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Spirituality and Self-Knowledge of Psychedelic Drug Users

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DÁT2 Psy Help Team

My Areas of Interest

- Cognitive Neuroscience
  - Consciousness Research
    - Altered States of Consciousness
      - Dreaming, Hypnosis, Meditation, …
      - Hallucinations
        - Psychoactive Drugs
          - Stimulants, Depressants, …
          - Hallucinogens
            - Dissociatives, Deliriants, …
            - Psychedelics
              - Entheogens
                - LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, DMT, LSA, …
                - salvinorin-A (*Salvia divinorum)*

Contents

I. Psychoactive Drugs (preliminary data)
   - Drug use purposes

II. Psychedelics (practical study)
   - Influence on life quality and spirituality

III. Psychedelics (theoretical study)
   - Drug instrumentalization & categorization

IV. Bio-psycho-socio-spiritual framework
   - Theories, models, and human needs

I. Psychoactive Drugs

Psychoactive Drug Use

- complex phenomenon: many drugs & use patterns
- social discourses mostly disregard voices of users
- attention targeted at problematic drug use
- large percentage of drug users are non-problematic
- non-problematic drug use is understudied
- Let's study drug use purposes!

Study Overview

- online questionnaire
- recruited with snowball method from multiple sources
- purposive sampling in target group:
  Hungarian Psychedelic Community (www.daath.hu)
- 667 adequately completed web forms
- exclusion criteria: problematic drug use
- 589 non-problematic users
- 3 psychological instruments:
  coping (PICI), purpose in life (PIL), spirituality (ISS)

Drug Types with Categorization

Depressants			Alcohol
			Inhalants
			Sleep medication, tranquilizers, anxiolytics *(without a diagnosis or prescription)*
			Medical drugs and alcohol combined
			Heroin and other opiates
			GHB, GBL
Stimulants			Tobacco
			Ecstasy (MDMA)
			Amphetamine and other stimulants
			Cocaine
Hallucinogens	Deliriants		Jimson weed, angel's trumpet, henbane etc.
	Dissociatives		Ketamine
			Nitrous oxide (N_2O)
			PCP
	Psychedelics	Minor	Marijuana, hashish
			New synthetic drugs (2C-B, 5-MeO-DMT etc.)
			Ibogaine
		Major	**LSD**
			Psilocybe mushrooms
			Mescaline cacti
			Salvia divinorum
			DMT (ayahuasca, yopo etc.)
			LSA (morning glory, HBWR etc.)
(fictional drug)			Relevin

