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From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation

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Cultural appropriation is often mentioned but undertheorized in critical rhetorical and media studies. Defined as the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture, cultural appropriation can be placed into 4 categories: exchange, dominance, exploitation, and transculturation. Although each of these types can be understood as relevant to particular contexts or eras, transculturation questions the bounded and proprietary view of culture embedded in other types of appropriation. Transculturation posits culture as a relational phenomenon constituted by acts of appropriation, not an entity that merely participates in appropriation. Tensions exist between the need to challenge essentialism and the use of essentialist notions such as ownership and degradation to criticize the exploitation of colonized cultures.

Cultural appropriation, defined broadly as the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture, is inescapable when cultures come into contact, including virtual or representational contact. Cultural appropriation is also inescapably intertwined with cultural politics. It is involved in the assimilation and exploitation of marginalized and colonized cultures and in the survival of subordinated cultures and their resistance to dominant cultures. This essay synthesizes existing literature from critical/cultural studies and related areas to (re)conceptualize cultural appropriation not only for critical analyses of media, rhetoric, and commodification but also for intercultural communication theory and pedagogy.

Cultural appropriation is often mentioned in critical analyses of media representations and commodifications of marginalized and/or colonized cultures. Although such works in critical/cultural studies often use the notion of cultural appropriation, the concept is frequently used without significant discussion or explicit theorizing (exceptions are discussed below). Therefore, although cultural

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appropriation is a common topic in cultural, critical rhetorical, and critical media studies, at times it is undertheorized in these literatures and is absent in the intercultural communication literature.[1] This essay works to rectify this situation by examining explicit and implicit conceptualizations of cultural appropriation in order to identify their underlying logics and assumptions and to subject such assumptions to critical reflection.

After briefly discussing definitions of cultural appropriation, I define, illustrate, and critically interrogate four types of appropriation explicated or assumed in the literature: exchange, dominance, exploitation, and transculturation. Although each of these types of appropriation can be understood as relevant to particular eras or contexts, transculturation ultimately questions the validity of the other three categories—not only in an era of postmodernity or globalization but also in historical contexts. Indeed, these four categories, in identifying increasingly complex dynamics involved in cultural appropriation, eventually question dominant conceptualizations not only of appropriation but also of culture itself. Transculturation points to culture as a relational phenomenon that itself is constituted by acts of appropriation, not an entity or essence that merely participates in appropriation. I conclude with a discussion of the ethical and political implications of privileging transculturation in the conceptualization of cultural appropriation. A variety of examples are offered for illustration throughout the essay, but in the interest of thematic unity, I focus on appropriations between Native American and Euro-American cultures when relevant.

Defining cultural appropriation

Communication scholars, generally in the critical tradition, who do discuss cultural appropriation only infrequently define the term, relying instead on common usage and the implications of affiliated theoretical frameworks. In reviewing research from the past 15 years, that repeatedly uses the term in the context of cultural, critical media, and critical rhetorical studies (e.g., Black, 2002; Buescher & Ono, 1996; Harold, 2004; Kadish, 2004; Ono & Buescher, 2001; Shugart, 1997; Torgovnick, 1996; Whitt, 1995), I found only one that explicitly defined it (Shugart). Although many authors in this tradition address cultural appropriation under roughly synonymous terms or subsets of the larger category, such as incorporation, commodification, and hybridity, many of these terms are also frequently left undefined or undertheorized.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2004) offers two definitions of the verb "appropriate" relevant to the use of the term by critical scholars: "to take exclusive possession of" and "to take or make use of without authority or right" (p. 61). *Appropriation* is derived from the Latin *appropriare*, meaning "to make one's own," from the Latin root *proprius* meaning *own*, also the root of *property*. These meanings parallel the use of the term in legal contexts, strengthening the connotation of an unfair or unauthorized taking—that is, theft. For example, in response to

controversies over the use of elements of First Nations cultures by non-Natives, the Writer's Union of Canada defined cultural appropriation as "the taking—from a culture that is not one's own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge" (quoted in Ziff & Rao, 1997, p. 1).

As Helene Shugart (1997) states:

> [T]echnically, [rhetorical] appropriation refers to any instance in which means commonly associated with and/or perceived as belonging to another are used to further one's own ends. *Any instance in which a group borrows or imitates the strategies of another—even when the tactic is not intended to deconstruct or distort the other's meanings and experiences—thus would constitute appropriation.*
> (Italics added; pp. 210–211)

Provisionally, this essay uses a broader, less evaluative sense of appropriation as the use of one culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture—regardless of intent, ethics, function, or outcome. I do not limit cultural appropriation to instances where those engaged in appropriation do so "to further [their] own ends" or in a way that necessarily serves their own interests. Cultural appropriation, however, is an *active* process and, in this sense, retains the meaning of a "taking." Mere exposure, for example, to the music or film of another culture does not constitute cultural appropriation. The active "making one's own" of another culture's elements occurs, however, in various ways, under a variety of conditions, and with varying functions and outcomes. The degree and scope of voluntariness (individually or culturally), the symmetry or asymmetry of power relations, the appropriation's role in domination and/or resistance, the nature of the cultural boundaries involved, and other factors shape, and are shaped by, acts of cultural appropriation.

Categorizing cultural appropriation

My first step in (re)conceptualizing cultural appropriation is to develop a rough typology of appropriation as discussed or implied in the literature for the purposes of conceptual clarification and systematic critical insight. In identifying these categories, I was guided by a dominant assumption in the literature: Acts of appropriation and their implications are not determined by the intent or awareness of those engaged in such acts but are instead shaped by, and in turn shape, the social, economic, and political contexts in which they occur. In John Fiske's (1991) terms, all acts of communication are socially positioned: Communicative relations are always social relations and hence political relations. Acts of communication and cultural appropriation both reflect and constitute the identities of the individuals and groups involved as well as their sociopolitical positions. As a result of this broadly shared assumption, cultural politics, specifically the power relations among cultures, are highlighted and become a primary basis for categorizing acts of cultural appropriation. Emphasizing the role of sociopolitical context, however, risks erasing

agency. Socially positioned subjects engage in acts of appropriation for a variety of reasons and with a variety of understandings concerning the implications and ethics of such acts. These intentions, motivations, and interpretations are part of the system in which such acts occur and can serve to reinforce, modify, cope with, or actively resist that larger system. However, agency is not reducible to an a priori quality of sovereign subjects (or cultures). Therefore, although the categories mentioned below emphasize social structure and power relations, attention is also given to possibilities for individual and collective agency and to the role of appropriation in constituting culture, identity, and agency.

Based on the range of literature addressing the topic, I identified four categories of cultural appropriation (adapted from Wallis & Malm, 1984; additional influences from Bakhtin, 1975/1981; Clifford, 1988; Goodwin & Gore, 1990; Ziff & Rao, 1997). Based on the assumptions identified above, these four categories can best be understood as naming the conditions (historical, social, political, cultural, and economic) under which acts of appropriation occur. After briefly defining each of the four types of appropriation, I discuss, illustrate, and evaluate each in depth.

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 a dominant culture by members of a subordinated culture in a context in which the dominant culture has been imposed onto the subordinated culture, including appropriations that enact resistance.
3. Cultural exploitation: the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without substantive 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, for example, multiple cultural appropriations structured in the dynamics of globalization and transnational capitalism creating hybrid forms.

My review and discussion of these types of appropriation highlights issues of central importance to the conceptualization of cultural appropriation. Cultural exchange operates in the literature as an implied baseline for clarifying the inequalities involved in the other conditions of appropriation and is generally assumed to be a nonexistent ideal. Cultural domination, in contrast, highlights the asymmetries under which acts of appropriation occur. Although many approaches to this set of conditions emphasize the power of the dominant to impose its culture on subordinated peoples, cultural dominance as a condition nevertheless requires attention to how the targets of cultural imposition negotiate their relationship to the dominant culture through a variety of appropriative tactics. Extending this implication, cultural resistance, a form of appropriation that occurs under the conditions of cultural dominance, highlights the agency and inventiveness of subordinated peoples by

examining how they appropriate dominant cultural elements for resistive ends. Resistance through appropriation, however, demonstrates the "impurity" of acts of resistance and of culture itself. Cultural exploitation focuses on the commodification and incorporation of elements of subordinated cultures. However, in defending the rights of subordinated peoples to protect the integrity of their culture and to control its use, most of the discourse of cultural exploitation operates from a model of culture as clearly bounded and distinct, as singular and organic. Such a model of culture is not only empirically questionable but also complicit in the subordination of "primitive" cultures. Transculturation further questions the validity of an essentialist model of distinct cultures that merely engage in appropriation, highlighting appropriation and hybridity as constitutive of culture, reconceptualized as an intersectional phenomenon. Although the literature on transculturation is grounded in the conditions of globalization and transnational capitalism, the implications of transculturation question the assumptions of the previous three categories in both contemporary and historical contexts.

