Western hegemony?” How to best explore this question posed two significant challenges throughout the process. One challenge is that the ayahuasca experience is rooted in the Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and mystical healing practices of certain Indigenous peoples in South America, and is deeply understood only by trained Indigenous healers. Thus, during my research process I tried to remain humble enough to remember this throughout my data gathering from non-Indigenous ayahuasca users. As a non-Indigenous person, I tried to remain aware that my viewpoint, as well as the viewpoints of other non-Indigenous peoples, may not represent the cultural views and understanding of Indigenous healers in South America.

The other major challenge relates to my reference to Western hegemony, which is also a broad, complex, and controversial topic. Most of my research participants were unfamiliar with

the concept. Participants were not used to examining and identifying hegemonic beliefs; as a result, my judgments and interpretations required careful consideration and explanation.

Given that my dissertation question has not been widely studied, and that the concept of Western hegemony is not usually associated with ayahuasca or other Indigenous healing methods, my research study is exploratory. Marshall and Rossman (2010) suggested that exploratory means, “To investigate little-understood phenomenon, to identify or discover important categories of meaning, and to generate hypotheses for further research” (p. 33). By exploratory, I also drew inspiration from systems thinking in looking holistically at the data with every turn. Systems thinking looks for connections, interconnections, and relationships between the various pieces related to my research question (Senge, 2000; Wheatley, 1999).

Methodologies

My dissertation question began with a hypothesis that ayahuasca may be a potential antidote to Western hegemony. This starting hypothesis situates my research as deductive in nature. Therefore, the research methods I utilized were oriented around testing my hypothesis through observation, interviews, and a survey instrument. According to Hyde (2000), “Deductive reasoning is a theory testing process which commences with an established theory or generalization, and seeks to see if the theory applies to specific instances” (p. 83). Given that this research study examined a theory, which is in part based on a personal agenda of encouraging change and transformation, a relativist model fit the question more adequately than a purely positivist model. Relativism holds that values are relative between cultures and people (Francis, 2002).

The literature on research methods was helpful in understanding the research options for my study. Creswell (2013) mentioned that a philosophical underpinning of conducting mixed methods research is pragmatism. “Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. This applies to mixed methods research, in that inquirers draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions when they engage in their research” (p. 12). Denscombe (2008) explained that mixed methods research helps to improve the accuracy of research data, and to produce a more complete picture by combining information from complementary kinds of data or sources. In addition, utilizing a mixed-methods approach tends to help prevent biases intrinsic to single-method approaches (p. 272). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) explained that a mixed-methods approach is one in which the data collection involves gathering both numeric information along with text information.

These various ways of looking at pragmatism and mixed-methods research inspired me to conduct a mixed-methods research study, which combined methods and approaches to best answer my research question. My hope in the research process was to explore my dissertation question from many angles and not rush through the research process or fall dogmatically into being informed from one particular research method or worldview. Instead, my hope was to challenge my own assumptions at every step of the research process. While I personally gravitate more towards qualitative research methods, I did not want my personal preferences to become a bias within the research process. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of my dissertation question, a mixed-methods research method was selected as the most applicable. Employing a mixed-methods approach to the research process resulted in generating both qualitative and

quantitative data, which all helped me examine the question in a more thorough manner than a single-method study would have afforded.

Research Design and Methodologies

My mixed-methods research study employed qualitative methods in the form of two different types of interviews: the first in the tradition of grounded theory, and the second, inspired by phenomenology. Given that there was no template to work from for my research study, I employed several interview techniques to help me navigate the research process. My study employed a quantitative method of research in the form of numeric analysis based on an online scaled questionnaire asking participants to rate various attitudes, beliefs, and actions related to hegemonic themes before and after the ayahuasca experience. This methodology employed in the quantitative component used the Likert scale. Due to the covert nature of hegemony, I wanted to attempt to find ways to quantify its often-subtle effects and measure the possible movement away from its forces. Coming up with appropriate questionnaire questions was challenging, but the resulting data were useful to my study and understanding of my research question.

Qualitative Interviews

One of the challenges in researching the ayahuasca experience is that each individual's experience is unique. However, through recording participant interviews, stories, and experiences, a phenomenon was captured and useful in my research process. Qualitative research can be defined as gathering, analysis, and interpretation based on narrative data. Part of the qualitative research process involves in-depth, open-ended interviews (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research is constructivist in design and philosophy. By constructivist I am referring to a process

whereby the researcher, “constructs the meaning of the phenomenon under investigation” (Teddlé & Tashakkori 2009, p. 6). Given that there is minimal groundwork laid to examine Western hegemony and ayahuasca together, employing a constructivist approach fit my study because I constructed my own meaning of the ayahuasca experience based on my research data. Best and Kahn (1998) explained that qualitative interviews can range from “informal conversational interviews,” to “closed, fixed response interviews.” This range of interview styles goes from having no predetermined questions to questions and response categories being determined in advance (p. 256). My qualitative research process involved employing two different styles of interview techniques. My primary method of interviewing was based on phenomenological methods of inquiry and allowed me to include some predetermined questions in each interview. The second type of interview I conducted was influenced by grounded theory, and allowed me to conduct open-ended interviews over several occasions without any predetermined questions.

Shorter Qualitative Interviews Based on Phenomenological Methods

My primary interviewing method was influenced by phenomenological research methods. My assumption was that employing a phenomenological approach was the most effective method to examine the uniqueness of participants’ ayahuasca experiences. In other words, since hegemony can seem abstract and the ayahuasca experience can be so varied, grounding both in lived experience seemed like an effective way to capture the effects of ayahuasca and see if the ayahuasca experience influences a shift away from the forces of hegemony. Phenomenological methods were applicable to look at my research question because, by definition, researching the ayahuasca experience includes examining human experience and “more reflective modes of

existence that arise when we take up theoretical attitudes toward our own and others' actions" (Desjarlais & Throop, 2011, p. 88). Throop (2009) explained that phenomenology is concerned with people's lived experience, including their thoughts, images, feelings, sentiments, moods, sensations, perceptions, and judgments (p. 89). Lester (1999) asserted, "The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation" (p. 1). Lastly, phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Phenomenological interview methods allowed research participants to express their thoughts, emotions, and reflections, and was an important component of my research process. In addition, the phenomenological approach also granted me the flexibility to have preset questions selected ahead of time. Preparing some questions ahead of time permitted me to work from an open-ended interview style and to focus the interviews on potential hegemonic themes, while at the same time being open enough to capture a wide range of responses from different participants. Best and Kahn (1998) explained that an "interview guide" approach allows the interviewer to select topics and issues to cover in advance, and can also decide the sequence and wording of questions (p. 256). Utilizing a phenomenological approach and drawing inspiration from the "interview guide" approach also allowed me to craft open-ended questions ahead of time that helped to uncover participants' feelings, thoughts, and experiences in ayahuasca ceremonies, and post ceremony.

Shorter Qualitative Interview Process. The shorter qualitative interviews with ayahuasca users all began by having participants sign an Informed Consent document, then they

were asked to state their age, to insure they were at least 21 years of age. Participants were then asked about the number of times they had used ayahuasca and when they first experienced ayahuasca. I began each short qualitative interview by asking, “What have you learned from the ayahuasca experience?” The next set of questions and format for the interviews followed the “interview guide approach.” I asked between four and five questions from the following list of questions with hegemonic themes. Depending on the responses from the participant I then either asked clarifying questions, or moved on to another question. These are the questions I drew from:

-Has your level of political activity changed before and after using ayahuasca?

*-Has the ayahuasca experience changed whether or not you are critical of
GMOs?*

-Has the ayahuasca changed how important making money and your career is?

*-Do you notice any changes in your level of critical thinking or criticality before
and after the ayahuasca experience?*

-Do you act in your daily life with more empathy before and after ayahuasca?

*-Do you feel more connected and supportive and supported by your family and
community before and after the ayahuasca experience?*

*-Has your connection to plants, animals, and the natural world changed before
and after using ayahuasca?*

Longer Qualitative Interviews Based on Grounded Theory

The second qualitative interview style employed in my research study was based on asking open-ended questions and allowing the research participant to guide the direction of the

interviews. Best and Kahn (1998) describe “informal conversational” interviewing as a method whereby, “questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things” (p. 256). The informal conversational interview component was influenced by grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed grounded theory as a method for conducting research that focuses on the interpretive process. Grounded theory is associated with theory development, and acknowledges the importance of a multiplicity of perspectives and “truths” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An open-ended interview style seemed to be the best method for conducting several interviews with an ayahuasca ceremony leader because this method allows for the interview participant to simply talk without any format. In this case, allowing an expert who has helped hundreds of people through the ayahuasca experience talk about anything regarding ayahuasca seemed like the best way to glean information from this ayahuasca expert.

According to Charmaz (2011),

Fundamental tenets of the grounded theory method include: (1) minimizing preconceived ideas about the research problem and the data, (2) using simultaneous data collection and analysis to inform each other, (3) remaining open to varied explanations and/ or understandings of the data, and (4) focusing data analysis to construct middle-range theories. (p. 155)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend a small sample size for grounded theory research along with experiential relevance. The recommendations made by Glaser and Strauss were applicable to my employing grounded theory to this component of my qualitative research process. Furthermore, grounded theory as a form of inquiry was selected because it can be a useful model for developing theories about possible connections between two or more factors, in

this case potentially useful in drawing connections between the ayahuasca experience and antidotal movement away from Western hegemony. Grounded theory, in this case, offered the opportunity to note some of the changes ayahuasca users go through in moving from a Western worldview and orientation towards an Indigenous worldview and orientation. Being able to focus on only one ayahuasca ceremony expert allowed me the time to get to know one participant over time and go deeper with the research process. I followed the process of interviewing the ceremony leader, then transcribing the interviews as soon as possible after the interview, and then unitizing the data into themes. I then categorized the thematic data, and repeated this process with each subsequent interview. All of these elements of grounded theory fit my study, though my study is certainly not strictly a grounded theory study, nor does it hold to many of the overall ideas put forth in grounded theory.

I did not select grounded theory as my primary research method for several key reasons; one of the basic assumptions of this research method is minimal preconceived ideas to prove or disprove. Suddaby (2006) explained, “Grounded theory thus should not be used to test hypotheses about reality, but, rather, to make statements about how actors interpret reality” (p. 636). My dissertation question aims to examine a theory that there may be a potential connection between the ayahuasca experience and antidotes to Western hegemony.

Longer Qualitative Interview Process. The four interviews with the ayahuasca ceremony leader were conducted using the “informal conversational interview” method. During the first meeting with the ayahuasca ceremony leader, after he signed an Informed Consent document, and stated that he was over 21 years of age, the interview began by asking, “What have you learned from the ayahuasca experience?” I began each interview by asking the same

question. I purposefully did not steer the conversation in any direction, and only occasionally asked clarifying questions based on his answers.

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative research is defined as gathering, analysis, interpretation, and presentation in a numerical manner (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 5). One of the problems with employing quantitative methods in this study, however, is that the subtle affects of hegemony are hard to quantify, hard to measure, and often difficult to see. So, taking the time to create a set of specific questions measuring potential changes research participants experienced before and after working with ayahuasca was useful and produced useful data. The specific form of quantitative methods in my study was an online-scaled survey. Some of the hegemonic themes I set out to examine with my quantitative research component were to identify potential changes in commodification, political awareness, community involvement, compassion and empathy for others, and social awareness, before and after the ayahuasca experience. Having a quantitative component provided the opportunity to study a larger and more random number of participants, and get perhaps less biased data than the in-person qualitative interviews. Descriptive statistical methods were employed rather than inferential statistics, because probabilities and generalized findings were not as significant to this study as understanding changes in behaviors, beliefs, and values (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 27).

Administering a quantitative online-scaled questionnaire seemed to be the best way to reach a larger number of participants and ask a broad range of questions to people who have worked with ayahuasca. My quantitative research study aimed to examine attitudes, and self-perceptions of participants before and after using ayahuasca. The actual questionnaire and

questions asked is included in the next section. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) stated, “When questionnaires are used in a study, the researcher is employing a strategy in which participants use self-report to express their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings towards a topic of interest” (p. 232). Given that ayahuasca is illegal in the United States, I thought that an anonymous self-reporting format for my quantitative research component would provide a way for people who work with ayahuasca to participate in my study. The model I used for questionnaire research was based on the Likert-type rating scales to measure the experiences of ayahuasca users. Likert scales are typically used to measure attitudes, and offer a range of responses to each question (Jamieson, 2004, p. 1217). Each question on the research questionnaire offered the participants six possible categories for their response *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neither disagree or agree*, *agree*, *strongly agree*, and *not applicable* (Likert, 1932). For the questionnaire, I crafted 28 questions pertaining to hegemony such as, “Before taking ayahuasca, I was politically active. After taking ayahuasca, my level of political activity changed.” At the end of the questionnaire a field was added so that each participant could include any comments. The scaled questionnaire can be found in Step 4 of the research process in the next section.

To ensure the anonymity of participants in the scaled questionnaire, no actual names were used in the online questionnaire, nor were Internet Service Providers (ISPs) captured. In lieu of a page where participants could sign an Informed Consent document with their names and addresses, a radio button was included at the end of the Informed Consent document that could be clicked to indicate that participants agreed to the terms of the study.

I had originally planned to conduct a small hermeneutic study, and received IRB approval to do so. Hermeneutic research involves interpreting texts as a way to understand a particular

phenomenon being researched. Hermeneutics combines phenomenological and linguistic analysis, semantics, and conceptual analysis (Crotty, 1998). Originally, the hermeneutic component was going to include monitoring a public online ayahuasca discussion group on Facebook called “Ayahuasca” and quantifying how many times hegemonic, social, and political themes were mentioned. After tracking the group for 30 days, the data did not seem relevant or significant to my study. The content of the postings in the Facebook included, for example, many postings from people looking for places to obtain ayahuasca to purchase for self-use, and people posting unusual experiences using other hallucinogens in casual settings. As a result, I determined that the interviews and scaled survey provided data that were more useful to my study than documenting the postings in the ayahuasca discussion group on Facebook.

Recruiting Research Participants

For each step of the research process I recruited research participants. I recruited people to participate in short interviews, for the scaled questionnaire, and one ayahuasca ceremony leader to be extensively interviewed. No compensation was offered to anyone for participating in the research study.

Through my research on the topic of ayahuasca, I met an ayahuasca ceremony leader. He was a 52-year-old Caucasian man, living in the St. Louis area. He had been working with ayahuasca for 15 years and travelled frequently throughout the United States leading ayahuasca ceremonies. He allowed me to interview him for my in-depth study, as long as he was given a pseudonym. He demanded a pseudonym to protect his anonymity for legal reasons. My recruitment method was to simply ask him, after discussing my dissertation study, if he might be

willing to be interviewed for the study. He and I began corresponding before I formulated my research study.

The ayahuasca ceremony leader agreed to distribute a flyer about the study to people who expressed an interest in being interviewed. These people then contacted me directly to arrange an interview. Having the ayahuasca ceremony leader hand out flyers to people who were interested took me out of the equation and offered another layer of assurance that there was minimal coercion to participate in the study. Furthermore, requiring that those people contact me directly meant they had to take steps to participate on their own volition, and was another way to ensure they were voluntarily participating. Fourteen people contacted me, and ten of them were interviewed for the study. I interviewed three people for my qualitative short interview pilot study and seven for my official short interview qualitative study.

The text included on the flyer, for both my pilot study and actual study, stated, Doctoral student seeking participants for a short in-person interview with users of ayahuasca. This interviewer will ask several questions about your experiences using ayahuasca and take between twenty and thirty minutes. Your identity will remain confidential in the research process. If you would like to participate, please contact Roan Kaufman either via email: roan Kaufman@mac.com or via phone. You can also contact him with any questions about the study. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

The participants for the scaled questionnaire (both the pilot study and the final study) were recruited through a public Facebook discussion group on ayahuasca titled *Ayahuasca*, which has over 21,000 members. I also posted ads in the *Singing to the Plants* public Facebook discussion group, *DMT: The Spirit Molecule* public Facebook discussion group, and the

Ayahuasca, San Pedro, Iboga Sacred Plant Community public Facebook discussion group.

The advertisements posted to these discussion groups included the following text:

Doctoral student seeking participants for an anonymous online research study about experiences with ayahuasca. The online questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

A link to the questionnaire hosted by Survey Monkey was included in the text.

Furthermore, the IRB at Fielding Graduate University approved the advertisements I posted to Facebook groups.

Ethical Considerations

Ayahuasca is currently illegal in the United States, because it contains the psychoactive hallucinogen DMT. DMT is considered a Schedule I drug, in the same category as mescaline, heroin, marijuana, and LSD (Controlled Substance Act, 2000). Due to its illegality, I was very careful to protect the anonymity of all participants. If the names of the leaders and/or participants were made public, it is possible that they could be at risk of criminal or civil liability, which could then impact their employability. This meant I did not use their names during the interviews, and during the transcription process each participant was only referred to by number and not by name. All online questionnaires were conducted anonymously to insure confidentiality of the participants. Furthermore, all of the IRB protocols regarding confidentiality and anonymity were followed precisely.

Protecting Confidential Data

All in-person interviews were recorded on an Apple iPhone using the Voice Memos program, and once the interviews were completed, the interviews were taken off the iPhone,

placed into a Dropbox folder, and then erased from the iPhone device. This process of removing the interviews from the iPhone was done in this sequence to protect the anonymity of all interview participants, in case my iPhone was lost or stolen. Some of the interviews were conducted via Skype and recorded using the Call Recorder program. When participants were interviewed via Skype, immediately after the interview the recording was transferred to a Dropbox folder, and then deleted from my laptop computer. This was done to protect the anonymity of all participants interviewed via Skype. Given that I often use my laptop computer in public places such as coffee shops, and bring it with me to meetings, ensuring that the interviews were not accessible to anyone using my laptop computer without my permission was important. Following the protocol of having all interviews taken off my laptop computer insured anonymity of the participants.

Data Collection

The data collection process followed five steps. The process began with a short-qualitative interview pilot study in which three people who have worked with ayahuasca were interviewed. Step 2: A quantitative scaled questionnaire pilot study was administered to 36 participants. Step 3: After changing the scaled questionnaire based on the data from both the qualitative and quantitative pilot studies and feedback from my dissertation committee, a revised scaled questionnaire was administered to a different set of participants. Step 4: Seven additional short qualitative interviews were conducted. Step Five: Four in-depth qualitative interviews were accomplished with an ayahuasca ceremony leader. What follows is an explanation of each phase of the data collection process.

Step 1: Short Qualitative Interview Pilot Study

A qualitative pilot study was conducted. I conducted three short qualitative interviews with three people who have experienced ayahuasca within a ceremonial context. During these interviews I asked open-ended phenomenological questions pertaining to whether they had noticed changes related to Western hegemony before and after their ayahuasca experiences. These interviews were conducted outside of an ayahuasca ceremony context, and none of the participants at the time of the interview were in the midst of an ayahuasca experience. Furthermore, none of the interview participants were under the age of 21. These interviews took place between July 10, 2014 and July 28, 2014. Two of these interviews took place in person, and one via Skype. Skype was selected because it is an easy method to record the interview, and it is accessible to many potential interview subjects who may not be able to meet in person. The in-person interviews took place at a location of the participant's choosing.

Each interview began by asking the participants to state how many times they had used ayahuasca, followed by asking what they learned from their ayahuasca experiences. These questions were followed by asking them about hegemonic themes before and after using ayahuasca from the following list of questions:

-Has your level of political activity changed before and after using ayahuasca?

*-Has the ayahuasca experience changed whether or not you are critical of
GMOs?*

-Has the ayahuasca changed how important making money and your career is?

*-Do you notice any changes in your level of critical thinking or criticality before
and after the ayahuasca experience?*

-Do you act in your daily life with more empathy before and after ayahuasca?

-Do you feel more connected and supportive and supported by your family and community before and after the ayahuasca experience?

-Has your connection to plants, animals, and the natural world changed before and after using ayahuasca?

Each interview lasted no longer than 30 minutes. The pilot study was conducted to see if the “interview guide approach” was an effective interviewing model. Furthermore, the pilot study helped determine if useful data were generated from this method, and to see if any themes emerged that might influence the further formulation of my research and methods. It was determined that this method for interviewing was appropriate and successful. One of the themes and insights I had, based on the pilot study interviews, was that there seemed to be a possible connection between quantity of ayahuasca experiences, and the heightened level of hegemonic awareness and movement away from Western hegemony. This possible connection guided me in making some small changes to the study such as asking more direct questions to participants about how often they work with ayahuasca and how the quantity of ceremonial participation may influence potential changes in attitudes, beliefs, and actions regarding hegemonic themes.

Step 2: Quantitative Scaled Questionnaire Pilot Study

The second pilot study was a quantitative scaled questionnaire pilot study. The scaled questionnaire was conducted using the Internet survey program, Survey Monkey. The scaled Internet questionnaire used the Likert-scale, and asked specific questions pertaining to whether or not the respondents, who were a self-selecting group of people who had experienced ayahuasca, noticed changes pertaining to antihegemony before and after the ayahuasca

experience. I do not know if these participants experienced ayahuasca within a ceremonial context or not. The scaled questionnaire was designed so that participants could complete the questionnaire in approximately 15 minutes. Potential participants were excluded from the scaled interviews on ayahuasca if they did not agree to the terms of the study, which required that they had experienced ayahuasca at least one time. Minors, referring to people under the age of 21, were also excluded from being interview participants to avoid any potential legal problems or any ethical considerations. I selected the age of 21 as my criteria of defining an adult, simply to generate standardization in my research process.

The study was open to participants from September 7, 2014 to November 18, 2014. Fifty people agreed to the terms of the study online, and 36 people completed the questionnaire. This questionnaire was my first attempt to try to quantify some Western hegemonic themes and measure them in this scaled questionnaire. The other purpose of the study was to test whether or not my recruiting methods were effective and if people from the Ayahuasca discussion group on Facebook might be interested in taking the scaled questionnaire. I had hoped for at least 50 participants for my scaled questionnaire. Furthermore, the participants who participated in the scaled questionnaire provided useful data to my study and helped me shape the additional research steps. The pilot study confirmed my assumption that there may be a connection between working with ayahuasca and a movement away from the influences of hegemony. A sample of the pilot study questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

Step 3: Conduct Seven Additional Short Qualitative Interviews

Seven additional short qualitative interviews were conducted with people who work with ayahuasca in a ceremonial context, between November 25, 2014 and December 19, 2014. The

same criteria were followed for the interviews, ensuring none of the participants were under the influence of ayahuasca, and none of the participants were under the age of 21 years of age. Four of these interviews were done in person, and three were conducted via Skype. These interviews followed the format discussed above regarding the “interview guide approach” in Step 1. Each interview took less than 30 minutes. Each interview included an opening open-ended question, followed by a selection of questions from the list of hegemonic-themed questions listed in the explanation of the pilot study information.

Step 4: Revise and Re-Open Quantitative Scaled Questionnaire

The scaled quantitative questionnaire was revised and re-opened for participants to take. Based on the data from the short qualitative interviews I conducted in the qualitative study along with the data from the quantitative scaled questionnaire pilot study and feedback from my dissertation committee members, changes and revisions to the scaled questionnaire were made before the second version was opened. Based on the data gathered in Phase 1, I decided that the questionnaire should include a field to more specifically determine the number of times each participant had used ayahuasca. The original scaled questionnaire included two fields to determine the number of times each participant had experienced ayahuasca: 1-10, or 10+. The revised questionnaire asked participants to note their usage in the following manner: *1-10 times*, *11-20 times*, *21-50 times*, *51-75 times*, *76-125 times*, *126-200 times*, and *200+ times*. After receiving feedback from my dissertation committee, I decided to also rewrite some of the questionnaire questions. Many of the questions in the questionnaire were rewritten in a clearer manner and more closely reflected examining changes before and after the ayahuasca experiences. Last, a field was created so that participants could include any comments they

wanted to make about ayahuasca. A comments field was added because I thought it might provide useful and unexpected data, and make the questionnaire more dialogical to provide participants a place to include any comments they wanted to include.

The scaled questionnaire was open to participants to take between December 1, 2014, and January 18, 2015. Sixty-seven people agreed to the terms of the study, 44 answered questions in the questionnaire, and 29 people wrote comments. The revised scaled questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

Step 5: Conduct Four In-Depth Qualitative Interviews with an Ayahuasca Ceremony

Leader

Over the course of four in-person meetings I conducted four in-depth qualitative interviews with one ayahuasca ceremony leader. The combined time of the interviews was 3.5 hours. These interviews took place between November 26, 2014 and January 5, 2015. These interviews took place outside of the ayahuasca ceremony context. The ayahuasca ceremony leader was not under the influence of ayahuasca during the time of any of the interviews.

Data Analysis

The 10 shorter qualitative interviews (three for the pilot study and seven for the actual study) were coded and analyzed utilizing thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was selected because it is a straightforward method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within data. Thematic analysis is a useful data coding method to employ when conducting a deductive-oriented study, which mine was. According to Boyatzis (1998),

Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires an explicit “code.” This may be a list of themes; a complex model with themes,

indicators, and qualifications that are causally related; or something in between these two forms.... The themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research. (p. vii)

The method I used for analyzing the shorter qualitative interview data followed the phases of thematic analysis put forth by Braun and Clarke (2006) including, “1. Familiarize yourself with the data. 2. Generating initial codes. 3. Searching for themes. 4. Review themes. 5. Defining and naming themes. 6. Producing the report” (p. 87). The process I followed for coding the interview data included transcribing the data, then familiarizing myself with the data. I then pulled out chunks of data that struck me as interesting and pertinent. Next, I came up with several themes and cut and pasted the chunks of data under each major thematic heading. Last, I edited the themes down to those most relevant and connected to Western hegemonic themes.

The in-depth interviews with an ayahuasca ceremony leader were analyzed using a grounded theory inspired approach to coding the data. The transcribed data were coded into many themes and meaning categories. Categories were then refined, and relationships between the themes were noticed, and some patterns emerged from the data (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 185). These patterns, such as ways in which the ayahuasca ceremony leader related stories about moving away from political action, and changes in his relationship to the natural world, influenced my overall analysis of all the various forms of qualitative data.

Descriptive statistical methods were employed to analyze the scaled questionnaire data. This method gave me a visual image to understand the data, detect patterns and relationships, and summarize the data in easily interpretable graphs (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 258). Frequency graphs helped summarize the changes in research participants before and after

working with ayahuasca regarding their behavior, attitude, and beliefs on hegemonic themes.

In this case, comparative bar graphs were created to show these variables and frequencies. Since this study focused on the potential changes in participants before and after using ayahuasca, the weighted average on individual questions was not determined to be useful. However, the comparison within a set of before and after questions is represented in the presentation of data.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
PRESENTATION OF DATA**

*You hold us through the night
You hold us through the night
Grandmother you
You fill our hearts with joy
You fill our hearts with joy
Grandmother ayahuasca
You hold us close through the night
Healing us, Teaching us
Hold on, Hold on as the waves move us through the night
Ayahuasca, we love you
Ayahuasca, we love you
Gratitude for this moment
Gratitude for your blessings.*

(Ayahuasca ceremony healing song, used by permission from the
Anonymous Ceremony Leader)

This chapter presents the data from the five steps of my research process. Step 1: Conduct a qualitative short interview pilot study. Step 2: Conduct a quantitative scaled questionnaire pilot study. Step 3: Conduct seven additional short qualitative interviews. Step 4: Revise quantitative scaled questionnaire and conduct additional quantitative scaled questionnaire study. Step 5: Conduct four in-depth qualitative interviews with an ayahuasca ceremony leader. For each of these I include the questions I asked going into each phase of the data gathering and my answers to those questions. The chapter concludes with a thematic analysis of the data, which I coded based on hegemonic themes.

The working hypothesis throughout my research, that the ayahuasca experience might be an antidote to Western hegemony, was admittedly from the beginning a complex one. Both topics, the ayahuasca experience and the concept of hegemony, are not easy to understand. Hegemony tends to be invisible and hard to identify. The ayahuasca experience turns out to be

similar to hegemony, in that it is hard to pin down, hard to understand, and manifests differently to different people. As a result of the research process, I better see how Western cultural hegemony plays out in my daily life. I see it in the news, while shopping, in Facebook postings, television commercials, and in the political systems. I have come to realize how unconsciously hegemony is integrated into my own beliefs and values. This research process was also challenging and complicated. Formulating a study that might bring forth research data to measure or more fully understand something as complicated as ayahuasca and hegemony challenged my research skills; to both construct a research study that would be respectful of the Indigenous ways of working with ayahuasca and of Indigenous research methods, while being conducted within a Western academic context.

Many themes emerged within the data, which surprised me, such as the degree to which the ayahuasca experience does not really result in an increase in political activity, and at the same time the high degree to which the ayahuasca experience inspires people to move towards viewing the natural world as sentient. The charts contained in this chapter show trends in the attitudes and beliefs of participants before and after working with ayahuasca: sometimes a large shift away from the influences of Western hegemony, and in some cases there are minimal changes reported, and in some cases the data are inconclusive. With the qualitative interview data, I did not anticipate there to be so many similarities in the words used to describe the experiences participants had with ayahuasca, which is noted in the interviews I conducted. I was also surprised at the themes that emerged in the data such as a movement away from commodification, a personal movement towards personal freedom and self-determination, and a movement towards relationality. I had also expected the interviews with the ayahuasca ceremony

leader to lead to more specific insight to Western hegemony and ayahuasca; instead it was instructive to hear many stories from this person about his experiences both leading and attending ayahuasca ceremonies and some of the results from those experiences.

Step 1: Conduct Qualitative Short-Interview Pilot Study

Table 1

Qualitative Short-Interview Pilot Study: Gender, Age, First Year Working with Ayahuasca, Approximate Number of Times Worked with Ayahuasca, and Interview Format

| Interview Participants | Gender | Age | First Year working with Ayahuasca | Approx. number of times working with Ayahuasca | Interview Format |
|-------------------------------|---------------|------------|--|---|-------------------------|
| Participant 1 | Male | 52 | 2012 | 14 times | In person |
| Participant 2 | Female | 40 | 2012 | 21 times | In person |
| Participant 3 | Female | 41 | 2001 | 40 times | Skype |

I asked myself the following questions when I began my short qualitative interview pilot study.

1. Is the “interview guide approach” an appropriate method of conducting the remaining seven short qualitative interviews? I determined that this research method was effective at yielding appropriate data from the interview participants.
2. Are the questions prepared effective for prompting participants to share their experiences before and after working with ayahuasca? I determined that using prepared questions about hegemonic topics included in Chapter 3 was a useful method for the remaining interviews.
3. Did the short qualitative interview pilot study produce useful qualitative data? I determined that useful data were produced from the pilot study interviews. Participants

shared personal stories and experiences with ayahuasca. Themes began to emerge from the three pilot study interviews. Even with a relatively small sample, trends emerged.

