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On Cultural Appropriation

ABSTRACT: This article starts from the premise that cultural appropriation is a key concern for folklorists and ethnologists, as well as for many of the communities with which they engage and partner, but that it is also one that has received relatively little attention of a general conceptual sort. This is true despite the ubiquity of cultural appropriation discussions in popular media, public culture, and informal scholarly conversation. Drawing on the work of these fields, an ideal-type conceptualization of cultural appropriation is offered, one that situates it as one among a range of modes of cultural change. For cultural appropriation, the key neighboring modes are diffusion, acculturation, and assimilation. The article also briefly addresses cultural appropriation as it is often situated vis-à-vis conceptions of, and processes related to, cultural property and cultural heritage. This heuristic emphasizes the metacultural discourse that marks instances of cultural appropriation as well as the inequality often characterizing the parties to such episodes.

FOLKLORISTS AND ETHNOLOGISTS speak regularly about issues of cultural appropriation. I have been party to numerous serious, thoughtful discussions of the theme with fellow scholars in my fields and, because most of my adult life has been twined with the lives of Indigenous friends and colleagues, I have had rich access to the ways that the issue is a catalyst for pain, reflection, and activism. Even without direct contacts with aggrieved or impacted communities or individuals, cultural appropriation debates frequently appear in media reports and across social media feeds. In the English-speaking world at least, cultural appropriation stories pass in front of us in a steady flow, even if we choose not to attend to them. There are

sophisticated writings on the subject too, but even when written by journalists, activists, or scholars with direct experience or knowledge germane to the topic, these tend to be authored from near the frontlines of specific cultural contests. This is logical and good, of course, and I have followed both news and analysis of cultural appropriation throughout my career, but folklorists and ethnologists still lack general models and heuristics with which to assess this steady flow. Here I attempt to work on this general, conceptual level. My goal in this article is to provide a framework within which folklorists can consider instances of appropriation and refine their thinking about the phenomena. I am not suggesting that appropriation must be inscribed as a keyword among the most central and durable concepts of folkloristics, but because it has been a reoccurring theme in the lives of the communities that we engage and of the cultural forms that we study, I hold that it deserves conceptual attention.[1]

My aim is to complement important specific discussions of cultural appropriation with a general heuristic or model. This could be thought of as both a model of, and a model for, work in folklore studies and ethnology. My proposition is that scholars in folklore studies and ethnology have developed resources that can help us think in cross-contextual ways about cultural appropriation. If brought together as a framework, such an account could be useful as we approach new particular cases as scholars, or as we take up further work as allies or self-advocates in the projects of scholarly activism. As with heritage and other matters of interest to these fields, cultural appropriation is both a scholarly framework and a phenomenon in the wider social world. Such instances require intentional efforts of conceptualization.[2]

Appropriation in the Roster of Kinds of Cultural Change

American ethnology and folklore studies were always concerned with change, even before the phrase "cultural change" came to prominence. Prior to taking up work on acculturation, which foregrounded concern for change after contact with colonial influences, historic-geographic work centered on questions of cultural innovation, diffusion, adoption, and adaptation. This work sought to reconstruct local and regional patterns of historical change with or without the benefit of written sources. Only the most extreme forms of functionalist ethnography in the mold of British social anthropology

purposefully bracketed out questions of change (Lesser 1985, 53–68 *contra* Radcliffe-Brown 1952. See also Mintz 1985a; Lesser [1933] 1977; and Strong 1936).

In my training in folklore studies and cultural anthropology (American ethnology), significant emphasis was placed on issues of "culture change" as this has generally been framed in the Americanist tradition. I took a whole graduate seminar titled *Theories of Cultural Change* (after Steward 1955) and various kinds of cultural change were always under discussion. These ranged from stark instances such as revitalization movements (Wallace 2003; Harkin 2004), enslavement (Mintz 1985b), and the rise of capitalism (Weber 1958; Thompson 1967) to relatively less painful ones such as folk revivals (Cantwell 1996; Sacks 1997), small-scale practices of traditionalization (Bauman 1992), and the invention of dessert (also Mintz 1985b). An interest in modalities of cultural change has continued throughout my career, even as scholars have grown less typological about cataloging them and as they have come to see change as a constant in all social life, a view that perhaps reduces the need to be overt about marking one's studies as studies of "cultural change."[3]

In the long run of scholarly work, however, our fields have cataloged and described quite a roster of modes of cultural change. Naming and characterizing all of them is a bigger task than this article can contain, but it may be useful to evoke something of the range and then to situate cultural appropriation among them. One key thing about the wider list is that the terms have active names. These aspects of human existence are experienced as processes. Missionization or modernization or enculturation or assimilation or creolization, for instance, all end in -tion or -ion, which in modern English is used in nouns that are the result of a verb. Missionaries missionize and thereby attempt to produce conditions of missionization. In folklore studies and ethnology, we have systematically worked our way through our inventory of key concepts, making them active, processual, agentive in this way. In doing so, we have added them to the set of cultural change concepts. Static tradition became traditionalization, a metacultural, discursive means by which individuals and groups create continuity-mindedness in the flow of history and change through the mobilization of people for certain kinds of action and through the inculcation of particular values (Jackson 2013, 74–85, 216–17). Folklore studies' nominal object has undergone this change also, with attention focusing on folklorization (McDowell 2010; Mendoza 2000;

Hafstein 2018; Briggs 2012; Paredes [1973] 1993). Heritage has likewise spawned heritagization (Hafstein 2018).

Not all processual modalities of culture change take the -tion ending. Genocide is an important example of a culture-change noun overflowing with horrifying action but without the -tion ending. The English -cide suffix, referring to death, shows up in other especially grim modes of cultural change, as in linguicide (a more active version of language death). While most of the -cide words are sub-societal (ex: suicide, regicide, infanticide), they carry powerful social and cultural implications and effects, even if they are probably not thought of as varieties of culture change in the same way that innovation, migration, or genocide are.

Before addressing some of the most relevant forms of cultural change, I would like to observe that global histories of folklore studies and ethnology are entwined with processes of social change of the sort that I am discussing here, with modernization and colonization producing, for instance, such phenomena as traditionalization and revitalization but also fostering, if not producing, the rise of these fields of study. The matters at issue can be read in various ways, but as a scholar whose work attempts to grapple with issues of continuity, and not just change, reaching back to precolonial, and thereby premodern, contexts in the Americas, it is my sense that some parts of the roster of culture change concepts are applicable in diverse times and places whereas others are specific to the formation of the current capitalist world-system. To suggest this is not to deny the particularly strong salience of nationalism, modernization, and colonialism to the concerns of, and rise of, folkloristics. I discuss these matters in a different way, and in greater depth, in a manuscript on folklore studies and world-systems analysis (Jackson 2019). Here, it might be easiest for me to just suggest that I think that cultural appropriation is a particularly salient matter in the early twenty-first century, but that I also believe that processes deserving of this label can occur in other settings, including precolonial Indigenous ones. At the same time, there are reasons, some of which are explored below, for cultural appropriation being more prominent in some times, places, and social positionalities than in others. Different culture change concepts have to be assessed and reassessed in changing scholarly practice and in different cases in which they might be applied. At the very least, folklorists subscribing to the "modernity changes everything" paradigm are likely to

agree that such modes of culture change as diffusion, urbanization, domestication, and invention have been with humanity for a very long time.

To situate cultural appropriation in this larger matrix of modalities of cultural change, I have to pluck from the bundle those that I will argue are most immediately proximate to it. While heritage and property will reenter the discussion below, here I focus first on diffusion, acculturation, and assimilation. These three processes have a very deep scholarly history of relevance. This is especially true with diffusion, which was a founding problem for these disciplines in their modern forms. Acculturation and assimilation were taken up intensively in the middle twentieth century.[4]

Diffusion

Discussions of diffusion in American folklore studies and cultural anthropology (American ethnology) are one part of a much wider history of international scholarly investigation into diffusion in which European ethnological and folk narrative research also played a significant role. While preceded by research concerns that are largely consigned to the dustbins of disciplinary history, diffusion stands at the head of our modern genealogies of respectable topics that respectable ancestors studied. Even if diffusion *per se* does not animate the work of most contemporary folklorists and ethnologists, we are trained to understand some of its basic characteristics, we read some classic works related to its study, and we walk around witnessing its continued presence in our lives. Trying to shake students out of seeing diffusion and the associated historic-geographic methods as matters of the past, I have long drawn their attention to contemporary interest in diffusion in business schools, where the study of innovation diffusion is at the heart of how multinational corporations strive to spread their new products widely (Rogers 2003).