Cultural exchange
Cultural exchange involves the reciprocal exchange of symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies between cultures with symmetrical power. Examples include the reciprocal borrowing of linguistic words and phrases, mutual influence on religious beliefs and practices, technological exchange, and two-way flows of music and visual arts. In its ideal form, cultural exchange involves a balance of this reciprocal flow. Appropriations of this type are generally voluntary, with the "choices" involved being individual and/or cultural.

With a few exceptions (Colista & Leshner, 1998; Wallis & Malm, 1984), cultural exchange is only implied in the critical/cultural studies literature. This category functions as the implicit "ground" against which the meaning and significance of the "figure" of cultural dominance or exploitation is highlighted. Its function in this regard is twofold: As an ideal, it establishes ethical standards by which other types of appropriation should be judged (i.e., reciprocal, balanced, and voluntary); as a theory, it serves as an easy target for critical scholars to demonstrate the inadequacy of pluralist and transparent (i.e., liberal) models of power.

In order to understand cultural appropriation as exchange, it is necessary to ignore what I have identified as the defining trait for types of appropriation: the context (or conditions) of the appropriations. One way to eliminate context is to engage in a kind of abstracted accounting of exchange and influence (Ziff & Rao, 1997). Another approach is to use the individual as the primary unit of analysis (Fiske, 1991), isolating what can appear to be voluntary, reciprocal exchanges from the larger contexts that clarify the inequalities and constraints on agency involved in any specific case.

The identification of "pure" cases of cultural exchange may be difficult insofar as few acts of intercultural communication and appropriation occur in contexts in which power imbalances are not an important element. For example, although Japan

may in some ways be an equal partner with the United States, such equality may not exist on all levels relevant to an act of appropriation. Japan's ownership of international media companies may influence USAmerican[2] culture in a variety of ways, just as USAmerican ownership of media companies with substantial presence in Japan may influence Japanese culture. Nevertheless, the hegemony of certain Western ideals, such as standards of female beauty (themselves perpetuated through Western and transnational media outlets, regardless of ownership), can have disproportionate effects on Japanese culture (Darling-Wolf, 2004), as reflected in the rates of certain plastic surgeries in Japan (e.g., changes to the nose and eyes to appear more "Western" [Cullen, n.d.]).

This first category demonstrates potential complications in categorizing conditions and acts of cultural appropriation. First, the identification of symmetrical or asymmetrical power relations between two or more cultures is complicated by the varying forms power can take, from economic capital to military might to cultural capital, and the complex intersections between them. A simple dominant–subordinate binary may not always apply in instances where the overall relationship might be characterized as unequal, and a level playing field may not operate in relation to specific acts of appropriations even if the overall relationship between two cultures is one of general parity.

Second, multiplicities of power and constraints on agency complicate determinations of the voluntary nature of cultural exchange. In the Netherlands, many Dutch university students insist that they and their nation chose to adopt English as a de facto second language for practical economic purposes but that "practical choice" has of course been shaped by the historical and contemporary dominance of Anglo countries, among other factors. Thus, when I teach in the Netherlands, I teach in English and can get by without learning Dutch on any substantive level. When my Dutch colleagues come to teach in the United States, however, they must operate exclusively in English. That is a clear reflection of a power imbalance, even though, individually and as a nation, the Dutch can make other choices. My appropriations of Dutch words into my vocabulary are far more voluntary, for example, than the use of English words in Dutch. The use of English words in Dutch is increasingly unavoidable, pointing to the next category of cultural appropriation: dominance.

Cultural dominance

Cultural dominance refers to a condition characterized by the unidirectional imposition of elements of a dominant culture onto a subordinated (marginalized, colonized) culture. In terms of cultural appropriation, this category focuses on the use of elements of a dominant culture by members of a subordinated culture in contexts in which the dominant culture has been imposed onto the subordinated culture. That is, following the theoretical assumptions explicated above, cultural dominance refers to the conditions under which acts of appropriation occur. Cultural dominance implies a relative lack of choice about whether or not to appropriate on the part

of the "receiving" culture because of the "sending" culture's greater political, cultural, economic, and/or military power. However, this does not mean that members of subordinated cultures do not negotiate this imposition in a variety of ways, manifesting at least limited forms of agency in how they appropriate the imposed cultural elements.

One form of cultural dominance is institutional assimilation, the use of educational, religious, or other institutions to replace a subordinated culture with a dominant culture. A particularly overt example of institutional assimilation is the effort to absorb Native American children into Anglo-American culture via the boarding school system established in the United States in the late 19th century (Lesiak, 1991), a case that illustrates both the conditions of cultural dominance and the appropriative responses of subordinated cultures to those conditions.

By relocating Native American children to a school far from their families, access to their "home world"—both their native culture as a whole and their particular social relationships and cultural practices—is blocked and maintenance of their native identity restricted (Goffman, 1961). "Admissions procedures" involve a "leaving off and a taking on" of one's "identity kit," those materials by which a person maintains performances of self (Goffman). Native children introduced into boarding schools had their hair cut, their clothing replaced with military uniforms, and were required to choose Anglo-Christian names. Many of their native practices were no longer accessible; traditional foods and forms of religious worship were replaced with those of the dominant culture. They were punished for speaking their native languages and had English imposed upon them. Finally, boarding school "students" were conditioned to view their culture from the dominant culture's perspective. Some boarding schools staged performances of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Song of Hiawatha," with the students themselves as the performers (Lesiak, 1991); in later years, students were shown Hollywood cowboy and Indian films and encouraged to cheer for the cowboys.

These strategies of assimilation via cultural dominance involve the *imposition* of the dominant culture onto the subordinated cultures, not its appropriation by members of subordinated cultures. The imposition of culture made possible by disproportionate access to resources and modes of power is not in itself cultural appropriation in the sense of a use or a taking—that is, an active process. However, insofar as a dominant culture is imposed upon a subordinated culture, the latter's members, individually and/or collectively, must adopt one or more tactics for their use of the imposed elements in order to manage the tensions between their native culture and the colonizing one (Goffman, 1961). Although this category emphasizes that cultural dominance is the *condition* under which some appropriations occur, a full exploration of cultural dominance as a category of appropriation requires a focus on the tactics employed by members of subordinated cultures to negotiate their relationship to the imposed culture. In what follows, such tactics (adapted from Goffman; Martin & Nakayama, 2000; Scott, 1990) are defined and illustrated through the case of boarding schools for Native Americans. These appropriative

tactics range from overt acceptance and internalization to overt rejection of the imposed culture to covert resistance.

First, *assimilation* involves internalization of the imposed culture, including reformation of identity, values, and ideologies. Assimilation involves the displacement of the subordinated/native culture by the colonizing culture, which necessarily involves the appropriation (broadly speaking) of the dominant culture by a member of a subordinated culture, as in the case of a Native American boarding school student who subsequently became a disciplinarian at the boarding school. Second, *integration* involves internalization of some or all the imposed culture without (complete) displacement or erasure of native culture and identity. Integration can involve the operation of two distinct cultures within an individual or a group or the fusion of aspects of each into a single culture and identity. Although some children in the boarding-school system may have integrated, others undoubtedly used mimicry and perhaps covert resistance (see below) until their release and then chose to return to their homes, despite pressures from the schools not to do so, indicating a failure to assimilate or integrate (Lesiak, 1991). The boarding-school system also demonstrated that adoption of assimilation or integration as an appropriative tactic does not guarantee acceptance of assimilated peoples by the dominant culture: Students who assimilated or integrated were often still stereotyped and rejected due to their race (Lesiak).

Third, *intransigence* involves overt resistance: a refusal to appropriate the imposed culture or other overt means of opposing its imposition, individually or collectively. Intransigence was present in boarding schools, as evidenced by punishments and frequent escape attempts. This strategy involves refusal to appropriate the imposed elements.