Step 2: Conduct Quantitative Scaled Questionnaire Pilot Study

I asked myself the following questions when I began my qualitative scaled questionnaire pilot study. The questions and my conclusions were

1. Is there a connection between ayahuasca usage and a change in Western hegemonic antidotes? There appears to be some connection.
2. Is there a significant change in attitudes and beliefs before and after working with ayahuasca? With some of the questions there appears to be a clear change in attitudes and beliefs, and in some cases not.
3. Can the subtle changes in people regarding hegemonic themes be measured? Using the scaled questionnaire format for the purposes of this study seems to be a useful method for examining this question. The data found in this pilot study were useful to my study and showed some relationship between working with ayahuasca and movement away from Western hegemonic structures.
4. Should these questions be changed based on the pilot study? Some of the questions were poorly written and were rewritten. When looking at the pilot study, I found that the questions which examined before and after working with ayahuasca to be more useful as a baseline. As a result, the questions that did not start with that premise of examining the effects of ayahuasca on beliefs and attitudes before and after were discarded or rewritten.

A total of 50 people responded to the pilot questionnaire. Of those, 36 people completed the questionnaire. I do not know why the other 14 did not complete the questionnaire. The table below shows the demographic distribution of the respondents. The letter *n* in the chart refers to the total number of people that fall into that particular category.

Table 2

Quantitative Scaled Questionnaire Pilot Study Demographic

| | <i>n</i> | % |
|--|----------|----|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 17 | 47 |
| Female | 19 | 53 |
| Age | | |
| 21 – 30 | 5 | 14 |
| 31 – 40 | 12 | 33 |
| 41 – 50 | 15 | 42 |
| 51 – 60 | 3 | 8 |
| 61+ | 1 | 3 |
| Number of ayahuasca experiences | | |
| More than 1x | 19 | 53 |
| 10x or more | 17 | 47 |

What follows is the presentation of the quantitative data from the pilot study. Thirteen charts follow with a presentation of the data. The letter *n* is also used in all 13 charts in this section to show the total number of people who fall into a particular category on the scaled questionnaire.

1. On the question of political action two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was politically active.

After taking ayahuasca, I am politically active.

There appears to be an insignificant shift in political activity before and after taking ayahuasca. The most noticeable shift is in the group that did not agree at all before and after.

This question was re-written and now is number 1 on the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire discussed in Step 4.

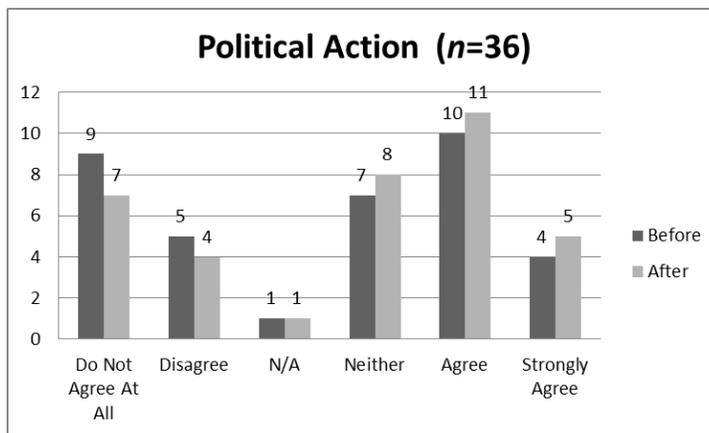


Figure 1. Pilot study: Political action.

2. On the question of personal courage one question was asked:

I am courageous in situations where I present a minority point of view.

As a point of clarification, on the question of being courageous in situations where the participant represented a minority point of view, before-and-after questions were not asked.

Twenty-nine of the 36 participants agree or strongly agree that they are courageous when representing a minority viewpoint. I decided not to use this question in the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

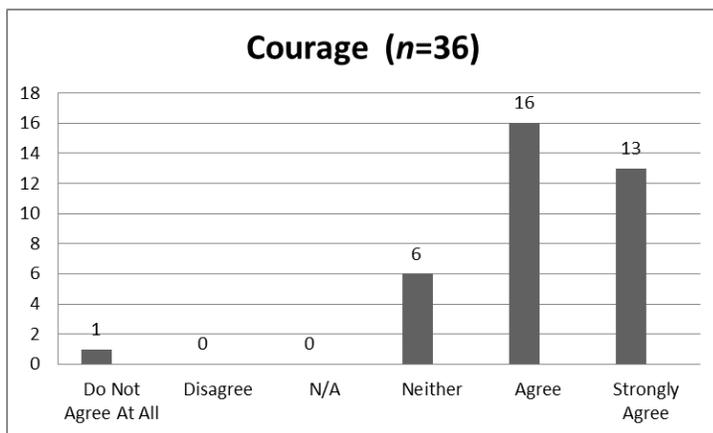


Figure 2. Pilot Study: Courage.

3. On the question of the importance of GMOs and the food industry, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was critical of GMOs and how the food industry is run and how it affects me.

After taking ayahuasca, I am critical of GMOs and how the food industry is run and how it affects me.

On the question of being critical of GMOs and the food industry, there appears to be a significant shift. Before working with ayahuasca, 5 participants disagreed that they were critical, while 15 strongly agreed. After using ayahuasca only one participant strongly disagreed and 19 strongly agreed that they were critical of GMOs and the food industry. This appears to be an unforeseen shift in perception. At the same time, there is a small increase in those participants selecting *not applicable* or *neither* and a small decrease in the number of those who agree. This question was re-written, and it is third in the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

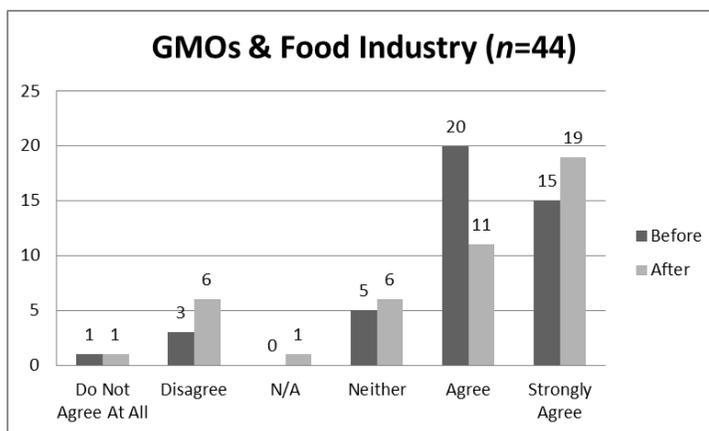


Figure 3. Pilot study: GMOs and the food industry.

4. On the question of English as the universal language, two statements were posed to questionnaire participants:

Before taking ayahuasca, I thought English should be the universal standard language.

After taking ayahuasca, I feel that English should be the universal standard.

*Note: One participant opted not to answer the second statement. The reason for this is unknown.

On the question of the importance of job and money there appears to be a minimal change before and after working with ayahuasca. My own personal bias was to assume that there would be a much larger shift after ayahuasca towards the *do not agree at all* or *disagree* categories, but this did not happen. In retrospect, the question appears to be poorly conceived.

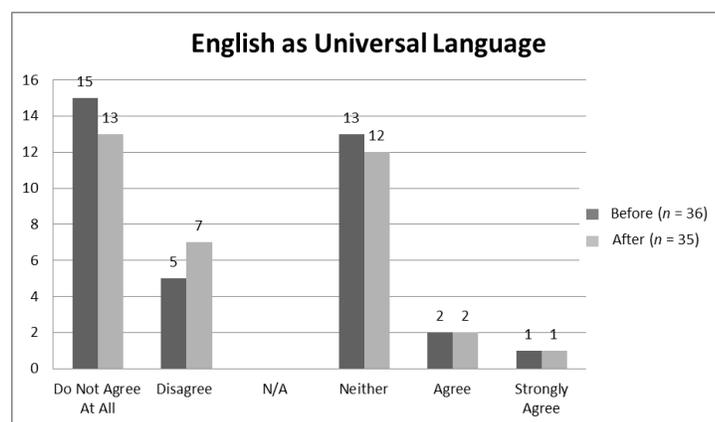


Figure 4. Pilot study: English as the universal standard language.

5. On the question of the importance of one's job and making money, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, my job and making money were important to me.

After taking ayahuasca, my job and making money are important to me.

*Note: One person opted not to answer the remaining questions. The reason is not known.

There does not appear to be a significant change in participants' feelings about use of English as a universal language before and after use of ayahuasca. My own personal bias was to assume that there would be a much larger shift after ayahuasca towards the *do not agree at all* or *disagree* categories, but this did not happen. In retrospect, the question appears to be poorly conceived. This question was re-written and it is number 5 on the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

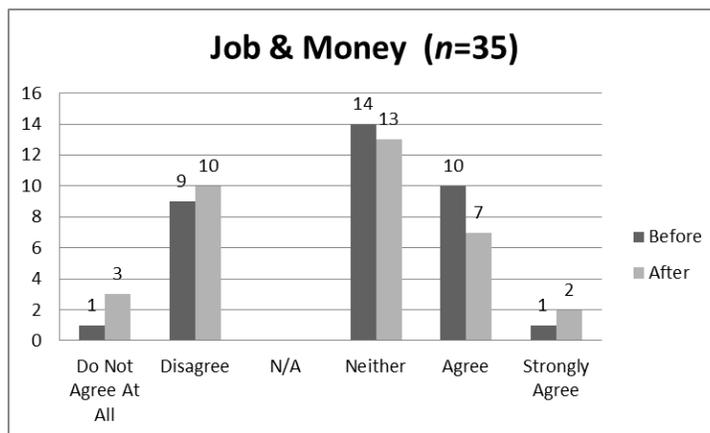


Figure 5. Pilot study: Importance of job and money.

6. On the question of connection to plants and animals, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I felt connected to plants, animals, and the natural world.

After taking ayahuasca, I feel connected to plants, animals, and the natural world.

There appears to be a very significant shift in the participants' before-and-after experience of feeling connected to plants, animals, and the natural world. Particularly notable is the large increase in the number of participants who strongly agree that they feel connected to plants, animals, and the natural world after having used ayahuasca. In the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire this question was changed to assess participants' view on plants, animals, and the natural world to the plants, animals, and nature having consciousness, and is question 6.

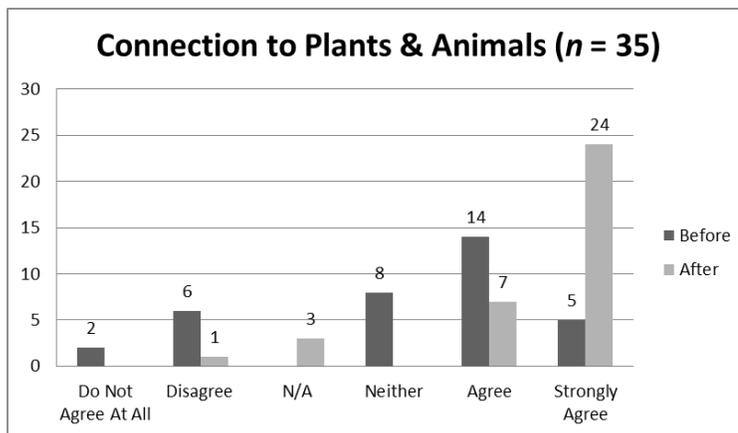


Figure 6. Pilot study: Connection to plants, animals, and the natural world.

7. On the question of connection and support among family and friends, one statement was posed:

I feel connected to my family and friends and supportive and supported.

As a point of clarification, before-and-after working with ayahuasca questions were not asked. Twenty-two of the 35 participants agree or strongly agree that they feel connection to their family and friends and feel supportive and supported. This question was not used in the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire because it was not clearly tied to working with ayahuasca and is not significant to my research study.

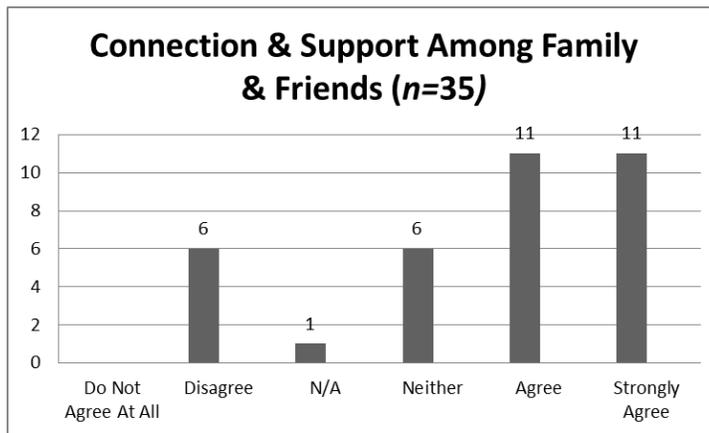


Figure 7. Pilot study: Connection to family and friends, support and supportive.

8. On the question of criticality of the news and news sources two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was critical of the news and news sources.

After taking ayahuasca, I am critical of the news and news sources.

*Note: Two participants did not answer the first question, but did answer the second question.

The reason for this is not known.

There appears to be an increase in criticality of the news and news sources after using ayahuasca. Particularly of note is the increase in *strongly agree* after using ayahuasca.

Furthermore, there is a decrease in the number of participants who disagree. This question was rewritten and is question number 8 in the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

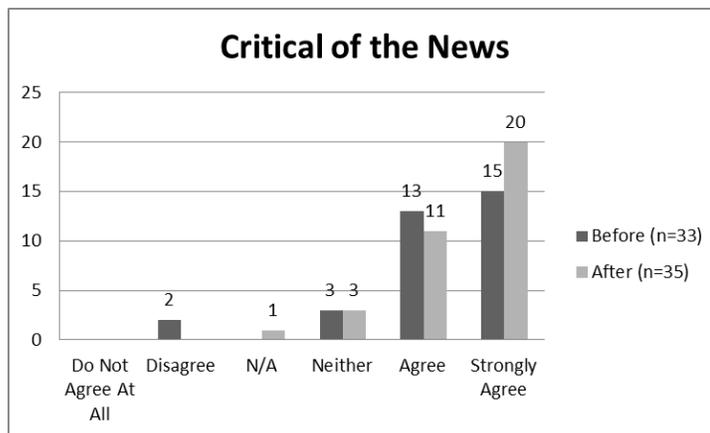


Figure 8. Pilot study: Critical of news and news sources.

9. On the question of one's thinking of the long-term consequences of his or her actions, one statement was posed:

I think about the long-term effects and consequences of my actions.

*Note: Only 34 participants answered this question. The reason for this is not known.

As a point of clarification, on the question of the participants' tendency to think of the long term consequences of their actions; before-and-after questions were not asked, nor was it asked whether there was a shift after use of ayahuasca. Twenty-nine of the 34 participants agree or strongly agree that they think of the long-term consequences of their actions. In the revised qualitative scaled questionnaire, this question was rewritten in the before-and-after working with ayahuasca format. It is question number 9 in the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

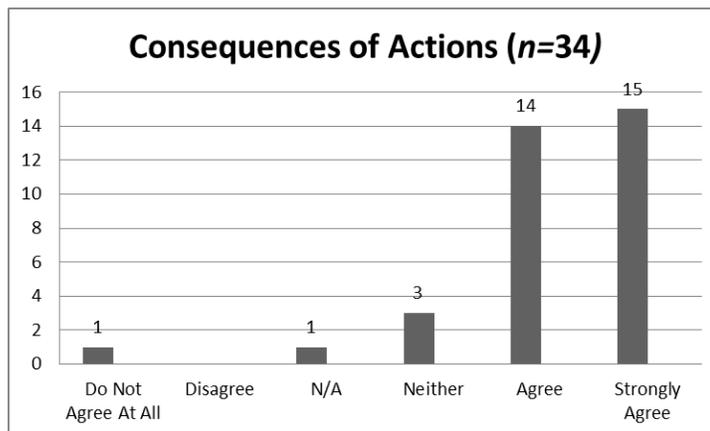


Figure 9. Pilot study: Long term consequences of actions.

10. On the question of the importance of material goods, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, seeking out more material goods was important to me.

After taking ayahuasca, seeking out more material goods is important to me.

The data show a notable decrease in the number of participants who view material goods as important after using ayahuasca. The entire graph shifts to the left as predicted, post ayahuasca usage. I assumed that working with ayahuasca would result in participants likely moving away from material goods being important to them. This question was re-written and is number 14 on the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

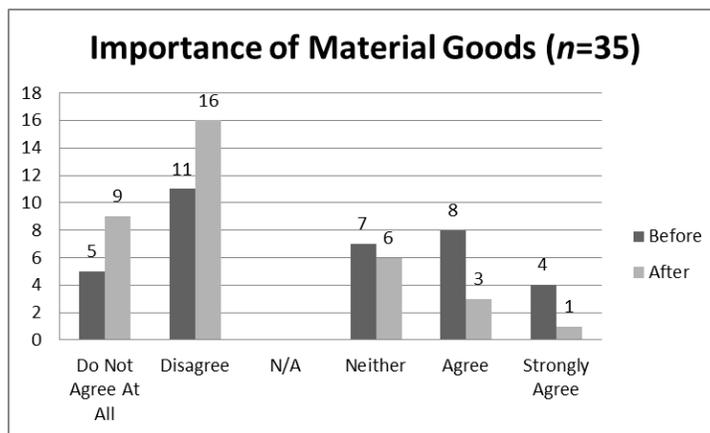


Figure 10. Pilot study: Having material possessions and their meaning.

11. On the question of acting with compassion and empathy, one statement was posed:

I act with compassion and empathy in my daily life and in my daily actions.

To clarify, on the question of the participants' tendency to act with compassion and empathy in their daily actions and activities, before-and-after questions were not asked. Thirty-one of the 35 participants agree or strongly agree that they act with compassion and empathy in their daily actions and activities. In the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire, this question was rewritten as a before-and-after working with ayahuasca question, and is question number 10.

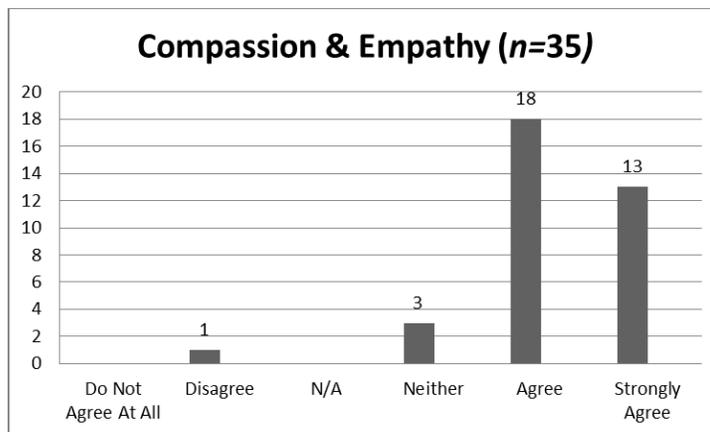


Figure 11. Pilot study: Acting with compassion and empathy.

12. On the question of critical thinking, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I considered myself a critical thinker.

After taking ayahuasca, I consider myself a critical thinker.

*Note: one participant chose not to answer the second question. The reason for this is not known.

There is an increase in the number of people who strongly agree that after using ayahuasca they are critical thinkers. And yet, there is a decrease in the number of people who agree that after using ayahuasca they are critical thinkers. While some participants have shifted into neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they are critical thinkers after using ayahuasca, no one disagrees that they are a critical thinker after using ayahuasca. This question was not changed, and is number 12 in the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

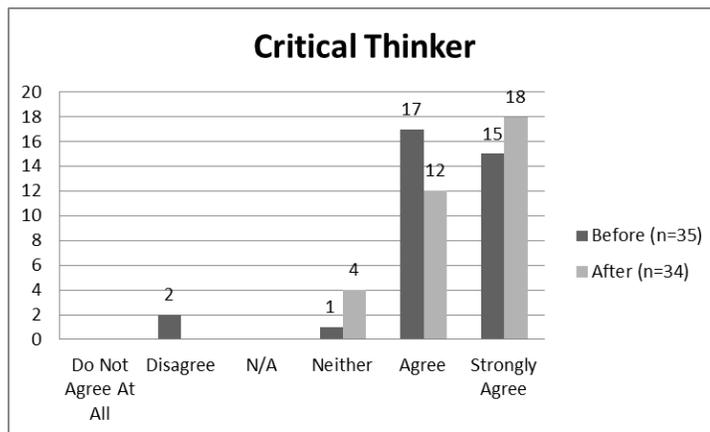


Figure 12. Pilot study: Considering self a critical thinker.

13. On the question of supporting local economies, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I tried to shop locally and was part of the local economy.

After taking ayahuasca, I try to shop locally and be part of a local economy.

There is a large increase in the number of participants who shop locally and participate in their local economies after using ayahuasca. This question was not changed, and is question number 13 in the revised quantitative scaled questionnaire.

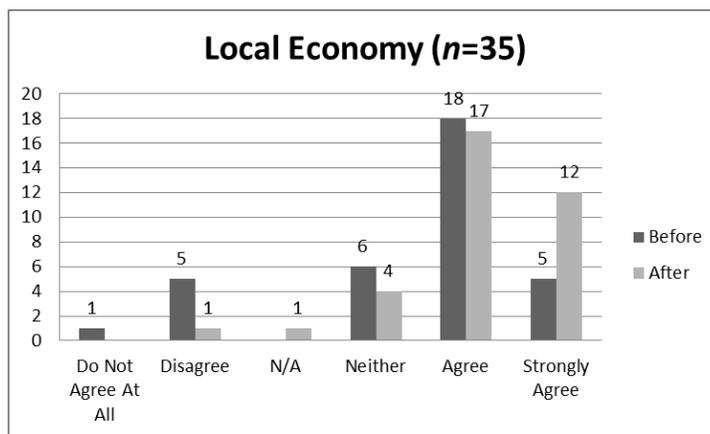


Figure 13. Pilot study: Shop locally and part of local economy.

Step 3: Conduct Seven Additional Short Qualitative Interviews

Table 3

Qualitative Short-Interview Final Study: Gender, Age, First Year Worked with Ayahuasca, Approximate Number of Times Worked with Ayahuasca, Interview Format

| Interview - Participants | Gender | Age | First year working with ayahuasca | Approx. number of times working with ayahuasca | Interview format |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Participant 4 | Male | 37 | 2008 | + 100 times | Skype |
| Participant 5 | Male | 66 | 2000 | + 100 times | Skype |
| Participant 6 | Female | 39 | 1998 | + 100 times | In-person |
| Participant 7 | Male | 35 | 2009 | 25 times | In-person |
| Participant 8 | Female | 37 | 2006 | 40 times | Skype |
| Participant 9 | Female | 28 | 2010 | 6 times | In-person |
| Participant 10 | Male | 46 | 2006 | +50 times | In-person |

Six additional short qualitative interviews were conducted. Within this group of seven participants, three had worked with ayahuasca more than 100 times and two more than 40 times. As a result, this group of research participants had more experience working with ayahuasca than those I interviewed for the short qualitative pilot study, and presented different data. These qualitative interviews presented many unexpected themes, as well as deep personal information I did not expect to hear during the interview process. These interviews seemed to anecdotally suggest a large shift in people who use ayahuasca and Western hegemonic themes. Specifically, there was a notable difference in outlook and worldview in those who had worked with ayahuasca for over a decade or over 50 times and those who did not.

I asked myself the following questions before I conducted the seven qualitative interviews. The questions and my conclusions were,

1. Do themes stand out in the interviews? Yes, there are many themes that stood out when examining the data; themes in the data which may be potential antidotes to Western hegemony are presented in the next chapter. There were many unforeseen similarities different ceremony participants had during actual ayahuasca ceremonies, as well as realizations they had come to outside of ceremony. For instance, many of the participants reported a distinct change towards viewing nature as a sentient consciousness after the ayahuasca experience. In addition, many participants reported feeling apolitical after working with ayahuasca.
2. What patterns have emerged based on quantity of ayahuasca experiences? Many participants reported an increase in personal changes and life improvements they experienced from participating in ayahuasca ceremonies. No one regretted working with ayahuasca. At the same time, most participants described the experience as difficult and challenging.
3. Does there seem to be a change in hegemonic themes? I was unsure if the qualitative data would suggest a change in hegemonic themes from participants, but it certainly does. There appear to be shifts in 100% of the participants away from one or more Western hegemonic forces after working with ayahuasca.

Step 4: Revise and Re-open Quantitative Scaled Questionnaire Study

A total of 67 people responded to the official online questionnaire. Of those, 44 people completed the questionnaire. The table below shows the demographic distribution of the respondents.

Table 4

Final Questionnaire Demographics

| Final Questionnaire Demographics | <i>n</i> = | % |
|---|------------|----|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 17 | 39 |
| Female | 27 | 61 |
| Age | | |
| 21 – 25 | 1 | 2 |
| 26 – 30 | 5 | 11 |
| 31 – 35 | 10 | 23 |
| 36 – 40 | 6 | 14 |
| 41 – 45 | 9 | 21 |
| 46 – 50 | 6 | 14 |
| 51 – 55 | 5 | 11 |
| 56 – 60 | 1 | 2 |
| 61+ | 1 | 2 |
| Number of times working with ayahuasca | | |
| 1 – 10 | 27 | 60 |
| 11 - 20 | 3 | 7 |
| 21 – 50 | 4 | 9 |
| 51 – 74 | 3 | 7 |
| 75 – 125 | 3 | 7 |
| 126 – 200 | 2 | 5 |
| 200+ | 2 | 5 |

What follows is a presentation of the quantitative data and corresponding graphs.

1. On the question of political action, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was politically active.

After taking ayahuasca, my level of political action changed.

The distribution data as represented in this graph are very difficult to interpret or are inconclusive.

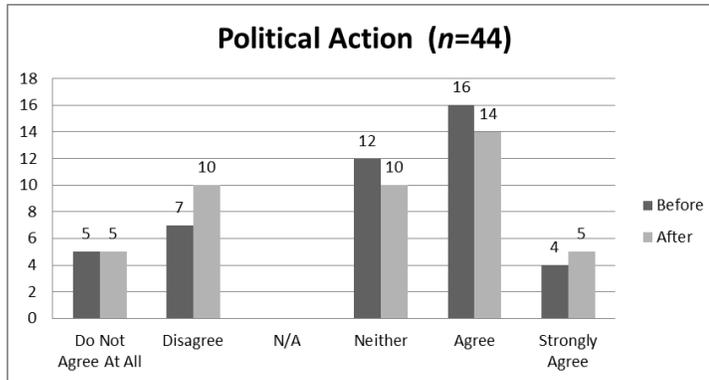


Figure 14. Final study: Political action.

2. On the question of acting in response to injustice, two statements were posed:

Before ayahuasca, I tried to intervene when there was injustice.

After ayahuasca, I am more likely to intervene when there is injustice.

The distribution data as represented in this graph are very difficult to interpret or are inconclusive.

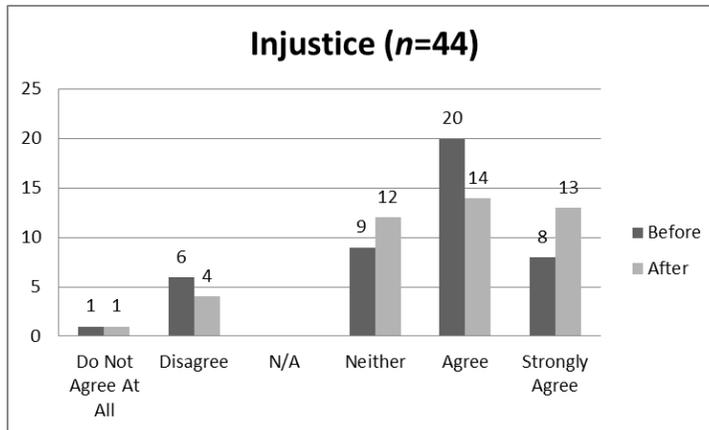


Figure 15. Final study: Intervening when there is injustice.

3. On the question of the importance of GMOs and the food industry, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was concerned about GMOs, how the food industry is run, and how it affects me.

After taking ayahuasca, I am more concerned with GMOs, the foods I eat, and the effects of the food industry.

The distribution data as represented in this graph are very difficult to interpret or are inconclusive.

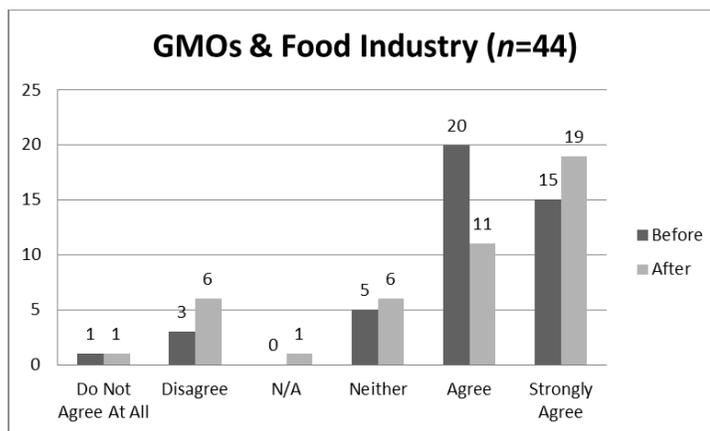


Figure 16. Final study: GMOs and the food industry.

4. On the question of English as the universal language, two statements were posed:

*Before taking ayahuasca, I thought English should be the universal standard language.
After taking ayahuasca, I feel there should not be a universally standard language.*

Before working with ayahuasca only 2% of participants agreed that English should be the universally standard language, while 66% disagreed or did not agree at all that English should be the universally standard language. After working with ayahuasca, 32% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that there should not be a universally standard language. At the same time, after working with ayahuasca 41% of participants neither agreed or disagreed that there should be a universally standard language. As a result, this question does not really provide useful data to understanding this issue.

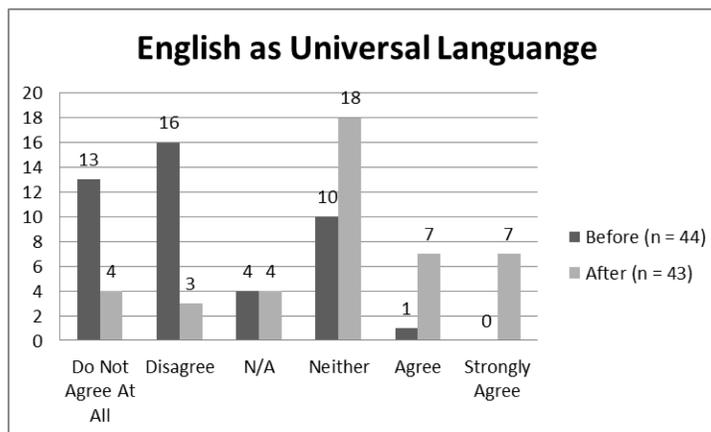


Figure 17. Final study: English as the universal standard.

5. On the importance of one's career two statements were posed:

Before ayahuasca, my career was the most important thing to me.

After ayahuasca, my career is less important to me.

Prior to working with ayahuasca, more than half of the participants did not feel that their career was the most important thing to them. After working with ayahuasca, half of the participants agree or strongly agree that their career is less important. The answers to this question potentially point to a shift in priorities from being commodity driven to perhaps seeking meaning in other ways.