There are many definitions and conceptualizations of diffusion available. Due to its richness and sophistication, and its standing as a synthesis of early American ethnology (inclusive of much folklore studies), I often return to Alfred Kroeber's (1948) textbook *Anthropology*. In the context of a longer and very rich discussion that I highly recommend for its interest and artistry, Kroeber follows a discussion of cultural tradition with a conceptualization of diffusion:

> Now allied to this receptivity of its own past is a receptivity that every culture shows toward cultural material worked out by other cultures. Such acceptance of foreign elements and systems of course constitutes a geographical spread; and the designation most in use for it is "diffusion." Such spreads occasionally are rapid, but often they require a considerable time interval. Accordingly, much of what is acquired by diffusion from outside also has its origin in the past, much as what a culture receives by internal handing-on of traditions; but the characteristic of diffusion, the emphasis of the process, is on transmission in space. (1948, 257)

Along with further theoretical reflection, Kroeber goes on to offer a fantastic account of the cultural provenance of a wide range of elements in "American" culture thereby making clear for his audience the centrality of diffusion as a historical process of cultural change for all known societies. In doing so, he also notes how, typically, "once acceptance is made, the source is played down and forgotten as soon as possible" (1948, 257). We should keep this later dynamic—the denying or downplaying of origins—in mind as we approach cultural appropriation.[5]

If we look at the list of "American" cultural traits that Kroeber (1948, 258) identifies, from a Germanic language full of French words written on Chinese paper with Phoenecian alphabet and German printing to the global food basket from which Americans eat, most (the Native American "contributions" being a possible exception) are not seen as vexing instances of taking. The temporal distances separating us from these acquisitions may account for some of this, but much cultural transmission through social or geographic space is accepted as relatively "normal" or desirable by the parties involved. Consider so-called "Scandinavian design" in general and the products offered around the world by the multinational firm IKEA in particular. Such furnishing may not be equally appreciated by all residents of the global ecumene (Hannerz 1989) or capitalist world-system (Wallerstein 2004), but on average the residents of Sweden (IKEA's home country) do not oppose the spread of assemble-at-home modernist furniture or their national meatballs nor do those who cue up to purchase them in places like Cincinnati or Beijing.[6] In keeping with Americanist theories of diffusion, IKEA products do often require localization, as was discussed for India in the *New York Times* (Goel

2018, "Ikea Opens First India Store, Tweaking Products but Not the Vibe") and other media outlets. Here is a good place to evoke one of folklore studies' more esoteric but beloved modes of cultural change, oikotypification, the term used in folk literature research (after von Sydow 1948) for more complex instances of the localization of diffused folk narratives (Clements 1997; Laudun 2006).

More could be said, but a hallmark of diffusion as I am describing it—based on established literatures in folklore studies and ethnology—is that diffusion is a widely occurring process of cultural change involving the movement of cultural forms, values, practices, and technologies from one social setting to another. The "arrival" of such a diffused cultural element changes the recipient society or group, sometimes to a small degree, sometimes extensively. Not all cultural forms are put on offer by potential source societies and not all potentially recipient societies are open to every possibility offered. Diffusion can be subtle and interesting along a range of variables, for instance, as Claude Lévi-Strauss observed across his *oeuvre*, societies often create new cultural forms in which they invert the forms or practices that they recognize among their neighbors (for example, Lévi-Strauss 1982). This is a special version of what is called stimulus diffusion but it also relates to complex practices of social boundary maintenance (Kroeber 1948, 368–70; Barth 1969).

There are many nuances and the study of diffusion is closely related to the study of innovation. As I have already suggested, a diffusion from one perspective is actually an innovation from the perspective of the society in which it "arrives." As colleagues and I have suggested in modeling innovation in relation to habitus and heritage, an innovation often co-occurs with a metacultural discourse of newness (Jackson, Müske, and Zhang 2020; Urban 2001; Urban, Baskin, and Ko 2007). In the present context, it is useful to return to Kroeber's point about forgotten origins. In terms of the arguments made by Jackson, Müske, and Zhang (2020), the process of forgetting that Kroeber describes would mark the transition of an innovation into the realm of normative, unremarkable, taken-for-granted culture. Appropriations can be similarly normalized, although aggrieved memory of wrongs done can also be actively preserved, thereby preventing this transition.

Some part of the pain in contemporary appropriation debates arises when one side channels our scholarship and cites diffusion as a healthy, "normal" cultural process, refusing to see that appropriation

is different from diffusion for this very reason—that not all parties are accepting of the process of cultural movement or flow involved. I will return to metadiscourses of anguish below, but as is probably evident, I argue for a rich, granular corpus of terms and characterizations of culture change processes and I reserve diffusion for those instances in which both the source and the recipient societies are, for the most part, not particularly troubled by the transmission. Diffusion is most easily applied to cases in which all parties (to the extent that we can speak approximately and theoretically about "all" parties) are pleased with or indifferent about the transmission.[7]

Acculturation

Acculturation's scholarly history is long, but not as long as diffusion's. Acculturation, as a theorized kind of cultural change, was a project embraced by American ethnologists (including many who also identified as folklorists), but it lacks a strong presence in folkloristics separate from ethnology. In American anthropology, as elsewhere, the study of diffusion (and innovation) was closely linked to the reconstruction of cultural histories manifest in historical or memory ethnographies and regional ethnologies. Acculturation studies in the US represented a reorientation in which the object was not to conduct ethnographic work that would allow for the reconstruction of past ways of life but instead to focus on the present social dynamics that were confronting social groups experiencing change. This applied particularly, but not solely, to instances of forced cultural contact, as among Indigenous groups experiencing ongoing European colonization.

The addition of acculturation studies in American anthropology is closely associated with a key document known as the "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation" authored by Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, and Melville J. Herskovitz (1936). While it was preceded by work relevant to the study of acculturation—in general and in particular societies—the memorandum legitimated this research question. In it, the authors define acculturation as a mode of cultural change as follows. Note how they seek to position it in relationship to related-but-not-the-same processes.

> Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the

original cultural patterns of either or both groups. (NOTE: Under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from culture-change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It is also to be differentiated from diffusion, which, while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place without the occurrence of the type of contact between peoples specified in the definition given above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation.) (1936, 149)

In the parenthetical note just cited, the authors treat several of these processes as overlapping and, in some ways, coconstitutive. For ease of exposition and for heuristic purposes, I will be treating the modes of cultural change as distinct, but I am not arguing against what the memorandum's authors are saying. In their terms (as in mine) cultural change is a broad category encompassing a number of types. I am treating diffusion, for instance, as distinct from acculturation but in their terms, it is reasonable to see acculturation as the result of an aggregation of diffusion events taking place in particular contexts.

Later work on acculturation brings out some of the distinctions that I am making and sets me up to introduce assimilation and to then return to appropriation. Present-day authors have retreated from categorical pronouncements of a sort that I am about to evoke. This is both because they come off as judgmental and because later work has often shown matters to be more complex and nuanced than such pronouncements would suggest.[8] With that caveat in mind, I note that classic work on acculturation generally used this term to describe broad cultural configurations arising from situations of cultural contact. This fostered comparative judgements about, for instance, an ethnic group or a particular village being more (or less) acculturated. While I am framing this as a kind of scholarly assessment, ethnographic work in Indigenous societies has shown that these judgements are also common in local life, as when the residents of one Indigenous village characterize themselves as more "traditional" or "conservative" and see a rival community as less so. (Such judgements can be reversed, with one community expressing pride in being more "progressive" and claiming that conservative neighbors are "backward.") Such intracultural discussions typically are based on an intergroup dynamic in which a group, Indigenous people, for example, are under pressure from a large and more

powerful (often nonindigenous, often historically more recent, and colonial) population.