Fourth, *mimicry* involves "going through the motions" without internalizing the imposed culture. If performed successfully, it will appear to the dominant group that assimilation or integration has been achieved. Here, appropriation involves an intentional performance designed to negotiate structures of power while maintaining one's native culture and thereby begins to demonstrate the active nature of appropriations under the conditions of cultural dominance and hence of the crucial role of agency. Fifth, *resistance* involves more covert opposition: the adoption of aspects of the imposed culture in such a way as to maintain a native culture and/or resist cultural domination, often without the awareness of the colonizing culture. Forms of appropriative resistance, to be discussed in detail below, may also have been present at the boarding schools; however, official records would be unlikely to evidence such a tactic if it was carried out successfully.

Cultural dominance has also been discussed extensively in an international context in terms of the cultural or media imperialism thesis.[3] Boyd-Barrett (1977) defined media imperialism as:

> [T]he process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external

pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected. (p. 117)

The United States and other (mostly Western) countries produce most of the media flowing through the international market while often importing little in return. "The absence of reciprocation of media influence by the affected country combines both the element of cultural invasion by another power and the element of imbalance of power resources between the countries concerned" (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, p. 118). Such an imbalance is particularly evident in the case of the United States, which exports media products (film, music, television) to the rest of the Western, "industrialized," or "developed" world and to the "majority" (i.e., "third" or "developing") of the world without a substantial flow in the reverse direction (see, e.g., Wallis & Malm, 1984, on music and Miller, Govil, McMuria, & Maxwell, 2001, on film).

   Although a discussion of all critiques and reformulations of the cultural impe-rialism thesis is beyond the scope of this essay, some central issues in the ongoing debate over the thesis are useful in clarifying the dynamics of cultural appropriation in general and cultural domination specifically. Models of media or cultural impe-rialism developed out of the political economy tradition (Boyd-Barrett, 1998; Roach, 1997), reducing culture to a function of economics and ignoring cultural imperial-ism's *cultural* implications. This approach tends to focus on structural aspects of cultural imposition without attending to particular media texts and their reception, making cultural claims based solely on an analysis of political economy. This con-tributes to a tendency to assume self-evident cultural effects from USAmerican or Western cultural products on non-U.S. or non-Western cultures (Roach; Tomlinson, 1991). Put simply, the approach risks assuming that importing USAmerican cultural *products* into other countries is the same as importing USAmerican *culture* into those countries, ignoring agency, reception, and resistance. The cultural imperialism thesis illustrates the condition of cultural dominance but ignores the appropriative tactics of the receiving cultures.

   As with institutional strategies of cultural assimilation, appropriation comes into play in the ways in which those "targeted" by cultural imperialism take up and use (or not) the foreign cultural products inserted into their environment: for example, assimilation, integration, intransigence, mimicry, and resistance. Although the polit-ical economy approach might mistakenly assume that cultural dominance results in assimilation or at least mimicry, we must also account for overt resistance to such cultural products as well as to the complex ways in which they play a role in integration or more covert forms of resistance. In doing so, however, we must not return to a simplistic model of consumer agency that presumes voluntary acts of consumption. Neither pure determinism (vulgar Marxism) nor pure agency (neo-liberalism) is capable of accounting for the dynamics of cultural appropriation in the conditions of cultural dominance.

   Questions of "free choice" (persuasion) versus coercion do not adequately capture the dynamics of cultural appropriation generally and cultural dominance

specifically. Free choice can only be conceived of in a vacuum (which is the ideological effect of the discourse of the "individual" or the "consumer"; see Fiske, 1991), and outright coercion is often not relevant to the dynamics of postcolonial, neocolonial, and other contexts (on the latter point, see Tomlinson, 1991). Instead, a central contribution of hegemony to communication theory is its breaking down of the persuasion/coercion binary, demonstrating how individuals and groups "willingly" participate in their own subordination due to powerful influences over what is "taken for granted" and naturalized (Good, 1989). The hegemonic influence of Western media demonstrates not only that the appeal of Western media products is always already structured in power but also that the political implications of acts of appropriation are not determined entirely by the intentions, motivations, and interests of the subordinated cultures doing the appropriating or by the dominant cultures that are imposing their media products.

These complexities and challenges to the cultural imperialism thesis (and to its neoliberal critics) are clarified by further discussion of resistive appropriations under the conditions of cultural dominance. Cultural resistance as a form of appropriation is a subset of cultural domination, one of the five appropriative tactics discussed above. I explore this particular tactic in more depth due to the substantial body of literature analyzing cases of and conceptualizing cultural resistance, its enhanced focus on the agency of subordinated groups, and its challenge to the purity of culture, resistance, and agency.

Cultural resistance

The term *cultural appropriation* has also been used to name the use of elements of a dominant culture by members of subordinated cultures to resist that dominant culture. Cultural resistance involves the appropriation of elements of a dominant culture by a subordinated culture for survival (Clifford, 1988), psychological compensation (Radway, 1984), and/or opposition (Harold, 2004; Shugart, 1997).

An important development in critical/cultural studies in the 1980s and 1990s was the conceptualization of media texts as polysemic, a development that challenged, among other things, the media or the cultural imperialism thesis (Roach, 1997). This challenge to simplistic models of ideological domination can be traced to Hall's (1980) explication of negotiated and oppositional decoding strategies and other important works in the British cultural studies tradition, audience research in the context of international media studies (e.g., Ang, 1982/1985; Liebes & Katz, 1990), and De Certeau's (1984) work on cultural poaching in everday life.

In these approaches, the audience (consumer) is granted a more active role and the construction of media texts and other products of the culture industries is increasingly understood to be overdetermined (Althusser, 1971), not linearly determined by the base, and hence structured with contradictions. These two factors offer possibilities for alternative and oppositional, as well as dominant, readings of media texts. Fiske (1989) conceptualized this approach to media analysis via the work of Bakhtin (1975/1981), De Certeau (1984), and Hall (1980), creating a perhaps

overly romanticized image of "the people" carrying out guerilla raids on dominant media and culture systems, crafting "popular culture" out of "mass culture" products to derive pleasures, meanings, and identities that resonate with their lived experience of contradiction and subordination. Hence, Fiske added to the existing focus of critical/cultural studies on incorporation (the appropriation of resistant cultural forms and symbols by the dominant system and their resignification and redeployment in support of that system) its dialectical opposite, excorporation: the appropriation by the people of the products offered (imposed) by the dominant culture in order to create oppositional or alternative meanings, identities, and pleasures. In doing so, the agency and inventiveness of subordinated cultures are highlighted.

Despite many criticisms leveled against it (e.g., Schiller, 1991), this approach is not entirely naive in its conception of power. Unlike neoliberal approaches to media and culture, Fiske (1989, 1991) does not rely on the a priori sovereign subject of liberal individualism, nor does he revert to its pluralist conception of power. Instead, he acknowledges that the ideological construction of subjects does not entirely foreclose agency, in part due to the contradictions both within mass culture and between mass culture and lived experience. Although Fiske (1989) may overemphasize the extent and significance of such "popular" appropriations, and although the impact of such semiotic struggles on material conditions is debatable, this approach is an important corrective to the conception of audiences as passive and more specifically as dupes. Indeed, Fiske (1989) offers a dialectical model of mass/popular culture in which acts of appropriation are ongoing on both sides: The people rip their jeans as an enactment of resistance; the culture industry produces preripped jeans to sell to the people, thereby commodifying and incorporating such resistance; the people then search for other ways to alter their jeans or for other mass culture products to alter; and the struggle continues.

Examples of oppositional readings and other practices that rework the products of mass culture abound in the literature (e.g., Fiske, 1989; Harold, 2004; Jenkins, 1988; Radway, 1984) and are otherwise readily evident, such as a segment in the documentary *Barbie Nation* (Stern, 1998), focusing on a lesbian couple who appropriate Barbie and Ken dolls by giving them genitalia and staging them in S&M sex scenes. Significantly, the couple asked that their faces be masked to protect their identities. This dynamic, in which cultural appropriation is used to enact resistance covertly, relates to James Scott's (1990) important work on hidden transcripts. Scott argues that if investigation of cultural domination and resistance is limited to public events, the conclusion will be that the dominant ideology is operating effectively toward hegemonic ends and that agency is absent. If, however, we attend to covert resistance, analyzing the hidden transcripts of subordinate cultural practices, greater and more robust tactics for opposing the dominant system will be revealed because, as a consequence of unequal power, stereotyping, and discrimination, such practices often remain at the level of the private or are only evident to those with knowledge of the restricted codes of subordinated groups.