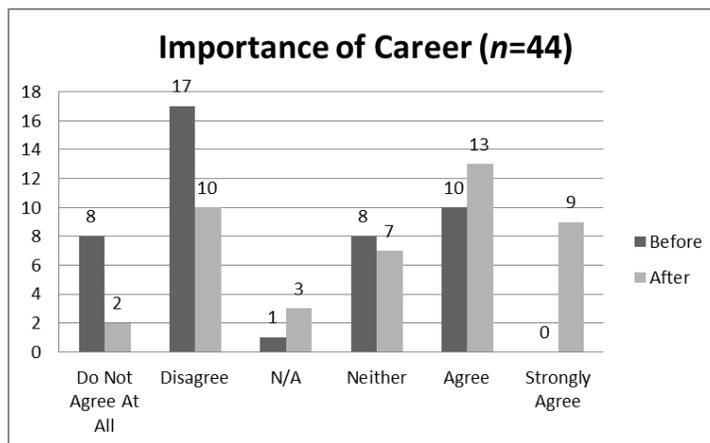


Figure 18. Final study: Importance of career.

6. On the question of consciousness of nonhumans, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I thought that plants, animals, and nature have consciousness.
After taking ayahuasca, I thought that plants, animals, and nature have consciousness.

Before working with ayahuasca 12 participants were either neutral or disagreed that plants, animals, and nature have consciousness. After taking ayahuasca, no one disagreed and only three participants were neutral on the topic of plant, animal, and nature having consciousness, while 39 participants agree or strongly agree.

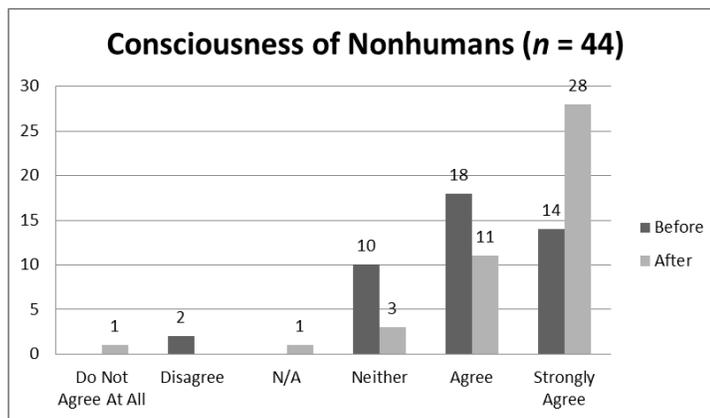


Figure 19. Final study: Connection to plants, animals, and the natural world.

7. On the question of putting one's own needs above those of others, two statements were posed:

Before ayahuasca, I put my needs and desires above others, including my friends, family, and community.

After ayahuasca, I am less focused on my own needs and desires, and more concerned with the needs of others including my family, friends, and community.

Before taking ayahuasca, 16 participants disagree or strongly disagree that they put their own needs above others. In other words they already put others' needs above their own. However 14 people agreed or strongly agreed that they put their own needs above others. After working with ayahuasca, 26 (10 more than before working with ayahuasca) people agree or strongly agree that they put the needs of others above their own.

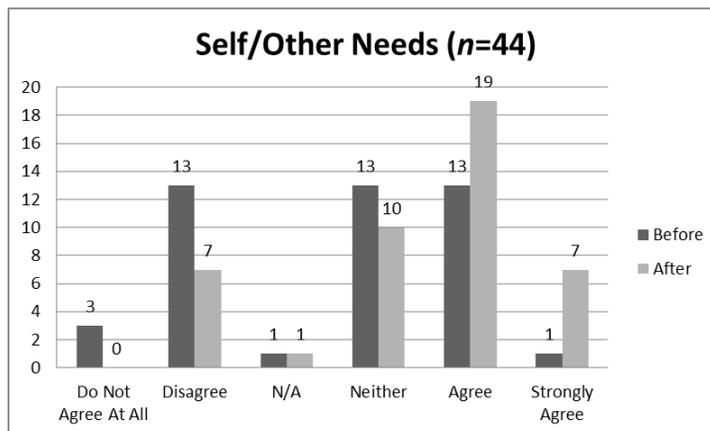


Figure 20. Final study: Self/other needs.

8. On the question of being critical of the way the news is reported, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was critical of the way news is reported.

After taking ayahuasca, I am more critical of how the news is reported.

Before taking ayahuasca, 36 of the 44 participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were critical of the news. After working with ayahuasca, only 31 participants agree or strongly agree that they were more critical of the news, while 5 participants chose *not applicable* as an answer to the second question.

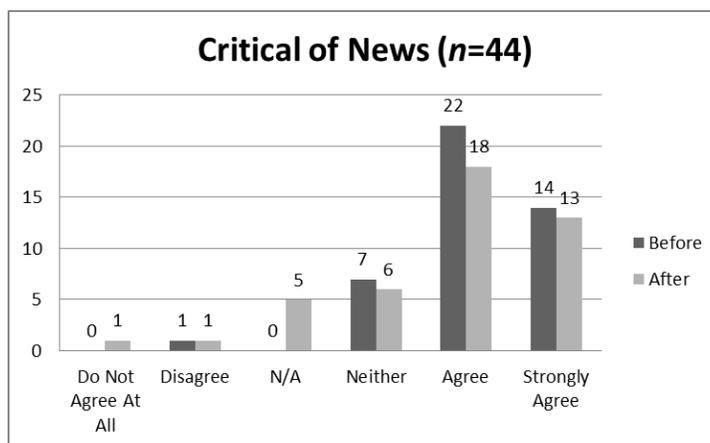


Figure 21. Final study: Critical of news and news sources.

9. On the question of one's thinking of the long-term consequences of one's actions, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I thought about the long-term effects and consequences of my actions.

After taking ayahuasca, I think about the long-term effects and consequences of my actions.

Fifteen participants strongly agree that after taking ayahuasca they think about the long-term effects and consequences of their actions. This is compared to only five participants strongly agreeing before working with ayahuasca.

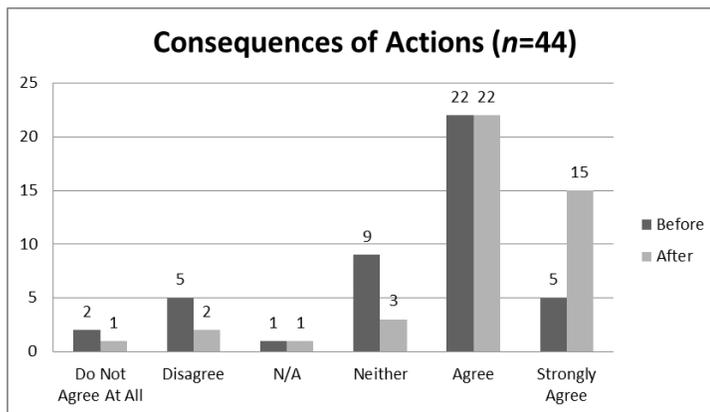


Figure 22. Final study: Long-term consequences of actions.

10. On the question of acting with compassion and empathy, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, acting with compassion and empathy was important to me.
After taking ayahuasca, acting with compassion and empathy is more important to me.

Three participants disagreed that acting with compassion and empathy was important to them before taking ayahuasca, while 39 either agreed or strongly agreed. However, after working with ayahuasca, no participants disagree, and 42 agree that acting with compassion and empathy is more important to them.

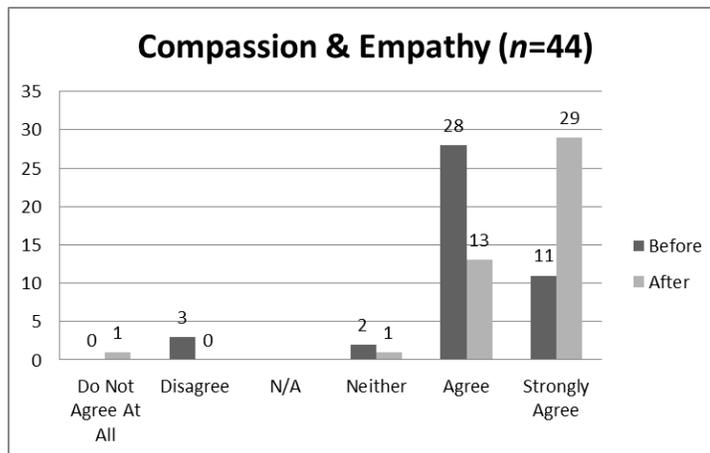


Figure 23. Final study. Acting with compassion and empathy.

11. On the question of social awareness, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was socially aware.

After taking ayahuasca, social awareness was more important to me.

Before taking ayahuasca, more than half of the participants agreed that they were socially aware. After working with ayahuasca, participants strongly agreed or agreed that social awareness is more important to them. Among those that were either neutral, or disagreed that social awareness was important prior to working with ayahuasca, there is almost no change in the importance of social awareness.

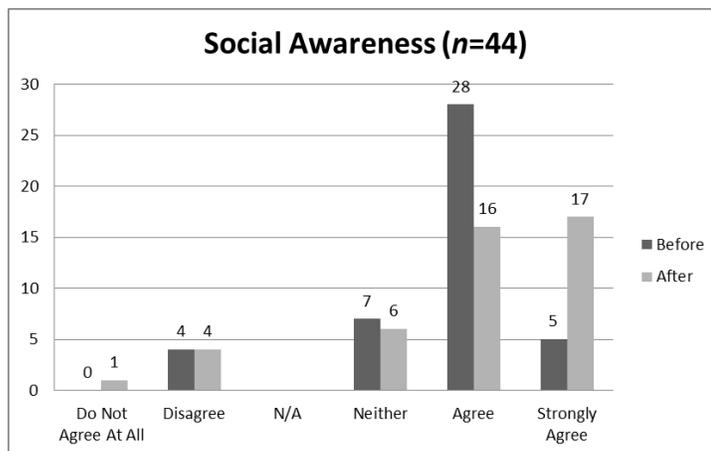


Figure 24. Final study. Importance of social awareness.

12. On the question of critical thinking, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I considered myself a critical thinker.

After taking ayahuasca, I considered myself a critical thinker.

*Note: One participant did not answer the second question. The reason is not known.

There appears to be very little change, however 34 participants agree or strongly agree that they were critical thinkers after working with ayahuasca, compared to 33 participants before working with ayahuasca.

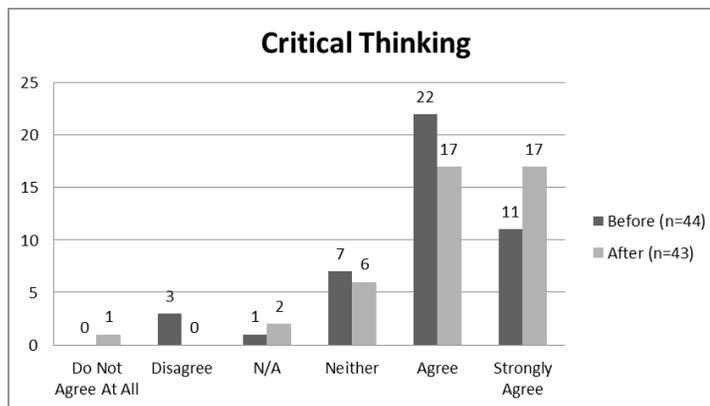


Figure 25. Final study: Considering self a critical thinker.

13. On the question of supporting local economies, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I tried to shop locally and was part of the local economy.

After taking ayahuasca, I try to shop locally and be part of a local economy.

*Note: One participant did not answer the first question. The reason is not known.

Before working with ayahuasca 26 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they tried to participate in their local economies. After working with ayahuasca, 31 participants either agree or strongly agree that they try to participate in their local economies. In addition, 8 people disagreed or strongly disagreed that they tried to participate in their local economies before working with ayahuasca, but only 3 people disagreed or strongly disagreed after working with ayahuasca.

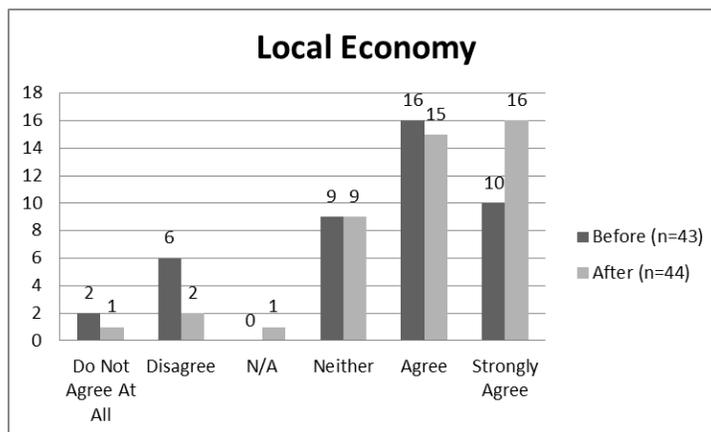


Figure 26. Final study. Shop locally and part of local economy.

14. On the question of the importance of material goods, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, buying and having many material possessions was very important to me.

After taking ayahuasca, having material possessions is less meaningful to me.

Thirty people were either neutral or agreed that material possessions were very important to them before taking ayahuasca. Material possessions became less meaningful to 34 participants after working with ayahuasca. Only 4 participants either disagreed or did not agree at all that material possessions were less important to them after working with ayahuasca.

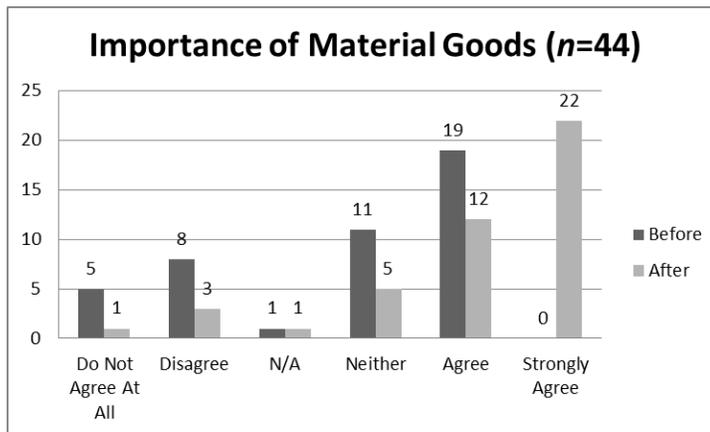


Figure 27. Final study: Having material possessions and their meaning.

Qualitative Scaled Questionnaire Comments

The scaled survey presented a place at the end of the survey for participants to include any comments they wanted to make. My hope was that this would give more opportunity for people in an anonymous setting to express their feelings and thoughts openly about ayahuasca and the ayahuasca experience. The comments left by participants were useful to the study and provided some interesting viewpoints about Western hegemony. The data presented a wide range of comments from someone commenting that ayahuasca is “God in a glass,” to someone criticizing the research questions for being too specific. Twenty-nine out of 44 questionnaire participants left comments. I have included a sample of 11 responses that illustrate some of the themes and topics mentioned by these anonymous participants. I included the date and times comments were submitted, which Survey Monkey captured. I included the exact comments left by participants and did not edit them for typographical or grammatical errors.

1. I strongly respect and I'm aware of the sacred nature of the plant teachers/healers, I believe that they can help shift consciousness in a planetary level, to make us more aware of others and the planet, and our role and our place in the human evolution.

1/18/2015 11:42 AM

2. While I've always had a strong desire for community connection, support, and intention to improve it, I think the medicine and ceremony have helped me internalize the experience that love and compassion are the foundation for these connections and that without love and compassion, I can participate and play a part in improving my community, but the true connection occurs through love and compassion and subsequently non-judgment. I think ayahuasca and the ayahuasca community has helped me feel and express compassion and empathy in a more natural, authentic way.

1/17/2015 8:23 PM

3. Aya for me has helped me address the critical imbalances within my self and ego. Through Aya ceremony, I have been able to gain insight into these issues and also have grown my ability to focus on them in a productive and meaningful way. I feel more connected with myself and with nature and the total environment as a result of my experiences with Aya. My relationships with my friends and community have also improved.

1/17/2015 12:19 PM

4. *The framing of this survey could lead one to believe that ayahuasca did not have much of an effect on me, which is not the case of my experience at all. My experience with ayahuasca simply affirmed the belief systems I already had going into it. It revealed itself as a life tool I can use to expand on my own understanding of nature, and how our political systems and social structures can corrupt an individual and keep him/her from living harmoniously with plant and animal spirits. Ayahuasca has enlightened my understanding of certain family members and their struggle to move forward with their own lives (i.e. why they have always seemed rather stunted in their spiritual understanding of the world.) I do not recommend that others use ayahuasca, but I think that those who are brave enough to do so walk away from it feeling empowered and connected to the universal consciousness.*

1/14/2015 6:10 PM

5. *It's difficult convey how significantly changed I am through my ayahuasca experiences if I stick only to the questions in this survey. Certainly some of my social and political behaviors have been influenced. But the most profound changes have been more deeply personal. I have been introduced to myself, my fears and flaws, but also my beauty and sense of comfort and satisfaction with who I am. I have done a fair amount of therapy and self improvement, taken depression medications to deal with depression, family issues and cultural issues related to being a woman. None have amounted to any really lasting change in how I relate to myself or to my community at large. Finally - at the midpoint in my life, I moved past a being stuck in my pre-adolescence and relate to myself as an adult woman with full ownership and responsibility for who I am in the world. It's not that I'm more politically active, as a hobby to keep myself busy. It's that I feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for who I am in society. Also, ayahuasca has shown me how things and people are all connected and influence one another. The risk associated with me being uninvolved, self-involved or negatively involved in community is too great. This is how the things noted in the survey are impacted by my ayahuasca experiences.*

12/30/2014 10:31 AM

6. *The primary reason I started to use Ayahuasca was for healing work- History of sexual incest which led (?) to addictions. I have been drinking ayahuasca for 8 years now and am learning how to better function as a compassion human being. I realized the world needs healing and ayahuasca was a very positive and beneficial way to begin. I feel blessed and have much gratitude to the plant spirits and to those who work with the plants.*

12/19/2014 3:54 PM

7. *Aya taught me how to be a better human being, not to be afraid of death, feel more compassion especially toward family members. It changed my diet and my habits. I became prolife with respect to my own life choices. It taught me to respect and cherish all*

life. It showed me God and history of creation. It opened my heart chakra. It made me. To be honest with myself. it showed me how to change my family's karma.

12/13/2014 11:11 AM

8. Before ayahuasca I was unaware that we have alien heritage now I'm convinced we have alien heritage.

12/13/2014 11:02 AM

9. I had a lot of these characteristics before I took ayahuasca, so having taken it, they didn't change a discernable amount. I have always had a strong connection to the Earth and fought for equality. I see it as a longer timeline, starting with me being a child who loved the woods and then a hardcore straight edge punk rocker with a political bent on up to the yoga teacher and astrologer I am now. All of these things served to give me a more universal and non-judgemental mindset and a desire to heal and help this world. The ayahuasca appeared in my life when it was needed to kickstart some faster evolution.

12/10/2014 6:07 PM

10. After taking Ayahuasca I feel less inclined to drink alcohol. I have started meditating, eating healthier and taken steps to build a healthier and happier life. I feel a greater sense of connectedness with everything and everyone around me.

12/2/2014 9:32 AM

11. Ayahuasca is safe and effective medicine to help heal the mind and body. It should be available to everyone who is need of healing. Ayahuasca has spiritual benefits as well. People that have been healed with ayahuasca are happier, healthier, have better relationships, and feel that their life has purpose.

1/13/2015 8:00 AM

Step 5: Conduct Four In-Depth Qualitative Interviews with an Ayahuasca Ceremony Leader

An anonymous male ayahuasca ceremony leader, aged 52, was interviewed on four occasions. This leader was selected to be interviewed because he was extensively trained in leading ayahuasca ceremonies in Peru and in the United States. These qualitative interviews were conducted employing a modified version of grounded theory interviewing methods. This leader spoke about a wide range of topics, from stories about his boyhood to his experiences being

trained to lead ayahuasca ceremonies. There were many references during the interviews to hegemonic themes such as political awareness, the role of healing in personal and collective change, shifts in community positioning, and changes in commodification. Due to the range of topics covered, I chose to code the data as with the other interviews, utilizing a thematic analysis approach. This method allowed me to place the data into a thematic model, which the qualitative data fit. This model is able to capture hegemonic themes as they relate to ayahuasca.

I asked myself the following questions before I conducted the four qualitative interviews with the anonymous ayahuasca ceremony leader:

1. Does someone who has worked with ayahuasca more than 400 times over 15 years present different data than others interviewed who have worked with ayahuasca fewer times? Yes, it appears that his comments are different than those who have worked with ayahuasca less than 100 times. During the interviews, he appeared to speak more definitely about the changes and change potential ayahuasca poses to Western hegemony. He is also able to discuss not only his own experiences, but his experiences in working with over 1,000 participants.
2. What can be learned from someone who has led hundreds of ayahuasca ceremonies on ayahuasca as an antidote to Western hegemony? The interviews were not as directed as the shorter qualitative interviews with other participants. As a result, the data were not always as obviously relevant to my study on hegemony. However, the ayahuasca ceremony leader was critical of some of the biases and problems Westerners and the Western worldview pose towards Indigenous models of working with ayahuasca.

Furthermore, he was critical of specific abuses people have endured during ceremonies from unethical ayahuasca ceremony leaders.

3. What themes emerge when there are no preset questions involved? Without preset questions that ask specific questions about hegemonic themes, hegemonic themes still emerged organically during the interview process. The ceremony leader offered many personal and vulnerable stories about his life, his challenges in leading ceremonies, and hard life lessons working with ayahuasca has taught him. In addition, he spoke extensively about ways in which ayahuasca has helped ceremony participants to become happier, healthier, and be more connected to their families and communities. While some of the stories and data were not immediately pertinent to the study, his stories and experiences added to the study through giving clear illustrations of the ayahuasca experience.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the data found in all five steps of my research process. The first step was to conduct a pilot study and interview three people. These qualitative interviews produced interesting data about Western hegemony. The data from this pilot study assisted me in finding themes and patterns in the data. The second step was to conduct a pilot scaled questionnaire study. This pilot study provided the opportunity to experiment with creating a survey instrument to examine Western hegemonic themes and find a way to rank attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. This questionnaire had 34 participants and presented a mix of data, some showing a potential connection between ayahuasca usage and changes in hegemonic themes. At the same time, some of the questions showed no connection, or data that were

difficult or inconclusive. Step 3 was to conduct seven additional short interviews. This phase of the research produced data that seemed to suggest a strong connection between ayahuasca usage and changes in Western hegemonic themes. During this step in the research, there were many participants who had used ayahuasca more than one hundred times. Many themes emerged from these data that were useful for my study. The fourth step of the research process was to conduct a revised scaled questionnaire study. During this revised study, 44 participants participated. A comments section was included, and 22 participants included comments. The data were useful, and some questions showed a strong connection between ayahuasca usage and changes in Western hegemonic themes. With other question sets there no, or minimal changes noted. Some questions presented data that were confusing and difficult to surmise the specific changes.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE FIVE ANTIDOTES TO WESTERN HEGEMONY

“When we drink ayahuasca we evolve and gain power and lucidity. Then we can create actions that take form in the world, and change the future and the past too. If there is some trauma in the past, for example, it can come up through ayahuasca, but then it can be healed. That’s what ayahuasca is for.”

(Peruvian ayahuasca master Guillermo Arevelo, in Heaven & Charing, 2006, p. 88)

This chapter summarizes all of the data from all five steps of the research process into themes related to Western hegemony. Specifically, when the qualitative data were coded using thematic analysis, five antidotes to Western hegemony were revealed. This chapter also presents quantitative data to suggest that there is a connection between people working with ayahuasca more than 50 times and a movement away from Western hegemony. These changes can be found both in the qualitative and the quantitative data.

I am describing these as “movements” away from a hegemonic structure towards an antidote because I feel it more accurately depicts what the data have suggested: that the ayahuasca experience and its unique form of challenging hegemony is a process, oftentimes a lengthy process. The ayahuasca process may be abstract and not necessarily a Western form of additive knowledge over a period of time, or singular dramatic shifts at one time. However, the research data show clear evidence that over time long-term ayahuasca users do show movements away from Western hegemonic structures towards Indigenous-based antidotes. It is not realistic to think of the ayahuasca process as a miracle cure or a panacea of some sort. The notion of “movement” seems to imply a more organic change model as well—which more aligns with an Indigenous worldview. As the ayahuasca ceremony leader suggested in one of his interviews,

Little by little we learn to work with the medicine. Little by little we let go of what holds us back inside ourselves. Little by little the Grandmother [ayahuasca] helps to reveal that we are divine and we live in a divine world full of divine people and divine plants and animals. Ayahuasca mirrors back to us that the medicine is divine and we are divine.

For each of the five antidotes, I provide a brief definition and exploration of its related Western hegemonic structures, followed by a description of the potential antidote as it relates to the research data. I present direct quotes from interview participants that align with these antidotes. As part of my description and definitions, I draw from theories of Indigenous scholars to ground this exploration within an Indigenous worldview.

Antidote 1: Movement from the personal trappings of Western hegemony towards self-determination.

Antidote 2: Movement from individuality and “survival of the fittest” toward relationality and kinship-focused.

Antidote 3: Movement from anthropocentrism towards an anthropomorphic view of the natural world.

Antidote 4: Movement from being materially and commodity focused towards meaning and purpose found outside of consumerism and commodification.

Antidote 5: Movement from unconsciousness regarding political and social influences, towards criticality, or even rejection of these influences.

Major Findings in the Data

Both the qualitative and quantitative research data suggest there is a movement or a change in people who experience ayahuasca. The changes appear to be greater in those who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times. For example, of the 11 participants interviewed for the study (10 short interviews and one ayahuasca ceremony leader), 100% of the participants who had worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times spoke about changes related to each of the five antidotes. Samples from these interviews are contained in this chapter. The quantitative data also show a movement away from hegemonic structures. I reconfigured the data from the revised scaled questionnaire of those who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times. The reconfigured data show a larger antidotal movement in this group of participants than in the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times. While the sample sizes to each step of my study were small, the data suggest that the five antidotes to Western hegemony are present in each method employed in the study.

Antidote 1:

Movement from the Personal Trappings of Western Hegemony

Towards Self-Determination

This antidote and its movement suggests that the ayahuasca experience assists participants in personal-level healing, which includes a transformation in personal meaning, healing trauma, regaining perspective on their lives, feeling more connected to their personal purpose, and assisting in change from the “inside out.”

Western Hegemonic Structure

Western hegemony preys on people in the arena of personal beliefs and attitudes.

Western hegemony and its force towards commodification push the notion that individuals are incomplete as they are, and compared to others, they do not measure up. In essence, the commodification machine of Western hegemony pumps out the idea that people are not enough: They are too old, too fat, too skinny, not smart enough, not womanly enough or manly enough, and that the solution is to buy products, services, procedures, or some purchased solution to compensate. According to West (1982), hegemonic culture is “a culture successful at persuading people to consent to their oppression and exploitation” (p. 119). When a culture is dominated by a worldview that measures personal success based on economic wealth, it creates a polarization and stratification where there is a class of those who have success and those who do not. As Katz (2006) suggested, “Hegemony refers to a certain way of life and thought being dominant, which is diffused throughout society to inform norms, values and tastes, political practices, and social relations (p. 335).

Some recent studies have suggested that materialism may be associated with dissatisfaction, depression, isolation, anxiety and anger, not happiness. At the same time some academic researchers are studying ayahuasca as a potential cure to these exact issues. Furthermore, the values of materialism seem to work in opposition to other human needs such as connection, safety, and authenticity (Eckersley, 2006, p. 13). This is not to suggest that materialism is the only source of such issues, but that materialism is one significant influence, and a thread directly linked to the priorities of Western cultures. A pitfall of Western hegemony is the manner in which nearly every aspect of life is reduced down to a form of commodification.

Certainly the fashion, cosmetic, and beauty industries prey on people who feel inadequate.

Orbach (1986) explains,

The images that are presented in advertising are designed to create an illusion, a fantasy ideal that will keep women continually consuming. Advertisers are well aware of the insecurities that most women feel about their own bodies. The influential power of the diet, fashion, cosmetic and beauty industries, and their advertising strategies, target this, and their profits are sustained on the enormity of the body insecurity. (p. 79)

Naomi Wolf (2002) goes even further in talking about the damage caused by these industries noting, “the advertisers who make women’s mass culture possible depend on making women feel bad enough about their faces and bodies to spend more money on worthless or pain inducing products than they would if they felt innately beautiful” (p. 84). There certainly appears to be a corresponding set of industries that exploit men as well. Viagra commercials, weight loss industries, beer commercials, and other cultural “ideals” of masculinity leave men feeling incomplete as well. The byproduct of Western hegemony seems to be an increase in escapism, lack of connection to others, lack of meaning, disassociation, and discontent. These all lead to some of the major cultural issues of our time including depression and anxiety, from which advertisers and big pharmaceutical companies profit. In the United States alone, 40 million adults over the age of 18 are affected by anxiety. Anxiety disorders and the treatment of them costs the United States more than \$42 billion per year. At the same time approximately 20 million adults over the age of 18 suffer from depression each year as well (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2015). My research data suggest that the ayahuasca

experience helps people feel less isolated, and find a deeper sense of meaning and purpose, along with more social support, from attending ayahuasca ceremonies.

Antidotal Movement

The antidote to the personal trappings of Western hegemony on a personal level refers to a movement toward self-determination. I am using self-determination not in reference to a country or a state controlling its own destiny, but in the way of individuals becoming free from limitations and barriers to happiness and freedom. The theme of self-determination on both state and individual levels are similar, however. Clements (2004) defined self-determination as, “the ability of people/s to name, create and control their own history” (p. 66). The woundings of Western hegemony on individuals often times prevent them from dreaming a new future, moving through emotional trappings, and being free from trauma and pain. The ayahuasca experience provides opportunities for individuals to find healing on all levels: emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual. This is why the ayahuasca experience can be so profound in its healing potential, helping individuals to heal and transform their lives, which then strengthens connections within the individual’s family and community. The First Nations Indigenous peoples such as the Anishinabek think of health and healing as having four components, which correspond to the four directions of the medicine wheel. These areas of health include the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional (Wilson, 2003, pp. 87-88). These four areas are precisely the same levels being healed within the ayahuasca experience. Healing ceremonies, not only ayahuasca ceremonies, are undertaken to help people move through feelings of hopelessness and despair, and to see their innate power. Cajete (1994) mentions that the highest goal of Indigenous education is to help each individual realize and experience completeness in his or her life (p.

211). Cajete seems to be pointing to the process of coming to completeness that people oftentimes experience after working with ayahuasca.

The process of healing with various methods, ceremonies, and processes can be found within Indigenous cultures' cosmologies worldwide. For example, Atkinson (2002) encouraged a group of Australian Aboriginal peoples to write and tell their personal and collective healing stories in a program called, "Al-li: Fire and Water, Anger and Grief" (p. 93). I appreciate the unique and thorough way one of the participants named "Jackie" describes healing:

Healing is a really confusing word. When I first thought of it, I thought I would go along and all this pain was going to be healed, but now I know healing means learning.

Learning about yourself--learning about looking at things in a different way.

Understanding how those things came to be. Owning your things, but not taking on board other people's things. Being responsible for what you are responsible for, but not for other people's responsibilities. Learning how to deal with different situations-how to interact with people-how to lessen conflict-seeing your own things differently. (p. 140)

Conventional medicine has been examining the healing potential of ayahuasca as a remedy for a variety of illnesses and issues, including finding spiritual purpose and spiritual meaning (Kjellgren, Eriksson, & Norlander, 2009), healing from trauma (Mate, 2013; Nielson & Megler, 2014), treating addictions (Brierley & Davidson, 2012; Mabit, 2007; Thomas, Lucas, Capler, Tupper & Martin, 2013), and treating depression (Palladino, 2009; Sobiecki, 2013). Ayahuasca, within an Indigenous framework, has the potential to act as a source of healing for many of the ills that stem from Western hegemony because it works holistically.