Among scholars today this sort of discussion is often awkward and embarrassing, whether encountered in a remote community or in an older work of scholarship, but it remains necessary to understand what the study of acculturation is about. Typically, such assessments, as with work on acculturation generally, arose from circumstances in which a relatively more powerful group was in sustained contact with a less powerful one. This power dynamic is central to the larger discussion that I am pursuing here. Most often, in the Americanist context at least, acculturation studies were pursued in acknowledgement of colonial contexts. Ethnographic studies of acculturation generally focused on the ways that put-upon, colonized peoples adjusted to constrained and difficult existence alongside dominant and dominating colonizing groups. It is worth noting, however, that power and demographic differentials existed among precontact Indigenous groups and these situations could also be analyzed within the framework of acculturation.[9]

Power differentials in colonial and settler society contexts are a relevant factor, but as assessments of relative acculturation suggest, this is also largely a gestalt characteristic. In contrast to diffusion, where individual cultural traits (practices, texts, foods, etc.) are the focus, acculturation is a broader, more pervasive characterization of change. A village resists or does not resist acculturation as a wholesale matter, whereas a story or a song or a style of hat might or might not diffuse. As I noted above, acculturation as a broader kind of phenomena could be seen in a large aggregation of diffusion events. In colonized communities generally resisting acculturation, we see marked differences between, for instance, acceptance of European metal tools (often welcomed) and European religions and values (sometimes resisted vigorously). For considering assimilation and appropriation, the power differential aspect is the one to keep foregrounded, even as trait versus gestalt (or configuration) help us further distinguish diffusion and acculturation.

Assimilation

While acculturation is a way of conceptualizing a powerful and pervasive kind of cultural change under (most often) conditions of unequal, intergroup contact, assimilation, as generally used, carries a strong aura of intentionality on the part of the dominant group

and is a more unidirectional process. The term is also regularly used beyond colonial situations, as when nation states devise policies that aim to "assimilate" immigrant and refugee groups. This way of thinking about assimilation frames it as programmatic (that is, as a matter of intentional policy). In popular understandings of assimilation, cultural forms do not just diffuse, they are actively pushed from the more powerful source group to the weaker target group. While proponents in positions of power will often speak of individuals and groups choosing to assimilate, assimilation efforts are done to people. The degree of coercion involved can be highly variable. As evoked in the memorandum, acculturation studies anticipated (and discovered) ways that both parties in cultural contact situations would reshape each other. In contrast, dictionary and scholarly definitions of assimilation emphasize its unidirectional nature. Assimilation is about how majorities attempt to reshape minorities in their image, sometimes with considerable coercion, often under structural conditions of inequality and relative disadvantage.[10]

The literatures on assimilation are especially vast due to the huge range of global situations, past and present, in which something like assimilation has taken, or is taking, place. The key thing here is to see again the power dynamic (stronger-weaker, larger-smaller, group-to-group) and to acknowledge that, while some individuals and groups may feel open to "being assimilated" this should not be assumed to be a universal reaction. Even when not overtly coerced, as when Native American parents insisted that their children learn English and abandon their Indigenous languages so as to avoid deeper forms of suffering and to take "advantage" of "opportunities" in the dominant society, "choice" under pressure is not exactly choice. Many individuals and groups may feel open to, even eager, to pursue cultural change on their own terms, but it is different when they are forced to do it on the terms spelled out by a dominant group. In assimilation, a dominant group actively transfers its lifeways to a subordinate group. This can be empowering or it could deepen the receiving group's subordination. The real-world contexts can be highly variable, but the power differentials and the direction of the cultural movement are constant.[11]

Appropriation

In ideal-type terms, diffusion or "cultural exchange" takes place in piecemeal transactions between relative equals without coercion

being the dominant motivation.[12] By contrast, acculturation takes place in situations of contact characterized by relative power imbalances and refers to broader contours of change. Because it is not about the movement of a single trait from one group or society to another, it becomes possible to speak of acculturation going in both directions (mutual influence) despite the demographic, economic, and other inequalities characterizing the contact situations. Like missionization, revitalization, and other modes of cultural change, assimilation often has an active character, with someone actively pursuing a program of change. Like missionization and unlike revitalization, assimilation is outward focused. There is a sense, at least from a certain point of view, that it is done to an external party. Assimilation shares this quality with appropriation.

As I am modeling it here, appropriation is a structural inversion of assimilation. In assimilation, a powerful group imposes aspects of its culture on an economically, politically, and/or demographically weaker target group. This is most clear in situations that scholars have overtly characterized as "forced assimilation" (see Lesser [1933] 1977; Strong 1936). In a framework of appropriation, in contrast, the powerful group takes aspects of the culture of the subordinated group, making them its own. If the subordinated group was happy or indifferent about a particular instance of such adoption, neither we, nor an on the ground observer, would resort to the label appropriation. Diffusion or acculturation (depending on the nature of the situation and our analysis) would serve us as labels, but in cases of aggrievement, appropriation fits. Appropriations are typically a source of pain and feelings of loss or violation for source communities—often resulting in concrete negative consequences—even as appropriating groups either do not perceive or refuse to attend to, these wider consequences. As noted above, those who take up cultural practices from aggrieved, subordinated groups often cite diffusion as a healthy part of (inter)cultural life, fundamental to the practical business of everyday living and valuable for the construction of multicultural societies, to which all participants "contribute." To this macro-defense is often added a micro-defense of appreciation, in which those accused of appropriation stress that they take up forms or practices out of respectful admiration. These macro- and micro-dynamics are easy to see in nearly any appropriation controversy, including in the brief examples given below. The four neighboring modes of cultural change are illustrated schematically in Figure 1.

Schematic Representations of Diffusion, Acculturation, Assimilation, and Appropriation

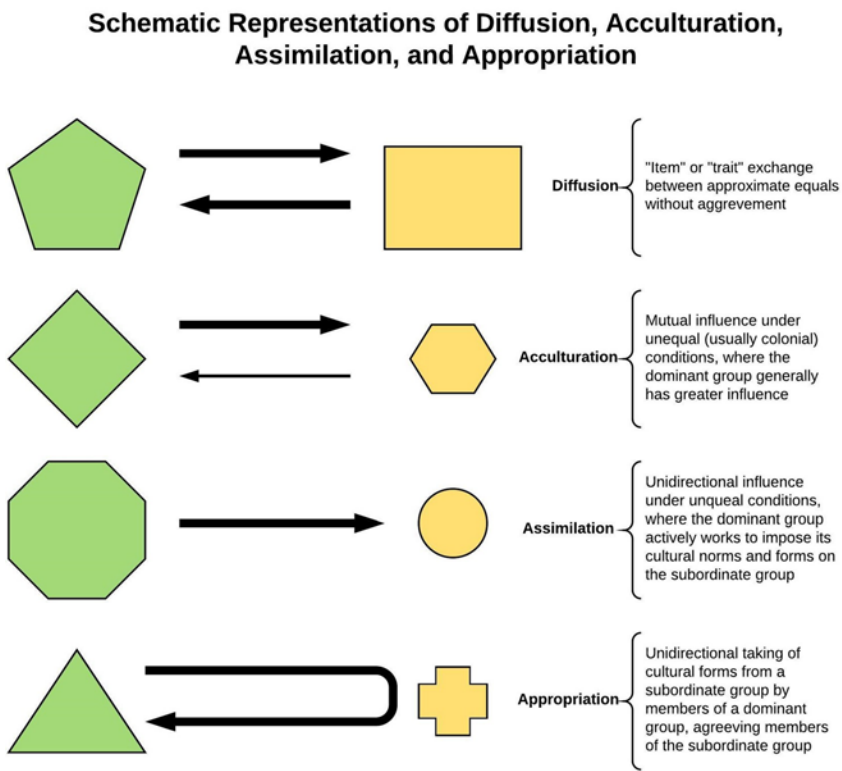|		
(pentagon / rectangle diagram)	Diffusion	"Item" or "trait" exchange between approximate equals without aggreement
(diamond / hexagon diagram)	Acculturation	Mutual influence under unequal (usually colonial) conditions, where the dominant group generally has greater influence
(octagon / circle diagram)	Assimilation	Unidirectional influence under unqueal conditions, where the dominant group actively works to impose its cultural norms and forms on the subordinate group
(triangle / cross diagram)	Appropriation	Unidirectional taking of cultural forms from a subordinate group by members of a dominant group, agreeving members of the subordinate group

FIGURE 1
In this representation of the four modes of cultural circulation under discussion, the differences in shapes only serve to evoke eight different hypothetical societies. The relative size of the shapes suggests the relative power of a society in relation to the other in its pair. The arrows characterize the direction or directions taken by the cultural circulations being modeled by each of the four concepts. The arrow of lighter weight pictured in connection with acculturation is intended to suggest that, while bidirectional, acculturation situations are marked by asymmetrical or unequal exchange between the linked societies.