The appropriation and resignification of derogatory words (e.g., *nigger*, *bitch*, and *queer*) and other oppressive cultural forms as a means of resistance by those targeted by such forms have led to explorations of whether such appropriations are indeed oppositional or whether the reproduction of such terms perpetuates subordination (Butler, 1997; Shugart, 1997). In a scene from the film *Smoke Signals* (Eyre, 2001), for example, one Native American character, Victor, teaches his Native friend Thomas how to act like a "real Indian"—how to conform to the dominant image of the stoic Indian in order to be taken seriously by Whites. This strategy of (re)appropriating a Hollywood image of Native Americans serves as a means of surviving in the White world but nevertheless plays into problematic stereotypes. Although Victor's teaching Thomas may reproduce negative aspects of the dominating culture, such performances can also demonstrate that the stereotype of Indians as stoic is itself a performance not an a priori quality. As Butler writes, language is not

> a static and closed system whose utterances are functionally secured in advance by "social positions" to which they are mimetically related. The force and meaning of an utterance are not exclusively determined by prior contexts or "positions"; an utterance may gain its force precisely by virtue of the break with context that it performs. Such breaks with prior contexts or, indeed, with ordinary usage, are crucial to the political operation of the performative. Language takes on a nonordinary meaning in order precisely to contest what has become sedimented in and as the ordinary. (p. 145)

Appropriation of elements of the dominant culture by subordinated groups can denaturalize the dominant culture's representational systems and/or can provide the possibility of a form of agency.

Studies on cultural resistance must examine the micro- and macroconditions enabling and constraining particular readings and appropriations, not just the readings and appropriations themselves. As Ellu Shohat and Robert Stam write, resistant readings "depend on a certain cultural or political preparation that 'primes' the spectator to read critically" (quoted in Roach, 1997, p. 58). Agency does not spring forth out of a vacuum but constitutes and is constituted by discursive, cultural, political, and economic environments and articulations, including acts of cultural appropriation. The very discourses that perpetuate the marginalization of subordinate groups can provide a basis for agency and resistance via appropriation and resignification (Butler, 1997). For example, although the 1970s "Keep America Beautiful" campaign featuring Iron Eyes Cody shedding a single tear in response to a polluted and littered landscape reinforced various stereotypes of Native Americans—for example, generically "Indian," stoic, and closer to nature—such discourses can also create forms of agency (and cultural capital) that have the potential to articulate resistance to the dominant culture. At the same time, such images can be deployed against Native groups, as when Native people are deemed by the dominant culture to no longer be "real Indians" if they participate in the

exploitation of natural resources or the accumulation of profit (consider in this context tribes that allow the storage of nuclear waste or that develop casinos on their reservations [Clifford, 1988; Torgovnick, 1996]), thereby denying Native peoples what little cultural capital the dominant system has granted them and limiting the forms of agency and identity available to them. Therefore, the title of this category, cultural resistance, is not meant to imply that acts of appropriative resistance are pure or guaranteed in advance.

This demonstrates an important point about cultural resistance via appropriation of elements of the dominant culture: Insofar as it articulates multiple discourses and lines of power, an act of appropriation can enact resistance and function hegemonically at the same time. Just as Fiske (1989) and others identified mass and popular culture as being structured in contradiction, arenas in which pure resistance is not to be found, so too are acts of appropriation, especially cultural resistance. Because agency is constituted in part through acts of appropriation, agency itself is structured in contradictions. The performance of resistance using the imposed culture of the dominant indicates the presence of agency but not necessarily an agency grounded in the a priori subject of liberal individualism.

Cultural exploitation

In the critical/cultural studies literature, cultural appropriation has most commonly been used to reference acts in which aspects of marginalized/colonized cultures are taken and used by a dominant/colonizing culture in such a way as to serve the interests of the dominant. Cultural exploitation commonly involves the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture in which the subordinated culture is treated as a resource to be "mined" and "shipped home" for consumption, as in the use of indigenous folk music by Western musicians and companies without financial compensation (Wallis & Malm, 1984). Cultural exploitation includes appropriative acts that appear to indicate acceptance or positive evaluation of a colonized culture by a colonizing culture but which nevertheless function to establish and reinforce the dominance of the colonizing culture, especially in the context of neocolonialism (e.g., Buescher & Ono, 1996). These instances often carry the connotation of stealing or of in some way using the culture of a subordinated group against them; studies on appropriations of Native American cultures are especially prominent in this regard (e.g., Black, 2002; Buescher & Ono; Churchill, 1994; Kadish, 2004; Ono & Buescher, 2001; Torgovnick, 1996; Whitt, 1995).

Ziff and Rao (1997) identified four concerns expressed about acts of cultural appropriation by dominant from subordinate cultures (i.e., cultural exploitation). The first concern is cultural degradation. Appropriation "can have corrosive effects on the integrity of an exploited culture because the appropriative conduct can erroneously depict the heritage from which it is drawn." Insofar as the depiction of the exploited culture is distorted, "tears can appear in the fabric of a group's cultural identity" (Ziff & Rao, 1997, p. 9). In the case of the appropriation of Native

American culture by the New Age commodity machine, for example, one concern is that non-Natives (some of whom claim to be real Indians) claim authority to define what Native Americans really are, distorting not only non-Native but also Native understandings of Native American cultures (Churchill, 1994; Whitt, 1995). The second concern identified by Ziff and Rao is the preservation of cultural elements. Arguments against cultural exploitation on the grounds of cultural preservation claim that cultural objects, symbols, and practices are best understood in their native contexts and that the priority should be preservation of the integrity of marginalized cultures. This raises concerns not only over the physical removal of cultural objects (e.g., to museums) but also over debilitating effects on the culture being appropriated, such as the disrespect for and inevitable distortion of Native spiritual traditions enacted by (perhaps unknowing) New Age producers and consumers and, more broadly, by a "cultural smorgasbord" approach to "other" cultures fostered by possessive individualism and commodification.

The third concern about cultural exploitation is deprivation of material advantage: Cultural products, either of the past or of living cultures, are being "wrongfully exploited for financial gain" (Ziff & Rao, 1997, p. 14). Here, we enter a set of legal issues, both nationally and internationally, in which intellectual property, a Western concept, mediates competing claims of ownership. Copyright laws favor individual ownership over collective ownership such that "traditional" cultural forms placed are in the public domain (Wallis & Malm, 1984; Whitt, 1995). For example, Kokopelli imagery, based on variations of flute-player imagery from indigenous petroglyphs and other visual media of the "prehistoric" southwestern United States, is widely used in Southwest tourist kitsch/art and marketing without compensation to living groups due to its presumed legal status as part of the public domain. Closely related to issues of material compensation is the fourth concern over cultural exploitation identified by Ziff and Rao: the failure to recognize sovereign claims. Although Western legal systems and concepts of ownership support the widespread appropriation of elements of traditional cultures without remuneration, they also often prevent traditional cultures from blocking what they perceive as inappropriate uses or adaptations. In the case of Kokopelli imagery, the cultures affiliated with these images have no formal authority over their use and adaptation. Bruce Springsteen may have had the economic resources, cultural capital, and legal standing to impede Republican appropriation of "Born in the USA," but the indigenous cultures of the Southwest that claim affiliations with flute-player imagery do not have comparable control over the use of their cultural heritage due to imbalanced access to resources and the appropriating culture's establishment of the rules. Indeed, economic survival, the dynamics of tourism, and the market for "Native American" arts and crafts may push Native peoples to participate in the alteration and commodification of that very heritage, as is the case with the images labeled "Kokopelli."

Most often in the critical/cultural studies literature, such acts of exploitative appropriation are discussed in terms of commodification, wherein other cultures

are used in the endless production of differences necessary for the perpetuation of the commodity machine. This concept has been relatively well theorized in the critical/cultural studies literature; therefore, I offer only a brief review of the concepts in order to identify its implications for the conceptualization of cultural appropriation.