The following chart was included in the previous chapter broken into sections that correspond with my three steps of qualitative research: conducting a qualitative short interview pilot study, conducting additional short qualitative interviews, and conducting four in-depth qualitative interviews with the ayahuasca ceremony leader. I am including a revised chart, with a complete list of the interview participants, including the ayahuasca ceremony leader. The chart is presented so that the reader can clearly see the differences in responses based on both the number of years participants have worked with ayahuasca, and the number of times they have experienced ayahuasca. These differences can be noted in their interview comments, which are included along with each antidote. As a point of clarification, after each comment a participant number is noted as P1, P2, and so on, which corresponds to participant number in the chart below. When there is a quotation from the ceremony leader it is noted as Ceremony Leader.

Table 5

Total Qualitative Participants: Gender, Age, First Year Working with Ayahuasca, Approximate Number of Times Worked with Ayahuasca, and Interview Format

| Interview - Participants | Gender | Age | First Year taking Ayahuasca | Approx. Number of times taking Ayahuasca | Interview Format |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Participant 1 | Male | 52 | 2012 | 14 times | In person |
| Participant 2 | Female | 40 | 2012 | 21 times | In person |
| Participant 3 | Female | 41 | 2001 | 40 times | Skype |
| Participant 4 | Male | 37 | 2008 | + 100 times | Skype |
| Participant 5 | Male | 66 | 2000 | + 100 times | Skype |
| Participant 6 | Female | 39 | 1998 | + 100 times | In person |
| Participant 7 | Male | 35 | 2009 | 25 times | In person |
| Participant 8 | Female | 37 | 2006 | 40 times | Skype |
| Participant 9 | Female | 28 | 2010 | 6 times | In person |
| Participant 10 | Male | 46 | 2006 | + 100 times | In person |
| Ceremony Leader | Male | 52 | 2004 | +400 times | In Person |

Comments About the Data. One-hundred percent of interview participants (11 out of 11) noted that the ayahuasca experience helped them experience healing on a personal or individual level, including transformation, gaining insights about their life, and helping to change unhealthy belief systems. This movement towards self-determination can be seen in the realizations, epiphanies, and examples of healing and transformation that participants mention. The samples provide examples of healing on multiple levels, change, shedding belief systems, and bringing new awareness and perspective to participants about their lives.

Antidote 1: Samples from the Data

-The medicine reminds me to be a better person and what is important to me (P3).

-It's a plant and a beautiful medicine that heals people, heals bodies, heals interpersonal relationships and societal relationships (P4).

-I was in a mild depressive state and had a lot of anxiety and it helped me (P7).

-Brought up childhood fears and trauma for me to face and deal with (P1).

-It's more of an awareness of an internal filing system where memories that are either painful or joyful get fragmented and then the process works to reorganize them or restructure them (P1).

*-It's helped me understand myself, let go of things I needed to let go of—
personality, thought patterns, lifestyles (P7).*

-It was like therapy, but much deeper (P6).

-Doing the hard work on yourself and examining your own shit, and bringing it forward into the world (P2).

-I have come to peace with certain things about being a woman, things that felt stuck before (P9).

-Self-love from the ayahuasca, which has been a huge part of the process for me (P8).

-Learned about myself and my traumas in my life, my family heritage, and my ancestral lineage (P8).

-I have changed how I treat self, others, the way I behave, and the person that I am (P9).

Antidotal Movement Found in the Quantitative Data

For antidote 1, there are no supporting quantitative data.

Antidote 2:**Movement from Individuality and “Survival of the Fittest” Towards
Relationality and Kinship-Focused**

This antidote and its movement suggest that ayahuasca helps move people from the Western hegemonic structure of individualism and “survival of the fittest” towards “relationality” and kinship-focused. At the heart of the solution to the Western hegemonic notions of individualism and survival of the fittest, is the concept of relationality, whereby humans strive to have healthy relationships with other people, with the environment, with the larger cosmos, with ideas, and with one’s self (Wilson, 2008). This movement happens when individuals working with ayahuasca change their orientation and values from self-concern toward being concerned with others.

Western Hegemonic Structure

Western hegemony prioritizes the ideas of survival of the fittest and individualism by promoting a socio-centric view of the world. Conversely, the Indigenous worldview values interdependence and collectivism (Harkness, Super, & Tijen (2000). Puchala (2005) argues, “Hegemony connotes the domination of the weak by the strong, the many by the few. It implies the institutionalization of privilege, consequent inequality in the distributions of various values, and the injustices inherent in inequality” (p. 571). This definition highlights a polarized worldview where some people succeed at the expense of others. This form of hegemony creates social values where there is a zero sum gain, whereby some people succeed while others fail. Okazaki, David, and Abelmann (2008) argued that Western scholarship, which is directly connected to the forces of Western cultural hegemony, tend to frame and represent non-Western

cultures as “other.” This framing of non-Western cultures as “other” promotes the notion of the West being the standard and being the norm (p. 92). The deep structure of Western hegemony seems to be entrenched in the belief that the aim of life is success and seeking personal gain, which is valued above others’ success and happiness. This belief seems to suggest that one only be concerned with one’s own small family unit, and not consider the global community of humanity.

Western cultures place a high significance on individuation and its implications of self-perceived freedom to pursue one’s goals without concern of the impacts on others. The Jungian model of individuation focuses on an individual’s autonomous identity (Jung, 1981). In other words, individuals are associated with themselves and their self-pursuits, beliefs, and individual happiness. Western culture tends to value individual pursuits and individual needs as above the needs of anyone or anything else. Hofstede (2011) concludes that people from individualistic cultures think and conceive of themselves as “I.” Members of collective cultures, such as Indigenous peoples, think of themselves as not only family members by identification, but as part of extended families. In other words, people from collectivist cultures, such as most Indigenous people, tend to think of themselves as “we” not as “I” (pp. 8-9). Like other forms of hegemony, individualism and socio-centrism are so entrenched and prevalent within Western culture that to most people they seem normal and insignificant. Yet, this form of Western hegemony is destructive and creates polarization within families, groups, communities, and ultimately a polarized world.

Antidotal Movement

My research data suggest that one potential antidote to the hegemonic force of individualism is connected to moving towards Indigenous relational models, whereby people, places, and things are viewed as relatives. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) argued that within an Indigenous model, the “highest good” implies that humans value relationships and interdependencies, and act from a moral viewpoint when interacting with others (p. 96). Relationality as a cultural model means that life is viewed through the lens of how people, places, and things are all related (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Simpson, 2000; Wilson, 2008). Relationality also refers to the relationships between things, including the relationships between the natural and unnatural world, and relationships between and among people. An example of the concept of Indigenous relationality is the use of the Cree word *nisitohtamowin* that means understanding, but understanding one’s self in relation to others (Kovach, 2009, p. 58).

Most Indigenous models of the role individuals play within the larger community put forth the idea that relationships (familial, communal, cosmological) are the focus and the priority, because we exist in an interdependent web of life. As a result, being an active community member, having good relationships within one’s family, within one’s community, and with one’s environment are integrated into cultural values, and therefore become priorities. This is a sharp contrast to more Western ideas of self-fulfillment viewed as a priority with minimal concern for others. According to East African Indigenous scholar Semali (1999a), “Indigenous knowledge does not derive its origins or meaning from the individual, but from the collective epistemological understanding and rationalization of the community” (p. 309). This

collective epistemological understanding also includes recognizing elders and elder wisdom as important in the learning process, along with the importance of having respect for multi-generations within a community context. Western hegemony, which tends to promote youth as the goal and encourages industries to try to sell people on looking youthful, creates polarization within families and communities whereby there are few meaningful opportunities for multi-generations to connect and dialogue. Cajete (2000) asserted that through community, native people learn their personhood and identity. Community is also the place individuals come to understand relationship, responsibility, and community participation (pp. 85-87). The confusion of autonomy with independence encourages a perception by individuals that they are separate from others and the environment in which they live, and so from the very things that affect their lives (Eckersley, 2006, p. 13). The Western notion of individualism, meaning people are separate and not innately interconnected, drives feelings and perceptions of loneliness, separation, and isolation.

Various types of ceremonies, rituals, and initiations happen frequently within Indigenous cultures. These ceremonies and rituals are based on communal knowledge transfer, and experiential learning, and are situated within a different worldview than Western cultural paradigms (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Ayahuasca done within a ceremonial context is able to work as a meaningful ritual and ceremony, and fulfill an initiatory purpose, and is grounded within an experiential learning format. Community ceremonies within some Australian Aboriginal cultures are done to help with illness, to connect with the cycles of nature, to help return creative energy to those feeling helpless or distressed, and assist in healing conflicts (Atkinson, 2002, p. 33). Ayahuasca ceremonies also provide the opportunity to help heal illness

and reconnect to creative energy. Public ceremonies and private rituals give families and communities shared experiences of healing and transformation. In turn, these experiences become integrated into the language of family and community relations (Castellano, 2004, p. 101). Ceremonies as structures for collective meaning and healing are common among Indigenous peoples, and are vehicles to help remedy isolation, depression, and conflict. These Indigenous examples of the power of ritual and ceremony to effect change an individual, family, and community levels all point to the power of the ayahuasca experience as a way to combat hegemony.

Comments About the Data. One-hundred percent of the qualitative interview participants commented that the ayahuasca experience shifted how they viewed and related to their families, communities, and friends; and that they developed more compassion and empathy for those around them. The samples from the data demonstrate a movement to relationality and kinship-focused. This theme can be seen clearly in the sample comments and how people shift from being only concerned with their own welfare and happiness towards being concerned about others.

Antidote 2: Samples from the Data

-Everyone is coming to ceremony and has their own set of concerns, problems, issues or past, hurt and wounds, and once you see that, you realize we are all in this together (P7).

-It has taught me a great reverence for other people in general (P10).

-Over time you see yourself in others. You begin to go to ceremony not only for yourself and to help with your own healing, but to help others and focus on their healing and well being as well (Ceremony Leader).

- I have a deeper relationship with what it means to pray in community (P8).
- More aware of what others are going through (P4).
- Greater sense of responsibility for the world (P3).
- Supporting people in my spiritual community is now a priority (P2).
- The medicine put me more in tune with how people work, see deeper into people (P4).
- Feeling other's suffering (P3).
- To hold myself to a higher standard and do right by people (P2).
- Be more compassionate and less judgmental (P10).
- I have the desire to give back to others (P9).
- Caring for others and giving what you can is more important and more rewarding (P2)
- Seeing greater beauty in people (P4).

Antidote 2: Antidotal Movement Found in the Quantitative Data

On the question of acting with compassion and empathy, one question was asked:

*Before taking ayahuasca, acting with compassion and empathy was important to me.
After taking ayahuasca, acting with compassion and empathy is more important to me.*

This question set looks at empathy and compassion and points to the notion of relationality, whereby extending care to people outside one's self is important to individuals. Looking at compassion and empathy seem to be ways to examine a potential movement from individuality and a survival of the fittest mentality toward kinship focus. In both groups (the group who has worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times and the group who has worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times) there is a movement after working with ayahuasca towards acting with compassion and empathy as more important. In the group of people who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, 100% of participants agree or strongly agree that after working

with ayahuasca acting with compassion and empathy is more important to them, whereas for the group who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times, 94% agree or strongly agree that after working with ayahuasca acting with compassion is more important to them.

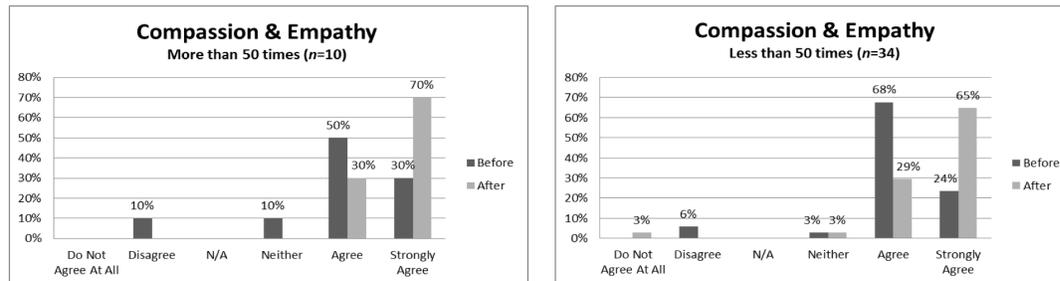


Figure 28. Comparison of acting with compassion and empathy: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

On the question of putting one's own needs above those of others, two statements were posed:

Before ayahuasca I put my needs and desires above others including my friends, family, and community.

After ayahuasca, I am less focused on my own needs and desires and more concerned with the needs of others including my family, friends, and community.

Given that ayahuasca has the potential to change people's life priorities I would expect a large number of participants to disagree that they put their own needs above others. As a result, it makes sense that a large number disagreed to the statement, "Before ayahuasca I put my needs and desires above others including my friends, family, and community." In the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, 80% agree or strongly agree that after working with ayahuasca, they are less focused on their needs and desires and more concerned with the needs of others. However, in the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times, 53% agree or strongly agree that they are less focused on their needs and desires and more concerned with the needs of others. This difference in the two groups of people who work with ayahuasca (those who have worked with it more than 50 times

and those who have worked with it less) seems to suggest that possibly over time people who work with ayahuasca become less focused on their own needs and more concerned with the needs of others. The short-qualitative interviews also showed that people tend to move towards thinking and helping others. This movement aligns with antidote 2's movement from individualism towards relationality.

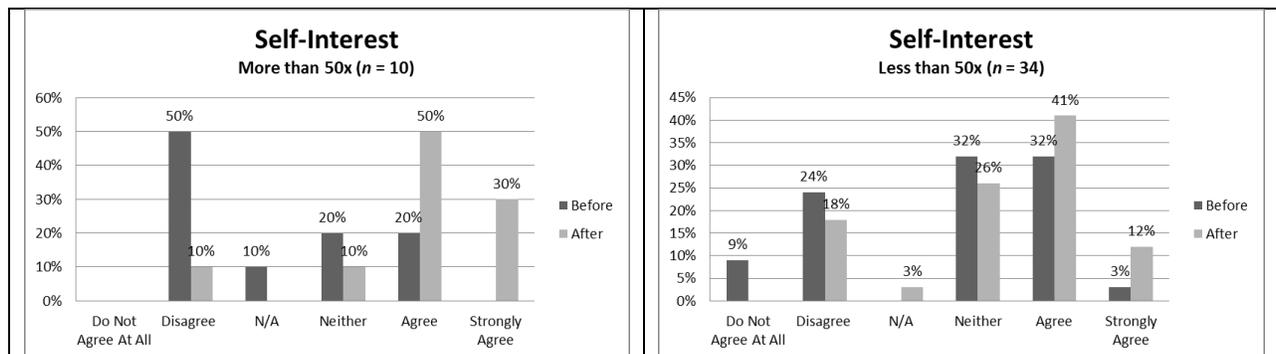


Figure 29. Comparison of self/other needs: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

On the question of one's thinking of the long-term consequences of his or her actions, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I thought about the long-term effects and consequences of my actions.

After taking ayahuasca, I think about the long-term effects and consequences of my actions.

I am putting this question under the category of relationality, because it points to some of the basic premises of relational values, specifically how one's actions affect others, including humans and nonhumans. With both sets of research participants there is nearly a shift towards agreeing and strongly agreeing to thinking about long-term consequences of one's actions after working with ayahuasca. The group of participants who have experienced ayahuasca more than 50 times moved from 50% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that they thought about the long-term effects and consequences of their actions before working with ayahuasca to 80%

agreeing or strongly agreeing after working with ayahuasca. Whereas in the participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times, 65% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they thought about the long-term consequences of their actions before working with ayahuasca to 85% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing than they thought about the long-term consequences of their actions after working with ayahuasca. The group of participants who worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times shows a 10% increase in agreeing and strongly agreeing that they think about the long-term consequences of their actions. This increase in long-term thinking seems significant to a potential movement away from individuality towards relationality. It is also interesting in terms of suggesting that people who work with ayahuasca on a regular basis may be more “in the present” than distracted and unaware of their moment to moment experience and actions.

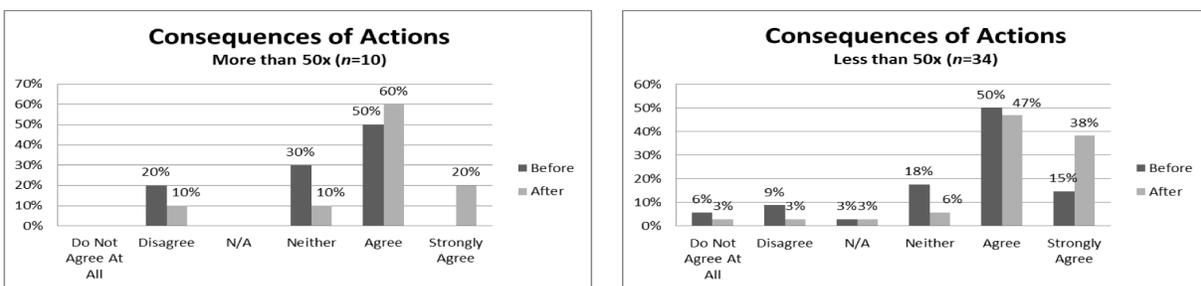


Figure 30. Comparison of long-term consequences of actions: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

Antidote 3:

Movement From Anthropocentrism Towards Viewing the Natural World as Sentient

This antidote shows how the ayahuasca experience influences people to move from the belief that only human beings have consciousness and are the only species of importance, towards the view that plants, animals, and the natural world are likewise sentient. For instance, many of the qualitative interview participants reported having reverence for ayahuasca as a living entity, and referring to her as “Grandmother” and as a plant teacher. Furthermore, nearly 100% of the participants in the qualitative and quantitative research components showed a large movement towards viewing the natural world as sentient, therefore moving towards an anthropomorphic view of the natural world.

Western Hegemonic Structure

Western hegemony seems to focus tirelessly on exploitation of resources at any cost, without concern about environmental degradation or sustainability. The Western model of environmental ethics (or lack of ethics) places human beings at the center of the universe, promoting an anthropocentric view of the world. The Indigenous model of environmental ethics positions human beings in relationship with plants, animals, and the natural world. The Western hegemonic model focuses on individual liberty and human-scale utilitarianism, whereas the Indigenous model promotes respect and ecosystem sustainability (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 96). The Western hegemonic view and treatment of the natural world is based on exploitation, destruction, and disrespect of the earth.

The following examples clearly demonstrate a distinctly Western belief that nature is subordinate to human beings. The environmental commons is being undermined and threatened

by the market and corporate ownership, with their drive to expand ownership of natural resources and increase profits. The drive to exploit resources has paved the way to pollution of the environmental commons. Toxic chemicals in the ground water supply have made water in many places undrinkable and toxic. Water that was previously safe to drink is no longer safe (Ebenstein, 2012). Toxic waste is being shipped all over the world, often to Third World nations, by waste-trading firms (Alston & Brown, 1993, p. 185). Western countries have not significantly decreased their greenhouse gas emissions, in spite of global warming worsening (Church, 2014). Water, which was previously available for free, is rapidly becoming a scarce commodity, and now often purchased (Bowers, 2005). Deforestation is happening at alarming rates, driven by multi-national corporations using the wood and clear cutting for profit. Ecological destruction and warfare are connected, and the country who spends the most money on its military and military actions is the US. Warfare, with its often implied ideological basis, is also destructive to ecosystems and other natural environments (Alston & Brown, 1993, p. 180). Companies like Monsanto are genetically modifying our food sources without any concern for the impact on the health of human beings, animals, or the environmental costs. Acid rain from coal-burning power plants is creating health problems in humans, harming forests and their inhabitants, along with damaging lakes, streams, and other bodies of water (Jowitt, 2010). These examples of environmental destruction reflect the notion put forth by John Locke, that nature has no intrinsic value, aside from serving human beings (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 75). At the same time, hegemony continues to profit without any concern about environmental destruction or degradation, and the West is told that all of these hegemonic institutions are functioning to improve “progress.”

One pointed example of the Western belief of human beings having a right to exploit the natural world for personal gain can be seen in the way of “bioprospectors” and other researchers who exploit and expropriate Indigenous lands and peoples to research and then steal traditional herbs and remedies, without any concern for environmental destruction or environmental restoration (Four Arrows, 2006; Smith, 1999). For instance, in 1984 an American scientist named Loren Miller applied for a United States patent for a strain of ayahuasca he called “Da Vine” (Miller, 1984; Tupper, 2009). The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) issued the patent to Miller in 1986 (Tupper, 2009, p. 9). Miller’s justification for the patent on Da Vine was that the specific strain of ayahuasca represented a unique strain of the vine due to the color of its petals (Fecteau, 2001, pp. 84-85). In 1999, the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (CBIOAB) discovered Miller had patented ayahuasca. In response, a group of Indigenous peoples sought legal council to fight the patent (Fecteau, 2001, p. 69). The group received assistance from the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL). In 1999, the CBIOAB and the Coalition for Amazonian Peoples and Their Environment filed an appeal to rescind the patent (Tupper, 2009a, p. 9). In 1999, the USPTO revoked the patent. While the patent was revoked, the USPTO rescinded the patent because the plant had been found in the Chicago Field Museum, but it did not address issues about the plant being used for centuries by Indigenous peoples for ceremonial reasons (Fecteau, 2001, p. 86).

Western hegemony, specifically free trade and the Western value of a free marketplace, forces commodification and economics above responsible environmentalism (Humphreys, 1996, p. 223). In the process, the free market ignores the actual costs to the environment and those

communities affected by environmental destruction. In the process of exploitation, humans move away from their innate relationship to the natural world, towards a model of domination and separating themselves from nature. Jacobs (1998) explains that Western dominant culture has justified the separation between humans and nature, by framing nature and the natural world as dangerous and to be feared (p. 213). Fear is a powerful emotion that hegemony uses to create stratification, division, paranoia, and keep individualism, survival of the fittest, and justify an anthropocentric view of the natural world.

Antidotal Movement

The antidote to the hegemonic influence of anthropocentrism is to move towards cultivating an anthropomorphic view of nature. In other words, the antidotal movement is to subscribe to Indigenous views of the earth whereby plants, animals, and the natural world are viewed as sentient beings and therefore should be protected and respected. In 2011, for example, Bolivia enacted the “Mother Earth law,” which granted rights to the earth as equal to humans, much like the corporate structure in the US. offers rights to corporations to be similar to citizens. Passing this law is one example of how to challenge Western hegemonic views of the earth. An Iroquois belief about personhood integrates Indigenous ideas about relationships between people and their environment to include plants, animals, and other humans. As a result, when the Iroquois conceived of “community,” they included humans, as well as plants, animals, and the natural surroundings all as “community members” (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 93). John Mohawk (in Barreiro, 2010) summarizes many ideas found within Indigenous philosophy about the human relationship with the natural world:

Everybody should be able to give greeting to the Mother Earth...it's a way of us having a relationship with that... It's fundamental: right after people, Earth. Then it goes to grasses, waters, trees, plants, winds, the moon, the stars, the sun, the universe, the whole thing. (p. 275)

Basso (1996) offers additional ways of moving towards an anthropomorphic view of nature through our language patterns and how we name our relationships with the natural world. Basso (1996) asserts that Indigenous peoples' relationship to place and land informs not only their language patterns, but at the same time, their culture and cosmological understanding. Some of the implications of Basso's work are that language patterns and how we name things are demonstrations of our beliefs. For instance, American Indian sweat lodges refer to sweat lodge stones as "Grandfathers." Implied is that there is wisdom and respect in these ancient stones, whereas in Western culture they are not given that respect. The same respect and love for the natural world can be found in the way many ayahuasca users refer to ayahuasca as "Grandmother." The implication of referring to ayahuasca in this manner is dramatic. A grandmother is an elder, a wise person, someone worthy of respect and caring. If someone was referring to ayahuasca as a drug, or as simply a vine, those terms imply a different relationship. The process of using respectful and relational language to describe the natural world and its elements alters how people then relate to nature and the natural world. This sort of environmental ethos can be found in creation stories from Indigenous peoples all over the world. In these stories and myths, plants, animals, winds, the sun, and other natural elemental entities are depicted as teachers and relatives (Cajete, 1994; Iseke, 2013; Kovach, 2010). The depiction of the natural

world as relatives and teachers affects how Indigenous peoples view the natural world, and therefore inspires these peoples to act with respect and care of the earth and the natural world.

Comments About the Data. Eighty-two percent (9 out of 11) of participants reported some type of shift in how they relate to the natural world. Many participants who have worked with ayahuasca reported a shift that moved towards viewing the natural world as sentient. The samples from the data demonstrate that after working with ayahuasca, people report more reverence for the natural world, in particular, relating to the plant teacher ayahuasca as sentient. This reverence and appreciation also seems to extend towards having a greater appreciation for animals, the earth, and other plant species as well.

Antidote 3: Samples From the Data

- In ceremony I was connecting with plant and animal spirits directly (P2).*
- When you connect with the plants you disconnect from greed, jealousy and anger (P5).*
- I'm much more sympathetic about what is going on with Mother Earth (P3).*
- When you really go deep with ayahuasca, you can't help but feel that ayahuasca has consciousness and really is a teacher and a healer (Ceremony Leader).*
- These ceremonies connect us back to nature, to the natural world, because we are so removed from it (P10).*
- Before ayahuasca, I never viewed plants as sentient beings that I could communicate with, or that had an independent consciousness (P4).*
- Awe and reverence for nature (P7).*
- I made a commitment to the plants (P10).*

-I have learned about how the plant works, not that I even understand 1% of how it works (P2).

-Sentient, intelligent force in the plant medicine (P7).

-We are supposed to be one with Mother Earth, and plants, and everything. Until we walk that walk and let the plants teach us and help us understand that again, we are separate.

(P5).

Antidote 3: Antidotal Movement Found in the Quantitative Data

On the question of consciousness of nonhumans, two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I thought that plants, animals, and nature have consciousness.

After taking ayahuasca, I thought that plants, animals, and nature have consciousness.

Figure 31 shows that in both groups (participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times and participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times) move towards thinking plants, animals, and nature has consciousness. Both groups show that after working with ayahuasca 89-90% agree or strongly agree that they thought plants, animals, and nature have consciousness. Both groups show a movement towards an anthropomorphic view.

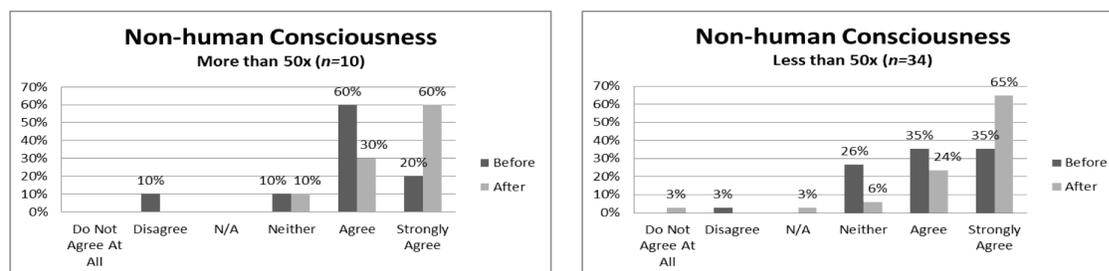


Figure 31. Comparison of connection to plants, animals and the natural world: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

Antidote 4:**Movement from Valuing Materialism and Consumerism, Towards Meaning and Purpose Beyond these Structures**

This antidote shows that after working with ayahuasca, participants move from a focus on materialism and consumerism towards finding meaning in other areas of life. Success in the West is unfortunately a zero sum game, whereby some people succeed and some fail, and where there is a growing divide between rich and poor. The American dream is partially based on economic success, not on compassion, personal meaning, character, relational respect, nor any form of sustainable ethics, whereas ayahuasca ceremonies and ayahuasca culture centers around finding personal meaning within one's individual experience, and values self-sacrifice and compassion towards others as character traits.

Western Hegemonic Structure

Western hegemony and its incentive to profit from consumerism have been selling the myth of the "American dream" as exemplified by the 1950s. According to Derber (1979), the main component of the dream is that economic success and materialism are the driving forces in finding happiness. A potential implication of the American dream is not only culture values related to valuing economic success over personal meaning, but that anyone can succeed if they simply work hard enough or pull themselves up from their own bootstraps. However, the notion that anyone can succeed is not true, nor is the notion that materialism causes happiness. These are myths that Western hegemony promotes to entice people into buying more products and create stratification.

Returning again to the hegemonic structures that hold commodification and materialism in place, Western hegemony pushes the idea that everything can be seen as a commodity; including activities, knowledge, and social relationships (Bowers, 2000, p. 74). American cultural paradigms tend to view human beings, cultures, and the natural world exclusively through the filter of their commodity value. Therefore, nearly everything in the West is reduced to its value in the marketplace (Welton, 1995). In the process, advertisers and hegemonies, who in turn drive Western views, promote the idea that happiness can only be found in materialism. This Western hegemonic process exists so that large-scale institutions can profit. Harms and Kellner (1991) explain one component of the process:

advertising should be seen as an indispensable force in the reproduction of consumer capitalism and in the maintenance of capitalist hegemony. Indeed, advertising has multifaceted social functions, ranging from short-range efforts to induce individuals to buy specific products to more long range functions that attempt to sell consumer capitalism as a way of life. (p. 3)

The view of profit and commodification is flawed on many levels, however. Consumer capitalism only works for the wealthy, not for the poor. While the wealthy can buy anything they want, the poor cannot keep up. This distinctly Western view creates a situation where everyone is constantly trying to gain more financial success and hardly have any time to contemplate their life or find meaning in any other areas of life.

Antidotal Movement

This antidotal movement happens as ayahuasca users move from viewing external factors, such as materialism, career status, and financial success, as the sole indicators of happiness and fulfillment, toward looking at more relational realms, such as the spiritual, sacred, and kinship-based to frame meaning and purpose. This movement towards rejecting materialism as the main focus of life is part of an Indigenous worldview. Four Arrows and Narvaez (2014) propose that elements of the Indigenous worldview include socially purposeful living, community involvement and social support, valuing generosity, and recognition of the Great Spirit in everything. While these elements do not describe a precise antidote per se, they show how Indigenous peoples move away from the traps of viewing every aspect of life as a commodity, and find purpose outside of materialism. This is not to romanticize Indigenous peoples or a time in the distant past before technology, but these models present a map to avoid some of the traps of Western hegemony by operating with a different set of assumptions and a different worldview.