Illustrating the Framework

Some instances of appropriation reported in the popular media can help illuminate the framework proposed here. These instances have been chosen because they are easily recounted. There are much more complicated and painful cases available for consideration. While I think that the framework should be useful for addressing such cases, I pass over them here for economy of presentation. Examples of such

cases would include many that are observable in relationships between Indigenous peoples and dominant European populations in the four main Anglophone settler societies—Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. US examples would include the phenomena of fraudulent claims and enactments of Native identity, "American Indian" sports team mascots, unwelcome use of Native American religious practices and ideas in non-Native "new" religions and spiritualities, the production and sale of fraudulent Native American arts and crafts, and the commercial exploitation of Native American designs by large, non-Native corporations (for examples, see Aldred 2000; Brown 2003; Bruyneel 2016; Parsley 1993; Sturm 2011). The literatures relating to specific appropriations are large and I encourage those unfamiliar with them to read the work of Indigenous authors who have explained the damage caused by appropriation and the ways it creates broader harms to Native communities.[13]

As a student of material culture in general and of dress in particular, I will use three cases of cultural appropriation in the domain of clothing and adornment. These progressively more complex instances can help illuminate the general framework. While simpler in relation to the kinds of cultural appropriation instances evoked above, they are still complicated and tap into larger networks of history, culture, and conflict. In presenting them briefly, I want to stress that they too could be unpacked and discussed at much greater depth.

Before taking up the examples, I want to underline that not all instances of cultural appropriation are equally troubling. To stick with typical Native American responses—there are reoccurring experiences that provoke, for instance, eye rolling and the shaking of heads, and there are reoccurring experiences that provoke deep anger, tears, profound feelings of grief, and impassioned activism. When, for example, a European American evokes vague family lore to claim to have "some" Native American ancestry, eyes typically roll. When a European American incorporates a fake native tribe and makes money selling "tribal" ID cards that enable those who buy them to fraudulently get set-aside (US) state government contracts intended for Native-owned firms, Native American observers will usually feel justifiable anger.[14]

Different intensities of response to acts that are framed as cultural appropriation prompt recognition of other differences worth noting before examining some examples. Appropriations attributed, for instance, to profitable corporations are often read differently from

those playing out at the individual level. Those involving financial gain or the telling of lies or breaking of laws are often seen differently from those arising from simpler differences of understanding between the parties. As my examples suggest, some kinds of appropriation contests are easier to understand and to narrate in the public sphere. As media reports suggest, clothing-centered examples are common and I think that this is in part because they are easy to recognize and easy to mediatize. Given the way that clothing functions in European American societies, clothing examples have the effect of gendering cultural appropriation discourse, suggesting that women are the primary agents of appropriation or consumers of appropriative products. I worry about this perception and would observe that the more egregious kinds of cultural appropriation practices—sports team mascots, for instance, or complex and often criminal forms of ethnic fraud—are usually perpetuated by organizations or groups led by men. Within fashion as an industry, men often hold decision-making and economic power. Men are involved in a range of cultural appropriation phenomena but these are often vexingly hard to explain and do not lend themselves to easy social media uptake/outrage or rapid journalistic exposé.[15] Saying that a Halloween outfit is offensive because the wearer is being insensitive and undermining the dignity of the people (mis)represented is a much simpler matter than explaining how the Federal recognition of Native nations works in tandem with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and why a group of county commissioners in some Midwestern US county cannot simply hand over human remains to any claimant group that shows up and asks for them.

"Appropriate culturation"

In March 2014, Christina Fallin, daughter of then-Oklahoma governor Mary Fallin, posted to Facebook a photograph in which she wore an eagle-feather headdress. While there are some special circumstances in which women in Native American groups of the Great Plains might wear such a headdress, they are, in this region, closely associated with Native American men and in all cases are seen as important emblems of respect and prestige—one generally reserved for important Native leaders and elders. Christina Fallin is non-Native and had already, in a controversial photoshoot at the Oklahoma governor's mansion, established a polarizing reputation for circulating images of herself

deemed by some in the state as inappropriate to the governor's mansion as a state symbol. When the image of Fallin wearing the headdress was posted, there was a significant backlash among Native American observers who were joined by non-Native allies and critics of her mother, Governor Fallin. While Governor Fallin is a Republican in a state dominated by the Republican party, she was at the time of the headdress episode on path to become one of the least popular governors in the US and in the history of Oklahoma (Buettner 2018).

For Native American people, this was hardly the first instance of inappropriate use of such a headdress by a non-Native person. It was hardly even the first case covered widely in the media. Thus for Native critics, the fact that non-Native people keep doing this and ignore their pleas for cultural respect is deeply frustrating (coverage of the broader phenomena is summarized in Lynskey 2014). That an important cultural object associated with solemn occasions and older, respected male leaders keeps being worn in casual and sometimes erotic ways by younger, non-Native women is particularly upsetting. When outrage followed Christina Fallin's photo posting, she offered a now classic form of nonapology in which she refused to address the substance of criticisms, noting instead that: "Growing up in Oklahoma, we [non-Native Oklahomans] have come into contact with Native American culture institutionally our whole lives—something we are eternally grateful for." As reported in the *Tulsa World*, Fallin (then age 26) continued: "With age, we feel a deeper and deeper connection to the Native American culture that has surrounded us. Though it may not have been our own, this aesthetic has affected us emotionally in a very real and very meaningful way" (Eaton 2014; see also Bain 2018; Keene 2014; Murg 2014; Zezima 2014).

In defending herself against criticisms, Christina Fallin describes a kind of entitlement that she feels and that she seems to suggest all Oklahomans should feel. Appreciation for visual aspects of Indigenous culture that are ubiquitous in the state, in her account, opens the door to making these one's own. Note the curious word "institutionally." I am hard pressed to interpret this, but my best guess is that this refers to institutions (such as museums) that make objects like feather bonnets visually accessible to non-Natives outside of the norms and cultural contexts of Native community life. I close this evocation by pointing out that when Christina Fallin (or her bandmate) posted her image to her band's social media, she/they captioned it "appropriate culturation." Despite claims to the contrary

(Murg 2014), this inversion of the phrase "cultural appropriation" signals that they knew exactly what they were doing in her posing for the photograph and then circulating it publicly. The caption suggests that her actions were intentional and were courting (further) controversy and/or making a political statement.

Native people are a minority in Oklahoma despite their large numbers relative to other US states, and the state being home to thirty-nine federally recognized Native nations. While their own tribal governments are increasingly important economic and political actors in the state, Native people in Oklahoma continue to face a great range of difficulties and lack the power to decisively impact state politics. Although I do not want to frame the matter categorically for all situations and contexts, they are generally in a subordinate position relative to Oklahomans of European ancestry, particularly leaders such as Governor Fallin. As reflected in Christina Fallin's words and actions, we have a classic case of a non-Native person claiming rights to, and taking, a cultural practice that is not hers by right of local Native practice and values. She should have known better and her caption suggests that she did know better. When confronted with the hurt that she caused, she chose to formally assert her claims to Native culture (on the common basis of appreciation) rather than to apologize or to engage Native people on the underlying issue. I offer this as a classic instance of cultural appropriation.

"To be honest, I'm finding it hard to work up much in the way of outrage about this"

Due to costume controversies, the American holiday of Halloween at the end of October is now the season for cultural appropriation discussion and debate in the US, but in 2018 a UK newspaper got a head start. German Octoberfest celebrations offered a less expected instance of costumed appropriation. *The Guardian* offered an unattributed September 10 piece titled "Oktoberfest Dirndl: Is it Ever OK to Wear 'Sexy' Versions of Traditional Dress?" The subtitle offered further detail explaining that: "Visitors wearing 'pornographic' Alpine outfits at the Munich beer festival have been accused of tasteless cultural appropriation." (*The Guardian* 2018). While the piece touches on the wearing of dubiously modified versions of traditional Alpine folk dress (*dirndl*) by American and Australian tourists of both genders, the associated image (of a cisgender woman wearing the sexy

version of Oktoberfest dirndl) makes clear that the women's outfits are the ones most clearly under discussion.

The piece is an instance of the paper's "Pass Notes" genre, which are presented as "A quick chat designed to tell you everything you need to know about a story you don't need to know about." The title and subtitle play it straight and evoke (unattributed) concerns about cultural appropriation and debasement. In what follows, both a position against such misuse and one that finds such objections ridiculous are presented quasi-conversationally. We do not get quotes from either side of the implied debate, just anonymous journalistic representations of the two positions. Both sides evoke "cultural appropriation" directly but the case against this being an actual instance of cultural appropriation is made in a lighthearted tone to suggest that any objections are, in this instance at least, ridiculous.