Commodification is sometimes used in nonscholarly (and some scholarly) accounts as if it was limited to the transformation of an object, person, or idea into something to be owned, bought, and sold, limiting its implications to issues of sacrilege (e.g., the commodification of religion) and appropriate compensation. This misses many cultural implications of commodification. In the conditions of capitalism, any object that enters the exchange system is inescapably commodified. Commodification abstracts the value of an object (or form or person) so that it can enter systems of exchange. In this process, the use-value and the specificity of the labor and social relations invested in the commodity are lost; it becomes equivalent to all other commodities (Marx, 1986). To create the appearance of difference (and hence value) amid this equivalence, additional meanings are attached to the commodity. The commodity becomes a fetish, a representation of values with no intrinsic relation to the object's use-value, production, and circulation. These meanings are the (illusory) ends to which the commodity itself becomes the means of attainment. These meanings are reifications; their artificiality must be obscured, forgotten, and collapsed into the object. This both enhances the illusion of the commodity's "intrinsic" (fetishized) value and serves to mystify the social relations involved in its production and consumption. By obscuring conditions and relations of production with reified meanings, consumers are not faced with an awareness of their participation in the exploitation of others' labor, culture, and identity (Ono & Buescher, 2001; Whitt, 1995).

Commodification, by abstracting the value of a cultural element, necessarily removes that element from its native context, changing its meaning and function and raising concerns about cultural degradation. Commodification also plays a key role in perpetuating unequal power relations such as neocolonialism. In fetishizing and reifying "artificial" meanings onto the elements of living cultures, the social relations and history involved in that act of commodification are obscured and neocolonial relations justified. As Buescher and Ono (1996) demonstrate in their analysis of Disney's *Pocahontas*, for example, feminism is appropriated to cast Pocahontas as a victim of barbaric patriarchy, thereby justifying historical colonialism (and, in the context in which the film is viewed, neocolonialism) on the grounds that it will liberate Pocohontas. Ultimately, many acts of appropriation, even when carried out under the banner of "honorable motives" such as cultural preservation and cross-cultural understanding, function to undermine the cultures being appropriated and serve the interests of the dominant. Commodification is therefore a key element in the hegemonic strategy of incorporation, in which an alternative or oppositional practice is redefined by the dominant culture in order to remove any genuinely oppositional meaning or function. Hence, those appropriating Native

American cultural elements may believe that they are opposing the very system they are supporting through their consumption and circulation of commodities, potentially degrading the very culture they intend to honor and protect (Churchill, 1994).

These concerns over cultural exploitation raise issues of importance to the conceptualization of cultural appropriation, including the implications of concepts such as sovereignty and degradation, problems with an essentialized view of culture, and the complexities of agency. First, the concepts of ownership and sovereignty articulate models of both the nation–state and the sovereign subject of liberal (possessive) individualism. These analogs (culture-as-state, culture-as-individual) perpetuate the notion of cultures as singular, clearly bounded and autonomous. Several critics of the appropriation of Native American cultural elements explicitly articulate an analogy to territory—that Anglos stole Native American lands and now they are stealing Native American culture and spirituality. This may be a historically grounded and rhetorically effective argument and is often repeated in scholarship critical of the exploitation of Native culture (Black, 2002; Churchill, 1994; Torgovnick, 1996; Whitt, 1995). However, the analogy further perpetuates the view of culture as a bounded entity that is found throughout the literature.

The discourse of cultural exploitation also implies, especially via the trope of "degradation," that sovereignty involves a right to remain pure, uninfluenced by others, and that the purity of subordinated/colonized cultures is maintained by being static, not dynamic—the former associated with primitive peoples and the latter with the "developed" world (Clifford, 1988; Torgovnick, 1996). For example, Marianna Torgovnick's reading of *Dances with Wolves* demonstrates that its narrative licenses White appropriations of Indian culture by positing the extinction of Indians as inevitable, Indian culture as invaluable and in need of preservation, and Whites as its legitimate inheritors. However, the logic of the narrative goes deeper. The film makes clear that Whites possess agency: the ability to appropriate, to be dynamic, and hence to survive. At the end, the two White characters who have "become" Indian leave the "real" Indians, presumably to save them from attack by the soldiers looking for Dances with Wolves/Dunbar (played by Kevin Costner). Yet, as contemporary viewers, we know that (in general) the Indians themselves will be attacked and killed and the Whites who appropriate Indian culture will survive. Indians are defined by the essence of their culture (harmonious, rooted in nature, spiritual), remain traditional, and die. Whites are defined by their ability and willingness to appropriate, adapt, and survive. Therefore, when Native Americans exhibit agency, acting in dynamic ways, actively appropriating non-Indian values and strategies, they risk being denied the status of real Indians by the dominant culture (Clifford; Torgovnick). The underlying logic is that essence and agency are mutually exclusive, at least for "other" cultures.

Second, the commodification of cultural elements relies upon and constitutes culture as essence via fetishization. The conceptualization of culture as a bounded essence, an entity analogous to an individual or state, feeds into the process by

which a culture is reified and transformed into a commodity fetish. As is clear in Torgovnick's (1996) analysis of New Age appropriations of Native American culture and Lesley Kadish's (2004) analysis of the use of Native American culture in marketing health food, an essentialized image of a generic Native American belief system is necessary for commodities' fetishization of culture and concealment of the power relations involved in such exploitations. Commodification, therefore, both relies upon and constitutes culture as essence, perpetuating the denial of agency, dynamism, and invention to Native Americans. This same essentialist view of (subordinated/colonized) culture is embedded in critiques of cultural exploitation on the grounds of cultural degradation.

Third, understanding the dynamics of cultural exploitation requires complex conceptualizations of agency. Just as one "common-sense" (liberal) response to the media imperialism thesis is that no one is holding a gun to the heads of people in Thailand to make them view *Baywatch*, a common defense against criticisms of acts of cultural exploitation and commodification is that Native Americans, for example, offer their culture for sale. These arguments raise the issue of voluntariness, holding that if Native Americans are themselves producing Kokopelli images to sell to tourists, then the Euro-Americans, Europeans, Japanese, and others who consume these products are on safe ethical ground. As with cultural domination, however, the simplistic binary of free choice versus coercion is inadequate: Native peoples do not choose to market and sell their cultural elements in a vacuum, nor do they always have their culture taken from them forcibly or otherwise without their consent. The production and sale of elements of subordinated/colonized cultures with their active participation occurs under economic conditions in which few other opportunities may be available to earn a living in the economic system they have entered without, in many cases, their consent. In addition, the elements these groups produce for sale are shaped and constrained by, for example, the tourist market and dominant aesthetic ideologies (e.g., primitivism; see Clifford, 1988).

However, these forces are not the constraints on agency; if we reject the essentialized (boundaried, static, and pure) view of culture, these conditions also enable (constitute) at least limited forms of agency. Native Americans themselves may engage in the distortion and commodification of their own cultural forms to produce objects that will be considered of value to tourists and collectors and may also engage in the appropriation of the cultural forms of other tribes in order to increase their incomes (Cooks, 1998). Both of these dynamics operate, for example, in the marketing of kachina dolls, the tourist/collector version of traditional Hopi *katsinas*, which often bear minimal resemblance to traditional *katsina* figures and are also produced by members of other tribes as well as by non-Natives. In addition, not always evident to outsiders are the ways in which some Native Americans, as individuals and/or tribes, engage in the *intentional* distortion of their cultural forms in the production of goods for outsiders in order to protect the sanctity and integrity of their culture. As this last example makes clear, a focus on structural and ideological constraints on free choice does not necessitate a denial of agency in cultural appropriation.

Transculturation

Transculturation involves cultural elements created through appropriations from and by multiple cultures such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic. Transculturation involves ongoing, circular appropriations of elements between multiple cultures, including elements that are themselves transcultural. Lull (2000) describes transculturation as "a process whereby cultural forms literally move through time and space where they interact with other cultural forms and settings, influence each other, produce new forms, and change the cultural settings" (p. 242). "Transculturation produces cultural hybrids—the fusing of cultural forms" (p. 243), but "hybrids such as these never develop from 'pure' cultural forms in the first place" (p. 245). To explain how transculturation and hybridization occur, Lull adds the dynamic of indigenization, in which "imported cultural elements take on local features as the cultural hybrids develop" (p. 244). For example, musical forms appropriated by the culture industry from urban African American culture (e.g., hip-hop), forms already structured in multiple cultural traditions and matrices of power, are in turn appropriated and localized by Native American youth living on rural reservations. Significantly, "transculturation processes synthesize new cultural genres while they break down traditional cultural categories" (p. 242). Transculturation refers not only to a more complex blending of cultures than the previous categories but also to a set of conditions under which such acts occur: globalization, neocolonialism, and the increasing dominance of transnational capitalism vis-à-vis nation states.