Another element of advice Indigenous wisdom addresses for living outside of the hegemonic structures of consumerism and materialism is through experiential and emotional learning models. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) offer a key distinction from Indigenous wisdom to understanding the significance of experiential learning. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) argue that the Indigenous response to Descartes' assertion, "I think therefore I am" is, "I experience, therefore I am" (p. 148). As a contrast to Western models, Indigenous learning and meaning involves cultivation of one's senses, such as how to deeply listen, observe, and experience things holistically (Cajete, 1994). The Indigenous model suggests that sacredness in daily life is felt

through direct experiences and direct actions (Deloria, & Wildcat, 2001). These Indigenous views on the significance of direct experience and experiential learning support the notion that the ayahuasca experience can be extremely powerful and transformative for those who work with it in a ceremonial context. One of the essential ways in which meaning is constructed within Indigenous models and forms of knowledge is through creative acts. Creativity may take the form of making sacred art, songs, dances, storytelling, prayer, ritual, play, or through reflection (Cajete, 1994, p. 42). Perhaps the Indigenous proposition that creativity is a gateway to meaning is a useful way to bypass materialism and consumerism. When someone is having direct experiences based on creativity, he or she does not necessarily require material goods or economic success to dictate fulfillment. These Indigenous examples of creativity suggest models of meaning that are outside of Western hegemonic models of materialism, and operate within an entirely different paradigm. My qualitative data show that people move away from some of the traps of consumerism and materialism towards a different meaning schema, as put forth in the Indigenous worldview.

Comments About the Data. Eighty-two percent (nine out of eleven) of the qualitative interview participants reported a shift in how they view materialism, commodification, and the role of career after working with ayahuasca. While earlier antidotes include a discussion about commodification and its hegemonic influence, this antidotal movement shows that ayahuasca participants note a distinct shift in their priorities away from career, materialism, and consumerism being their life focus.

Antidote 4: Samples from the Data

-The work I do now is important enough and makes me happy to be doing it and that has a greater value to me than making more money (P6).

-I live simply and don't have a lot of stuff, nor do I want a lot of stuff (P2).

-Before the medicine, I thought I always had to have like this career and a lot of money (P4).

-I think once I started working with the medicine, I realized that the whole way of thinking was not where I needed to be (being career-focused and making more money). (P5).

-Anecdotally, it seems that people who use medicine tend to be less materialistically attached (P8).

-Before, I was more likely to get comfort from material goods. Now it doesn't matter (P7).

-I look at how I spend my money differently (P2).

-Early on, the Grandmother had me re-think my whole life and my priorities. Working with the medicine had me walk away from my career and stop focusing so hard on making money, and accumulating so much "stuff." Instead I started living more simply and changed my focus to trying to help people heal their lives (Ceremony Leader).

-Ayahuasca helped me relate to my professional and financial situations with less attachment to the outcome and to spend less energy on these things (P4).

-People associated with the medicine path have the approach to living life in a light, unattached way regarding belongings (P8).

-It changed my focus to be more of a healer, and not just a corporate slave (P7).

-Lost the drive to make more money and get a better position at the company (P10).

-Removed material bonds—because they weigh you down (P6).

Antidote 4: Antidotal Movement Found in the Quantitative Data

On the question of the importance of material goods, two questions were asked:

Before taking ayahuasca, buying and having many material possessions was very important to me.

After taking ayahuasca, having material possessions is less meaningful to me.

Figure 32 shows a shift in participants away from materialism after working with ayahuasca. It is interesting that in the group who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times they show that before working with ayahuasca 70% disagree or do not agree at all that having material possessions was important to them, and after working with ayahuasca 90% report that having material possessions is less important to them. Whereas in the group of people who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times 50% agree and strongly agree that before working with ayahuasca buying and having many material possessions was important to them. In the group of people who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times only 20% agree or strongly agree that before working with ayahuasca buying and having many material possessions was important to them. In the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times after working with ayahuasca 64% agree or strongly agree that having material

possessions is less important. Both charts show a movement away from materialism after the ayahuasca experience.

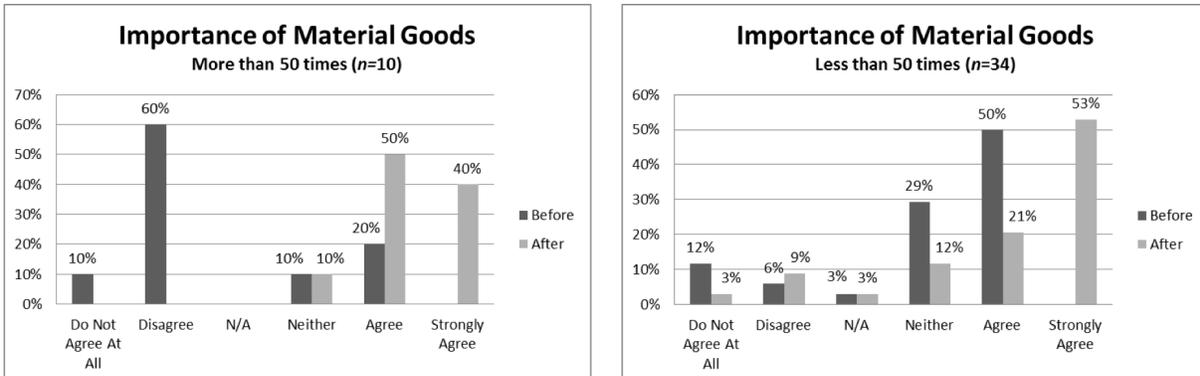


Figure 32. Comparison of having material possessions and their meaning: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

On the question of supporting local economies, two statements were posed:

*Before taking ayahuasca, I tried to shop locally and was part of the local economy.
After taking ayahuasca, I try to shop locally and be part of a local economy.*

*Note: One participant did not answer the first question. The reason is not known.

Shopping locally is an important question, because it can show how people make conscious choices to support local businesses as opposed to shopping at larger corporate stores. Supporting one's local economy is one way to move away from Western hegemonic forms of consumerism whereby multinational corporations keep profits from money spent at stores they own and from products they sell, towards supporting localized businesses who tend to keep profits in their own localized communities. Figure 33 shows that the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times show a movement from 89% agreeing or strongly agreeing before working ayahuasca that they tried to shop locally and support their local economy to a drop of 9% or 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing after working with ayahuasca. However, one person did not respond to the statement. There is a shift, however, in people moving from the agree category to strongly agree category after working with ayahuasca. In the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times there is a movement from 53% of participants before working with ayahuasca agreeing or strongly agreeing that they tried to shop locally and support their local economy to 67% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they tried to shop locally and support local businesses after working with ayahuasca.

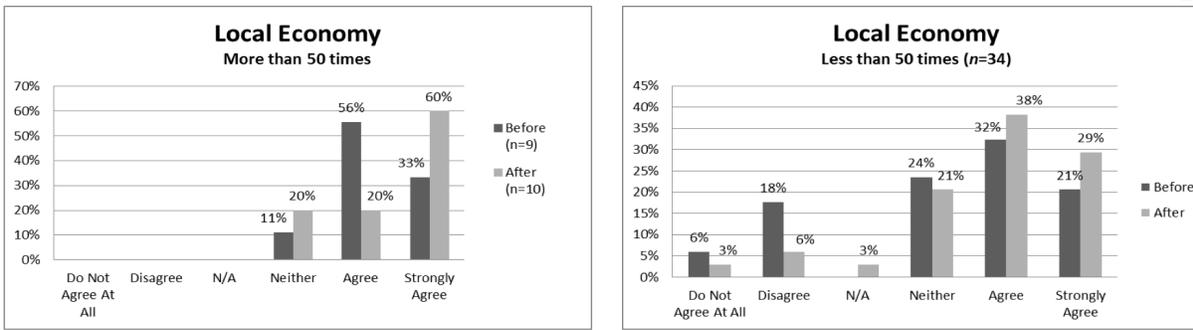


Figure 33. Comparison of shop locally and part of local economy: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

On the importance of one's career, two statements were posed:

Before ayahuasca, my career was the most important thing to me.

After ayahuasca, my career is less important to me.

How people prioritize their careers can point to how they are influenced by the Western hegemonic forces of materialism and consumerism, and therefore this question is important.

The data in Figure 34 suggest more movement in people who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times than those who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times. In other words, 50% of participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times agree or strongly agree that their careers are less important to them after taking ayahuasca compared to 21% prior to taking ayahuasca. However, with the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, 50% agree that their careers are less important to them after taking ayahuasca compared to 30% before working with ayahuasca.

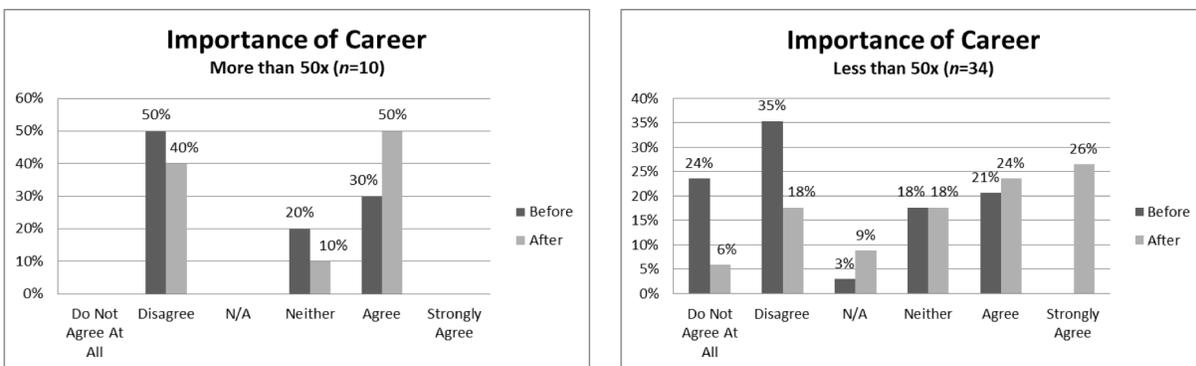


Figure 34. Comparison of importance of career: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

Antidote 5:**Movement from Acceptance of Western Hegemonic Institutions****Towards Criticality or Rejection**

This antidote shows a movement in participants who work with ayahuasca from accepting the influence of Western institutions such as the American political system, media, Western academia, Western medicine, and the effects of colonization and globalization toward rejecting these institutions and moving toward a position of criticality; and, in some cases, an all-out rejection of these systems, leading to nonparticipation. Ayahuasca ceremony participants, without being steeped in the works of Freire or academic models of learning, seem to move towards the development of critical consciousness from their participation in ayahuasca ceremonies.

Western Hegemonic Structure

Four Arrows (2006) suggested, “The term [hegemony] thus signifies the ability of the dominant social leaders to cultivate, through largely non-coercive means, a popular worldview that naturalizes their positions in a way that manipulates subordinate classes of people to consent to their own subordination and oppression, thinking that it ultimately serves their best interests” (p. 27). For example, Chomsky (Herman & Chomsky, 2008) explains, the “propaganda model” of U.S. media. According to Chomsky and Herman, “The media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them” (p. xi). These powerful social interests include political groups and large corporations. Herman and Chomsky (2008) suggest that one of the major ingredients in the U.S. propaganda model includes, “The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and ‘experts’ funded and

approved by these primary sources and agents of power” (p. 2). These types of hegemonic influences are precisely what the ayahuasca helps people reject and move away from. The ayahuasca experience helps people to unveil and to see the presence of Western hegemony in their lives and to then reject these destructive influences.

Within the framework of American politics, a small elite group of people holds the power, while the masses have very little input. This system is highly influenced by the institutions that have the most money, such as the banking system, corporations, media giants, and investment firms. These institutions, which are led by a small number of people, then influence government. In response to pressure, the government, which appears to be corrupted by a small number of hegemonies, only makes incremental changes, if any changes at all, in public policy (Schubert, Dye, & Zeigler, 2015, p. 13). In other words, hegemony in this case relates to the concepts first articulated by Gramsci as, “the process by which ruling elites secure consent to the established political order through the production and diffusion of meanings and values” (Carragee & Roefs 2004, pp. 221-222).

Four Arrows (2010) describes how Western hegemonic institutions use fear as a mechanism to control people and keep them trapped into not questioning the influence of Western hegemony:

In Western tradition, authority stems generally from external sources. We listen to the authority of our books, our teachers, our preachers, our parents, our leaders, etc. Such authority, especially when coupled with fear or stress, literally hypnotizes us to believe the messages of the authority figure, no matter how incorrect. To the contrary, Indigenous wisdom teaches that the only true source of authority is personal reflection,

honest reflection, on lived experience in light of the spiritual understanding that everything is connected. (p. 26)

Within most models of Western academia, Western epistemological concepts drive a biased view of what is considered valid in areas such as culture, education, knowledge, language, social relationships, law, and scholarship (Blaut, 1993; Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffrey, 2004; Smith, 1999). Ladson-Billings (2003) asserts that the Western epistemological approach pervades the (academic) academy (p. 402). Eurocentric ways of operating dictate which methods are employed and which are not; which methods and traditions are heralded as significant, and those that are marginalized. Grande (2008) concludes that (Western) institutions, scholarship, vocabulary, and doctrines all support Western discourse, and by extension institutional forms of Western hegemony.

Antidotal Movement

Indigenous peoples can teach Western people how to move away from Western hegemonic structures entirely and recreate systems anew. According to Smith (1999), “One of the strategies that Indigenous peoples have employed effectively to bind people together politically is a strategy which asks that people imagine a future, that they rise above present day situations which are generally depressing, dream a new dream, and set a new vision” (p. 152). Cajete (1994) also discusses visioning, but in the context of Indigenous educational models. Visioning, he asserts, becomes a source of empowerment (p. 209). Smith’s teachings on the purpose of dreaming a new dream and setting a new vision is akin to Cajete’s discussion on the role visioning has within Indigenous educational models. The ayahuasca experience and its ability to give people actual “visions” during the ayahuasca ceremonies, along with offering new

perspectives at looking at life, give ayahuasca ceremony participants the opportunity to create entire new systems outside of the influence of Western hegemony.

One way to move away from these destructive Western hegemonic forces is to develop criticality, or to even reject Western hegemonic institutions altogether. One powerful model of developing criticality can be found within the work of critical pedagogy. Ira Shor (1993) proposes that Freirean education is based on developing critical consciousness. As part of the process, individuals go through “de-socialization.” Shor describes this process as,

Recognizing and challenging the myths, values, behaviors, and language learned in mass culture; critically examining the regressive values operating in society, which are internalized into consciousness such as racism, sexism, class bias, homophobia, a fascination with the rich and powerful, hero-worship, excess consumerism, run away individualism, militarism, and national chauvinism. (p. 32)

One of the central problems with the Western hegemony is its influence on the political system. Alfred (1999) describes some of the differences between Western hegemonic governance models and Indigenous models this way:

Indigenous governance systems embody distinctive political values, radically different from those of the mainstream. Western notions of domination (human and natural) are noticeably absent; in their place we find harmony, autonomy, and respect. We have a responsibility to recover, understand, and preserve these values, not only because they represent a unique contribution to the history of ideas, but because renewal of respect for traditional values is the only lasting solution to the political, economic, and social problems that beset our people. (p. 5)

Indigenous systems of democracy mostly are to be rooted in Indigenous values. Indigenous values strive towards participation, inclusivity, and consensus-based decision-making. This model encourages, for instance, leaders to have a council of elders for input in making decisions. This model also encourages local-level political autonomy. I am not mentioning this model to suggest that some Indigenous groups are not indeed corrupt or do not follow this model of protocol, but that these models do exist and are quite different in structure and in values promoted compared to Western models. This Indigenous-based political model presents one path to combat hegemony.

Another example of criticality and challenging Western hegemonic institutions can be seen in Indigenous protest movements happening in every corner of the globe. These forms of protest and criticality highlight a movement away from a Western model of politics and governance towards more sustainable models of social and political life. Indigenous peoples have been at the forefront of human rights movements and the environmental justice movement. For instance, in 2012, a group of Indigenous Canadian women formed the Idle No More movement to protest several Canadian bills giving the government more control over land usage, which would result in more corporate access to waterways. These bills would likely result in an increase in toxic pollution and environmental degradation. The Idle No More movement quickly became a worldwide Indigenous rights and environmental rights movement, and mobilized many Indigenous peoples to become more politically active (Bernd, 2013; Idle No More, 2013). Certainly, the American Indian Movement (AIM) is another example of a politically based, social change Indigenous movement, created to bring about self-determination for American Indian peoples and American Indian legal rights.

Comments about the Data. Seventy-three percent (8 out of 11) of participants reported an increase in political awareness, criticality of Western institutions, and/or a shift in their choices to participate or not participate within the framework of politics and other hegemonic institutions.

Antidote 5: Samples from the Data

-If politicians used ayahuasca, they would care less about ego and power (P5).

-It makes you more sensitive and more aware of what is going on in the world. And that doesn't go away. It has a lasting effect. (P3).

-I have found that over time, I am much more involved and intrigued by what is happening in my immediate area, politically, much more than before the medicine (P4).

-Before the medicine, I was thinking of politics on a more worldly scale, but now it's more about my immediate surroundings. With the medicine I've realized there is not a whole lot I can accomplish in a worldly way, but from a local place I can bring about change and affect people. I'm also just more interested in what is happening locally (P6).

-It has helped me to see a broader perspective, to be more critical, discerning, and understanding whether it's local politics or when people are arguing (P4).

-I guess I'm apolitical now, since doing the medicine (P1).

-Political movements are part of the "against" model of the world. From an ayahuasca perspective, you are looking at being free from the whole trap of Westernization. We are trying to help people be liberated from themselves, their culture, their history, towards self-determination for themselves and the entire planet (Ceremony Leader).

-Politically, I've given up on politics (P4).

- I ignore politics because it is so screwed up (P10).
- More socially aware, but I don't follow what is going on (P9).
- You see injustices more, and the way the status quo has set up the world (P7).
- After ayahuasca, some people become more politically active or want to become healers (P7).
- I'm apathetic to politics (P10).
- You feel from ayahuasca that you have the support to be courageous in life and stop injustice (P7).
- The medicine made my commitment to social justice and caring for people stronger (P6).
- Put me in touch with oppression (P10).
- I felt a strong sense of empathy of the effects of oppression and exploitation (P3).
- Aware of what it's like when people take advantage of others for their resources (P3).
- The whole political scheme is dysfunctional. All these egos (P5).
- Politicians are destroying our lives and destroying Pachamama, and destroying everything (P5). [Note: the Indigenous Andean people refer to the Mother of the World and the Mother Goddess as Pachamama.]

Antidote 5: Antidotal Movement Found in the Quantitative Data

On the question of acting in response to injustice, two statements were posed:

- Before ayahuasca, I try to intervene when there is injustice.*
- After ayahuasca, I am more likely to intervene when there is injustice.*

This question is about injustice and intervening when there is perceived injustice. This question points to the hegemonic structure of oppression forces of injustice; as a result I am

drawing a connection between injustice on an institutional level and intervening on behalf of injustice being a form of criticality expressed in action. This points to a movement away from simply accepting Western hegemonic forces and taking an active role to change or intervene. Figure 35 shows that the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times show a much larger movement towards intervening when there is injustice than those who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times. With the group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, 100% agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to intervene when there is injustice. The group of participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times shows that 50% agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to intervene when there is injustice after working with ayahuasca.

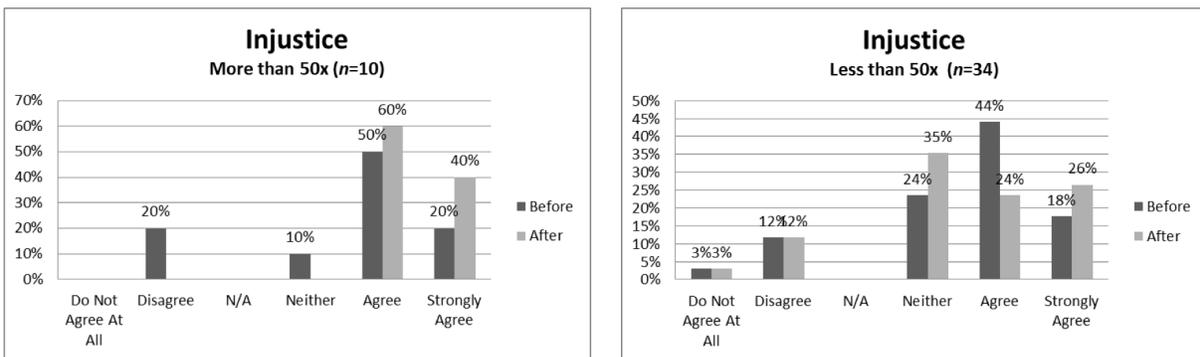


Figure 35. Comparison intervening when there is injustice: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

On the question of political action, two questions were asked:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was politically active.

After taking ayahuasca, my level of political action changed.

Figure 36 shows that among the participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, 70% agree that their level of political action changed after taking ayahuasca. The group of participants who have experienced ayahuasca fewer than 50 times show a much more distributed response when asked whether their level of political action has changed since taking ayahuasca, including a large number of the participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (39%) that their level of political action has changed at all. The group of people who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times show a much bigger change after working with ayahuasca than those who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times.

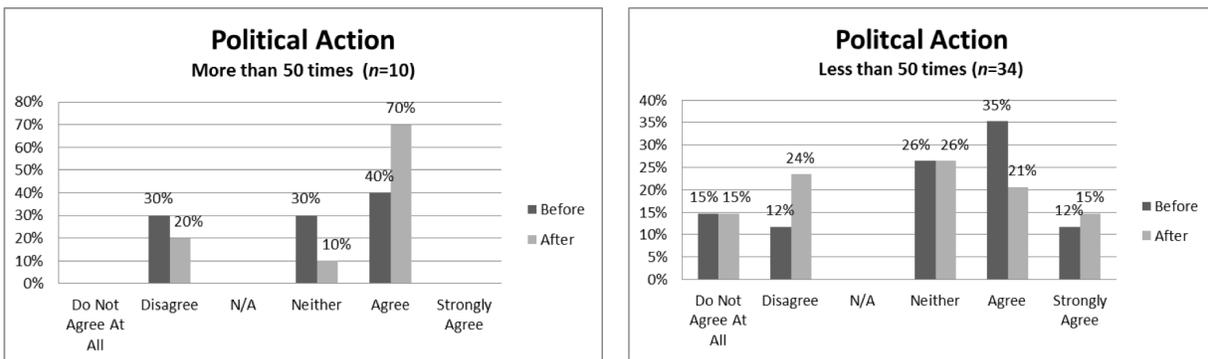


Figure 36. Comparison of political action: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca

On the question of social awareness two statements were posed:

Before taking ayahuasca, I was socially aware.

After taking ayahuasca, social awareness was more important to me.

Social awareness is another area related to criticality. Figure 37 shows that the participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times show that 90% agree or strongly agree that social awareness was more important to them after working with ayahuasca. At the same time, 80% agreed or strongly agreed that social awareness was important to them before working with ayahuasca. So, there was a 10% increase in agreeing or strongly agreeing about the importance of social awareness after working with ayahuasca. With the participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times, 74% agree or strongly agree that social awareness was important to them before working with ayahuasca, and 70% agreed or strongly agreed that social awareness was important to them after working with ayahuasca. In other words, it appears that there was a decrease in the importance of social awareness in people who worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times, not an increase.

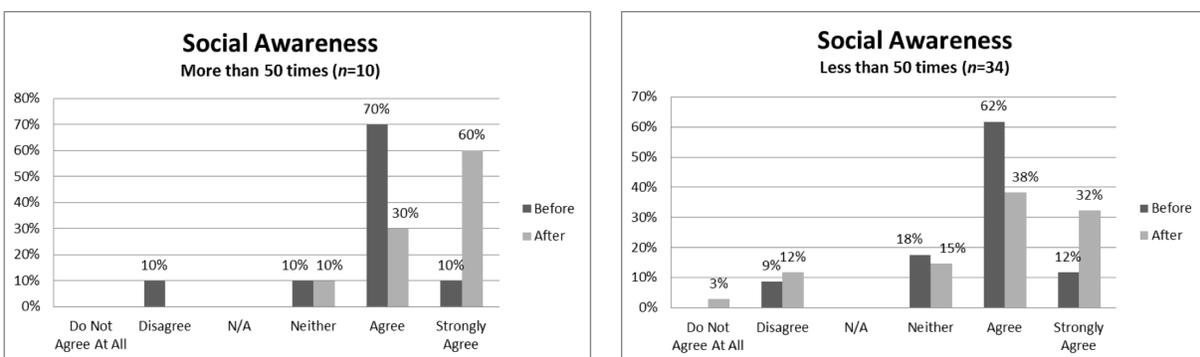


Figure 37. Comparison of social awareness: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

The Indigenous Worldview Versus the Western Worldview

Each of the five antidotal movements away from Western hegemonic structures shows a movement towards a solution rooted within an Indigenous framework or worldview. I wanted to clarify this worldview discussion as part of the summary of the findings of my study. One way to think about the five antidotal movements to Western hegemony I have uncovered in my study is to imagine that each antidote represents a movement from the Western worldview towards an Indigenous worldview. Hedlund-de Witt (2013) suggests, “Worldviews are then understood as the inescapable, overarching systems of meaning and meaning-making that substantially inform how humans interpret, enact, and co-create reality” (p. 112). According to Ibrahim (1991), our worldview directly affects and mediates our belief systems, assumptions, modes of problem solving, and decision making (p. 14). A worldview, therefore, defines how one views one’s relationship to the outer world, including the environment, other people, and institutions (Sue, 1978).

Tarnas (2006) describes worldviews in a way that is more solid and more concrete: Our worldview is not simply the way we look at our world. It reaches inward to constitute our innermost being, and outward to constitute the world. It mirrors but also reinforces and even forges the structures, armorings, and possibilities of our interior life. It deeply configures our psychic and somatic experience, the patterns of our sensing, knowing and interacting with the world. No less potently, our worldview – our beliefs and theories, our maps, our metaphors, our myths, our interpretive assumptions – constellates our outer reality, shaping and working the world’s malleable potentials in a thousand ways of subtly reciprocal interaction. World views create worlds. (p. 16)

As a point of clarification, the chart contrasting the Indigenous worldview and the Western worldview is included to understand the differences, not to suggest that all Indigenous peoples believe the same thing, nor am I suggesting that all Western people share the same worldview. The reason I am referring to an Indigenous worldview is to understand the differences as they pertain to Western hegemonic influences and the effects of these influences on cultural-level beliefs. There certainly is fluidity based on a variety of factors such as nature, nurture, culture, family, and so on. An Indigenous person can adopt a Western worldview and orientation, and a Western person can certainly operate from an Indigenous worldview and orientation. These worldviews, and the inherent beliefs of each worldview, are not static; they are dynamic. One of the problems with ayahuasca becoming popular among Western people is the commercialization of ayahuasca in South America, whereby some of the Indigenous people have shifted from a traditional Indigenous worldview towards a Western worldview. At the same time, my impression from conducting qualitative interviews is that some of the interview participants appear to have significantly altered their lives and belief systems to appear to be more akin to an Indigenous worldview, as evidenced through their lifestyles and life choices.

Through my research on Western hegemony, the Western worldview matches up closely with the values and priorities of Western hegemony. At the same time, the Indigenous worldview is therefore grounded within an Indigenous framework, which includes an Indigenous agenda. What follows is a diagram showing the Indigenous worldview versus the Western worldview. The following diagram is primarily based on the research found in Four Arrows and Narvaez (2014) titled, *A More Authentic Baseline*. Their original diagram and text have been modified to focus on worldviews. In the process of modification, text has been edited and a few distinctions

have been added or removed. I have included two other distinctions, one from the work of one of my primary mentors in understanding Indigenous spirituality, Myron Eshowsky (1999), and one from my own observations of the differences in the Western versus Indigenous worldviews.

Table 6
The Indigenous Worldview versus the Western Worldview

| Concept | Western Worldview | Indigenous Worldview |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| View of Nature | Detachment from, even fear of nature | Constant awareness and respect for all nonhumans as relatives and teachers |
| Authentic Social Support | In rhetoric, and for special occasions or crises | A continual high priority |
| Cultural Mores | Selfishness and stubbornness fostered and expected | Generosity and cooperation fostered and expected |
| Community Involvement | Hierarchical, classist, “us vs. them” | Fully egalitarian and cooperative |
| Socially Purposeful Living | Non-normative, self/family/business orientation | Normative |
| Community Enjoyment | Rare (spectator sports, religious services, events) | Common and authentic |
| Boundaries | Rigid kinship culture and social classes | Fluid, companion/kinship culture |
| Social Contact with Others | Minimal. Focused on work, spectator entertainment, superficial interaction | Considerable. Including much community contact such as dancing, singing, playing, ritual |
| Relations with Other Groups | Competitive or hostile attitude even when taking cooperative actions | Cooperative and supportive |
| Materialism | Selfishness and accumulation is ultimate | Generosity is ultimate |
| Conflict Resolution | Goal is usually punishment, revenge or payback | Goal is to bring all back into community |
| Individual Freedom | Restrictive and subject to authoritarian input, freedom mostly in financial areas and unequal structures | Extensive with no coercion |
| Individual Relationships | Hierarchical and authoritarian | Egalitarian |
| Multi-Age Contact | Rare outside of family, avoided otherwise | Continual, sought-after, elders valued |
| Role Models | Those with high wealth, power, celebrity status | Those with high virtue and commitment to community |
| Generosity and Cooperation | Selfishness and stubbornness often expected in popular culture | Fostered and expected |
| Immorality | Cheating, abuse and | Cheating, abuse, aggression and |

| Concept | Western Worldview | Indigenous Worldview |
|--|--|--|
| | deception common and expected | deception rare and not tolerated |
| Fear Orientation | Fear based and fear avoidance typical | Courage/fearlessness fostered |
| Ego Emphasis | Concerns of inferiority and superiority are common | Person is “large in life” but never feels superior |
| Spirituality | A “known” Creator is “exterior” and regarded “occasionally” during stress or on certain days | Mysterious “Creator” is in everything and thus gives sacred significance to all. Ceremony is continual |
| *Ethical Conduct | Focused on rules, regulations, legal hierarchy | Based on getting along and sustaining relationships |
| **Experiential Orientation | Virtual experience valued | Direct experience valued and sought after |
| *Myron Eshowsky (1999) from his essay, <i>Shamanism and Peace-making</i> | | |
| **Added by Kaufman | | |

Conclusion

This chapter presented the five antidotal movements away from Western hegemony, which was uncovered through my analysis of both my qualitative and quantitative research data. With each antidotal movement I explained how it was connected to Western hegemony and then how the data suggested a unique antidotal movement away from this specific form of Western hegemony. I also explained how the antidotal solution was grounded within an Indigenous perspective. I then included several samples from the qualitative data regarding each antidotal movement to show how the participants reported their changes. When applicable I also included examples from the quantitative data to show the antidotal movement away from Western hegemony. Specifically, as part of my analysis process, I reconfigured many of the quantitative data charts to show how participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times reported a different set of data trends than those who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times. Oftentimes, participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times show a significantly larger degree of movement away from hegemonic structures than those who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times, and this is evident in many of the data charts. The last part of this chapter showed some of the differences between the Indigenous worldview and the Western worldview. A chart was included based on the work of Arrows and Narvaez (2014). While my research has uncovered some of the ways ayahuasca might be a potential antidote to some hegemonic structures, ayahuasca also poses many challenges, especially in the West. Ayahuasca is not beyond critique. In the next chapter I explore some of the problems associated with ayahuasca and some of the ways in which rather than acting to counter Western hegemony, in some cases it may reinforce hegemony.