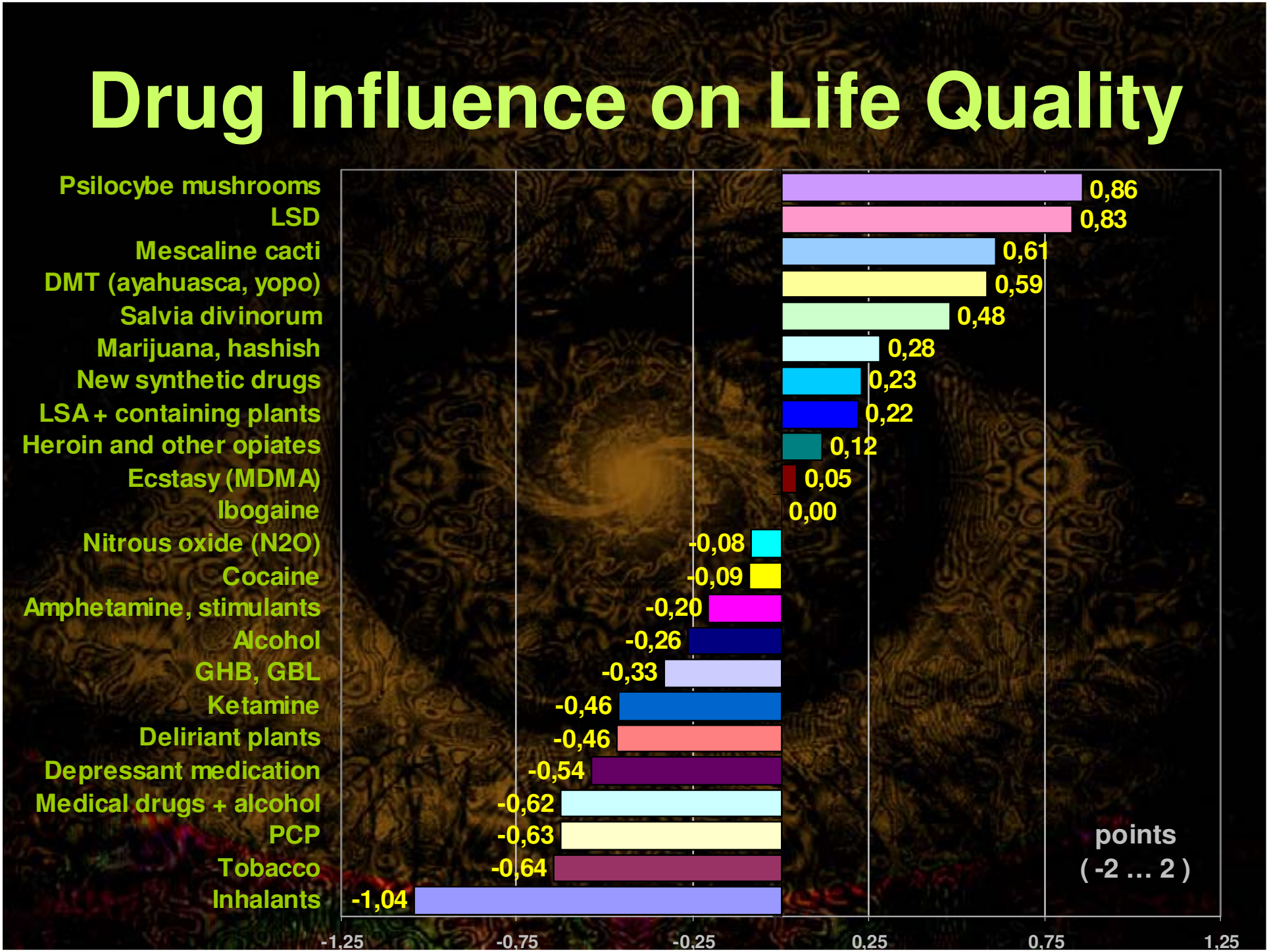
Drug Use Purposes

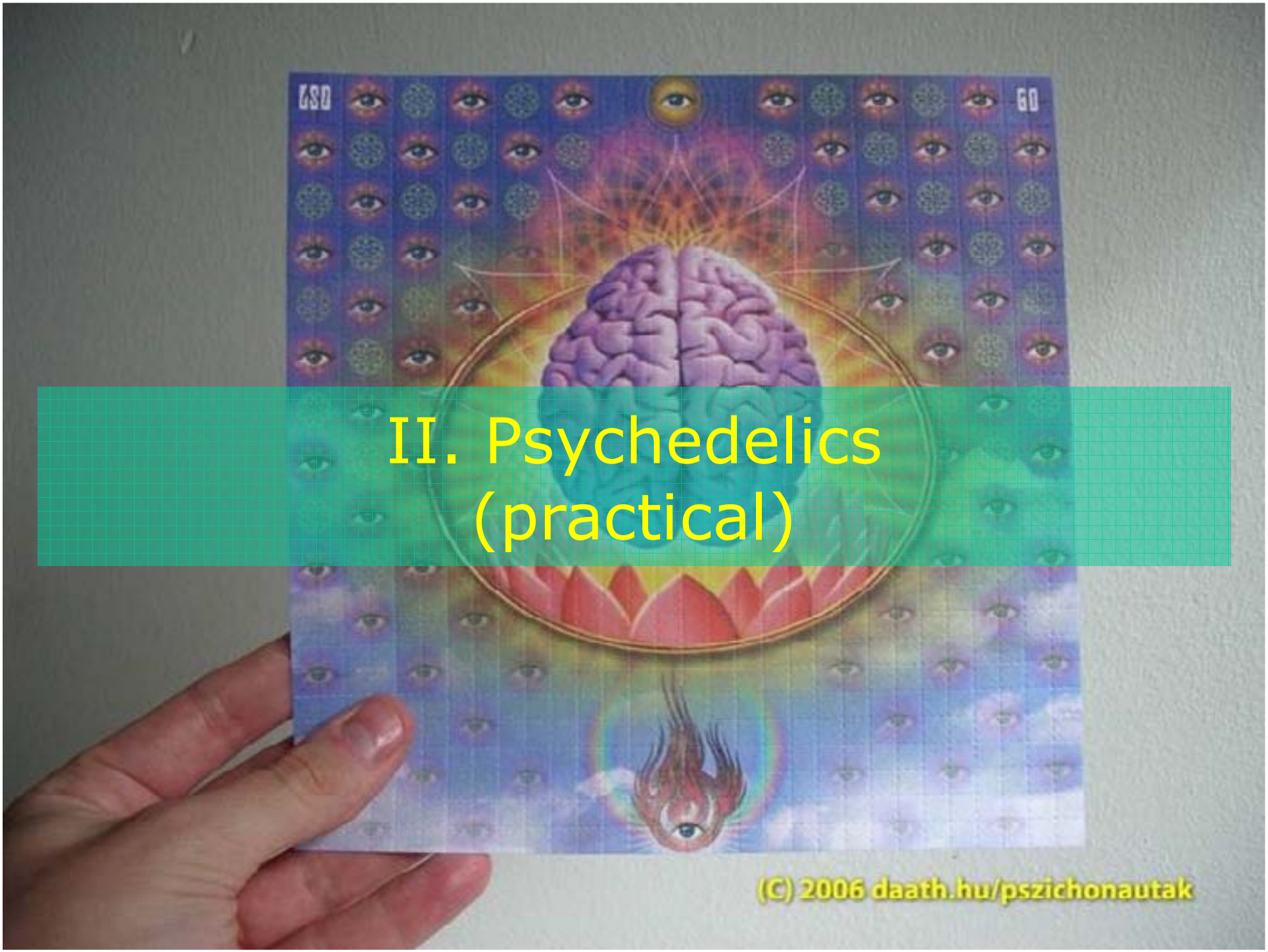
RELSPI	**Religious or spiritual practices**
S-KNOW	**Self-knowledge and self-inspection**
S-MEDI	**Self-medication**
MOOD	Enhancing mood
BORED	Avoiding boredom and hopelessness
DEFIC	Offsetting a deficiency
SOCIAL	Increasing social contact
SENS	Increasing sensation and pleasure
ART	Stimulating artistic creativity/performance
PHYS	Enhancing physical power
REBEL	Rebellion or alternative lifestyle
IDENT	Building personal identity and drawing attention
MEMBER	Expressing membership in a group
CURIO	Out of curiosity