In light of the previous categories and the emphasis throughout this discussion on the conditions in which appropriation occurs, a key question concerning transculturation as a category of appropriation is whether it refers to a relatively new set of *conditions* in which appropriation occurs or to a new *paradigm* for thinking about cultural appropriation, a paradigm that challenges the validity and embedded assumptions of the previous categories. Transculturation engages multiple lines of difference simultaneously, whereas the other three categories engage entwined pairs of entities: in the case of exchange, two equals; in the cases of dominance and exploitation, the dominant and the subordinate. Transculturation conceptually problematizes aspects of the preceding categories of cultural appropriation. Cultural exchange, domination, and exploitation presume the existence of distinct cultures. Nevertheless, unless culture is mapped directly onto nation, territory, or some analog thereof—a highly problematic move—the boundaries here are, at best, multiple, shifting, and overlapping.

Identification of boundaries presumes that cultures are separate entities, distinct wholes, a view that Clifford (1988) demonstrates is rooted in Western conceptualizations and metaphors—that is, culture as organism. Indeed, the commonly expressed concerns over cultural exploitation identified by Ziff and Rao (1997), cultural degradation, preservation, and sovereignty, reflect just such a conception. According to Clifford, "expectations of wholeness, continuity, and essence have long been built into the linked Western ideas of culture and art" (p. 233). Culture is viewed metaphorically as an organism that cannot survive radical environmental

shifts, loss, and/or replacement of substantial elements, or radical hybridization. Fragmentation and disjuncture are incompatible with this view of culture; their presence signifies the death of the culture. Therefore, among other implications, this organic view is incapable of accounting for (trans)cultural dynamics:

> The culture concept accommodates internal diversity and an "organic" division of roles but not sharp contradictions, mutations, or emergences …. Groups negotiating their identity in contexts of domination and exchange persist, patch themselves together in ways different from a living organism. A community, unlike a body, can lose a central "organ" and not die. All the critical elements of identity are in specific conditions replaceable: language, land, blood, leadership, religion …. Metaphors of continuity and "survival" do not account for complex historical processes of appropriation, compromise, subversion, masking, invention, and revival. (Clifford, 1988, p. 338)

As an alternative, Clifford argues that "identity is conjunctural, not essential" (p. 11). Identity and culture are not discrete entities, but relationships, intersections. "'Cultural' difference is no longer a stable, exotic otherness; self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence" (p. 14). Purity, wholeness, and integrity may reflect the felt experience of some cultures; nevertheless, the discourse of cultural purity, especially with regards to "other" cultures, is complicit in essentializing culture and Western discourses of the primitive.

Clifford's (1988) view has significant implications for conceptualizing cultural appropriation beyond highlighting the centrality of appropriative resistance to the survival of colonized peoples. It posits that appropriations do not simply occur between cultures, constituting their relationships, but that such appropriative relations and intersections constitute the cultures themselves. Certainly, in an era often described as postmodern (involving cultural fragmentation, multiplicity, indeterminacy, *pastiche,* and *bricolage*), postcolonial (in which previously colonized cultures work to recreate themselves from the remains of their precolonial and colonial cultures), and globalized (involving an unprecedented flow of people, discourses, and cultural forms around the world), cultural appropriation is a central process. Clifford's reconceptualization of culture comes closer to capturing these dynamics than organic metaphors that reflect Western discourses of the primitive more than contemporary cultural experience. Nevertheless, the implications of transculturation and Clifford's critique of the organic view of culture are not necessarily limited to the postmodern, postcolonial, and global, suggesting that a conjunctural view of culture may apply to (pre)modern and (pre)colonial conditions as well, questioning the applicability of cultural dominance and exploitation not only to contemporary contexts but also to historical ones.

Hybridity: transculturation as a contemporary condition
Although its "roots" in an organic metaphor for culture may be unfortunate given my discussion of Clifford (1988), the concept of hybridity is useful in clarifying dynamics

of appropriation under transculturation, understood here as a historically specific condition. Kraidy (2002) discusses hybridity in the context of cultural globalization, focusing on its potential for international and intercultural communication studies. Despite problems with prior uses of the concept, Kraidy sees no "credible substitute to characterize the dual forces of globalization and localization, cohesion and dispersal, disjuncture and mixture, that capture transnational and transcultural dialectics" (p. 332). Kraidy warns against the importation of hybridity into communication studies as a merely "descriptive device, i.e. describing the local reception of global media texts as a site of cultural mixture" (p. 317). Instead of understanding hybridity as the *product* of local–global interactions, "hybridity needs to be understood as a communicative practice constitutive of, and constituted by, sociopolitical and economic arrangements" (p. 317). Kraidy's approach highlights "the mutually constitutive interplay and overlap of cultural, economic and political forces in international communication processes" while positing "the relationship between structure and agency as a dialectical articulation whose results are not preordained" (p. 333).

Following Kraidy (2002), transculturation is not only distinct from cultural exchange in that multiple cultures and multiple acts of appropriation are involved but it also retains the implications of unequal power of cultural dominance and exploitation while acknowledging the radically different nature of appropriation in the global–local contexts of transnational capitalism. Transculturation highlights, in ways that cultural dominance and exploitation do not, the hybridity of cultural forms and, following Clifford (1988), the lack of "authenticity," "purity," and "essence" in the elements being appropriated and in the appropriations themselves. The point, however, is not to return to a pluralist conception of power, or to pretend that the implications discussed under cultural dominance and exploitation no longer apply. Transculturation and hybridity are as inescapable as cultural appropriation itself—an "always already" condition of *contemporary* culture. Although specific acts of transcultural appropriation vary in the degree of choice involved, for most individuals and cultures today, the *condition* of transculturation is an involuntary one.

The case of Hopi kachina dolls produced for consumption by tourists and collectors of indigenous arts from the southwestern United States (mentioned earlier under cultural exploitation) demonstrates the international and transcultural contexts in which even seemingly "domestic" appropriations occur. These products are shaped by the domestic and international market in Native arts, including commodification of Western fantasies about Native Americans; by the efforts of Hopi and other Native groups to establish economic viability in the U.S. economy; and by the dialectic of cultural assimilation and cultural survival. Some kachina dolls (and numerous other Native art forms) are not only made by non-Natives but also produced outside the United States, adding an international component of both cultural and labor exploitation to the kachina doll trade. "Imitation" kachina dolls abound, leading to a heavy emphasis on authenticity by dealers in Native arts. However, the creation of "hybrid" kachina dolls (as well as potentially hybrid forms of traditional *katsina* figures), such as those incorporating nontraditional materials, even by

"traditional Native artists," complicates notions of purity and authenticity. In a context in which hybridity is inescapable and in which colonized peoples necessarily appropriate aspects of other, often dominating, cultures, "cultural or artistic 'authenticity' has as much to do with an inventive present as with a past, its objectification, preservation, or revival" (Clifford, 1988, p. 222). This "inventive present" includes the (involuntary) condition of transculturation as well as the appropriative tactics used by subordinated cultures, few of which could be considered pure.

Even if their presence originates from cultural dominance, pickup trucks, country music, rap, and rodeo are a part of tribal life in the southwestern United States along with *katsinas*, corn pollen, and eagle feathers—not only as cultural impositions or evidence of assimilation but also as part of the ongoing dynamics of culture, identity, survival, and resistance. Even a seemingly random teepee at a roadside Native American arts outlet—oddly placed, an object more appropriate for the Great Plains and its tribes than the Southwest, serving to cue the Western image of "the Indian" more than to represent any particular tribal identity or heritage—cannot be dismissed a priori as alien, inauthentic, and nothing more than a ploy to lure in ignorant tourists (though it is). Its (in)authenticity is more complex than an organic or primitivist view of culture can accommodate, and its dismissal as inauthentic obscures the cultural dynamics of a living people as much as its alien presence. Stereotypes perpetuated about Native Americans via Hollywood (including teepees as a Native American universal) are complicit in the subordination and exploitation of Native peoples, but they also constitute part of the lived experiences of those peoples, experiences that are never determined in advance by the political economy of their representation by the dominant culture and that can serve to provide forms of agency (e.g., possibilities for reappropriation) not otherwise available. Appropriations in such transcultural contexts—involving multiple Southwestern tribes with varying degrees of traditional and assimilated practices as well as the descendants of Spanish, Anglo, and Mormon colonizers, using a means of habitation employed by tribes of the Great Plains to attract tourists off a highway paved with rock taken from a Hopi sacred site, buzzing with cars (some with indigenous names such as Cherokee, Pontiac, and Touareg) carrying tourists not only from Phoenix and Los Angeles but also from Sao Paolo, Berlin, and Tokyo, who are reading guidebooks to the region distributed by transnational media conglomerates and who just might purchase a Kokopelli t-shirt or kachina doll—articulates not only a dizzying array of factors, none determinant, but also possibilities for a variety of potentially effective agencies. These appropriations and agencies are inauthentic but perhaps thrive precisely because of such inauthenticity. This is not a world of autonomy, equality, and genuine pluralism but of domination, struggle, survival, and resistance; one which can be better understood via hybridity and indigenization and in which concepts such as purity, authenticity, and continuity can do as much to perpetuate (neo)-colonial relations as to overcome them (Clifford, 1988).