**CHAPTER SIX:
PROBLEMS WITH AYAHUASCA USAGE IN THE WEST AND BY WESTERNERS**

*See the light in your eyes
In your eyes, see the light
Even in the darkest moments of the night
Even in the darkest moments of your life
See the light shining in your heart
In your heart, see the light
Even in the sweetest moments of the night
Even in the sweetest moments of your life.*

(Ayahuasca healing song, used by permission from anonymous Ceremony Leader)

It would be irresponsible of me to not include an exploration of some of the problems with ayahuasca usage and the peoples who work with ayahuasca, both in South America and in the West. As a researcher, it would be unrealistic to present a one-sided view of ayahuasca as being only of benefit without exploring some of the major challenges it presents. Many of the problems related to ayahuasca were uncovered during my qualitative research interviews, in particular with the ayahuasca Ceremony Leader. Furthermore, I discovered other problems with ayahuasca usage in my literature research on ayahuasca. Ayahuasca is clearly not a panacea, nor always a clear path towards remedying hegemony. This chapter explores some of the ways in which working with ayahuasca in the West, rather than being an antidote to Western hegemony, appears to be a byproduct of Western hegemony and in support of hegemonic structures and Eurocentric views and beliefs. This chapter explores some of the manifestations of hegemony in the form of commodification such as, cultural appropriation, abuse of power by ayahuasca ceremony leaders, drug tourism, the influence of Christianity on ayahuasca legality, and a critique of psychonauts.

Contextually, many of the challenges related to ayahuasca as an antidote to Western hegemony stem from the tendency of Western users of ayahuasca to view and experience ayahuasca within a Western paradigm or worldview, and not within an Indigenous context or worldview. In the process, the ayahuasca experience, which at its root is an Indigenous ceremonial experience, loses its context in translation. This disruption in context oftentimes comes down to a difference in values between the two worldviews.

Ayahuasca Cannot Be Understood

The current rise in ayahuasca usage among Westerners is a relatively new phenomenon. As a result, it is unclear what the long-term results will be or the effects of Westernization on the ayahuasca experience or the Western psyche. The forces of Western hegemony tend to push towards the standardization of its models of medicine, health, healing, and education. Hall (1992) argues that Western research models focus on categorization, condensing complex systems into a system of representation, producing standard models and averages for the purpose of comparison, and creating criteria to evaluate against and rank. Very little about ayahuasca and the ayahuasca experience involves standardization. The brew, for example is never made exactly the same every time. The quantity of DMT is never the same. Each batch is slightly different. Furthermore, some of the people who make ayahuasca include different plants to customize the brew based on the needs of the people drinking it. This lack of standardization suggests that applying a Western scientific approach to attempt to understand ayahuasca may be challenging or meaningless.

The Western academic approach to examining ayahuasca usage is the push towards codification, for example. With the focus on codification comes arrogance in trying to

understand and codify such a mysterious and unknown process as the ayahuasca experience.

While some academic researchers are looking at the medical properties and uses of DMT, a detailed history of ayahuasca does not appear to exist in academia. It is possible that many groups use ayahuasca in secret and do not want their knowledge shared with outsiders. Some of the ancient uses of peyote, for instance, exist but very little exists on how ayahuasca was used hundreds and thousands of years ago. The Western mind, as discussed earlier, has a difficult time accepting that some things are mysterious and may remain mysteries. The Western orientation puts limitations around direct experiences by having to constantly try to understand them, versus the Indigenous model that allows experience to be limitless and unfold in their own time. We do not know why ayahuasca ceremonies take place late at night, for example, and often in the dark; the entire ayahuasca process is mysterious. Indigenous peoples at least have a cosmological understanding that it is okay for things to simply be mysterious and to not be understood, that they can remain a mystery. The Western orientation to “figure out” versus “experience” applies here, and suggests this split in consciousness. The history of ayahuasca usage is also unclear. As Beyer (2012) asserts, “The first ethnobotanical account of ayahuasca dates from 1851, although not published until 1873, when the English botanist Richard Spruce encountered the vine among the Tukano of the Rio Uapes in Brazil.” This detail supports the notion that we in the West only recently have even heard about ayahuasca usage, let alone understand how it was originally used, or the ways in which ancient ceremonies were conducted. In fact, most ayahuasca history and chronologies are simply speculative. We have minimal idea of how it was discovered, how it was originally used, and what we do know is speculative at best.

Another mystery of ayahuasca are the mysteries surrounding the ways traditional ayahuasca healers have worked, and still work, with ayahuasca. Proctor (2001) explains that in some ayahuasca traditions, only the ayahuasca leader consumed the ayahuasca, not the patient. The ayahuasca shaman would consume ayahuasca as part of the process to diagnose and cure illness (p. 15). The Peruvian ayahuasca healing center, Temple of the Way of Light (2015), echos the comments made by Proctor; “Traditionally in the Amazon (although not in all Indigenous tribes), the patient would not drink ayahuasca. Only the curandero would in order to cleanse the energetic issues of the patient as well as receive a diagnosis and prescription from doctor ayahuasca.” We do not know how long ayahuasca healers have allowed others to drink ayahuasca. There is very little history documented, outside of a few people’s travel logs to South America.

Lack of Standardization

There is also very little standardization in the format and setting of ayahuasca ceremonies, in Peru as well as in the West. Some groups function in a more Indigenous fashion than others. Some groups in the West, for instance, play prerecorded music on an Ipod and everyone lays down and has their own ayahuasca experience, which supports a self-centered, individualistic experience which is representative of the Western worldview. Some groups, which are inspired by the Church of Santo Daime, require participants to wear white clothes, the men and women are separated, song books are distributed, music is played, and everyone is encouraged to sing along. Some of the songs are in English and others in Portuguese, following the Brazilian Daime church tradition. Other groups conduct ayahuasca ceremonies more like they do in rural Peru, where the ayahuasca healer sings *icaros* (ancient ayahuasca songs), uses tobacco as a healing

technique, and the ceremony is conducted primarily in the dark. There are certainly other groups in places such as Brazil and Colombia who come from their own Indigenous traditions and conduct their ceremonies within their own traditional context, with minimal influence of the West and Western ways of working with ayahuasca. There is a huge variety of settings in which ayahuasca is consumed in the West, as well. Some yoga centers illegally sponsor ayahuasca ceremonies, as do some intentional communities, along with a large group of people interested in American Indian spirituality. There is simply no standard; there is a spectrum of different ayahuasca ceremony styles, from more Indigenous-based ceremonies to Western-oriented ceremonies. There is no standardization in the formats and styles of ceremonies, including group size, which makes it challenging to research and come up with a baseline for style or experience. Embracing these differences, we can certainly gauge if a particular group or ceremony leader is relating to ayahuasca as a sacred plant teacher, simply a drug to trip on, or a Christianized ritual.

Furthermore, there is a lack of standardization of skill level and competence in those leading ayahuasca ceremonies. Within an Indigenous model of scholarship, a person might apprentice with a leader and knowledge and experience will happen through direct teachings from the mentor and indirectly through ceremonial experiences over time. The mentor guides the student in his/her own unique learning process, which includes finding one's own skill set and own knowledge base through dialog. A mentor then empowers the student to find his/her own way over time as s/he moves towards competence. The Western model of scholarship, in contrast, is primarily based on what Freire (2004) refers to as the "banking system" of education whereby a teacher "deposits" information into a passive student's mind for the student to know long enough to regurgitate during testing.

Cultural Appropriation

Some of the ways in which ayahuasca ceremonies in the West are influenced by Western hegemony is connected to cultural appropriation. Many Western people are now leading and participating in ayahuasca ceremonies without respect for the cultural context and significance in which ayahuasca is situated within Indigenous cultures. Western participants in ayahuasca ceremonies oftentimes appear to have lack of understanding of the customs, legality, history, and sacrifices made by Indigenous experts working with ayahuasca.

According to Rogers (2006), cultural appropriation can be defined as the use of, "a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals" (p. 474). Tupper (2009a) explained, "For many Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, ayahuasca is integral to ritual practices, myths, cosmologies, art and music, and most other aspects of cultural life" (p. 118). Many Western people, however, misuse the exact elements Tupper lists as connected to ayahuasca and the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, such as art, music, cultural artifacts, rituals, and cosmologies. I appreciate Rogers' explanation of cultural appropriation and his inclusion that one aspect of cultural appropriation is the way in which the dominant culture uses elements of a subordinated culture out of context and without permission. In this case, Western people often misuse and misrepresent themselves as being connected to certain Indigenous ayahuasca groups when they are not. Rogers identifies four categories of cultural appropriation:

1. Cultural exchange: the reciprocal exchange of symbols, artifacts, rituals, genres, and/or technologies between cultures with roughly equal levels of power.
2. Cultural dominance: the use of elements of dominant culture by members of a subordinated culture in a context in which the dominant culture has been imposed

onto the subordinated culture...

3. Cultural exploitation: the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without substantial reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation.

4. Transculturation: cultural elements created from and/or by multiple cultures, such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic. (p. 477)

For many people who live in areas where ayahuasca ceremonies have been conducted for thousands of years, ayahuasca and its cultural and spiritual significance play a part in every day life. Tupper (2009a) explained, "For many indigenous peoples of the Amazon, ayahuasca is integral to ritual practices, myths, cosmologies, art and music, and most other aspects of cultural life" (p. 118).

Referencing Western versus Indigenous worldview concepts, it appears that Western users of ayahuasca may have unintentionally applied a Western worldview to working with this Indigenous plant teacher. This is the very nature of Western hegemony that it is something perpetuated unconsciously by the masses. According to Mezey (2007), "To think of culture more dynamically requires asking about power, appropriation, and negotiations between groups" (p. 2006). From this lens, power and appropriation point to Westerners using economic power to exploit ayahuasca culture, and oftentimes Indigenous peoples, who traditionally work with this plant teacher. The ayahuasca ceremonies and the structures of the ceremonies are certainly a form of cultural property (music, art, healing techniques, and ceremony structures). The ayahuasca ceremony is how some ayahuasca cultures, such as the Shipibo in Peru, self-identify. When one culture borrows or adapts another culture's property such as the ayahuasca

ceremonies, they in essence create a watered-down version of the real thing, based on very limited exposure, limited experiences, and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and healers. Western people using ayahuasca have economic power and the ability to commodify the ayahuasca experience, and within Western hegemony this is what tends to happen. Commodification of ayahuasca will be examined in depth in the next section.

The same dynamic of Westerners culturally appropriating of Indigenous spiritual practices happened to the American Indians. Deloria (1992), discussing New Agers who have taken parts of American Indian spirituality argued, "They [New Agers] take from the tribal traditions those things they find most attractive, ignoring the cultural context in which those elements were formed and from which they derive their meaning and power" (p. 19). The Western New Age movement is often accused of commodifying Indigenous spiritual practices and traditions and instead tends to look only at the mystical and mythological aspects of Indigenous spiritual traditions, without understanding or looking at the larger picture of the lives of Indigenous peoples, which oftentimes includes oppression and colonization by Western forces. Part of Western hegemonic structures is the tendency to commodify alternative forms of spirituality and mysticism and turn them into something that can be bought and sold, even if that is not how those traditions work (Rogers, 2006, p. 488). The tendency of the Western New Age movement, which is similar to the way many Westerners relate to ayahuasca, is that they ignore the forces of Western hegemony that have harmed these Indigenous cultures, and do very little to contribute to Indigenous communities and peoples. Instead, many Westerners operate from a place of individuality and pursue their own agenda without concern for relationality.

Lack of Attribution. Furthermore, Westerners often take pieces of other cultures without

providing attribution. Since Judeo-Christian traditions are often culturally familiar and prevalent to Westerners, while ayahuasca traditions are less understood and prevalent, some Westerners essentially come to the conclusion that ayahuasca culture is "up for grabs" and can be used any way they want. This means using ayahuasca songs, art, ceremony structures, and cosmologies out of context and/or without permission, or selling aspects of Indigenous ayahuasca ceremonies and culture to other Westerners. Western hegemonic structures promote consumer culture. Consumer culture views everything as a commodity; including lifestyle, tradition, identity, and even spirituality. Everything in consumer culture is for sale including spirituality and ceremonies (Aldred, 2000).

In a Western religious context, it would be inappropriate to represent one's self as something one is not. A person cannot call himself or herself a rabbi or a priest, yet people call themselves a medicine man, an ayahuasca expert, a shaman, an elder, or other spiritual titles without repercussion or outrage (Khadem, 2008, p. 203). However, some Westerners are now selling ayahuasca services to other Westerners, and have taken the power away from Indigenous people to dictate what is considered real and what is not considered real, in terms of ayahuasca healing techniques, ceremonies, including which elements of ayahuasca ceremonies should be shared publically and which should be kept secret. When the dominant culture suddenly dictates which aspects of the non-dominant culture are real and not real, everyone suffers. There has been a tendency for White shamanic practitioners, whom some American Indians refer to as "plastic medicine men," to misrepresent themselves as being part of a particular Indigenous lineage when they are not. These Western people often profit from Indigenous cultural and spiritual rituals and ceremonies such as sweat lodges, ceremonies, vision quests, seminars, and healings, without

sharing the financial profit with Indigenous people, and oftentimes not even offering attribution to the cultures these rituals and ceremonies come from (Aldred, 2000; Tupper, 2002). Many South American people are now claiming to be ayahuasca healers and experts to simply cash in on the demand, but do not have the proper training. Furthermore, many Westerners are also claiming to be trained as ayahuasca ceremony leaders without having the proper training over time, or the blessings of their elders and mentor/s in their work with ayahuasca. Many Westerners are also cashing in on the ayahuasca phenomenon and leading ayahuasca ceremonies in countries such as the US.

Romanticizing Indigenous Peoples

Another form of cultural appropriation are the ways in which Westerners oftentimes romanticize Indigenous cultures and Indigenous healers, including ayahuasca healers. These same sorts of misconceived mythologies have occurred in how Western people view South American ayahuasca leaders and cultures practicing ayahuasca spirituality. Romanticizing and therefore trivializing Indigenous practices supports the Western worldview, as does exalting Indigenous practices. The result of romanticizing Indigenous cultures is the tendency to reinforce the “noble” and “ignoble” savage myths of these peoples. These two myths romanticize and demonize the roles of Indigenous peoples, and minimize the seriousness and uniqueness of their histories. The abuses against American Indians have been more extensively documented than those against most other Indigenous groups; however, this tendency to portray American Indian people as noble and ignoble savages also happens within ayahuasca cultures in South America, and in how ayahuasca leaders in particular are depicted. Within American Indian culture, the noble savage is represented by imagery of American Indians in headdresses, and includes the

"Dances with Wolves" and Pocahontas stories. Another popularized noble savage image is the "one with the earth" motif (Mihsuah, 1996). The 1970s, "Keep it beautiful campaign" featuring Iron Eyes Cody shedding a single tear in response to pollution reinforced stereotypes about American Indians as closer to nature, stoic, heroic, and noble. These depictions of American Indians are archetypal caricatures created by anthropologists and ethnographers through art and literature. In essence, these images depict a caricature of a culture, mythologized versions of a culture seen through the eyes of Eurocentric romanticism (Bataille, 2001). Eurocentric hegemonic influences extend power to dictate cultural stories, histories, and can manufacture images of Indigenous peoples the way they want, because they have the power to do so.

Within ayahuasca cultures the same is also true in the depiction of healers and *ayahuasceros* (ayahuasca masters). Many Westerners who work with ayahuasca romanticize the lives of ayahuasca healers. Websites advertising ayahuasca retreats in Peru, for example, feature pictures of ayahuasca healers wearing traditional tribal clothing, preparing ayahuasca in the jungle over a large open fire, or smoking a ceremonial pipe, sitting in a traditional *maloca* — which is a traditional round ceremonial building where ayahuasca ceremonies are held. While these images of ayahuasca leaders may be accurate in so far as conducting ayahuasca ceremonies, they do not depict a realistic image of these people's lives or their actual lifestyle, which is grounded in the mundane just as it is in the spiritual. Instead, these advertisement-driven images reinforce stereotypes without presenting a whole view of these healers, their lives, and the cultures from which they come.

The Influence of Christian Hegemony on Legality and Illegality

One of the key reasons Westerners travel to South America to drink ayahuasca and participate in ayahuasca ceremonies is due to the illegality of ayahuasca in the West. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in the United States ayahuasca is considered a Schedule One drug. Legality is significant in the discussion about challenges with ayahuasca because who determines legality, and which Indigenous practices should or should not be legislated by the government is a direct correlate to Western hegemonic structures in the form of legality. Why do many Western governmental bodies frame the work with plant medicines such as ayahuasca and peyote as drugs and therefore illegal, except if they are done within a Christianized context? By Christianized, I am referring to the legal status of the Christian-based Santo Daime Church in Oregon, and the Uniao do Vegetal Church in New Mexico being granted legal rights to work with ayahuasca under the religious freedom law. Why is it that only a Christian-based group can use ayahuasca legally, while Indigenous groups are not afforded the same legal protection? As Kivel (2013) argues, Christian values dominate all aspects of U.S. society; nothing is unaffected (p. 3). Christian hegemony has historically been, and continues to be, a destructive force against anything it deems to be in conflict with its beliefs. Christianity has been a historic force against American Indians. According to Churchill (2002), between 1880 and 1930, 80% of all American Indian children were sent to Christian missionaries, forced to live in Christian-based boarding schools, forbidden from practicing their Indigenous religions and from speaking their native languages (p. 57).

The influence of Christian hegemony was part of the push to outlaw many American Indian spiritual practices, including working with peyote. Peyote in the United States was made

illegal in the 1880s. Around 1915, American Indian groups formed the Native American Church to regain legal status to conduct peyote ceremonies. From 1916-1919, Christian groups in the United States spearheaded an anti-peyote lobbying campaign and succeeded in keeping peyote illegal. Maroukis (2012) explains that there appears to be significant evidence that Christian elements were added to this Indigenous-based ceremony (peyote) to acquire legal protection and lessen the opposition against it (pp. 124-126). This shows that the only way American Indians thought they could regain their legal rights to work with peyote was to placate the Christian hegemony who were in power.

It wasn't until the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 that most religious rights of American Indians were restored. The 1978 Act gave American Indians the right to have access to sacred sites, to possess eagle feathers and certain bones, as well as use of peyote in sacred ceremonies. Even today, the Native American Church still incorporates elements of Christianity into its peyote ceremonies and rituals. In some Native American Church chapters, they sing Christian songs as part of the peyote ceremonies and may even include Bible quotations. Yet Maroukis (2012) argues, "The Native American Church is not indigenized Christianity. It is an indigenous faith, and so perceived by its members, in spite of Christian accreditations to its ceremonies" (p. 69).

Christian hegemony is still an influence on Western society today and is part of how the American judicial system legislates around what constitutes a legal sacrament, such as ayahuasca or peyote; what constitutes a religion, such as whether or not American Indians can practice their Indigenous forms of spirituality; and what constitutes morality and ethics. In the case of ayahuasca, Christianity still plays a significant role in determining if groups can legally work

with or use ayahuasca or not and under what guidelines. Within the current paradigm, if the groups want legislative support, the ceremonies must be done in a Christian-inspired manner or they will not be legally recognized. Conducting ayahuasca ceremonies in an Indigenous framework is not enough to gain legal acceptance.

Commodification

Earlier in this chapter, commodification was discussed in relation to cultural appropriation. Now I discuss the role profit has on shaping Western participation in ayahuasca ceremonies, including the role of drug tourism, and the ecological toll caused by the increase in participation in ayahuasca ceremonies by Westerners, primarily Americans. There are many problems associated with the commodification of ayahuasca. One problem regarding charging high fees for ceremonies is that it can easily default into supporting a polarized classist hegemonic structure, whereby the only people who can afford to participate are a self-selecting group of primarily White, educated, middle-class people. This type of exclusivity points directly to the hegemonic structure of individuality as being the top priority, while others who are less financially successful simply cannot afford to participate. There appears to be a classist element, for instance, in those who can afford to travel to places such as Peru to participate in high-priced ayahuasca retreats. Missing from these examples of high-priced ayahuasca ceremonies and retreats is the Indigenous notion of healing as accessible to an entire community of people, which includes those who may be less wealthy, single parents living on a shoestring budget, college students who have little money, unemployed adults, and so on. It would seem that with an Indigenous model of relationality, ceremonies would be done for all and inclusion would be the priority. Some of these examples of high-priced ayahuasca ceremonies seem to go against the

Indigenous model.

The popularization of ayahuasca in television shows, documentaries about DMT featured on Netflix, magazine articles, and celebrities speaking its praises, have all contributed to the increase in attention about ayahuasca. The increase in attention has created new niche industries, such as drug tourism, that cater to people wanting to experience ayahuasca. Shifting the ayahuasca experience into the framework of another Western commodity means that many ayahuasca ceremony leaders, some Indigenous and some Western, now travel the United States, charging \$150 to \$350 per night for ayahuasca ceremonies. The average size of these groups is usually between 20 to 50 participants, although I have read stories of ayahuasca ceremonies with as many as 100 participants. However, most ayahuasca maestros in South America will only work with groups of 10 or less to ensure that each person is able to receive individual attention and healing during the ayahuasca ceremony, which calls into question the motivation for working with such large groups of people in one specific ceremony. I am certainly not suggesting that all people are using an exploitive commodification-based model for ayahuasca ceremonies usage in the United States. I have also heard several stories of people conducting ceremonies for groups of less than ten participants, and done on a donation basis. The people running smaller groups seem to be the exception to the rule, however. It appears that some people lead ayahuasca ceremonies for personal power and gain, which is part of the Western worldview, while others appear to be more service-based and community-oriented, which is more associated with an Indigenous worldview. There certainly are costs and risks of obtaining ayahuasca in the United States as well, and the price of obtaining ayahuasca is unknown to me. Despite the legal risks of working with and obtaining ayahuasca, the ayahuasca Ceremony

Leader suggested,

It is worth taking the legal risks to help my relatives heal their lives and find a good way to move through the world. I give my life to the ceremonies and to this path of healing. It is crazy that government tries to mandate this sacred teacher as illegal. It shows how ignorant, misguided and sick the American legal system is, that they consider ayahuasca a drug and not a medicine.

Drug Tourism and Hegemony

Another form the commodification of ayahuasca takes is the rise in *drug tourism*. Drug tourism refers to Westerners travelling to various countries in South America specifically to experience ayahuasca. With the large increase in Western people visiting Peru and parts of South America to work with ayahuasca, there has been a rise in abuses and commodification as well. The potential to profit from ayahuasca is certainly at the foundation of this increase in abuses. I am not suggesting that it is somehow negative that Western people travel to South America to work with ayahuasca, some positive things have come from drug tourism. Drug tourism has changed the way many people work with ayahuasca in South America however, and most of the changes point to commodification and an influence of Western hegemony. Grunwell (1998) explains the Westernization of ayahuasca drug tourism: “That this industry [ayahuasca] is heavily advertised and available to anyone with financial means to undertake a trip, that it is not a hush-hush experience available only to a select few in the psychedelic drug underground, is perhaps even more astonishing” (p. 62). As a result, ayahuasca drug tourism has resulted in new industries and increased the numbers of people falsely claiming to be experts in leading ayahuasca ceremonies.

Ayahuasca tourism has created retreat centers that charge large sums of money for ayahuasca ceremonies. Ayahuasca tourism has also resulted in crash courses in ayahuasca healing methodologies being offered to Westerners, who hope to master the art of ayahuasca healing quickly, compared to the multi-year apprenticeships Indigenous people go through to learn about leading ayahuasca ceremonies whereby learning about ayahuasca is seen as a never ending path. For example, Blue Morpho ayahuasca retreat center located near Iquitos, Peru charges \$2,340 for a 7-day retreat, which includes 5 nights of ayahuasca ceremonies (Blue Morpho, 2015). These sorts of expensive retreat centers can be found in various locations around South America. Smaller, more remote, and perhaps more legitimate ayahuasca healers often charge only \$75 per night of ceremony.

Lack of Ecological Respect for the Ayahuasca Vine

The ecosystems in South America are being altered by the increase in ayahuasca tourism along with the increase in demand for the ayahuasca brew, which contains the ayahuasca vine and chacruna leaves. As a result, areas where the ayahuasca vine grew freely along with the chacruna leaves may be overharvested, as Indigenous people try to make more and more ayahuasca to keep up with the demand. This tendency to clear cut and deforest for commercial interest, often by World Bank projects, Western corporations, and corrupt and misguided governments are all examples of the hegemonic structures of anthropocentrism, whereupon the natural world is viewed simply for its commodity value, without forethought given to sustainability. Unfortunately, this potential problem is not mentioned in the popular books or television show documentaries about ayahuasca, which instead focus on the mystical healing ceremonies and the rituals, and the unusual elements of the ayahuasca ceremonies. These media

depictions and journalistic explorations of ayahuasca have ignored the potential environmental impact. There are multiple layers of hegemony at work here (deforestation, overharvesting of ayahuasca) all done in the name of profit. It is well documented that deforestation and destruction of the Amazon Rainforest has been happening at a rapid rate. According to Butler (2008),

Rainforests once covered 14% of the earth's land surface; now they cover a mere 6% and experts estimate that the last remaining rainforests could be consumed in less than 40 years. Experts estimate that we are losing 137 plant, animal, and insect species every single day due to rainforest deforestation. That equates to 50,000 species a year. (p. 1)

Given the increase in demand for ayahuasca, and oftentimes the lack of forethought and planning to protect and sustain this sacred vine and the sacred leaves by Indigenous peoples, it is possible and perhaps likely that ayahuasca may be harder to find over time. Or it is possible that local Indigenous peoples are destroying local ecosystems designed to grow food for their villages and communities to instead grow ayahuasca. This trend towards destruction of the natural world for profit is a byproduct of Western hegemony and its belief that nature is subordinate to human beings and their needs. Hopefully other Indigenous groups and ecologically aware Westerners will focus on cultivating sustainable practices to both empower the Indigenous peoples to protect the sacred plant ayahuasca, while still ensuring that Indigenous ayahuasca ceremony leaders can support themselves financially through their work with ayahuasca.

Organizations such as the Ethnobotanical Stewardship Council (Ethnobotanical Stewardship Council, 2014) have recently emerged to focus on advocating for sustainability for plant medicines such as ayahuasca. According to their report (2014),

When used with other sustainable development approaches like sustainable tourism, carbon off-setting, sustainable forestry management, medicinal plant cultivation, and/or the development and certification of other sustainable non-timber forest products (NTFP), the planting and harvest of ayahuasca and admixture plants can compete economically and culturally with industrial development to be part of the solution to protecting the Amazon and improving the lives of Amazonian peoples. (p. 10)

Abuse of Power by Ayahuasca Leaders

Given that ayahuasca is a powerful healing medicine, and known for its ability to alter consciousness, participants are in a vulnerable state during and after ayahuasca ceremonies, and therefore open to abuses from ayahuasca ceremony leaders and assistants. Grob (2005) mentions characteristics common to altered states of consciousness. Included in this list are alterations in thinking, altered time sense, perceptual alterations, and hyper-suggestibility (p. 76). When Western people work with ayahuasca in South America or in the West, they are then in a raw and vulnerable state. This vulnerability opens the door for unethical people to prey upon them. Many people report that they arrive in places such as Peru and Columbia to go on an ayahuasca retreat, only to find that the advertised prices are not available and the ceremonies actually cost more. In addition, there are other reports of ayahuasca ceremony leaders telling participants that if they do not get a large number of ayahuasca treatments, along with other shamanic treatments, they will then get sick or not heal. These types of financial exploits are one type of abuse and outside of the spirit of these healing ceremonies. These forms of abuse can be tied to Western hegemony, which pushes the idea of “survival of the fittest” whereby behavior can be justified because it enhances personal gain.

Exploitation of Women

The hierarchical, power-based, dominator model of Western hegemony is an influence in the ways in which women are exploited in ceremonies, and also point to a decline in authentic Indigenous values whereby abuse, mistreatment of others, and manipulation are forbidden and punished. According to Hearn (2013) there are frequent reports of molestations, rapes, and negligence on behalf of supposed ayahuasca healers. This includes ayahuasca healers touching women's breasts and bodies during ayahuasca ceremonies and claiming it is part of the healing process, which points to Western hegemony playing out in terms of misogyny, and other power abuses. In my dissertation research, I have also heard stories from women who have had supposed medicine men trying to convince them to have sex, and/or being sexually harassed during ceremonies, which is far from the healing intent and ethical behavior from which most ceremony leaders operate. The dissociative states associated with the ayahuasca experience, and the Western tendency to romanticize and idolize ayahuasca leaders and the ayahuasca ceremony process create a situation whereupon some unethical ayahuasca leaders prey on women. The inherent power differential between ayahuasca ceremony leader and participant, and the trust required for participants to allow themselves to be vulnerable and open during ayahuasca ceremonies requires highly ethical behavior.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a rise in women enduring various forms of abuse during ayahuasca ceremonies. Some organizations of women have formed to address issues of abuse and to find solutions to this problem. In November 2014, Annie Oak presented a lecture entitled, "Abuse of Power in Ceremonies that use Psychoactive Substances" at the Shaman

Women, Plant Medicine and Psychedelics Salon hosted by the Women's Visionary Congress in Vancouver. During her speech, Oak reported,

We have been meeting together since 2007 and we are observing a growing number of women who are coming forward to describe sexual advances by male shamans, particularly, but not limited to, ayahuasca ceremonies. We also hear from those who describe being energetically violated in different ways. As the number of people from around the world traveling to Peru, Ecuador, and other parts of Latin American to drink ayahuasca has increased, so have reports of abuses by people leading these ceremonies.

Later in her talk, Oak continued,

First, we would like to caution those who find ayahuasca and other substances useful to be careful not to become enchanted or fall under their spell in a way that discourages critical thinking. We also see that ayahuasca ceremonies are becoming a big business and many shamans, ceremonial leaders, tour operators, owners of lodges and other parts of this industry have a vested interest in not discussing this topic, silencing those who have been violated, or somehow denigrating this discussion.

These comments by Oak are important and illustrate a real problem regarding safety for women who participate in ayahuasca ceremonies and other hallucinogens-based ceremonies.

In some extreme cases, ayahuasca healers have even ended up having participants die. In August 2012, for example, 18-year-old Kyle Nolan from California paid \$1,200 to attend 5 nights of ayahuasca ceremonies at the Shimbre Shamanic Center in Madre de Rios, Peru. Nolan died during his visit to the retreat center, and the ayahuasca leader Master Mancoluto buried Nolan's body on the retreat center property (Farberov, 2012). The cause of Nolan's death is still

unknown. Mancoluto, however, suggested that Nolan died during an ayahuasca ceremony, and there seems to be significant evidence to back up this claim. Death during ceremonies is extremely rare however, and this is an extreme cases of negligence by an ayahuasca healer ending in tragedy. The obvious problem is that this ayahuasca ceremony leader did not do his job, which ultimately is to protect, heal, and care for the people who come to work with him. Instead, Mancoluto was only concerned with making money and protecting himself from the negative consequences of his actions.

Psychonauts

Another problem with ayahuasca usage in the West is that a good number of ayahuasca users fall into the category of *psychonauts*. Psychonauts are people who experiment with hallucinogens as part of their process of self-exploration and mind expansion. This type of hallucinogen use is often recreational and not grounded within a ceremonial context. As Participant 4 of the qualitative interviews pointedly suggested, “I see a lot of Western people treat ayahuasca like LSD, and psychonauts treating it as a journey through the mind and nothing more.” Instead of focusing on healing as a path, psychonauts think of hallucinogens as a way to escape from their ordinary life and be more dissociated.