Drugs x Purposes

	RELSPI	S-KNOW	S-MEDI	MOOD	BORED	DEFIC	SOCIAL	SENS	ART	PHYS	REBEL	MEMBER
Alcohol				4			6	2			2	3
Tobacco					2	7	2				2	3
Depressant medication			2									
Ecstasy (MDMA)				2				2		2		
Amphetamine, stimulants				2						7		
Nitrous oxide (N_2O)				2								
Marijuana, hashish		2		2				2	3			
LSD	3	3										
Psilocybe mushrooms	3	3										
Salvia divinorum	2	2										

Drug Influence on Life Quality





II. Psychedelics (practical)

Study Goals

- To study psychopharmacological self-enhancement by assessing a non-problematic drug user group
- Comparing:
  1) autognostic use of psychedelic drugs („PSY”)
  2) other uses of other drugs („C1”)
  3) no drug use („C2”)
- Initial work hypothesis:

  Differences in life meaningfulness and coping characteristics

  Autognostic psychedelic drug use associated with
  - enhancements of life quality
  - a higher level of spirituality

Major Psychedelics

LSD

psilocybin

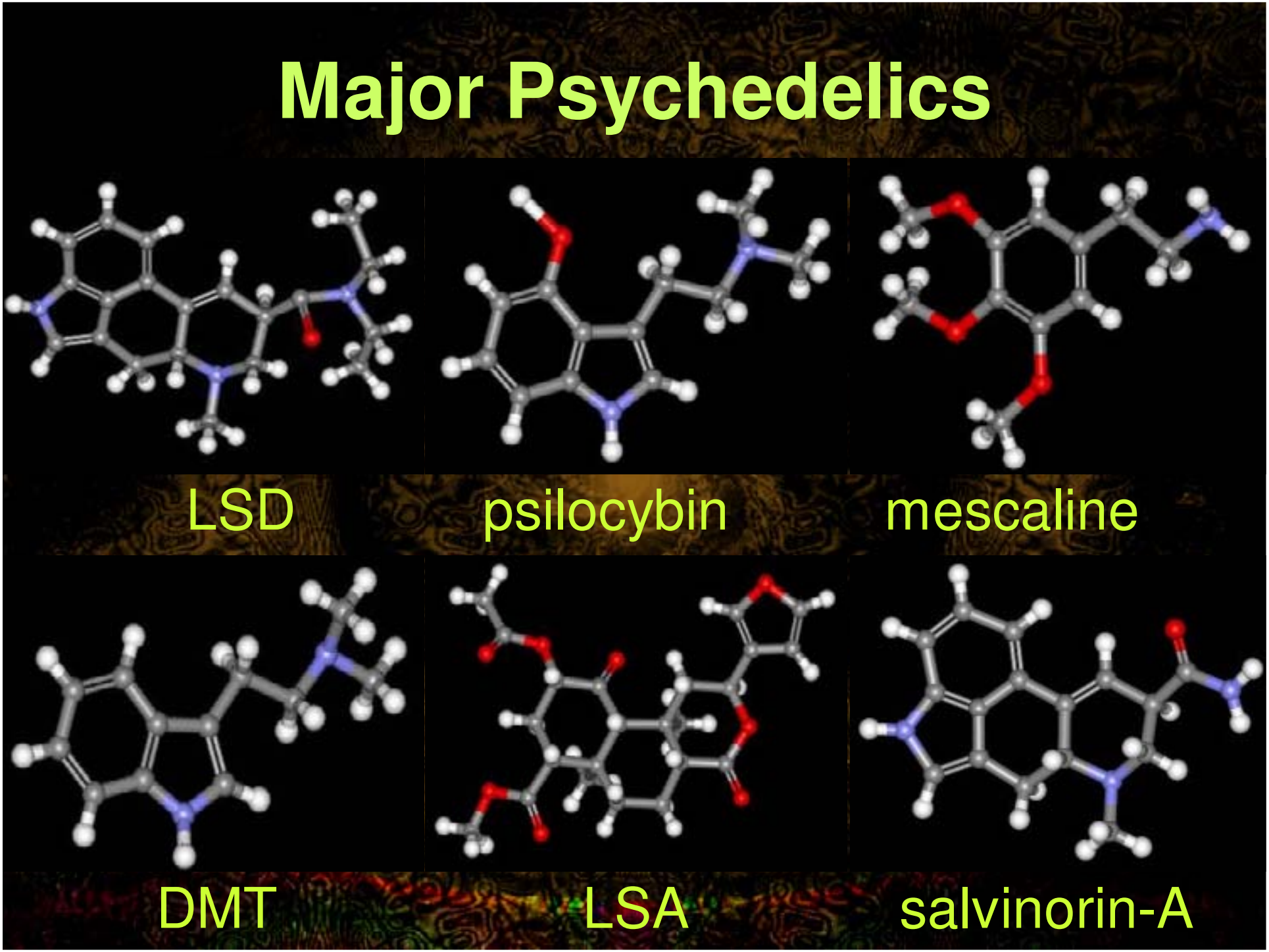
mescaline

DMT

LSA

salvinorin-A

Major Psychedelics



Methods

- online questionnaire
- informed consent
- socio-demographics
- questions about drug use

3 psychological instruments:

- coping (PICI)
- meaningfulness of life (PIL)
- spirituality (ISS)

www.psyd.hu

Psychological Immune Competence Inventory (PICI)

- assesses personality factors behind an individual's resource capacities for long-term coping with stress
- 80 items, developed by Oláh (2005)

Purpose in Life Test (PIL)

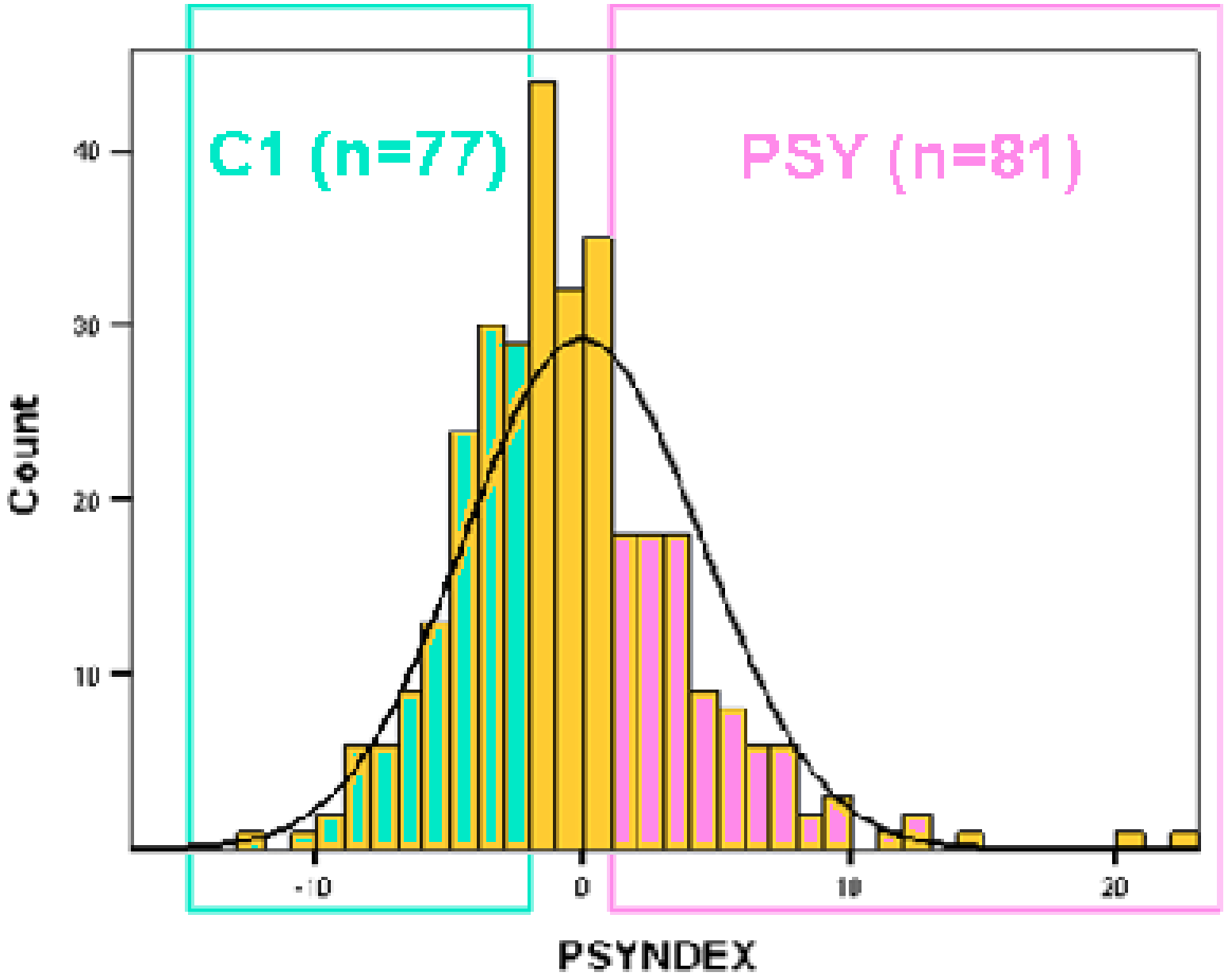
- measures a protective factor that meaningfulness of life has on mental health (based on the concepts of Frankl)
- 20 items, developed by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964)

Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (ISS)

- measures the guiding capabilities of spirituality in a person's life (based on the Religious Orientation Scale)
- 6 items, developed by Hodge (2003)

PSYNDEX score ("psychedelic index")

- calculated for 277 non-problematic drug users
- drug use parameters:
  (1) number of psychedelic drugs
  (2) autognostic drug use purposes
  (3) importance and effects of the experience
- obtained distribution range (-12 to 23)
- separated into roughly equally sized groups:
  - high-scoring (PSYNDEX > 1) -> target group ("PSY")
  - low-scoring (PSYNDEX < -2) -> control group ("C1")


C1 (n=77)
PSY (n=81)
Count
40
30
20
10
-10
0
10
20
PSYNDEX

Results

- PSY group substance use less problematic than C1
- PSYNDEX – PICI: weak correlation ($r = .137$, $p < .009$) only if problematic drug users included
- PSYNDEX – ISS: correlation ($r = .339$, $p < .001$)
- ISS in matched groups: PSY > C1, C2
- # of psychedelic drugs: positive correlation with ISS

Discussion 1/2

- Great variability and marked differences in the usage patterns of psychoactive drugs that cannot be approached by oversimplified or problem-oriented generalizations
- Exclusion of problem users: evens out subtle differences

  -> Focusing on problem users: likewise biases results
- Religious/spiritual attitude may keep away from drug use, especially if abstinence is valued/required by the community
- …But: sacramental drug use may also be in accordance with religious or spiritual goals
- **Spirituality may act as a protective factor against drug-related problems <u>for both drug users and non-users</u>**

Discussion 2/2

- Meaning of *spirituality* is ambiguous
- Autognostic drug use as a “training situation”:
  - deliberately provoked exceptional experiences
  - in order to gain self-knowledge
  - to rehearse coping strategies
- Actual efficiency and benefits still speculative

Next study: qualitative interviews with target group

Summary

- Drug use and its purposes were studied in 667 drug users and non-users with an online questionnaire
- Focus on autognostic use of psychedelic drugs
- Participants matched and grouped into PSY, C1, C2
- Coping, life quality and spirituality were assessed with psychological instruments PICI, PIL and ISS
- No differences found in coping and life quality between non-problematic drug users and non-users
- Psychedelic drugs less associated with problems
- Autognostic psychedelic users had higher spirituality

Móró, Simon, Bárd, & Rácz (2011)

Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 43 (3), 188–198, 2011

ISSN: 0279-1072 print / 2159-9777 online
DOI: 10.1080/02791072.2011.605661

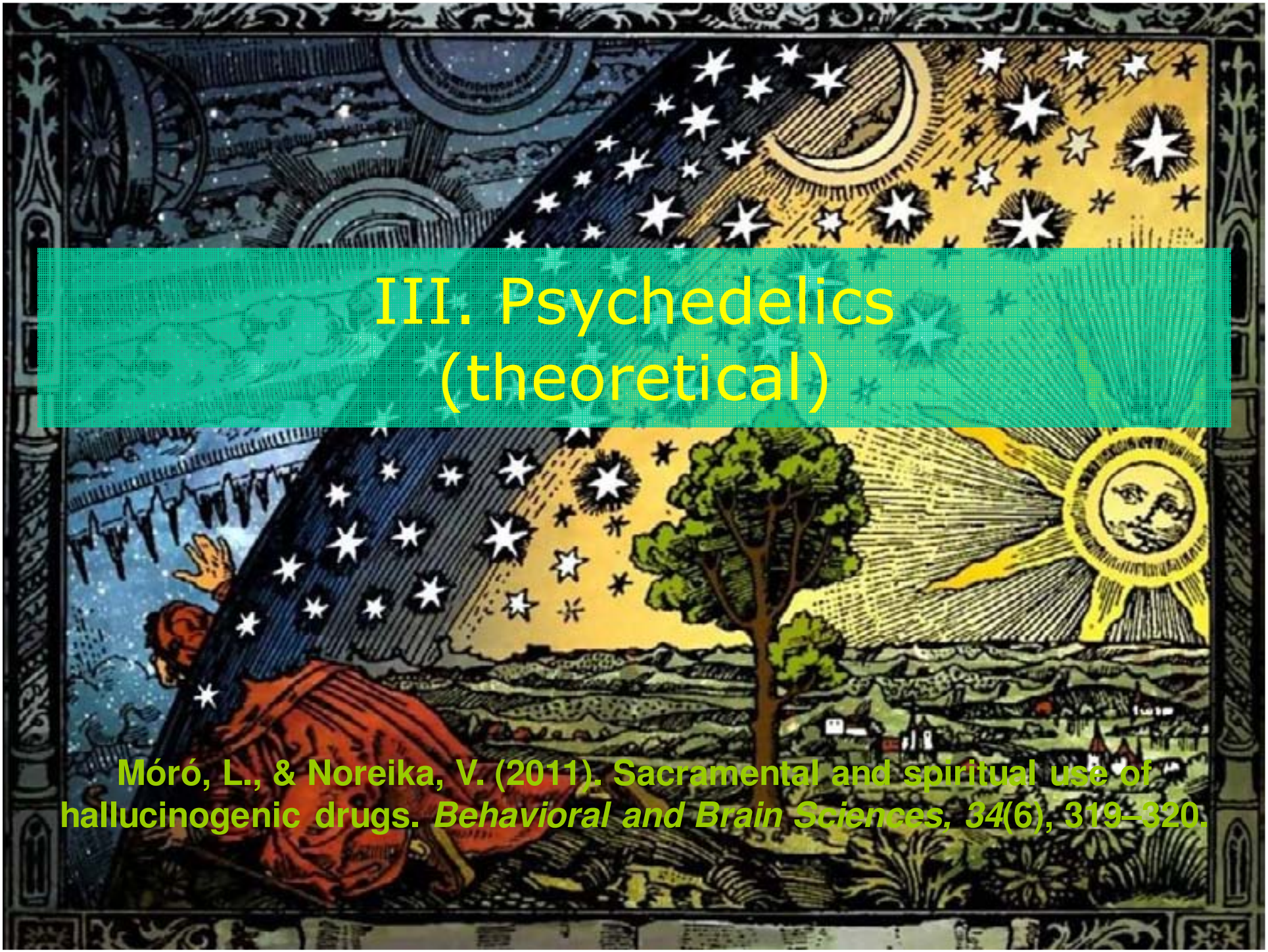
Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Voice of the Psychonauts: Coping, Life Purpose, and Spirituality in Psychedelic Drug Users

Levente Móró, M.Sc.[a]; Katalin Simon, M.Sc.[b]; Imre Bárd, M.Sc.[c] & József Rácz, Ph.D.[d]

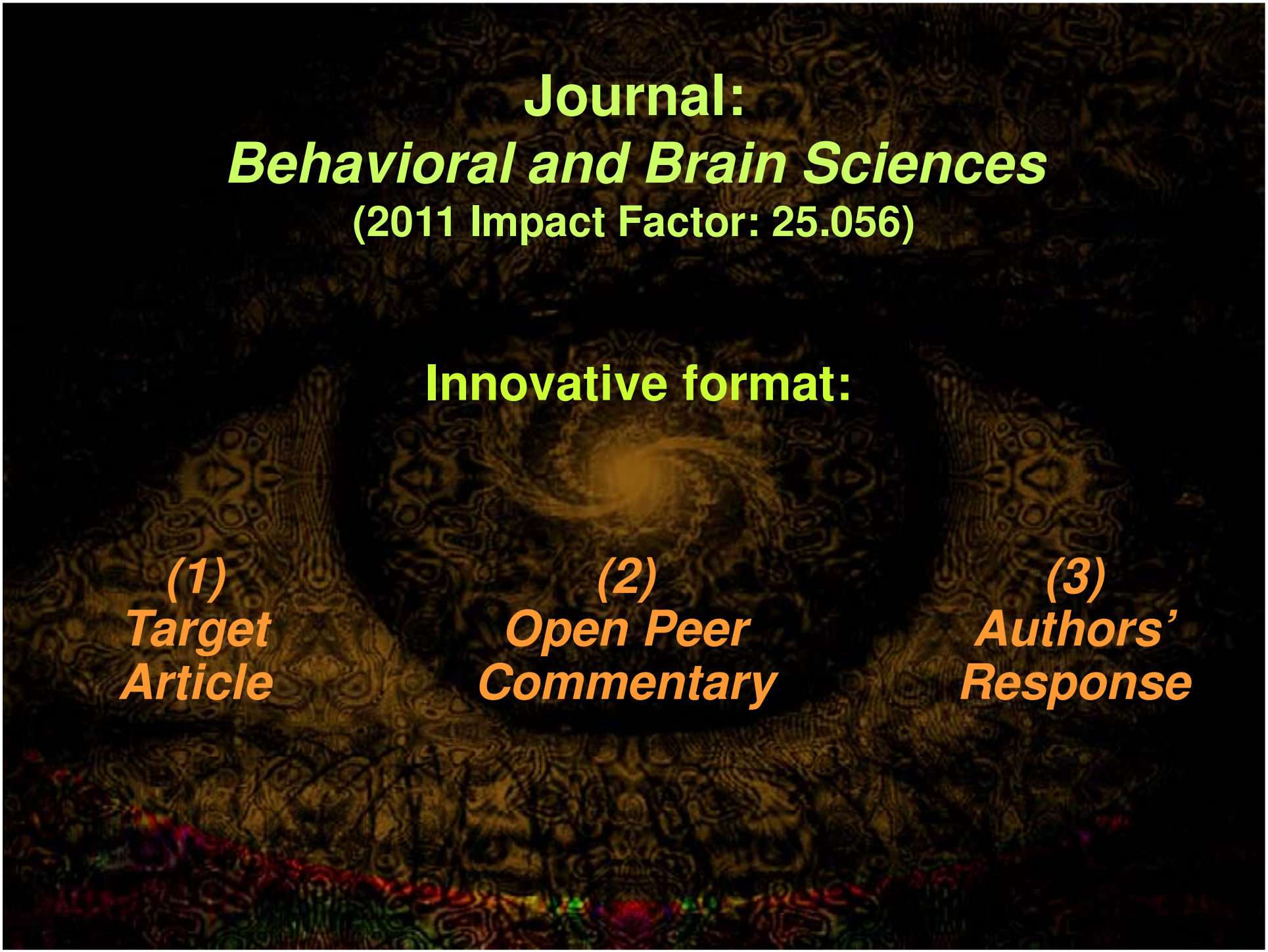
Abstract— Psychoactive drug use shows great diversity, but due to a disproportionate focus on problematic drug use, predominant nonproblematic drug use remains an understudied phenomenon. Historic and anecdotal evidence shows that natural sources of "psychedelic" drugs (*e.g.*, mescaline and psilocybin) have been used in religious and spiritual settings for centuries, as well as for psychological self-enhancement purposes. Our study assessed a total of 667 psychedelic drug users, other drug users, and drug nonusers by online questionnaires. Coping, life purpose, and spirituality were measured with the Psychological Immune Competence Inventory, the Purpose in Life test, and the

Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 43(3), 188-198.



III. Psychedelics (theoretical)

Móró, L., & Noreika, V. (2011). Sacramental and spiritual use of hallucinogenic drugs. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 34*(6), 319–320.


Journal:
Behavioral and Brain Sciences
(2011 Impact Factor: 25.056)
Innovative format:
(1)
Target
Article
(2)
Open Peer
Commentary
(3)
Authors'
Response

(1) – Target Article:

Müller & Schumann (2011)

Drugs as instruments – A new framework for nonaddictive psychoactive drug use

Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 34(6), 293–310.

Abstract: Most people who are regular consumers of psychoactive drugs are not drug addicts, nor will they ever become addicts. In neurobiological theories, non-addictive drug consumption is acknowledged only as a "necessary" prerequisite for addiction, but not as a stable and widespread behavior in its own right. This target article proposes a new neurobiological framework theory for non-addictive psychoactive drug consumption, introducing the concept of "drug instrumentalization". […]

Proximate mechanisms of psychoactive drug use

(by Müller & Schumann)

1. Improved social interaction.
2. Facilitated sexual behavior.
3. Improved cognitive performance and counteracting fatigue.
4. Facilitated recovery from and coping with psychological stress.
5. Self-medication for mental problems.
6. Sensory curiosity – Expanded perception horizon.
7. Euphoria, hedonia, and high.
8. Improved physical appearance and attractiveness.

6. Sensory curiosity – Expanded perception horizon.

(by Müller & Schumann)

„[…] Drugs that humans consume primarily for their sensory perception changing properties, such as hallucinogens”

– mescaline, psilocybin, LSD
– phencyclidine, ketamine, GHB
– cannabis

„[…] coincident activation of previously unrelated representations that are then interlinked”

(2) – Open Peer Commentary:

Móró & Noreika (2011)

Sacramental and spiritual use of hallucinogenic drugs

Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 34(6), 319–320.

Abstract: Arguably, the religious use of hallucinogenic drugs stems from a human search of metaphysical insight, rather than from a direct need for cognitive, emotional, social, physical, or sexual improvement. Therefore, the sacramental and spiritual intake of hallucinogenic drugs goes so much beyond other biopsychosocial functions that it deserves its own category in the drug instrumentalization list.

Sacramental and spiritual use of hallucinogenic drugs

(by Móró & Noreika)

- Induces unique kinds of subjective experiences with a rich phenomenology
- Results in increased apperception, dissolution of ego boundaries, feelings of unity and insight, presence of or encounters with nonhuman entities or beings
- Appears as independent from one's own mind
- Motivated by gaining metaphysical insight
- Originates from a "higher" need for mystical experiences
- Supported by vast amount of archeological evidence and historical documentation

(3) – Authors' Response:

Müller & Schumann (2011)

To use or not to use: Expanding the view on non-addictive psychoactive drug consumption and its implications

***Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 34*(6), 328–347.**

„Móró & Noreika argued that in particular sacramental and spiritual drug intake, which is famously associated with psychedelic drugs, may go far beyond a simple expansion of the perception horizon. We fully agree with this suggestion and add this as ninth instrumentalization goal to the list as: *Facilitating spiritual and religious activities*."