The piece is too short and elliptical to be certain, but it seems that the author or authors, or at least the representation of the doubtful commentator, cannot believe that millions of tourists traveling to Munich to wear sexy peasant wear and drink a lot of beer is worthy of being understood as cultural appropriation. Anyone who knows the seriousness of devotees to traditional forms of folk dress in northern European nations would be more willing to entertain the possibility that objections are real and justified, in at least some German circles. One would love to know more about the matter on the ground, even if *The Guardian* treats it as something we "don't need to know about." Be that as it may, I raise this case not because of the quality of the reporting, but because it points to certain perceptions held by those with liberal politics in English speaking countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. Cultural appropriation can be seen to be a real thing, but not a real thing that Germans could reasonably experience, at least not with respect to folk costume worn during what is now a major tourist spectacle. Note that I cited a full-throated critique of cultural appropriation of Native American dress from *The Guardian* in the headdress case above (Lynskey 2014).[16]

Subordinated minority groups—particularly Indigenous groups—experience cultural appropriation. If Germans are on any side of this equation, it would be, the logic seems to go, as appropriators.[17] A left-leaning UK paper in the end makes light of the claim that German vernacular culture could be debased and misused by non-German tourists in league with German purveyors of Octoberfest experiences. The dubiousness of the cultural appropriation claim, in the eyes of the

naysaying voice in *The Guardian* piece, seems to rest on its non-accord with the model described here, in which appropriators are in a more powerful position than those whose culture forms are being appropriated. This view, of course, aggregates all Germans into a common body. A committed devotee to German ancestral dress may receive no direct benefit from Octoberfest tourism, but because some Germans do and because Germany is a powerful state with global influence, the idea that its citizens could be victimized and thus aggrieved is dubious. The German case as presented by *The Guardian* not only underlines the issue of relative collective power, it highlights again the unavoidable facts that appropriation is constructed in metacultural discourse about cultural practices and that this discourse, by its nature, is constructed around two opposing sides in which one is aggrieved and one questions the aggrievement.

"My culture is NOT your prom dress"

The variables in play can be seen more complexly in a final dress and adornment case. In the United States, the senior-most grades in high schools regularly hold an elaborate celebratory dance known as "prom."[18] Attendees often wear formal dress, including tuxedos and formal gowns. During the spring of 2018, a young woman in Utah chose to wear a style of Chinese dress (*cheongsam, qipao*) that has come to be seen as culturally significant, especially in the context of the country's Han majority, in which this dress style has come to fill the same slot as the "nationalities dress" worn by the nation's minority peoples. My first firsthand experience with this type of dress was when Chinese museum colleagues brought them to the United States to wear at the openings for the *Quilts of Southwest China* exhibition in its US venues (MacDowell and Zhang 2016). In that context, the qipao dress was worn as a sign of affiliation with Chinese national culture, one especially appropriate for majority women without appropriate minority-style dresses.[19]

In Utah, as is now normal, the non-Asian American woman who chose to wear the Chinese dress to her high school prom posted images of herself and of her date on social media. This generated a passionate backlash from Chinese American and Asian American observers who took offense at her decision to appropriate a sign of Chinese culture for her own use. Journalistic sources on this controversy are abundant and easy to locate, so I do not dwell on all of

the details, such as her motivations, American reactions and counter-reactions, or the young woman's response to the controversy. The key factor that causes me to bring it forward in this context concerns a later turn taken in the reporting. Journalists and their readers found special interest in the divergence in reactions separating Chinese (and Asian) American critics and various persons-on-the-street in China (Qin 2018; see also Moon 2018; Rossman 2018a, 2018b; Schmidt 2018; Seely and Rossman 2018; Yang 2018; Zhang 2018).

The crux of the Chinese response was appreciation for the woman's choice. The commentators from China relayed by journalists appreciated her appreciation and saw no problem with her wearing it for this special occasion. On a microlevel, the Chinese and Chinese American voices said different things, embracing or being offended by the use of the dress. On a group level, the aggregated, synthesized "Chinese" response is in accord with a national policy of soft power, in which appreciative signs of non-Chinese engagement with Chinese civilization are not only welcome, but actively cultivated through a range of overseas investments and government initiatives. The Chinese voice as represented by journalists is confident, not embattled. By contrast, and in accord with the perspective that I am taking here, the Chinese American view (also a journalistic synthesis) is an upset one. The statements of Chinese or Asian American critics are born out of experiences of racism and subordination in the US that the Chinese commentators have not experienced and, if unexplained, would have difficulty understanding. My reading of the journalism here is reinforced by discussion of the case with Chinese colleagues and acquaintances in China during the summer of 2018.

As in other cases, the student who wore the dress, also had many defenders among European American observers. Many of my own friends found it hard to muster disapproval for the wearing of the dress, as many of them share with the student an appreciation for world cultures in general and textile arts in particular. I will not attempt to adjudicate the case myself, but the special difference separating fabrics hanging as art on a wall and fabrics fashioned into clothing and worn on the body is significant. Both are performances, but one is closer to the center of personal identity. Given all that we know about the important nexus of clothing and identity, it should not surprise us that dress practices are a particularly hot node in cultural appropriation debates. The student did not bring a dress to

school on a hanger for a show and tell activity, she wore it on her body during an important rite of passage ceremony.

Power dynamics are important for understanding cultural appropriation contests. The prom dress case provides an opportunity to think imaginatively about conditions of authorization. Beyond the vexing problem of "playing" embodied identities that are not our own, there is always the situational context. The story of the prom dress would have been very different, I feel certain, if such dresses had been worn to prom by all of the women participating in a high school Chinese language or culture course. In this scenario, we could imagine the students having been instructed, and encouraged, in their wearing of such dresses by a respected Chinese or Chinese American teacher. While the initial social media outrage might have looked the same at first, the follow-up debates would have looked very different. My thinking on this point has been profoundly shaped by Native North American values relating to relationality and responsibility.

Relationality and Responsibility

Non-Native observers often misconstrue the reactions that they get when they enter into complex encounters with specific Native communities, perceiving such communities to be more bounded and exclusionary than they actually, in practice, are. If confronted by a question such as "Who are you?" non-Natives often think about this in an ego-centric way (that is, in individualistic rather than collective terms). In many Native communities, the simple question "Who are you?" is not as hostile as it sounds to non-Native American ears. "Who are you?" is a short way of saying, who are you related to? Where do you fit in the web of social relations that I perhaps also fit into? Relationships relate closely to mutual responsibilities. People that are connected in relationships can expect (supportive) things from one another. Responsibility involves being held accountable to others and being able to hold others accountable as well. Sound work on the topic of Native American kinship speaks to these themes as do programmatic statements relative to Native American and Indigenous studies and ethical research in and with Indigenous communities (Deloria 1988, 1998, 24–37; DeMallie 1998; Fixico 2003, 75; Justice 2016, 30; Moreton-Robinson 2017). With respect to issues of cultural appropriation, they can help us see issues of context, particularly the question of human relationships and mutual responsibility.

In a public context, I was given a kind of jacket known in English as a Yuchi jacket. The garment has a complex cultural history, as its origin can be found in the diffusion of European men's jacket styles into the Native American communities of Eastern North America during the British colonial period (Jackson 2013, 125–38). Today though, coats of this type are, for the most part, no longer worn by non-Native people in the Eastern US. They were localized in Native American communities and have become a worn symbol of specific Native identities among the Yuchi and, with material variation, a few Native groups who are, or were, their native neighbors. There are contexts in which it makes local sense for me to wear the Yuchi jacket that I was given and there are other contexts in which it would not make sense or be appropriate. They key issue that I am raising though concerns relationality and responsibility on my part and on the part of others. If someone were to take offense at my wearing the Yuchi jacket that I was given, is there some respected Yuchi person who would speak up on my behalf, explaining not only the jacket and its contexts, but explaining me and my relationships, in the process? On my side of the equation, I am being judged in an ongoing way by my Yuchi friends, who monitor the question: "Am I conducting myself in a responsible way and in a way worthy of my relationships with them and with others?"