Psychonauts often purchase ingredients to hallucinogenic brews such as ayahuasca or its analogs online. Analogs are plants that have similar chemical properties to other plants. In this case, some psychonauts, rather than try to make ayahuasca the way they do in South America, by combining ayahuasca vine and chacruna leaves, will look for plants that contain similar chemical compounds to these two ingredients. Or they may synthesize DMT (the active hallucinogenic compound found in ayahuasca) from other plants in order to have a drug trip. This form of drug

experimentation is part of the Western hegemonic structure that supports the belief that Western individuals should be free to do whatever they want, whenever they want, without any respect for traditions or cultural understandings of this plant teacher. This is not to suggest that all psychonauts are the same. It is not a black-and-white issue; some psychonauts are more respectful of Indigenous cultures and practices than others. Doyle (2011) discusses psychonauts in the following manner:

Psychonauts browse the psychedelic vaults (online) to learn about the experience of other psychonauts with different compounds, dosages, programming, and intent, and carry out their experiments accordingly. Trip reports are, then, first and foremost protocols, scripts for the better or worse, ingestion of psychedelic compounds and plants. (p. 47)

The problem with Doyle's approach is that it is situated within the Western worldview and not the Indigenous worldview. There appears to be minimal, if any, recognition given to the plants as sentient. Plants are not considered teachers or healers or relatives, but simply the means to getting high and having an unusual trip or experience. Doyle's description of psychonauts also seems to highlight the infusion of the Western worldview, which emphasizes and values logic and rationality, based on the belief that there is always an objective truth that can be reached through linear processes of discovery (Wurtz, 2005, p. 279). All of my research, however, seems to show that sacred medicine plants and plant medicine ceremonies work in a non-linear way. Furthermore, psychonauts generally apply the Western worldview to working with plant medicines, and forego the group experience to focus on themselves and their own psychic exploration. Last, psychonauts have no rigor in their supposed self-explorations. This individualistic approach risks promoting self-indulgence, spiritual tourism, and superficial

understandings of plant medicines, and can drift into escapism and self-appeasement. The psychonaut approach is far from the reaches of Indigenous models for social and political change, and other elements situated within the Indigenous worldview.

The ayahuasca ceremony leader I interviewed specifically criticized psychonauts and those who attend ceremonies for what he referred to as the “wrong” reasons. He argued, “Some people attend ceremony only for the fun parts. They want to come for the rainbows and unicorns, and the pretty color show. But that’s not why we come and drink ayahuasca. We come to learn how to be strong for ourselves in the face of adversity and ultimately to be strong for our friends, families and our world and become social change agents. That’s what the medicine teaches us to do and empowers us to do and become.” Most psychonauts are missing the healing intent and community focus that the ayahuasca ceremony can provide. Furthermore, psychonauts oftentimes misuse ayahuasca without the guidance of someone who knows what he or she is doing and is grounded in an Indigenous understanding of plant medicine ceremonies.

Lack of Post-Ceremony Social Support

As discussed in the Western worldview diagram, Indigenous cultures tend to be collectivist in nature. By collectivist, I am referring to having community support, including an established kinship network for emotional support, along with frequent access to community rituals and ceremonies. Ayahuasca usage in the West is often done without the support of a community and without a community context for understanding. As a result, oftentimes individuals leave ceremonies disoriented, whether in the US. or return from trips to work with ayahuasca in South America, because they are without a methodology of integration between the ayahuasca experience and their every day life. Lewis (2008), explains,

Quite unlike shamanic initiates, Western ayahuasca users have little cultural support and guidance within which to contextualize their experiences.... Indigenous shamanic initiates, on the other hand, have the support of the master curandero (as well as their family, community, and culture at large), who helps the initiate to integrate and understand the distress that invariably results from their powerful ayahuasca experiences. (pp. 110-111)

When individuals do not get the proper support after working with ayahuasca, such as psychonauts, and return to their normal lives, they may have spiritual crises. Individuals dealing with spiritual emergencies often seek clinical treatment for their anxiety and other distressing symptoms that happen as a result of not knowing how to integrate their normal waking life and their spiritual life. Within shamanic cultures, this sort of experience is common and understood as an initiatory experience, which is framed as a way to grow the soul and be cracked open to experience subtle spiritual influences more fully. Shamans, which in this case, include those who lead ayahuasca ceremonies, are known to straddle both the spiritual world and the every day world, and their work is to move between the two on behalf of healing people, communities, and the natural world. However, within the Western framework this sort of experience of bridging the spiritual and material worlds may be experienced as anxiety, depression, and dissociative states of consciousness. That said, these sorts of spiritual crises may become exacerbated due to lack of social support and cultural understanding of the process (Lewis, 2008, p. 113). Some of the interviews I conducted echo the statements that integrating ayahuasca experiences can be confusing and disorienting without social support. Participant 6, for example, stated, "After ceremony there was a sense of loneliness and isolation." Participant 1 echoed the inevitable, "It

can fade away.” These examples point to a lack of social support and a lack of working within an Indigenous context as possible barriers to getting the most from the experiences. If these participants had more guidance and opportunities to process and integrate their ayahuasca experiences into their regular routines, perhaps they might gain more from the ayahuasca experiences. However, within the Western hegemonic forces of individualism and drive towards materialism, it is difficult to live in a manner that supports community participation and affords the time necessary to live relationally.

Conclusion

While there are many benefits to ayahuasca usage, along with ample evidence that it may be a potential antidote to various forms of Western hegemony, there are many challenges as well, which come down to Westerners applying their own Western worldview towards their work with ayahuasca. When applying a culturally mismatched paradigm the results can be problematic. Various elements of cultural appropriation support the Western worldview, such as romanticizing Indigenous peoples, keeping Westerners who work with ayahuasca stuck in the grips of Western hegemonic influences, rather than shifting way from these influences. Romanticizing and therefore trivializing Indigenous practices supports the Western worldview as well.

One of the most destructive forces on Indigenous peoples and cultures are the Western hegemonic forces of commodification. Commodification has been the force behind drug tourism. The spread of ayahuasca tourist centers around South America has brought about many problems, including the exploitation of Westerners, sexual harassment, and other forms of abuse. These forms of abuse point to the movement away from traditional Indigenous values towards

some of the worst elements of Western corruption, abuse of power, and exploitation of others for personal gain. Another byproduct of drug tourism is environmental destruction and the problems that go along with not employing sustainable practices to protect the sacred plants that go into making ayahuasca.

Next, psychonauts present a potentially destructive influence on ayahuasca usage in the West, because they attempt to work with ayahuasca outside of a ceremonial context, without the support of others in a spiritual community, or without a trained leader. The approach that psychonauts seem to take appears to be more about drug experimentation than working to move away from the destructive forces of Western hegemony. Furthermore, most Westerners, given that they are not Indigenous peoples, have small—if any—kinship networks developed. This points to potential problems with working with ayahuasca in that they do not have community to help provide emotional support that may be needed after working with ayahuasca. Westerners and the manner in which they work with ayahuasca, oftentimes do so to support individualistic pursuits, not work to move towards a more relational Indigenous model. For all of these reasons, the ayahuasca experience may not be as effective at combatting Western hegemony as it could be.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

We often pray to see and experience beauty inside of ourselves and our lives so that we can see beauty outside ourselves and in our every day lives. The ayahuasca sometimes teaches that a person cannot recognize external beauty without seeing inner beauty. So we pray in ceremony for ourselves, our families and our world to recognize that they are all part of a beautiful world and all a part of beautiful creation. (Anonymous Ceremony Leader)

My research study explored the research question, “How might the ayahuasca experience be a potential antidote to Western hegemony?” When I began my study, my assumption was that there was likely a connection between the ayahuasca experience and the potential to move people away from the destructive influences of Western hegemony, although I was unclear what that connection might be or how it might surface in the data. One of the purposes of this chapter is to analyze the data and look for other possible influences on the data and to look for other causes in changes in participants. This chapter will also look at other solutions to Western hegemony, outside of the ayahuasca experience.

Both the quantitative and qualitative research, appear to show a correlation between people who work with ayahuasca, in particular those who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, and evidence of antidotal movements away from Western hegemonic influences in their lives. Chapter 5 presented the five key antidotal movements found within the data. The analysis in that chapter explored how these five antidotal movements are situated within an Indigenous framework, along with showing how they act to counter specific forms of Western hegemony. I also included quantitative data to show how these antidotal movements could be viewed in the numeric data. The data sets from the quantitative scaled questionnaire were reconfigured to highlight the antidotal movement of those who worked with ayahuasca more

than 50 times compared to participants who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times.

These data sets suggested that there is a greater antidotal movement away from Western hegemonic structures in participants who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times or more, as compared to those who have worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times. When participants have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, there seems to be a shift away from the forces of Western hegemony, in participants' beliefs, attitudes, outlook on life, and actions.

Another surprise from the research study was noting how ayahuasca appears to have a far-reaching power to effect change on various levels, from personal-level healing to changes in criticality, and by extension healing effects on individuals and communities. While there certainly are many possible antidotes to various forms of Western hegemonic influences, the ayahuasca experience in a ceremonial context, and its connection to Indigenous wisdom, seems to address all of these different forms of hegemony.

Age as a Factor in the Data Results

When I began to analyze the quantitative data, one of the questions I had was related to whether or not age was a factor in the answers given to the questions asked on the scaled questionnaire. I hypothesized that one's age could certainly be a major factor in one's hegemonic awareness, and perhaps this type of awareness is simply more prevalent in adults over 40 years of age, for instance. Furthermore, my assumption was that natural developmental life stages affect natural changes related to beliefs, attitudes, and possibly a shift in worldview might result in older ayahuasca ceremony participants reporting a movement away from hegemonic forces having nothing to do with the ayahuasca experience, but simply based on their own process of maturing. I also thought age could be a factor in the participants who have worked with

ayahuasca more than 50 times simply because that volume of ayahuasca usage could possibly take someone 10 years, which would simply put them in an older age group.

When I re-configured the data to look at changes in ayahuasca users over 45 years of age compared to those below 45, the participants over the age of 45 are fairly evenly distributed among various age categories. Figure 38 below, looking at the age of participants, seems to suggest that age simply is not a large factor in the quantitative data.

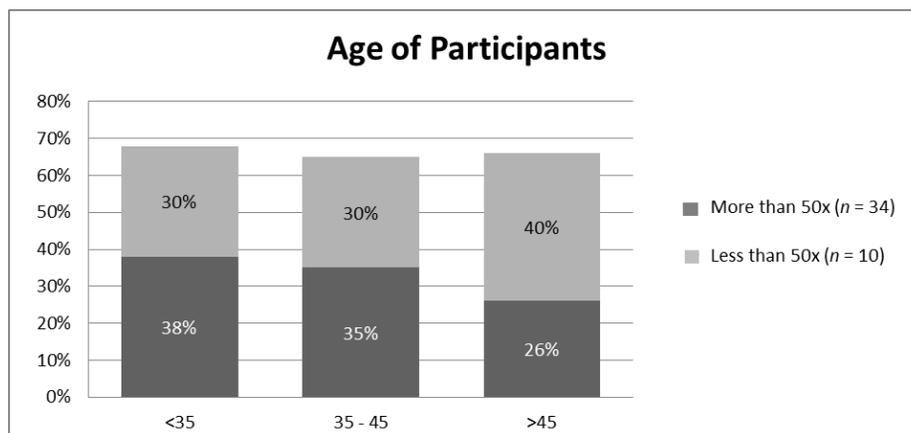


Figure 38. Age of participants.

Gender as a Factor in the Data Results

In examining the data, I was also not sure if gender would play a role in skewing the results of the quantitative scaled questionnaire one way or another. One gender might be more likely to answer the questions one way or another, thus affecting the data. Figure 39 shows that the gender makeup of research participants is almost identical in the group who has worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times compared to the group who has worked with ayahuasca less than 50 times. As a result, gender does not appear to be a factor in changing quantitative data one way or another.



Figure 39. Comparison of gender of participants-qualitative data: More than 50x ayahuasca versus less than 50x ayahuasca.

The Five Antidotal Movements Analyzed

What follows is additional analysis of the five antidotal movements away from Western hegemony. This form of analysis compares other potential antidotes to Western hegemony with the ayahuasca experience. With each potential antidote I include my own assumptions regarding how effective I anticipated the ayahuasca experience could be as an antidote to Western hegemony. As stated before, ayahuasca clearly is not the only solution, or only method that people can employ to work against hegemony; there are others such as critical pedagogy. Ayahuasca and its connections to Indigenous wisdom does seem to present a radical and potentially effective method at producing this shift, however.

Antidote 1:

Movement from the Personal Trappings of Western Hegemony

Towards Self-Determination

Based on the existing literature, I expected the ayahuasca experience to be effective at helping individuals heal, learn, and grow. Ayahuasca has been shown to relieve depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and to heal forms of trauma. Ayahuasca has also been shown to help people find a connection to their spirituality and to assist them in having

meaning and purpose in their lives. I also assumed that ayahuasca would be effective at helping individuals move away from the destructive influences of Western hegemony on an individual level toward self-determination, which my results confirmed.

One of the unique features of the ayahuasca experience is that each individual appears to have a different experience, and participants report that the ayahuasca experience is never the same twice. The ayahuasca experience, therefore, seems to be individualistic in how it helps each person in a somewhat different way and effects change in different ways. Both my qualitative and quantitative research data confirmed that there seems to be a connection between working with ayahuasca and movement away from the personal trappings of Western hegemony. These samples from the qualitative interviews all point to the healing process the ayahuasca experience provides for people. This power of ayahuasca to assist with personal healing and a movement away from Western hegemonic structures can be found in a few samples from the qualitative interviews:

-When you sit in ceremony and meet Grandmother ayahuasca, you learn a lot about yourself. You see where you're stuck and where you are already free. You have this amazing opportunity to really dialogue with the plant spirits and dis-engage from your past, and society's influences. (Ceremony Leader)

-There is always so much personalization to the experiences that I hear when others share about it too. (P1)

-There's a physical discomfortness and an emotional uncomfortableness, but on the other side, I feel free. (P3)

-Medicine gets at the root of people's problems, healing physical, emotional and spiritual

bodies. (P4)

Psychotherapeutic Traditions

The first antidote, movement from the personal trappings of Western hegemony towards self-determination, can potentially be found in many traditions, healing, and pedagogical models. Psychotherapy, and other Western forms of healing, also helps individuals learn about, and loosen the grip of Western hegemonic institutional forces such as homophobia, classism, racism, sexism, and other forms of institutional bias. These psychologically based forms of healing sometimes assist individuals in understanding how the destructive and covert forces of hegemony work so that individuals can find solutions that lead towards self-determination and freedom from these destructive influences. The ayahuasca experience, situated within the Indigenous worldview, looks at self-determination as something healed through relationality and specifically through ceremony and ritual.

Psychotherapy, however, often only focuses on helping individuals to understand themselves better, and to learn coping skills. The psychotherapy process often ignores the external forces of hegemony or social influences that may affect the individual. Psychotherapy tends to focus only on the individual because it is oriented towards the Western worldview. Western models of healing tend to focus on the individual and the individual's healing process, and not on creating larger community or family-level change as part of the healing process. Brief therapy, for example, focuses on assisting clients in finding solutions to their personal issues and to learn to focus on inner resources and strengths (de Shazer, 1985). These are important skills to develop in the person's healing process, but they are different than the type of personal changes individuals tend to go through by working with ayahuasca. The Western model of healing is in

contrast to the Indigenous worldview that looks at healing as done on behalf of the larger world along with the individual level.

Transformational Learning

The field of transformational learning also aims to help individuals transform the way they view the world, themselves, and their outer actions. Mezirow (1996) described this transformational process as, “A perspective transformation leads to a more fully developed (more functional) frame of reference . . . one that is more (a) inclusive, (b) differentiating, (c) permeable, (d) critically reflective, and (e) integrative of experience” (p. 163). O’Sullivan (2003) suggested, “Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world (p. 203). Both transformational learning as well as the ayahuasca experience point to similar forms of transformation, generated from different stimuli.

Freirean Philosophy

Freire’s (2004) concept of “conscientization,” which refers to the process of developing critical awareness of one’s self, is relevant in exploring other routes moving towards self-determination. Critical awareness within a Freirean framework refers to being critical of oppressive institutional forces, including classism, racism, social, political, and capitalistic influences. Freire (2004) argues, “The oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as Subjects of the transformation” (p. 127). Freire suggests that an essential part of liberation is to seek out, through rigorous self-examination, forms of oppression they have unconsciously adopted. These forms of oppression are akin to

various forms of covert hegemonic forces, which dictate belief at such a prominent cultural level that individuals do not even realize their own thoughts and beliefs are complicit with hegemonic forces. The process of liberation, according to Freire, starts with developing criticality to foster self-determination.

Indigenous Models of Experiential and Emotional Learning

When people experience ayahuasca, it is not on a conceptual or theoretical level, it is a unique direct experience. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) asserted that sacredness among Indigenous peoples is felt through direct experience, and through direct actions. The Indigenous worldview, and the significance it gives to experiential learning, is in contrast to the Western academic models of learning, in which transformational learning is situated. Furthermore, an important aspect of Indigenous experiential learning is learning how to work with emotions, specifically fear. Jacobs (1998) explained that traditional cultures intentionally use fear within a learning context to help people expand and learn how to utilize emotions in the learning process.

Indigenous people understand fear and learn how to work with it as a way to become liberated from its limitations (p. 156). The ayahuasca experience provides emotional learning, teaching, and healing through direct experience. Academic models of learning ignore the role of emotion in the learning process and ignore the visceral-level reaction individuals feel in relation to various forms of oppression and injustice. The ayahuasca ceremony leader summed up the ayahuasca process in the following way: “The medicine works as a galvanizing experience. It pulverizes the ego and challenges people to look more deeply at their ideas and illusions of what life is like. It is a disorienting experience for many people, but the challenges always lead to

more freedom.” The ayahuasca experience in this case provides antidotal movement away from the trappings of Western hegemony towards self-determination.

Antidote 2:

Movement from Individuality and “Survival of the Fittest” Towards Relationality and Kinship Focused

I was not clear whether the ayahuasca experience would influence movement from individuality towards relationality. I wondered whether the results of working with ayahuasca repeatedly would lead people towards a more community and familial orientation. Given that the interview participants were all raised within Western countries and within Western cultural orientations, it would then follow that they would likely be influenced and perhaps entrenched in a Western worldview. Therefore, I was not sure if the ayahuasca experience would effect change in this area. However, the qualitative data suggested that 100% of the interview participants noted some type of shift from individualism towards relationality. The quantitative data also show a movement towards relationality.

For example, one of the question sets in the scaled questionnaire asked participants to rank the following two statements: *Before ayahuasca I put my needs and desires above others including my friends, family, and community. After ayahuasca, I am less focused on my own needs and desires and more concerned with the needs of others including my family, friends, and community.* The results of this question set were that 32% of participants answered, “agree” or “strongly agreed.” However, after the ayahuasca experience 59% answered “agree” or “strongly agreed.” These results show a shift in consciousness in people who work with ayahuasca from individuality towards relationality and kinship-focused. This alteration in values is connected to

a potential shift away from the hegemonic forces of individualism as a central driving force.

Both the qualitative data and the quantitative data trends suggest that the ayahuasca experience may be effective at helping individuals make this movement away from the influences of Western hegemony.

Another way to examine relationality is to look at whether or not the ayahuasca experience results in an increase in compassion and empathy for others. My quantitative data showed that in the group of people who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times, 100% of participants agree or strongly agree that after working with ayahuasca acting with compassion and empathy is more important to them. De Rios and Rumrill (2008) suggested that ayahuasca can enhance empathy and can bring about social harmony, by allowing people to understand each other more thoroughly. They argue that ayahuasca also sharpens social awareness resulting in social bonding (p. 6). The social bonding and social healing De Rios and Rumrill (2008) mention points to the antidotal movement from individuality towards relationality. One participant from the short qualitative interviews highlighted the ability of ayahuasca to work on multiple relational levels at once, which supports the assertion that ayahuasca can bring about social bonding, saying, "It is a plant and a beautiful medicine that heals people, heals bodies, heals interpersonal relationships and societal relationships." Healing interpersonal relationships along with societal relationships is situated within the definitions of relationality. The comments from an anonymous scaled questionnaire participant highlight a related theme in the qualitative data, which shows the ayahuasca experience might bring about a change in how individuals value others outside themselves. The following comment from this anonymous participant, offers specific clues on how the ayahuasca experience works in an organic way to open people up:

While I've always had a strong desire for community connection, support, and intention to improve it, I think the medicine and ceremony have helped me internalize the experience that love and compassion are the foundation for these connections and that without love and compassion, I can participate and play a part in improving my community, but the true connection occurs through love and compassion and subsequently non-judgment. I think ayahuasca and the ayahuasca community has helped me feel and express compassion and empathy in a more natural, authentic way.

The comments from both interview and questionnaire participants suggest a distinct movement towards relationality inspired by the ayahuasca experience. At the same time, both sets of comments also show a movement towards the Indigenous worldview, and away from the Western worldview. Within the Indigenous worldview, community participation and the value of community, is viewed as highly important and one of the top values. Within the literature about ayahuasca, very little is discussed regarding helping individuals shift their orientation from individualistic towards more kinship-focused, however. In my observation, the theme of ayahuasca potentially working to help individuals become more relational in their orientation does not often surface in the literature about ayahuasca especially in Indigenous cultures, because most ayahuasca leaders and ayahuasca cultures are collectivist in nature. In addition, it appears that Westerners who lead ayahuasca ceremonies, along with those who regularly participate in ayahuasca ceremonies, may already be oriented towards an Indigenous worldview versus a Western worldview.

Stages of Maturity: Erikson and Kegan

There are many ways people can move from individuality towards relationality, however. This movement may happen naturally during the stages of healthy maturity. Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson's (1963) model of early social and moral development presents eight distinct stages that address each stage during a person's lifetime. Within each stage of development there is a psychosocial crisis along with a corresponding virtue associated with the stage. Within Erikson's model, the psychosocial crisis associated with adulthood is "generativity versus stagnation." The virtue associated with adulthood is "care." Part of the adulthood stage of development, according to Erikson, is learning to develop a sense of caring, concern, and empathy for others. This increased focus on care and concern corresponds, in some ways, to the movement towards relationality found within the ayahuasca-based antidotes to Western hegemony.

Dombeck (2007) offers another layer in understanding how people can move through the stages of social maturity. In Dombeck's description, he draws inspiration from Robert Kegan's work on the *Evolving Self*:

New layers of social/emotional development occur as people become able to finally see themselves in increasingly larger and wider social perspective. For example, the moment I am able to understand for the first time what another person is thinking or feeling, I have made a sort of leap forwards out of subjectivity (me being trapped in my own perspective) and into a view of the world that is a little more objective. If I can understand what someone else is thinking and feeling, I can also imagine myself as I must look through their eyes and my self-understanding becomes that much more

objective. This sort of expanded awareness represents an emergence from embeddedness in my own subjective perspective and the growth of my ability to see things from multiple perspectives at once.

These stages of maturity described by both Erikson and Dombeck may describe the organic process which individuals go through as they reexamine their lives and their priorities. As a natural part of the aging process, they may naturally gravitate towards what is most important to them on a more essential level, and move away from the less meaningful trappings of individuality. This shift in values may follow a natural sequence as put forth by Erikson, whereby caring for others becomes a higher priority. At the same time, Dombeck's comments about expanding one's awareness to see more complexity and view multiple perspectives may also shift simply as a byproduct of becoming a more mature person and having more life experience. These stages of maturity shown in the models of Erikson and Dombeck do not include a critique of the covert hegemonic forces that are steeped in the beliefs of individualism and in survival of the fittest, as key covert paradigms that are supported and adopted in the undercurrent of Western culture. Nor do Erikson and Dombeck explore gender differences in development either. Carol Gilligan (1982), for example, explained that women tend to understand themselves in relationship to others and through their relationships, while men tend to understand themselves through individuating from others. These biases in Erikson and Dombeck's work point to possible influences of Western hegemonic thinking.

The ayahuasca experience, on the other hand, is not based on a linear pattern of chronological stages of development. Instead, the ayahuasca tends to propel people towards adopting various elements of the Indigenous worldview and rearranging their lives and priorities

in the process. These shifts during maturity are different than the antidotal movement towards relationality I am describing, which is rooted in Indigenous wisdom and an Indigenous worldview. Relationality within an Indigenous worldview means that life is viewed through the lens of how people, places, and things are all related (Cajete, 1994; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Wilson, 2008). Relationality implies a shift towards interdependence and extending empathy and caring beyond one's immediate family or friends.

Nor do these developmental models address the glaring issue that Western hegemony, which supports a number of "isms," seems to purposefully create community stratification and moves away from relationality. By "stratification" I am referring to a Western model whereby mixed generations rarely interact; whereby class stratification creates social polarization based on the haves and the have-nots; whereby Whites and minorities are not necessarily encouraged to interact; whereby men and women are supposedly in a gender war; whereby gay and straight people are viewed in opposition to each other; whereby Republicans and Democrats are seen as complete opposites in their beliefs and only vote along party lines, rather than engaging with issues; whereby those who identify with Judeo-Christian backgrounds depict people of other faiths as unusual or alternative, and so on. In all of these cases, the forces of Western hegemony create and support the notion of "other," and when a group is labeled "other" they are then dehumanized, objectified, and depersonalized in the process of being treated poorly. We currently see this in the dramatic rise in Islamaphobia, whereby the cultural narrative along with the media narratives depict followers of Islam as terrorists and as dangers to society, which has resulted in a spike in hate crimes and hate speech. These forces of polarization are in contrast to

relationality and the Indigenous worldview that attempts to bring communities together, not pull them apart.

Freire and Dialogue. Freire (2004) speaks about the importance of dialogue as part of human liberation; he argues, “Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people...Love is at the same time the foundation for dialogue and dialogue itself” (p. 89). Freire’s comments point to some of the themes found within the Indigenous notion of relationality. Certainly the notion of a community orientation and the necessity of a connection between all people is one aspect of the movement away from the destructive grips of hegemony. In this case, the drive towards individualism moves away from a sense of authentic dialogue, and through dialogue individuals see themselves in others, develop greater empathy and compassion, and orient themselves in the worlds and experiences of others. The ayahuasca experience does this through ceremony, ritual, and the push towards collectivism.

Democratization. Brookfield (2005) posits that transformation is a collective process whereby one person cannot achieve freedom at the cost of others, thus democratization is infused in the process of critical theory. Brookfield’s mention of democratization is also related to the Indigenous concept of relationality. Within a collectivist culture, there certainly would be more of a democratic orientation. The Western hegemonic political structure seems to be more of a plutocracy than a democracy, in terms of how the political system actually works. The Indigenous models of politics are more geared towards localized self-determination than being ruled by and for the wealthy, as opposed to the collective.

Antidote 3:**Movement from Anthropocentrism Towards Viewing the Natural World as Sentient**

I assumed that my research would show that participants, after working with ayahuasca, would more likely view the natural world as having consciousness. The notion that ayahuasca is a living, breathing plant spirit and teacher suggested to me that due to the intensity of the ayahuasca experiences, people innately brought a level of respect towards how they related to ayahuasca. In addition, given that there are so many different types of experiences, visions, healing experiences, dialogues with various supernatural forces, and changes in consciousness related to the ayahuasca experience, it would then follow that people who work with ayahuasca in a ceremonial context would then move toward the Indigenous view of plants and the natural world as sentient. This logic supports that if the plant spirit ayahuasca has great healing power, then other plants and other natural forces may also have consciousness, as suggested by the Indigenous worldview.

The data related to antidote 3 showed that 100% of the short qualitative interview participants noted a movement from anthropocentrism towards an anthropomorphic view of the natural world. Within the quantitative data, there was a large shift after the ayahuasca experience in beliefs about plants, animals, and nature having consciousness. This movement is even more pronounced in people who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times. This concept of relating to plant teachers and the natural world as sentient is an extension of antidote 2, movement towards relationality. The data suggest that both qualitative and quantitative research participants have moved towards relating to the natural world as sentient, and away from the Western hegemonic models that nature is subordinate to human beings. These Western ideas

reflect the notion put forth by John Locke, that nature has no intrinsic value aside from serving human beings (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 75). For example, an anonymous scaled questionnaire participant commented, “Ayahuasca changed my life. I thought I was already open-minded, but now feel much more so. It has made me feel more connected to people, animals and nature. I think I am more empathetic now.” The ayahuasca experience, in this case, helped this participant shift towards an anthropomorphic view of nature.

While the data suggest a shift in consciousness, such as the above comment from an anonymous participant, it is unknown how those people who work with ayahuasca and who participated in the research studies have specifically changed their actions regarding being more focused on environmental sustainable or more respectful of the natural world. Do they consume less? Do they recycle more? Do they contribute money to environmental causes? Do they become politically active in environmental rights? Do they eat less meat or try to reduce their carbon footprint? How does this shift in consciousness change actions and not merely conceptual thought? Given the research questions and the parameters of my study, I do not have a way of answering this question.

Other Indigenous Ceremonies and Plant Medicines as Potential Antidotes. It is certainly likely that Westerners who participate in sweat lodges, Sun Dances, peyote ceremonies, and other forms of Indigenous ceremonies would also show a movement towards viewing the natural world as sentient, perhaps a greater shift than those who work with ayahuasca. This shift, I assert, happens because those ceremonies and rituals are all grounded within an Indigenous worldview and are representational of this worldview. During sweat lodges, leaders often will give teachings about the importance of Mother Earth and the emphasis of human beings striving

to live in harmony with nature. This sort of environmental ethos can be found in creation stories from Indigenous peoples all over the world. In these stories and myths plants, animals, winds, the sun, and other natural entities are depicted as teachers and relatives (Cajete, 1994; Iseke, 2013; Kovach, 2010).

Western-Academic Examples of Environmental Awareness. There are some attempts in the academy to describe the human-earth relationship in a way that honors the earth as sentient. This includes the “Gaia” theory, which is the idea that the earth is a self-regulating system and essentially alive (Sahtouris, 1989). The term “ecological awareness” is a concept from systems thinking that refers to ways in which everything is related, and all things influence each other (Wheatley, 1999, p. 158). Furthermore, the field of “ethno-ecology” proposes that bodies of knowledge exist between Indigenous cultures and their ecosystems (Martin, 2010). All of these definitions and fields of study draw influence from ancient Indigenous views of human relationships with the natural world and echo the Indigenous worldview, which is grounded in an anthropomorphic view of the natural world.

Environmental Protection Protest Movements

There are many political protest movements that are focused on fostering environmental awareness and fighting institutional forms of environmental destruction. Groups like Greenpeace are focused on protecting the earth and promoting environmental awareness. Other groups like Earth First are more extreme and attempt to protect the earth using civil disobedience, grassroots organizing, and other forms of protest. There are many other organizations focused on environmental protection. The Green Party of the United States is a political party that is inspired, in part, by operating and promoting environmental sustainability. All of these examples

are of trends to fight for environmental rights, and could be framed as a movement towards an anthropomorphic view of nature. While these organizations may be somewhat effective in affecting some change and environmental protection, they are not generally guided by and for Indigenous peoples or based on Indigenous spiritual principles.