At the same time, however, concepts like transculturation and hybridity can be deployed to delegitimize (legitimate) claims of cultural ownership by subordinated

groups, potentially perpetuating (illegitimate) acts of cultural exploitation and thereby questioning whether transculturation should supplant cultural domination and exploitation as valid types of cultural appropriation. The bind here is that although cultural essence and its attendant traits (singular, bounded, static, and proprietary) perpetuate primitivist, organic, and static conceptions of culture (especially with regards to indigenous cultures) and enable exploitative commodifications, many of the same assumptions inhere in arguments for the rights of colonized cultures to oppose exploitation and to practice, perpetuate, and (re)claim control over their culture (e.g., Whitt, 1995). Hence, as mentioned above, many cultural critics draw parallels between the theft of indigenous lands and the theft of indigenous culture—a rhetorically useful but nevertheless conceptually problematic analog.

Transculturation as an "always already" of cultural existence

Whereas many of the conceptualizations of transculturation and related concepts (hybridity, indigenization) are grounded in the particular conditions of transnational capitalism, the critique of the very concepts of culture and appropriation that undergird the first three types of appropriation can be extended beyond the contemporary condition to previous eras. That is, transculturation questions whether the conception of culture as singular, bounded essence has ever had empirical validity or conceptual coherence. Transculturation, as conceived here, calls not only for an updating of the understanding of contemporary cultural dynamics but also for a radical reconceptualization of culture itself: as conjunctural, relational, or dialogic; as constituted by, not merely engaged in, appropriative relations; and as an ongoing process of absorption and transformation rather than static configurations of practices. Transculturation is not, however, a neoliberal licensing of cultural imperialism or an embracing of the radical indeterminacy and antimaterialism of some postmodern theories of culture. Transculturation questions many of the assumptions undergirding cultural dominance and exploitation, but it remains oriented toward the material dimensions and implications of cultural practices and sensitive to the complex dynamics of disproportionate power. Transculturation identifies forces of cultural homogenization and highlights the influential role of economic, political, military, and other forms of power while also recognizing how cultural appropriation can be constitutive of cultural particularity and agency. The ongoing imposition of the essentialist view of culture embedded in the first three types of appropriation onto various others (marginalized and/or colonized peoples) may constitute the kind of "epistemic violence" critiqued by Spivak (1988).

The history of Navajo weaving demonstrates the validity of transculturation's conception of culture and appropriation in situations prior to the current globalized era. Weaving has long been a central part of Navajo (Diné) culture, and this continues today as Navajo weavers prepare rugs for display and sale in museums, Native arts outlets, and trading posts on or near the Navajo Nation, and other uses. However, although a particular idea of "authentic" Navajo weaving (in terms of materials,

techniques, and patterns) affects the value attached to such weavings, the past 150 years of Navajo weaving have included a wide range of materials and patterns, born of both the conditions under which the Navajo have survived and Navajo inventiveness. A brief review of the recent Eyedazzlers Project (n.d.) and related research by Sheri Burnham (2005) concerning the Germantown period in Navajo weaving and its recent revival illustrates the complex cultural intersections, conditions, and agencies involved in acts of appropriation and the limitations of an essentialist view of culture.

In 1863, the U.S. Army forced the defeated Navajo on the Long Walk to Bosque Redondo in eastern New Mexico. Bereft of their sheep and unable to grow crops or otherwise support themselves, Navajo women began unraveling Army-issue blankets and reweaving the materials (Burnham, 2005). Eventually, Germantown yarn from Philadelphia was provided to the Navajo via the railroad. This finely spun and brightly colored yarn was very different from their traditional handspun and naturally dyed yarn, contributing to the development of a distinct style of weavings referred to as Germantowns or Eyedazzlers. The use of Germantown yarn and related styles of weaving continued for approximately 40 years before a return to more traditional patterns and materials. For some, Germantowns represented a loss of authenticity and tradition; a return to earlier styles was driven in part by efforts to market more traditional or authentic weavings to collectors and tourists of the exotic Indians of the Southwest.

In the 1990s, some Navajo weavers and the trading posts through which many of their weavings were sold began a revival of the Germantown style. This revival, among other things, called attention to the inventiveness of Navajo weavers and to the ability of cultures to patch themselves together and survive—by literally unweaving and reweaving the text(ile)s of the colonizing culture, then using that culture's materials to create a new but nevertheless "Navajo" style. Of course, resistance, like culture, is never pure. Navajo weaving is intimately linked to the marketing efforts of non-Indians and the commodification of the dominant culture's fantasized image of Native Americans and the Southwest. Both the Germantowns and the subsequent weaving styles are not pure expressions of traditional Navajo culture but are shaped by the dynamics of (neo)colonialism. These weavings are not only "simply" (essentially) expressions of Navajo culture and history but are also products of European and Euro-American markets, of the railroads, of tourism, and of the trading posts (themselves cultural hybrids of Native and Western, Anglo and Navajo, Mormon and Spanish), which mediated between the weavers and those who eventually purchased their weavings. Even the pre-Bosque Redondo Navajo weaving styles were involved in interactions with other Native American tribes (the Navajo likely learned weaving from the Puebloan cultures that inhabited the region before their arrival) and a system of trade relationships (Burnham, 2005). Indeed, the sheep from which they obtained their wool were a result of Spanish colonization; hence, the pre-Germantown woolen weavings were themselves hybrid even if the yarn was handspun and naturally dyed. If the history of a cultural practice

is traced far enough, its hybridity (impurity) will almost inevitably be demonstrated (cf. Rogers, 1998).

A dismissal of the Germantown weavings as inauthentic is not only driven by the essentialist, organic view of culture outlined by Clifford (1988), it overlooks the important role of cross-cultural appropriations in both ongoing cultural development and cultural survival. Such dismissals perpetuate the view of indigenous cultures in particular as static and without agency, and overlooks the important role of appropriation and hybridity in the ongoing constitution of identity as well as resistance—even prior to European contact and colonization. Power dynamics are an intrinsic part of these hybrid forms, but not as simple, one-sided formulas of powerful–powerless. The concerns here are whether the categories of cultural dominance and exploitation can effectively capture these dynamics and whether they do "epistemic violence" to the Navajo. As this case illustrates, transculturation is not always or only degradation or homogenization; it can also be constitutive of cultural particularity, agency, identity, inventiveness, and resistance—not only for those at Bosque Redondo and those who eventually resettled Navajo lands but also for the weavers, traders, and others involved in the contemporary revival of Germantown weaving. These contemporary Germantowns are, of course, also not "pure" but incorporate digital designs and colors of significance to the Native American Church (another hybrid cultural entity) and call forth parallels between the history of the Long Walk and Bosque Redondo with today's struggles for cultural survival (Eyedazzlers Project, n.d.).

Transculturation and *telos*

What is to be gained or lost by replacing cultural exchange, domination, and exploitation with transculturation and its attendant implications? Does an acceptance of transculturation's validity necessitate a rejection of the other three types of appropriation, including the two characterized by unequal power? To address these questions, I examine Ono and Buescher's (2001) analysis of Disney's appropriation and marketing of Pocahontas. In this essay, Ono and Buescher advance the cipher as an updated conceptualization of commodification processes: "A cipher is a figure through which various commodities with multiple exchange values are marketed, *and* it is a social concept that circulates like a commodity" (p. 26). Through "appropriation, resignification, and commodification," the historical figure of Pocahontas was rendered as a "newly constituted figure" (p. 26). Their conception of the cipher as a late capitalist commodity form necessitates "examining multitudinous meanings located within and revolving around a nodal point .... Because the cipher is never fixed, never fully seen in its totality, and always changing, it becomes increasingly difficult but all the more necessary to pinpoint and evaluate" (p. 37). The cipher "shifts attention away from images, representations, and products to the *process* by which images, representations, and products come to have meaning" (p. 27). The view of culture embedded in transculturation also focuses on processes and

relationships; culture "is never fixed, never fully seen in its totality, and always changing" because it is a network of relations, not an entity.