I could elaborate on this point further, but I have evoked the theme enough to circle back briefly to the case of Christina Fallin and also the prom dress incident. If Christina Fallin was connected in meaningful relationship with actual Native American Oklahomans knowledgeable about the headdress that she chose to wear, there is little likelihood she would have worn it. If she had worn it she would have faced informal sanction and not just mediated criticism. She did not wear it as an outgrowth of her face-to-face relationships with Native peoples of the Great Plains but as an outgrowth of her lack of such relationships and her participation in a dominant culture in which Native signs are ubiquitous but Native people are not. In the case of the dress, our assessment of the situation would be wildly different if there were Chinese American individuals standing beside her, endorsing her participation in, and accepting responsibility for, her engagement with, their cultural practices. This would have also entailed holding her responsible for their trust in her. Instead, she was read as engaging in a consumer practice (purchasing a dress as an individual) in a colonial global marketplace that cares little about the

feelings of those whose signs, and objects, and practices are pulled into its orbit. Of course, intercultural relationships and responsibility in the sense I am evoking them here play out in small-scale ways. In a contemporary idiom, they are hard to "scale up" to a societal or global level.

Other Models of Cultural Appropriation

Among the most regularly consulted general treatments of cultural appropriation is *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation* edited by law scholars Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao and published in 1997. In their introduction, Ziff and Rao evoke a broad range of contexts characterizable as cultural appropriation, noting not only this breadth of application but also the conceptual ambiguity of both culture and appropriation. Writing as legal scholars with an appreciation for cultural processes and cultural identities, they are attuned to the ways that cultural appropriation intersects with wider heritage and property discourses and practices. They include valuable discussion of the ways that cultural appropriation debates are predicated on conceptions of social insider and outsider and how cultural appropriation is flagged in relation to both rivalrous and nonrivalrous objects. For my purposes, the strength of Ziff and Rao's account lies in the way that it foregrounds power differentials among the parties to appropriation events. Their essay also usefully disentangles varieties of appropriation events and the different kinds of critiques that underpin different kinds of appropriation.

In my view, Ziff and Rao are least effective when it comes to sorting out the kinds of cultural movement or circulation that, I would hold, are analytically adjacent to, but not the same as, appropriation. Thus, in their account, diffusion is explored as a kind of appropriation, a position that leads to seeing appropriation as "pervasive phenomena" that "happen all around us in a vast number of creative domains" (1997, 4). This line of thinking leads to a very expansive conception of appropriation in which it takes on qualities that I associate here with diffusion, acculturation, and assimilation. The authors express real concern about cultural appropriation and aim to cultivate nuanced responses to it, thus this treatment of diffusion, is not in full accord with other things that the authors say in their essay. The stance that all diffusions are appropriations poses problems that I have aimed to evoke here. I have emphasized revisiting these

neighboring domains in part on account of this aspect of Ziff and Rao's influential treatment.

As I do in Figure 1, Ziff and Rao also attempt to portray cultural appropriation in a heuristic diagram (1997, 6). Unlike the one that I offer, theirs attempts to capture an extremely wide range of variables. Anyone concerned with the topic would do well to consult it and it is my hope that my simpler heuristic will have value as a compliment to the model that they offer. Theirs might be read as a relatively comprehensive inventory of factors that enter into, and are generated out of, appropriation episodes and debates.

In suggesting at the start of this article that folklore studies and ethnology had small literatures on cultural appropriation relative to the frequency with which we discuss and observe cultural appropriation phenomena and discourses, I have to underline that this is a relative, not absolute, lack. It is a lack most prominent in the absence of canonical overviews akin to those we regularly consult and teach on topics such as group (Noyes 2012), tradition (Noyes 2009), heritage (Hafstein 2012), and performance (Bauman 2012). In addition to works already cited elsewhere in this article, there are other key works in this realm that have shaped wider scholarly discussions. As I noted in a 2006 review, Michael F. Brown's *Who Owns Native Culture?* is a key survey of cultural property and cultural heritage issues organized around vexed contests, often discursive, sometimes also legal, of the sort that are often framed as cultural appropriation (Brown 2003; Jackson 2006).[20]

Heritage and Property

While not the central point here, my concern with cultural appropriation is also linked to considerations of cultural heritage and cultural property. The literatures on these two phenomena, particularly the literature on property, overlap extensively with the case study literature on cultural appropriation. Cultural property is regularly evoked and sometimes actually leveraged for the defense of cultural forms against unwanted appropriation. We see this, for instance, in India's prior art database projects that aim to prevent the appropriation of vernacular medicine practices and their enclosure by corporate actors (World Intellectual Property Organization 2011; Hansen and Van Fleet 2003) or in the development of intellectual property-like laws that aim to, for instance, protect the market for Indigenous arts

and crafts from inauthentic works made by non-Indigenous actors (Brown 2003, 215–16; Evans-Pritchard 1997; Wood 2008) or to protect the market for regionally marked artisanal goods and foodstuffs (May et al. 2017). We see it also in the development, by Kimberly Christen, Jane Anderson, and their colleagues of a sophisticated system of licenses and labels that aim to discourage cultural appropriation and encourage respect for the local property concepts and values that should, but rarely do, travel alongside cultural forms and practices originating in Indigenous and other localized communities (Anderson and Christen 2013).

On the heritage side, appropriation claims and grievances threaten to arise whenever and wherever local vernacular culture is deployed for profit in markets. Examples are many, for instance, when outside tour operators seem to profit most from heritage tourism initiatives that focus on the richness of a local cultural community (Zhang 2014). Of special interest to me are local-global heritage dynamics of an appropriative character that were flagged most compellingly by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her series of essays theorizing heritage (1995, 2004, 2006). In Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's approach, heritage is made in a process in which selected aspects of culture are given a new context, one that valorizes them and places them into a dramatically new metacultural framework, shifting them from the realm of everyday life into the world of the exhibition, the museum, the safeguarding strategy, the list, and the regulatory regime. Some cultural forms move further, they are not just made into heritage, they are lifted up, onto national and international stages through heritage policies and practices operating at and above the level of states.

When a cultural form is made into heritage, it is not only celebrated as important and worthy of preservation, its social base is also expanded to include nonlocal actors who are encouraged to care about its status. Along the way, heritage objects are carried out of intimate domains pushed, often by nonlocal actors, into national or international commons. These commons are themselves constituted through legal, political, and policy actions of this sort. When cultural forms are placed into these extra-local domains, however, they become accessible to, and on a rhetorical level "belong to," a wider range of actors (i.e., as "national heritage" or as part of the "universal heritage of humanity"). At the same time, they are thereby marked for possible further appropriation. They can inspire new kinds of copying, of course. The extensive documentation and publicity
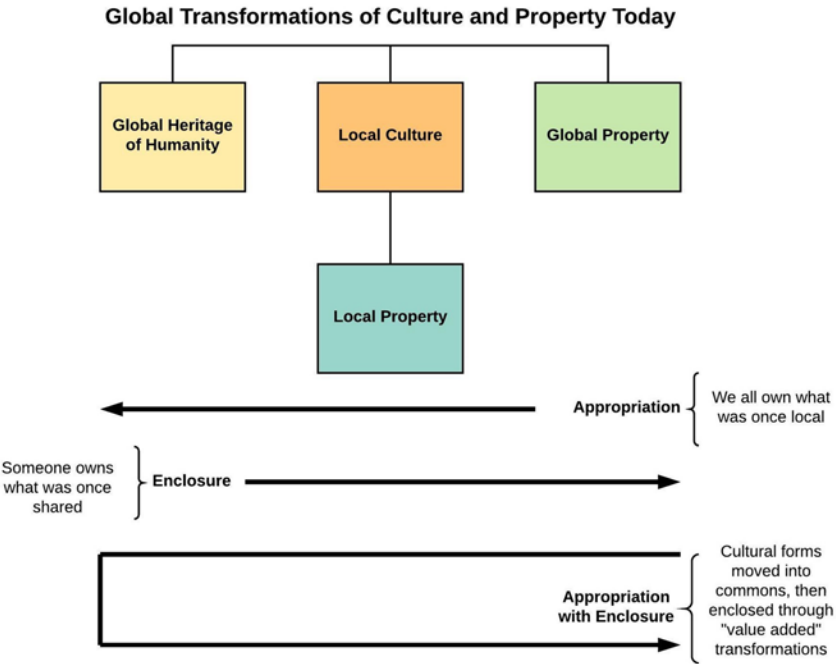
Global Transformations of Culture and Property Today

Global Heritage of Humanity

Local Culture

Global Property

Local Property

Appropriation — We all own what was once local

Someone owns what was once shared — Enclosure

Appropriation with Enclosure — Cultural forms moved into commons, then enclosed through "value added" transformations

FIGURE 2

In this scheme for representing the connected relationship between the social construction of heritage and property, the arrows represent transformational movement between categorizations presented at the top of the diagram. Within a heritage and property framework, appropriation, often at the national or international level, turns local culture, including local culture understood as property, into national or global heritage. Enclosure is an inversion of appropriation in that once local cultural forms are turned not into widely shared global heritage but globally recognized (usually corporately owned) property. A more complicated transformation is presented at the bottom of the diagram. It first involves turning local culture, including local culture understood as local property forms first into global heritage, thereby positioning such forms within a global commons. Once placed there and "shared", western intellectual property regimes allow for "value added" modifications that enable corporations and other actors to enclose them as property.

accompanying heritage initiatives can facilitate this. They are also, paradoxically, positioned to be enclosed and made into property by those who might appropriate them and then introduce value-added changes to them, modifications that can sometimes make them eligible for privatization via patent, copyright, and other intellectual property regimes. I try to illustrate such transformations, from local culture through heritage and on to enclosure in Figure 2, a scheme

that was developed by participants in my 2004 Contesting Culture as Property course based on the work of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and others whom we were then reading.