On the other hand, Indigenous communities in every corner of the world are protesting environmental destruction, but within the context of an Indigenous worldview. Protesting in this case is tied to Indigenous values and priorities that position the environment and environmental issues as of utmost significance to communities, and therefore individuals. Cheyenne member Gail Small has been successfully fighting to keep coal and other energy companies off Cheyenne lands. Small runs a non-profit, Native Justice, focusing on protecting the lands of Native peoples (Mihesuah, 2003; Native Action Org, 2012). Other tribal peoples throughout the United States have been vocal in the political arena to protest mining, pollution, “fracking,” and other environmentally destructive practices. In 1993, Indigenous groups in Ecuador sued Chevron because of oil fields and pollution contaminating Indigenous lands and affecting Indigenous peoples (Kimberling, 2005). From 2013 into 2014, the Indigenous people of Borneo have been protesting the construction of several dams in their region (Davidson, 2014). As recently as 2013, the Sami people, primarily located in Norway and Sweden, were protesting a mine being built in Sweden because it would interfere and disrupt reindeer herds (Rising & Dougall, 2013). Since 2012, the Maori have been protesting American oil company Anadarko because of drilling off the west coast of New Zealand (Kaituhi, 2013). These are just a small sampling of Indigenous protest movements happening all over the world. All of these protest movements not only demonstrate models for civic engagement and acting in a way to individually and

communally protect the earth, but for community stewardship of the environment as well.

Indigenous ecological identities are interrelated because of intricate links between the cultural politics of the Indigenous movements and global environmental policies (Ulloa, 2013, p. 7).

Solutions from Freire, Critical Pedagogy, and Ecopedagogy

The question returns, however, whether other political or pedagogical solutions work to encourage people to move from anthropocentrism towards an anthropomorphic view of the world. For example, Freire's work and that of critical pedagogy does not acknowledge the destructive forces of hegemony that are destroying the earth and escalating an environmental crisis. While Freire's work acknowledged many destructive forces of hegemony and oppression, he did not explore how these forces of commodification and oppression extend towards the natural world. At the time of Freire's writing, however, issues related to environmental awareness were not popularized and these themes were not part of a cultural exploration of the effects of environmental destruction. However, today these environmental issues are commonly known and therefore should be discussed within critical pedagogy and within Freirian explorations of hegemony. Environmental destruction in areas which Indigenous peoples inhabit certainly translates to oppression of Indigenous peoples, but even more significantly threatens their physical and cultural survival. For instance, the United Nations declared 1993 as the year to focus on empowering Indigenous peoples. Part of the United Nations 1993 Statement (Stamatopoulou, 1994) declared, "Indigenous culture, religion, and spirituality are so connected with the land that deprivation of land is tantamount to deprivation of Indigenous identity and culture" (p. 76). This recognition of the interdependence of Indigenous peoples with the

environment on all levels highlights the connection between environmental destruction and its oppressive forces against Indigenous peoples.

More recently there has been an attempt to merge consciousness about environmental oppression within a form of critical pedagogy called *ecopedagogy*. Kahn and Kahn (2010) describes the field of ecopedagogy and some of its beliefs:

Though nascent, the international ecopedagogical movement represents a profound transformation in the radical educational and political project derived from the work of Paulo Freire known as critical pedagogy. Ecopedagogy seeks to interpolate quintessentially Freireian aims of the humanization of experience and the achievement of a just and free world with a future oriented ecological politics that militantly opposes the globalization of neoliberalism and imperialism, on the one hand, and attempts to forment collective ecoliteracy and realize culturally relevant forms of knowledge grounded in normative concepts such as sustainability, planetarity, and biophilia, on the other. (p. 18)

I see many problems with Kahn's assertions about ecopedagogy, the first being his suggestion that ecopedagogy represents a profound transformation and is radical in some manner. The glaring problem is that Kahn does not appear to have properly researched Indigenous wisdom and Indigenous models of the human connection to the earth. For instance, in 2011, Bolivia's Foreign Minister, Choquehuanca (Vidal, 2011), spoke about the role of Bolivia's traditional Indigenous respect for Pachachama:

Our grandparents taught us that we belong to a big family of plants and animals. We believe that everything in the planet forms part of a big family. We Indigenous people can contribute to solving the energy, climate, food and financial crises with our values.

These teachings and wisdom found within Indigenous cultures are not new, they are part of ancient forms of Indigenous pedagogy.

Is Kahn unaware that Indigenous ecological identities are interrelated because of intricate links between the cultural politics of the Indigenous movements and global environmental policies (Ulloa, 2013, p. 7) and this is why Indigenous peoples are the ones actually “militantly” opposing environmental destruction, as described in early examples of Indigenous protest movements? These examples of Indigenous views are certainly older than Freire’s work, and certainly Indigenous views of anthropomorphism have been entrenched in cultural beliefs longer than sustainability and biophilia have been part of the lexicon of the Western academic environmental movement. While Kahn’s work to infuse critical pedagogy with ecological awareness seems important and necessary, without the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, both to represent oppressed groups and to include voices from those who are much more knowledgeable about environmental issues than Westerners are, seems superficial.

Antidote 4:

Movement from Valuing Materialism and Consumerism Towards Meaning and Purpose

Outside these Structures

Throughout each step of my doctoral degree coursework I became more aware of the destructive forces of Western hegemony, especially commodification and consumerism. These forms of Western hegemony attempt to reduce people, places, and things down to an economic value. This dynamic of always looking to profit, without any concern for the cost or the price paid by people, nature, or the impact on future generations, seems to be one of the central problems with Western hegemony. This push towards consumption is what inspired me to try to

explore hegemony more deeply and perhaps work towards finding potential antidotes that could be executed in a realistic manner. A connected theme to consumerism, which is embedded in American culture, is the notion that material success results in happiness. As a result, my research on the ayahuasca experience, in particular the antidotes to Western hegemony, looks for a sense of meaning and purpose outside of materialism and consumerism.

When I began my research study, I had no idea whether or not the ayahuasca experience could alter this hegemonic force or not. I did not expect the ayahuasca experience to affect people's consciousness around materialism. It seemed likely that individuals could experience ayahuasca and address their own healing needs without changing their buying patterns or altering their view on materialism. Materialism, in my view, seems to value short-term comfort and conveniences, which are entrenched in American culture.

Next, I wondered what the Indigenous worldview and Indigenous wisdom might suggest as possible solutions to consumerism and materialism. Indigenous peoples around the world often live in poverty, lacking material goods and material wealth, and struggling to survive. Poverty and unemployment are high in many communities in South America that work with ayahuasca. Furthermore, Indigenous cosmologies do not necessarily address issues related to consumerism and materialism. The Indigenous worldview, however stresses generosity as a value, while the Western worldview supports selfishness and accumulation. The Western worldview supports individuals envisioning their "legacy" to be money given to their children, while the Indigenous worldview values someone living with high character to pass on values to his or her children. These guideposts suggest a disparity in values regarding cultural aims and views on consumption. Part of the solution to this problem may be to look at ways to disengage

from consumerism. In the next section, I offer examples of anti-consumerism movements in the United States that offer potential clues on how to do this.

It seems as if Western hegemony propose the idea that the purpose of life is a never ending accumulation of wealth. In 2014 billionaire Mark Cuban (Shandrow, 2014) said, “Business is my morning meditation.” Cuban’s comments demonstrate a belief that suggests business and economic success are more important than personal meaning and/or spiritual meaning as the driving force in one’s life. His comments are ironic in that some people wake up and meditate on peace or welfare for all, while Cuban’s meditation is on money and business. Also ironic is that Cuban is so focused on making more money even though, clearly, he no longer needs to be. To Cuban and others who may share his set of values, consumerism and materialism become the driving purpose and frame the meaning of life, even though there is significant evidence to show that the division between those who have wealth and those who do not continues to widen, and the increase in consumptive patterns is not environmentally sustainable.

Looking back at my research on the five antidotes to Western hegemony can also offer clues to understanding Indigenous solutions to consumerism and materialism. This meta-analysis of the cumulative antidotal movements shows how each antidote to Western hegemony might influence and interact with other antidotes in unpredictable ways.

Antidote 1: If a person was free from hegemonic influences, in the sense of true self-determination, s/he may very likely approach consumerism and materialism from a non-Western manner. S/he might choose to not participate in consumerism altogether and be critical of the hegemonic forces that try to drive the beliefs that more consumption results in happiness. A person who is free from hegemonic influences, on an individual level, may also be critical of the

message advertisers propose that try to emotionally manipulate individuals into buying certain products to feel worthy or to boost self-esteem. Embodying the antidotal movement of self-determination could result in looking for personal meaning outside of consumerism.

Antidote 2: If an individual were living from the principles of relationality he/she would likely embrace the Indigenous value of generosity as a priority and not the Western value of greed and selfishness. This focus on relationality would provide the lens to look at consumerism and embracing the principles of how it supports notions of individualism and individual success at the expense of others. Relationality would help a person move towards acting in ways, including on a consumer level, to support the larger community, and not simply work for individual success. Relationality suggests adopting an attitude of generosity.

Antidote 3: If an individual was embodying an anthropomorphic view of the natural world, s/he might also change his/her consumption patterns. An individual may, for instance, attempt to live in a more eco-friendly manner. This type of living would mean looking at the environmental costs of consumerism and choosing to consume less based on the environmental impact.

Examples of American Trends Against Consumerism

There are trends within American culture to fight against consumerism; a push that seems to move away from the insatiable drive for “retail therapy” and “shop til you drop” mentalities. The 1999 film *Fight Club* (Bell & Fincher) put forth a storyline about the disenchantment with American consumerism. This quotation articulates some of the frustration of a generation fed up with the push towards consumerism:

Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don't need. We're the middle children of history, man. No purpose or place. We have no Great War. No Great Depression. Our Great War's a spiritual war... our Great Depression is our lives. We've all been raised on television to believe that one day we'd all be millionaires, and movie gods, and rock stars. But we won't.

The sentiment expressed in this quotation from *Fight Club* can be found in a number of anti-consumerism trends in American over the past decade. The ayahuasca experience may act as a galvanizing experience whereby people find personal meaning outside of consumerism and change their lives to move away from the influences of hegemony. Whereas people may already have made a decision to downsize their lives or attempt to live in a more sparse manner, as suggested by the small housing movement, those who work with ayahuasca may realize on a more existential level that they no longer wish to participate in consumerism or no longer need or require as many material possessions as they previously thought.

Small House Movement. The small house movement is part of the rejection of big homes, big mortgages, and carrying high amounts of credit card debt. The small home movement provides a potentially more sustainable way of life, both economic and environmentally. Small houses are generally less than 600 square feet, although some are less than 100 square feet. One of the main draws is that they are much less expensive than other forms of housing. Part of the small house movement has been the popularity of modifying shipping containers into small homes, as well.

DIY Movement and Freegans. Other trends in the anti-consumerism trend are the increase in do it yourself (DIY) home projects that recycle and repurpose items that would

normally be thrown away into practical household items. Many websites and discussion groups focus on exploring DIY projects. A few examples are reusing items such as palettes found in the garbage and turning them into coffee tables, desks, bookshelves, and storage units. There are many other examples of DIY projects, from making old suitcases into chairs, turning old tennis racquets into mirrors, turning pop tabs into purses, and so on. An extreme example of anti-consumerism is *freeganism*. Freegans try to avoid purchasing anything and instead forage for food and other goods. Freegans are able to support themselves by reclaiming a range of discarded items, including food and clothing, and often also find free places to live, including in abandoned buildings (Nguyen, Chen, & Mukherjee, 2014).

Slow Money Movement. Another example of a different sort of anticonsumerism, specifically a movement away from multi-national corporate businesses, is the *slow money movement*. The slow money movement is predicated on investing in local and sustainable businesses, which often include local farms and food-related businesses (Lydersen, 2009). The slow money movement aims to help smaller localized communities create more wealth and keep it within their own communities rather than having larger companies profit.

Microfinance Movement. On a global scale, the microfinance movement has emerged as a way to empower people who are living in poverty and have no other sources of sustainable income, often in Third World countries, and oftentimes women. Over the past decade microfinance and microloans have become a popular way of helping micro-entrepreneurs and small businesses, which would not otherwise have access to funding. In 2006, the person responsible for creating the concept of microcredit, Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize. Estimates are that approximately \$4.4 billion is donated yearly for microloans from

institutional and individual donors (Surowiecki, 2008). There has also been an increase in alternative currencies such as Bitcoin, which attempts to offer a movement away from banking institutions to a decentralized form of currency that is anonymous, fast, and cheap to use.

Culture Jamming. The last anti-consumerism trend is protest movements targeting consumerism, such as *culture jamming*. Anti-consumerism protestors often use digital technologies to bring light to the destructive forces of consumerism. Culture jamming can be defined as “a remix or repurposing of a known image such as a corporate logo, and infuses critical perspectives on mainstream trademarks and logos” (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014, p. 13). One of the major aims of culture jamming is to highlight consumerism and bring light to its ubiquity in terms of prominence along with influence within Western culture. The magazine *Adbusters* is associated with culture jamming and acts as a focal point to bring attention to issues such as anti-consumerism and activism. *Adbusters* (2015) proposes, “We want folks to get mad about corporate disinformation, injustices in the global economy, and any industry that pollutes our physical or mental commons.” *Adbusters*, for example, is responsible for creating the “buy nothing day” and the “digital detox week.” According to their website,

We are a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age. Our aim is to topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way we live in the 21st century. (*Adbusters*, 2015)

Critical Pedagogy and Critical Theory Critique of Consumerism

Criticizing the influence of consumerism and material is certainly not a new pursuit. Critical pedagogy and critical theory are both influenced by Karl Marx’s work. Marx (1973)

argued, “Artificial need is what the economist calls, firstly, the needs which arise out of the social existence of the individual; secondly those which do not flow from his naked existence as a natural object. This shows the inner, desperate poverty which forms the basis of bourgeois wealth and of its science” (p. 228). From critical pedagogy, Giroux and Giroux (2008) attack the influence of hegemonic forces driving the free market: “Wedded to the belief that the market should be the organizing principle for all political, social, and economic decisions, neoliberalism wages an incessant attack on democracy, public goods, the welfare state, and non-commodified values. Under neoliberalism, everything either is for sale or is plundered for profit” (p. 182).

The major challenge with Marx and with Giroux and Giroux’s comments is that they explain the problem, but do not present possible solutions. The problem with consumerism is the forces of hegemony that not only profit from the consumptive patterns that are culturally infused in the belief systems of individuals, but it also points to a lack of spirituality, or a lack of personal meaning. Personal meaning and finding one’s place within the cosmos won’t be found merely in intellectualism or in academic models. These more personal and deeper truths are found within spirituality or in one’s own unique connection to the universe. I am not suggesting that deeper meaning and purpose be confined to religion or even spirituality per se, but in a different way of relating to the world whereby meaning and purpose are not derived from materialism and success. Models for this type of purposeful meaning, outside both consumerism and outside the hegemonic forces of Judeo-Christianity can be found within Indigenous models of living, in particular within the ayahuasca communities. Certainly models for purposeful

meaning outside consumerism and hegemonic forces can be found in other places, not related to ayahuasca and Indigenous wisdom as well.

Antidote 5:

Movement from Acceptance of Western Hegemonic Institutions Towards Criticality, or Rejection

I had assumed that people who participate in ayahuasca ceremonies might be more politically active after working with ayahuasca than before working with it. I was surprised, however, to find that many participants in the short qualitative interviews commented that they were now apolitical or did not follow politics, or had simply given up on politics. P5 argued, “The whole political scheme is dysfunctional. All these egos.” In fact, 64% of the qualitative interview subjects reported giving up on politics or rejecting the political system altogether. In Chapter 5, my quantitative research data suggested that 70% of people who have worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times reported a change in political action. Social awareness is another area related to criticality. The participants in my quantitative scaled questionnaire who worked with ayahuasca more than 50 times show that 90% agree or strongly agree that social awareness was more important to them after working with ayahuasca. These trends were interesting because at the same time, some of the qualitative interviews suggested an increase in engagement on a smaller more localized scale. P4, who in the interview suggested, “Politically, I’ve given up on politics,” also reported fighting to have fluoride removed in his city’s water system, along with other examples of civic participation. P6 also mentioned being more active on a local level: “Before the medicine I was thinking of politics on a more worldly scale, but now it’s more about my immediate surroundings. With the medicine I’ve realized there is not a whole lot I can

accomplish in a worldly way, but from a local place I can bring about change and affect people.” In addition, one of the anonymous quantitative scaled survey participants commented,

I am more politically aware, but less angry about what I see. I was very politically active when Scott Walker started making changes with Wisconsin, and went daily to protests. Now I feel that the best work I can do may not be from standing in a crowd of people in front of a news camera pointed the other way, but to act from love as much as possible, because it seems that nothing can change the world more than love.

One of the ways in which I interpret the data and this trend towards being apolitical and ceasing to engage in the political system after ayahuasca usage, is that perhaps people turn away from the entire hegemonic system of politics and its inherent polarization and oppressive quality. Given that political change happens slowly, if at all, and can often seem corrupt, perhaps this antidotal movement is a demonstration of simply disengaging from this structure and rejecting it entirely to move toward a different way of focusing on smaller level politics and social issues.

Freire and Critical Pedagogy on Criticality

One of Freire’s (2004) main concepts is “praxis” which is defined as the union of critical reflection and action, and is applicable to understanding this potential shift away from Western hegemonic structures. Freire’s concept of praxis suggests that critical awareness requires action of some sort to be put into practice. Perhaps adopting an apolitical attitude is its own form of action. A movement away from the two-party political system and the implied plutocracy may imply a focus exclusively on localized politics and local social issues.

Democratization. A theme related to criticality, found within critical pedagogy, is democracy and supporting democratization. Hooks (2003) argues that mass-based political

movements calling on citizens to uphold democracy and the rights of everyone to be educated, to work on behalf of ending domination in all of its forms are needed. In particular, she suggests that the education system needs to be changed to fight against, “imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy or any ideology” (p. 3). Shor (1992) asserts that all forms of education are by definition political. They are political in the way they enable or inhibit discussion, questioning, and reflection on knowledge, school, and society. These models of criticality imply a movement either toward the encouragement of actual democracy, which would imply an educated model of political engagement, or developing more awareness of the challenges of democracy and the ways in which hegemony prevents authentic democracy from occurring, through the tendency to create obstacles to real information that can inform democratic participation.

Critical theory aims to encourage democracy, and examines ways in which the American model of democracy is not really a democracy. For example, in his discussion about critical theory, Farr (2009) argues that a society is not a democracy because, “There are members of society who do not have proper access to education and necessary cultural, social, and economic resources for the kind of self-development and self-determination needed for democratic participation” (p. 124). Farr (2009) mentions a second obstacle to democratic participation--the lack of information, rather than the “proliferation of useless, administered, manipulative information” (p. 124). Neoliberal capitalism, Giroux and Giroux (2008) argue, is “wedded to the belief that the market should be the organizing principle for all political, social and economic decisions” (p. 182). This force of neoliberalism is in contrast to democracy and democratic values. If neoliberal capitalism is the driving force of politics, and not democracy for the sake of

community involvement, then we do not have an actual democracy. While these descriptions of the various forces of Western hegemony seem accurate, they do not include solutions to these problems, whereas the ayahuasca experience seems to point to more concrete change models.

Self-Determination. One way to combat the hegemonic forces of neoliberal capitalism is the Indigenous notion of self-determination. Self-determination is a theme found within Indigenous literature, and is relevant to a discussion about freedom and democracy. Self-determination, in this case, does not refer to individual freedom the same way it is defined in antidote 1: movement from the personal trappings of Western hegemony towards self-determination, but towards self-determination on a more political and cultural level. In discussing what self-determination might look like for the Maori people of New Zealand, Bishop (2008) explains, self-determination “seeks to operationalize the Maori people’s aspirations to restructure power relationships to the point where partners can be autonomous and interact from this position rather than one from subordination or dominance” (p. 440). Bishop also contrasts Indigenous views of self-determination with Western views of self-determination, highlighting that the Western view focuses on territoriality that coincides to sovereignty over a space or a people. In contrast, the Indigenous views of self-determination are relational, acknowledge interdependence, and encourage peoples to make sense of the world in their own culturally generated manner (p. 440). Self-determination is one of the key themes in my research on the antidotal movements away from Western hegemony.

Critique of Critical Pedagogy

Some of the challenges with the approaches to criticality and political awareness that are presented by critical pedagogy, including hooks, are that they seem to suggest it is necessary to learn about democratization in the classroom, or in a formalized manner. Furthermore, the assumption also seems to be that the notion of criticality itself is necessary. At the same time it seems that what critical pedagogy refers to as “criticality” is conceived of and based in a Western model of critical thinking. Perhaps in a Utopian sense, if an Indigenous community were not exposed to corruption and hegemony in the same way that Western culture is, developing criticality might not even be necessary. At the same time, it seems as though the Western model of criticality may project the image of the noble savage onto Indigenous communities, such as those in South America who work with ayahuasca, with the assumption being these Indigenous peoples are uneducated and have nothing to offer in terms of promoting criticality.

Perhaps the Indigenous peoples who work with ayahuasca have in their own way consciously turned away from the influences of Western hegemony by making a series of choices to live simply and to find political awareness and take action on a personal level, not as a grand demonstration. Maybe from their perspective it is evident that Western models of politics are corrupt and destructive and the solution is to simply turn away and no longer engage in these forms of hegemony. Maybe rather than focus on development of criticality on an intellectual level, the ayahuasca communities in South America have developed heightened somatic awareness and are able to feel corruption and the forces of hegemony on a visceral-level, and the potential solution to hegemony is viewed as an issue best addressed through visceral level change on an individual level, not on a large political scale. I am not pretending to “know” what

Indigenous people feel about criticality or democratization. I cannot possibly know what various different groups and individuals feel about a particular topic, but I can suggest that the Western model is incomplete and only presents one worldview and one perspective on a complicated issue.

Limitations and Challenges in the Research

There are many limitations to this research study. The qualitative research interviews only focused on ten participants, which is quite a small number. I only interviewed one ceremony leader, who was a Westerner, and this also implies a potentially biased view of what ayahuasca ceremonies are like. Furthermore, only 44 people participated in the scaled questionnaire. Participants for the scaled questionnaire were recruited through advertisements on Facebook discussion groups about ayahuasca, which also presents a limitation in who chose to participate in the study. The qualitative short interview participants were all recruited from invitations given out by one ceremony leader. Having all the participants invited by one source may have influenced the type of people I interviewed for the study. The data could have been different if multiple ceremony leaders had referred people to participate in the study. The data could have been different if I had traveled to South America to conduct interviews with Indigenous peoples, or if I had interviewed more people overall. In addition, all of the people I interviewed for the qualitative interview portion were Westerners, and without a big variation in age or location, and only two were not Caucasian.

Given that there are so many different styles and types of ayahuasca experiences, different styles or methods could certainly produce different experiences for participants. Neither the qualitative interviews nor the quantitative scaled survey addressed the differences in ceremony

styles. I do not know if some people who attended a ceremony did so with a trained ayahuasca leader or if they bought the supplies through a website and cooked their own ayahuasca. I do not know if they participated in ceremonies in the jungles of Peru or if they participated in a Santo Daime inspired ayahuasca ceremony in Chicago. These various types of ceremonies could greatly alter the experiences of the individual and therefore alter how they would respond to the interview questions, and therefore affect the results of the study.

The quantitative scaled questionnaire presented limitations as well. The questions were poorly written at times and could have been confusing for the participants. Perhaps if the questions were written more precisely, the participants may have answered differently. Furthermore, the scaled questionnaire did not do a good job at establishing a before and after picture of ayahuasca usage and could have been written more clearly to present those themes in the data. The quantitative scaled questionnaire did not ask the participants about their ethnicity, which could have been useful in interpreting the data and possibly showing patterns of how people from other cultures experience ayahuasca differently, nor did the scaled questionnaire ask participants if they were from South America or were from Indigenous backgrounds, which could also affect the data.

Another limitation is the topic I am researching. Western hegemony itself is difficult to understand and see. As a result it can imply subtle changes, intangible changes, and be so entrenched in personal, spiritual, and cultural understandings that it is challenging to quantify or come up with conclusive evidence to suggest anything about it. At the same time, Indigenous cosmologies and the Indigenous worldview do not necessarily address hegemonic themes overtly, certainly the ayahuasca literature does not.

An additional limitation is the lack of baseline comparisons to other antidotes to Western hegemony. I am unclear how other plant medicines such as peyote, san pedro, mushrooms, or ibogaine may create more or less antidotal movement away from forms of Western hegemony than ayahuasca. Furthermore, no comparisons were made between the ayahuasca experience as a potential antidote to Western hegemony compared to other Indigenous ceremonies and rituals that are not dependent on plant teachers, such as sweat lodges, Sun Dances, vision quests, grief rituals, or other types of ceremonies. Perhaps these ceremonies and rituals, which do rely on plant medicines, are differently effective.

I am also limited in my own biases. I am an outsider researching both the ayahuasca experience and the Indigenous worldview. As a Western person, I have a limited understanding of the Indigenous worldview and of the Indigenous understanding of ayahuasca. These are all limitations to this study and examples of challenges found in the research process.

Future Directions

This research study opens up a larger discussion about ayahuasca as antidote to Western hegemony. Further research could take many directions based on the foundation of the research in this dissertation. A more comprehensive study with larger sample sizes would be helpful in looking for more specific and concrete evidence of both change and changes in behavior related to hegemonic themes and ayahuasca. Being able to spend a year or more on a study would be useful in being able to look deeper at the subtle and more esoteric aspects of the ayahuasca experience. Given that my research study shows a correlation with people who had experienced ayahuasca more than 50 times with a larger movement away from Western hegemonic structures, focusing the research on this subgroup might present useful data. I would be interested in a

comparison study between ayahuasca and other plant medicines, and other ceremonies and rituals, to see if the ayahuasca experience is more or less effective than these other Indigenous experiences.

It would also be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study whereby an individual would be interviewed before the first ayahuasca experience and then interviewed incrementally over time to chart possible changes related to Western hegemonic themes. It could be interesting to also create relationships with several ayahuasca ceremony leaders to collectively ask them to find possible antidotes to Western hegemony based on their unique experiences and skill sets, and then test these solutions out in their ayahuasca communities and document this process. Perhaps these ayahuasca ceremony leaders could also help design the research study and have the research process become more of an action research study.

I would also like to explore other solutions to Western hegemony not based in plant medicines and not based in ceremonial and/or ritual contexts. It would be interesting to explore the effectiveness of critical pedagogy, transformational learning, and other more academic forms of learning to see if Western hegemony could be challenged more effectively by these modalities.

Travelling to places throughout South America, where ayahuasca is legal, and directly interviewing Indigenous peoples about their views on Western hegemony would be useful to my understanding of the ayahuasca experience. It would be interesting to experience different styles of ayahuasca ceremonies and note the differences as well.

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APPENDIX A

Pilot Scaled Questionnaire

| | Do not agree at all | Disagree | Neither Disagree Nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree | N/A |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------|---|--------------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1 Before taking ayahuasca, I was politically active. | | | | | | |
| 2 After taking ayahuasca, I am politically active. | | | | | | |
| 3 I am courageous in situations where I present a minority point of view. | | | | | | |
| 4 Before taking ayahuasca, I was critical of GMOs and how the food industry is run and how it affects me. | | | | | | |
| 5 After taking ayahuasca, I am critical of GMOs and how the food industry is run and how it affects me. | | | | | | |
| 6 Before taking ayahuasca, I thought English should be the universal standard language. | | | | | | |
| 7 After taking ayahuasca, I feel that English should be the universal standard language. | | | | | | |
| 8 Before taking ayahuasca, my job and making money were important to me. | | | | | | |
| 9 After taking ayahuasca, my job and making money are important to me. | | | | | | |
| 10 Before taking ayahuasca, I felt connected to plants, animals, and the natural world. | | | | | | |
| 11 After taking ayahuasca, I feel connected to plants, animals, and the natural | | | | | | |

world.

- 12** I feel connected to my family and friends and feel supportive and supported.
 - 13** Before taking ayahuasca, I was critical of the news and news sources.
 - 14** After taking ayahuasca, I am critical of the news and news sources.
 - 15** I think about the long-term effects and consequences of my actions.
 - 16** Before taking ayahuasca, seeking out more material goods was important to me.
 - 17** After taking ayahuasca, seeking out more material goods is important to me.
 - 18** I act with compassion and empathy in my daily life and in my daily actions.
 - 19** Before taking ayahuasca, I considered myself a critical thinker.
 - 20** After taking ayahuasca, I consider myself a critical thinker.
 - 21** Before taking ayahuasca, I tried to shop locally and was part of the local economy.
 - 22** After taking ayahuasca, I try to shop locally and be part of a local economy.
-

APPENDIX B

Revised Scaled Questionnaire

| | Do not agree at all | Disagree | Neither Disagre e Nor Agree | Agree | Stron gly Agree | N/A |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------|--|--------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| 1 Before taking ayahuasca, I was politically active. | | | | | | |
| 2 After taking ayahuasca, my level of political action changed. | | | | | | |
| 3 Before ayahuasca, I try to intervene when there is injustice. | | | | | | |
| 4 After ayahuasca, I am more likely to intervene when there is injustice. | | | | | | |
| 5 Before taking ayahuasca, I was concerned about GMOs, how the food industry is run, and how it affects me. | | | | | | |
| 6 After taking ayahuasca, I am more concerned with GMOs, the foods I eat, and the affects of the food industry. | | | | | | |
| 7 Before taking ayahuasca, I thought English should be the universal standard language. | | | | | | |
| 8 After taking ayahuasca, I feel there should not be a universally standard language. | | | | | | |
| 9 Before ayahuasca, my career was the most important thing to me. | | | | | | |
| 10 After ayahuasca, my career is less important to me. | | | | | | |
| 11 Before taking ayahuasca, I thought that plants, animals, and nature have consciousness. | | | | | | |
| 12 After taking ayahuasca, I thought that plants, animals, and nature have consciousness. | | | | | | |

1 Before ayahuasca I put my needs
3 and desires above others
including my friends, family, and
community.

1 After ayahuasca, I am less
4 focused on my own needs and
desires and more concerned with
the needs of others including my
family, friends, and community.

1 Before taking ayahuasca, I was
5 critical of the way news is
reported.

1 After taking ayahuasca, I am
6 more critical of how the news is
reported.

1 Before taking ayahuasca, I
7 thought about the long-term
effects and consequences of
my actions.

1 After taking ayahuasca, I think
8 about the long-term effects and
consequences of my actions.

1 Before taking ayahuasca, acting
9 with compassion and empathy
was important to me.

2 After taking ayahuasca, acting
0 with compassion and empathy is
more important to me.

2 Before taking ayahuasca, I was
1 socially aware.

2 After taking ayahuasca, social
2 awareness was more important to
me.

2 Before taking ayahuasca, I
3 considered myself a critical
thinker.

2 After taking ayahuasca, I
4 considered myself a critical
thinker.

2 Before taking ayahuasca, I tried
5 to shop locally and was part of the
local economy.

2 After taking ayahuasca, I try to
6 shop locally and be part of a local

economy.

- 2** Before taking ayahuasca, buying
 - 7** and having many material possessions was very important to me.
 - 2** After taking ayahuasca, having
 - 8** material possessions is less meaningful to me.
-