Ono and Buescher's (2001) use of the cipher enables an understanding of how a multitude of relationships and intersections are involved in any instance of appropriation and commodification. The cipher works by configuring these multiplicities in particular ways: the sexualization of Native American women for heterosexual White men, the reconfiguration of Native American history for neocolonial purposes, the provision of the materials necessary for children to "play Indian," the appropriation of feminism to further commodification, and so on. The cipher allows for a commodity to take on radically different meanings as contexts shift, bringing certain meanings to the fore while obscuring others, playing various cultural elements with and against each other. The cipher accounts for these relationships while highlighting their role in the perpetuation of power and the maintenance or transformation of material conditions. In short, the cipher appears to be consistent with transculturation in that it assumes no "original," emphasizes relationships among diverse cultures and contexts, focuses on cultural processes over products, and highlights multiplicity over singularity.

Nevertheless, Ono and Buescher (2001) remain committed to criticizing a mode of exploitative appropriation more akin to my discussion of cultural exploitation than to transculturation. Statements such as "when Disney *imported* the figure of Pocahontas into mainstream commodity culture" (p. 25) indicate a model of cultures as bounded entities akin to nation states or territories. By prefacing claims about what Disney's use of Pocahontas accomplishes with statements such as "by ignoring the historical context of the originary figure, and by disregarding and dishonoring the traditional culture in which it has historically had meaning…" (pp. 25–26), they explicitly posit an original form against which one can judge the distortions of the Pocahontas cipher as well as implicitly assume that Native Americans have a more legitimate claim to the historical figure and her contemporary representation. However, their method of analysis, guided by the concept of the cipher, does not necessitate such assumptions or claims: That is, the analytic insights offered by the cipher, a concept at least roughly consistent with the assumptions of transculturation, does not require a bounded and proprietary notion of culture, nor a concept of the authentic or real. Ono and Buescher advance a cogent critique of Disney's use of Pocahontas, and I see no indication that their commitment to opposing the exploitation of Native peoples hinders their analysis via the cipher, even though that commitment is not intrinsic to the concept.

Ono and Buescher's (2001) analysis demonstrates that critics, while guided by concepts grounded in transcultural assumptions, may nevertheless find it necessary or desirable to revert to the terms and conceptions of cultural domination and exploitation to manifest their commitment to *telos* (Ono & Sloop, 1992). That is, what kind of cultural politics a transcultural model offers is unclear, including whether its analytic usefulness needs to be supplemented by external political commitments. The first three types of appropriation offer a semicoherent ethical system

and political justifications that are readily recognizable within the common sense of Western liberalism. Although transculturation recognizes issues of power, assumptions of cultural purity, degradation, bounded singularity, and essence are problematized as both empirically questionable and ideologically circumspect due to the implication of such assumptions in (neo)colonialism and other oppressive systems. Hence, although transculturation may conceptually and even empirically trump the other three categories of appropriation explored here, the political commitments of critics may encourage a retention of the previous categories, at least until the political affiliations of transculturation are further clarified.

Conclusions

Cultural appropriation is inescapable, but that is not to say all acts of appropriation are equal. Acts and conditions of appropriation vary in terms of the degree and relevance of (in)voluntariness, (in)equality, (im)balance, and (im)purity. The four categories of appropriation presented above presume particular models of culture and cultural relations. Cultural exchange recalls an "innocent" era or context in which cultures freely and without power implications mutually share cultural elements, perhaps with the effect of greater cultural understanding and creativity. Cultural domination and exploitation are modeled on dominant–subordinate relations roughly equivalent but not entirely reducible to historical models of colonization; although complexities and developments in these relations are acknowledged, the model retains a binary structure of power and is implicitly based on a desire to (re)turn to the "ideal" of cultural exchange. Cultural resistance as an appropriative tactic under the conditions of cultural domination, however, highlights agency and inventiveness on the part of subordinated cultures, which begins to question a static, essentialist conception of culture. Finally, transculturation is an effort to theorize appropriation in the conditions of global capitalism in a neocolonial and postmodern era. It still draws, therefore, from the domination–subordination model of cultural domination and exploitation while working to acknowledge complexities in culture, power, and appropriation that question the possibility (or desirability) of a (re)turn to cultural exchange. However, I argue that transculturation and its implied conception of culture question the validity of the assumptions embedded in the previous types, not just in the contemporary world but historically as well.

The challenge for cultural, critical media, critical rhetorical, and intercultural communication studies is to reconceptualize culture not as bounded entity and essence but as radically relational or dialogic. Cultural practices, including appropriation, are both constituted by and constitutive of culture (in general) as a realm of relationships. We need to leave behind the sovereign subject of liberal individualism and its macrolevel analog, the distinctive, singular, clearly bounded, sovereign culture that is so easily conflated with the nation state and continue to grapple with Clifford's (1988) recognition that we are dealing with matters of "power and rhetoric rather than of essence" (p. 14).

Such a shift, however, is not without its complications. New conceptions of culture necessarily affect cultural politics and ethical evaluations of processes such as cultural appropriation. For example, as discussed above, attempts on the part of indigenous cultures to protect the integrity and coherence of their cultural traditions, as well as strategies for survival, are often grounded in claims concerning "owner-ship," "property," "degradation," and other culture-as-essence notions. Where does the conceptual shift advocated in this essay leave subordinated, especially indigenous peoples? What is the new ground for their efforts to overcome historic and resist ongoing oppression, for the constitution of oppositional agencies? Could this re-conceptualization of culture and cultural appropriation also constitute a kind of epistemic violence? The felt experience of indigenous peoples of cultural continuity, integrity, and degradation as a result of systems of power should not be dismissed a priori, nor should the political impulse behind critical examinations of cultural appropriation. Yet, the implication of the culture-as-essence view in colonial and neocolonial oppression should not be overlooked.

I contend that cultural appropriation, including all four types discussed here, is still useful: analytically, heuristically, and pedagogically. These categories and their underlying conceptualizations of power, culture, and agency provide a set of tools for thinking through cultural dynamics, sorting through different interpretations and implications, and clarifying various ethical and political commitments, thereby enabling an active scrutiny, not merely rote repetition of, familiar claims concerning, for example, cultural exploitation. They also remind us of the variable conditions in which appropriations occur and of the distinct perspectives that various participants in cultural appropriation will bring to appropriation processes, products, and eval-uations thereof, thereby enabling appropriately historicized conceptualizations of appropriation and culture. Therefore, although this essay argues for a privileging of transculturation and a reconceptualization of culture as dialogic or conjunctural, a qualified retention of the other models and types of appropriation is still warranted.

Notes

1 Although cultural appropriation is often mentioned but rarely systematically concep-tualized in the critical/cultural studies and international communication literatures, it is almost entirely absent in intercultural communication studies, despite the ubiquity of the phenomenon in intercultural contexts. In my search for work on cultural appro-priation, almost none of what I found is framed in terms of intercultural communica-tion contexts or literatures. A review of recent books and anthologies surveying and synthesizing the field of intercultural communication identified no references to cultural appropriation or potentially related concepts such as cultural dominance, cultural imperialism, or cultural resistance. A review of intercultural communication textbooks revealed none that directly mention the concept. One notable exception is Martin and Nakayama's (2000) text, which does not use the term itself but which does discuss cultural imperialism and subordinate cultures' use of mass culture for resistance, topics

that are somewhat unsurprising given this text's unique mix of traditional and critical approaches to the subject. Therefore, two of the goals of this essay are to demonstrate the importance of cultural appropriation to intercultural communication and to highlight what the critical/cultural studies literature can offer to intercultural communication studies.

2   I use "USAmerican" instead of "American" to reference facets of the United States, thereby distinguishing it from the rest of the Americas and avoiding the ethnocentrism implicit in the use of the latter.

3   Although often challenged, media or cultural imperialism remains an influential if contested perspective in international communication and has undergone some revision (e.g., Boyd-Barrett, 1998; Schiller, 1991). Cultural imperialism remains the point of reference, and much of current global media studies is still working to reformulate or refute the thesis (e.g., Colista & Leshner, 1998; Goodwin & Gore, 1990; Kraidy, 2002; Lull, 2000; Miller et al., 2001; Tomlinson, 1991).

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