The full relationship between appropriation, heritagification, and properitizaton warrants extended further discussion by others. My aim in raising these linkages here is to note that they are explored in recent work and that they remain important for further research and conceptualization. I also aim to urge readers interested in appropriation see how it is now bound up closely with heritage and property, two of the most important concerns for early twentieth-first century work in folklore studies and ethnology.[21]

Lateral Appropriation

I recognize that articulating a heuristic for understanding cultural appropriations will prompt objections and require caveats. This is true of simplifications in general and it will be surely be true for a simplification of a complex matter that is fundamentally about painful contests waged on the ground in cultural life and in metacultural discourses about those grounded experiences. I cannot fully anticipate all possible reservations, but I want to frame one at the close of this piece, as it arises from ethnographic work and ethnological reflection well known to me. I offer it in its own terms and as an illustration of how the model I articulate here will need to be further refined.

In a contribution to the *Journal of Folklore Research*, two close collaborators of mine—Daniel C. Swan and Michael Paul Jordan—reflected on their research collaborations, over the course of many years, with the Kiowa, a federally recognized Native nation living in present-day Oklahoma in the United States. In discussing the ways that leaders of the Kiowa Black Leggings Warrior Society (KBLWS) sought to use defensive documentation as part of a strategy aimed at preventing appropriation of their dances, songs, and ceremonies, Swan and Jordan note:

> Power undoubtedly plays an important role in shaping the form cultural transmission takes, particularly where interactions between indigenous communities and members of settler colonial societies are concerned. However, the model presented by Ziff and Rao (1997) fails to fully account for the concerns the leadership of the Kiowa Black Leggings Warrior Society expressed

regarding the potential appropriation of the organization's intangible property. The model Ziff and Rao offer is based on a binary opposition between dominant and subordinate groups and does not account for cultural borrowing between groups that occupy similar structural positions. It should be noted that the KBLWS is as concerned with preventing other indigenous groups from utilizing its songs, dances, and regalia as it is with stopping members of the dominant Anglo society from exploiting these cultural forms. From the perspective of the KBLWS, any unauthorized performance of its songs and dances represents an act of appropriation. (2015, 74n23)

Swan and Jordan's objections to Ziff and Rao's perspective would extend to aspects of the account that I am offering.

Knowing something of the ethnographic case that they are reflecting upon—and many like it from other parts of Native North America—I share the view that a general approach to cultural appropriation has to take such instances into account. Until we have a better nomenclature and framework for such instances, I propose that they might be qualified as *lateral* cultural appropriations, meaning instances in which groups worry about (and experience) "horizontal" appropriations from groups occupying comparable circumstances, existing at similar scales, and in equivalent positions of power. Such instances share with more power imbalanced cases the quality of aggrievement and nonconsent. The Kiowa instance is not a hypothetical one, as many Kiowa feel deep anger over the ways that other Kiowa songs, dances, and ceremonies (particularly the Gourd Dance) have been taken up and practiced by non-Kiowa, both Native and non-Native. Historical instances of stealing songs and dances are documented widely in Native North America (Jackson 2014 explores an instance and Jackson 2010 addresses some of the legal and theoretical issues at stake).[22]

Essentialist? Just like Authenticity?

The Kiowa Black Leggings Warrior Society possess a distinctive set of songs, dances, material objects, and ceremonial practices and, as their work with Swan and Jordan has documented, they are eager to prevent these from circulating in unauthorized ways outside their ceremonial organization (Swan and Jordan 2015; Jordan and Swan 2014).

The kind of cultural knowledge that they are eager to safeguard is an instance of what the famed ethnologist and folklorist of the Native Great Plains, Robert Lowie, characterized as incorporeal property—what we would today call intellectual property (Lowie 1928). Across this region, the ceremonial dance forms held and practiced by men's societies were, and often still are, closely guarded and highly valued by those to whom they have been bestowed. The foundational literature in American folklore studies and ethnology related to issues of cultural property was established through the study of such dance practices among the Native American societies of the American west (Jackson 2010).

If sympathetic ethnography of Native American dances as collective property can serve as a canonical case for the recognition of a real-world worry about, and experiences of, cultural appropriation, a different body of dance ethnography can ground a critique of cultural appropriation as an interpretive framework. Salsa and belly dance can center this counter argument. Shelia Bock and Katherine Borland have made a strong case against seeing the borrowing of dance practices from distant or "other" source communities as cultural appropriation. In doing so, they marshal a formidable body of sophisticated folklore studies work to suggest that cultural appropriation is a problematic frame because it does not recognize the complex, networked nature of social life and because it suffers from the same problems of essentialism that marked classic conceptions of authenticity, tradition, and culture itself (2011, see also Kenny 2007 for a parallel study of belly dance). Bock and Borland adopt a constructivist (*contra* essentialist) perspective that is also generally my own. I have argued elsewhere in ways similar to those they adopt (Jackson 2003a, 136–38, Jackson 2013, 176–79; Jackson and Levine 2002; Waselkov with Jackson 2004, 694–96; see also note 8 here).

What can we make of this conundrum? Partially, the difference between the case of the Kiowa men and that of the women who belly dance in central Ohio is one of different views held by different people out in the world. If Swan and Jordan were to interview non-Native or non-Kiowa gourd dancers, they would not see their participation in the gourd dance as cultural appropriation. They would offer rich and humane accounts of how the dance came into their lives and what it means to them as an expressive practice. I have been trying to underline the way that cultural appropriation

only exists where there is a difference of understanding between source and obtaining individuals or communities. Cultural appropriation has to be called into existence by someone taking up a (metacultural) discourse of aggrievement. From the perspective those whose behavior is in question (or from their allies or ethnographers) such a discourse may seem unfair, overly harsh, or to traffic in essentialisms, but that rebuttal cannot, in itself, make the discourse to which it responds go away. In small scale instances where the parties can access one another, respectful mutual dialogue may bring the antagonists together. At larger scales, views may change with time and the kinds of forgetting that Kroeber noted for diffusion may do their work. As colleagues and I have argued for heritage and for innovation, it is possible with time for appropriations to work their way toward normal, unremarkable (unremembered) status (Jackson, Müske, and Zhang 2020), but under intercultural conditions of inequality and suspicion, this normalization, a kind of "getting over it" can, understandably, be slow. I certainly do not demand or expect injustices to be forgotten. Collective memories can be deep and also a source of power.

Seeing cultural appropriation in terms of metacultural discourse helps situate it alongside rather than in opposition to the constructivist concepts that folklorists (especially performance-oriented ones) regularly use. At the same time, the concerns that Charles Briggs noted for the literature on the so-called invention of tradition and its destructive impact on Indigenous communities are in play in such discussion of cultural appropriation (Briggs 1996; Jackson 2013, 74–85, 216–17). Groups such as the Kiowa do actually prize songs and dances that their ancestors actually did bequeath to them. Given the destructive consequences of cultural appropriation that Native peoples have again and again highlighted, it is not workable for ethnographic disciplines such as folklore studies and ethnology to construct understandings of cultural appropriation unable to attend to these realities and the political circumstances that Indigenous and subaltern communities face. We can (as fields if not as individuals) though, attempt to sympathetically engage those who live on both sides of cultural appropriation contests. If we do our work well, we may help foster more sensitive and respectful forms of intercultural contact and cultural change. The imperative to not cause harm, however, takes precedence over the hope of doing good. Briggs's reflexive account of scholarly positioning powerfully underlines the

stakes in terms that are even more stark now than in 1996 when he published them.