IV. Bio-Psycho-Socio-Spiritual framework

Theories and Models

Maslow	**(1943)**	Theory of human motivation
Antonovsky	**(1961)**	Salutogenesis model
Frankl	**(1963)**	Search for ultimate meaning
Engel	**(1977)**	Biopsychosocial model of health
Bishop	**(2009)**	Biopsychosociospiritual medicine

Human Needs

Maslow (1943) A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review 50*, 370–396.

Self-transcendence
Self-actualization
Aesthetic
Cognitive
Esteem
Love
Safety
Physiological

≈

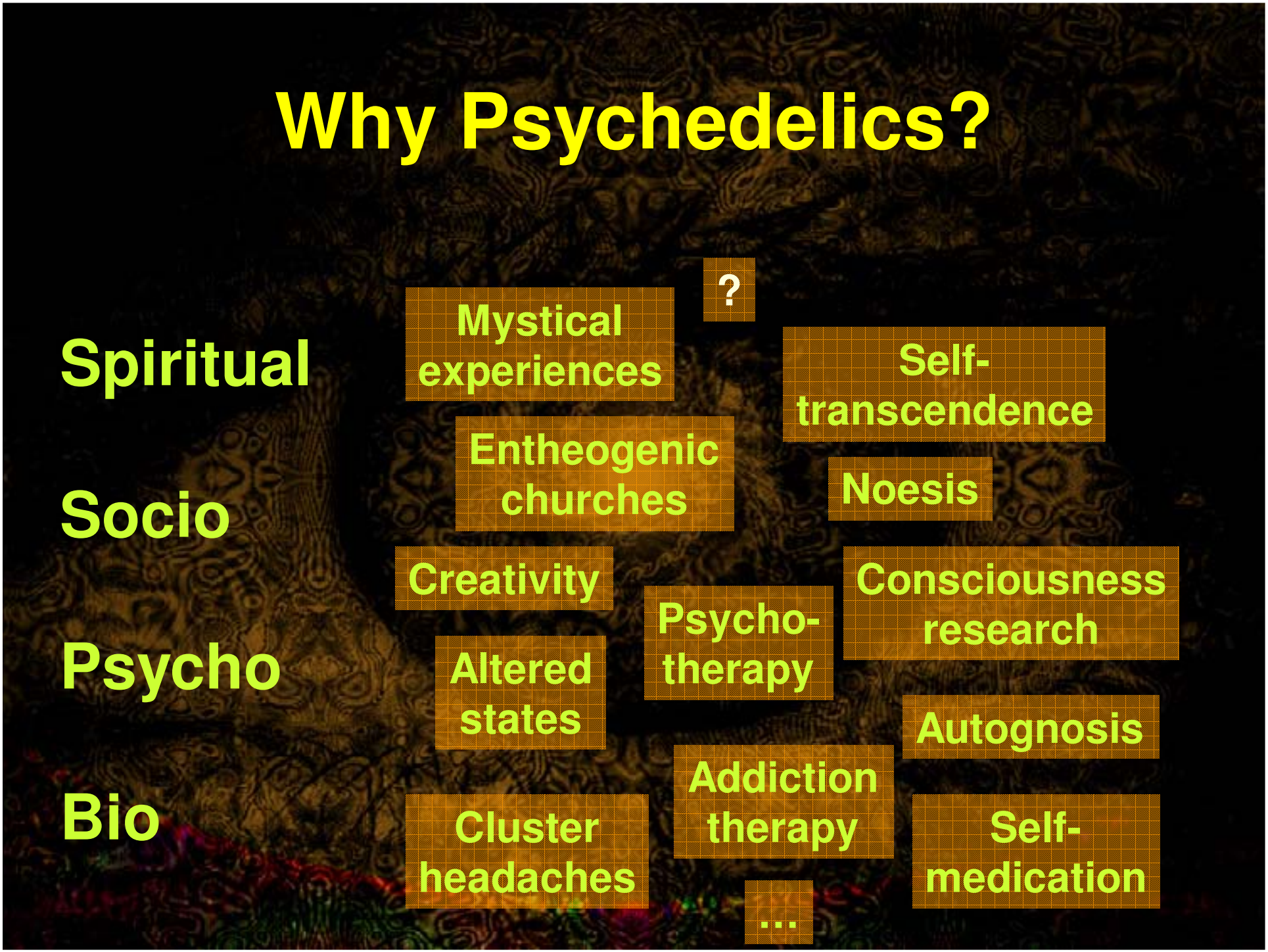
Spiritual

Socio

Psycho

Bio

Why Psychedelics?



Summary

Psychedelics:

- used for autognostic purposes
- has positive effect on life quality
- associated with a higher level of spirituality
- facilitate spiritual and religious activities
- do higher functions in a multi-level framework

…are the most extraordinary!

Thank you for your attention!

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