> In an environment in which subaltern communities, affirmative action, immigration, and the poor are increasingly targeted in political and economic terms for the perceived woes of the white middle class, it becomes even more important to consider the political-economic distribution of metadiscursive practices that shape the outcome of such contestations, even if researchers can achieve some success in disrupting dominant practices of reading and writing. (1996, 463)

I cannot do justice to Briggs's account in excerpt, but a core theme of relevance is the ways that scholars enjoy a privileged vantage point in the sense of access to multiple points of view, but also in the sense of comfortable distance from painful lived experiences. Meanwhile, the contests they discuss can have a life or death, make or break consequences for the participants, particularly those whose status remains durably disadvantaged.

I thus do not disagree, *per se*, with colleagues who would argue that cultural appropriation, as a frame of analysis, risks reimporting risky essentialisms about the dynamics of cultural circulation, the authenticity of some cultural forms relative to the inauthenticity of others, and the boundedness of cultures and societies. For me, that risk is set in tension with its opposite, that all cultural forms are up for grabs in a neoliberal, global commons that offers corporations powerful intellectual property protections but offers the holders of vernacular culture nothing but the opportunity to be disrespected and looted by whomever has the power to pull it off. Thankfully, a perspective that treats cultural appropriation episodes as two-sided contests in which metacultural discourse characterizes on the ground realities as seen from both sides, need not fully resolve the epistemological and ethical questions at issue. Ethnography can enable us to gain purchase on the specifics at issue by engaging with the people involved. Not all matters characterized by someone as cultural appropriation are equal. Ethnographers can attend to, and make sense of, the specifics even as they track broader trends and tendencies. At the same time, there is potential for conceptual work that is informed by, but not reducible to, ethnography. I encourage ethnographic investigation of appropriation contests in context. It

is hoped that the conceptual framework described here will assist in such work, but not determine its outcome.

Conclusion

I do not claim that the framework presented here is novel. It arises out of a lot of important work done by many colleagues. It also relates closely to active discussions in the broader public sphere and, most importantly, it tracks with and acknowledges the primary work and lived experiences of individuals and groups (Indigenous and otherwise) who have experienced and testified to various forms of cultural appropriation. While it may be too simple a model discussed at too great a length, what I have aimed to do is to consolidate and formalize these streams of experience, reflection, and research into a model or heuristic that we might discuss, use if useful, and ideally improve upon in new work. Beyond the specifics of the particular concept under discussion, I have long held that American folklore studies would be stronger if American folklorists devoted more attention to articulating and revisiting the concepts at issue in their work. Ethnology (American, European, and otherwise) tends to devote more attention to this kind of work, but there the problem of relatively disarticulated regional traditions of work also persists as does the shared problem of forgetting relevant work done in earlier eras.

Situating the place of theory in folklore studies, Dorothy Noyes notes that "humble theory recognizes that all our work is essay, in the etymological sense: a trying-out of interpretation, a provisional framing to see how it looks" (2008, 40). Regarding the ongoing revision of such provisional framings, she goes on to note: "In the absence of a better alternative, there is much to be said for the Enlightenment project. Science reduces reality in an effort to understand it but it also properly lays itself open to an ongoing process of collective correction and revision." I hope that this attempt at historicizing, contextualizing, simplifying, synthesizing, and modeling a portion of our literatures related to cultural appropriation will be received as useful concept work in the senses evoked by Noyes. If not useful as guide, perhaps it will be useful as a provocation for a better account.

As I neared the end of the work of drafting this article, I took a break to see what was going on in the lives of my friends and colleagues on Facebook. Of course, there it was. Blowing up in front of me was a new and very painful episode of the sort that is mainly modeled in

a sterile, ethnological register in this essay. Native people I know and admire were again hurting and also debating and sensemaking. An existing law designed to protect them against cultural appropriation was instead weaponized and used as a political instrument in ways that scores of Native people, members of federally recognized tribes, were objecting to as contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the law. I cannot recount this story directly here, but I evoke it to underline that my dry prose sits on top of the most painful and, sometimes, life and livelihood altering social transformations and contests.

As I have characterized it here, cultural appropriation is a kind of cultural change or movement that is recognizable because it is accompanied by a metacultural discourse in which source communities—as represented by those who take up the role of spokespeople—do not approve of, and are aggrieved by, an unwanted taking of an important cultural practice, cultural form, or body of cultural knowledge. This metacultural response may provoke anything from apologies and restitution to defensive counter arguments, further disrespect, violent reprisal, or further appropriation. While the dynamics can vary greatly, as can the range of factors that come into play, in the model offered here, power differentials of some kind are often important (but see lateral appropriation above). Finally, I have argued that it is heuristically useful to see cultural appropriation alongside, but distinct from, other modes of cultural change. In actual instances, these ideal type distinctions will breakdown and shade into one another. One key purpose of concept work is to better prepare us for such complexities in the lived worlds in which we live, work, and attempt to be allies.

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State University student folklore conference, where a version of this paper was shared as a keynote address. I am alone responsible for the paper's infelicities.

Notes

1. In support of the proposition that cultural appropriation has received little attention in the English-language, peer-reviewed literature in folklore studies, I prepared a literature review in which I assessed all usages of this term in three key journals—the *Journal of American Folklore*, the *Journal of Folklore Research*, and *Western Folklore*. Rather than include that review in an endnote here, or in the body of the text, I have prepared it as a short companion essay, which has been made persistently available in IUScholarWorks Open (see Jackson 2021). To summarize that effort briefly, I note that the *Journal of American Folklore* had featured (as of fall 2019) seven instances in which the concept of cultural appropriation had appeared. With the exception of Kapchan and Strong (1999), these appearances were relevant to the conceptual discussion here, but incidental. In *Western Folklore*, cultural appropriation is discussed in passing in three articles and one book review, with more detailed engagement occurring in one article and one book review. For the *Journal of Folklore Research*, four articles are relevant. Of these, Bock and Borland (2011) and Swan and Jordan (2015) are discussed in detail later in this paper.

Because this paper extends into the neighboring field of ethnology, a briefer survey for that field was also undertaken. Two journals were sampled. For *Ethnologia Eurpaea*, cultural appropriation appeared in passing in one article and for the *American Ethnologist*, it appeared centrally in three articles. Of course, the journals surveyed here represent only a small fraction of the literature in these fields. A line of research in folklore studies related to appropriation of a somewhat different, but relevant, sort, is anchored by Amy Shuman's (2005) treatment of the appropriation of stories within histories of discourse and in relationship to issues of responsibility, evidence, and empathy.

2. This article arises from discussions held with students in an Indiana University graduate course that I taught in the middle 2000s. I thank the participants in two instances of my course Contesting Culture as Property—Curtis Ashton, Zilia Balkansky-Sellés, Aditi Deo, Tierza Askren (née Draper), Flory Gingging, Carrie Hertz, Teri Klassen, Wei-Ping Lee, Jiang Lu, Gabriel McGuire, and Tiana Tew in 2004 and Gabrielle Berlinger, Elizabeth Burbach, Jill Hemming Austin, Lanlan Kuang, Rodrigo Pedrosa, and Jeremy Stoll in 2006. For other work derived from this course, see Jackson (2004), American Folklore Society (2005), Gingging (2007), and Klassen (2009).

When students in Contesting Culture as Property chose their research projects, a significant proportion of them chose to focus on issues of cultural appropriation. In this course context, and in my thinking since this period (2004–2005), cultural appropriation fits into, or is adjacent to, themes of cultural heritage and cultural property. In a significant number of instances, cultural appropriation episodes also become entangled in intellectual property regimes such as patent, copyright, trademark, and trade secret, and quasi-intellectual property

frameworks such as geographic indicators. After describing a model of cultural appropriation in the core of this article, I will return briefly to the relationship between cultural appropriation and these neighboring or encompassing meta-cultural frameworks. These linkages, for me, first emerged from my discussions with students in the Contesting Culture as Property course. I am here trying, after too much delay, to share the general framework that also arose from our discussions. I recount this history in part to acknowledge the impact of these students-turned-colleagues on my thinking and to situate this project in the context out of which it arose.

3. A historical query of the *American Anthropologist* shows "culture change" or "cultural change" being evoked with these terms starting in the 1920s, gaining great prominence starting in the 1930s (for example, Wissler 1920; Mead 1929; Kroeber 1931; Steward 1932; Mekeel 1932; Redfield 1934; Redfield, Linton, and Herskovitz 1936; Strong 1936; Eggan 1937). "Culture change" appears in a 1907 bibliographic review in the *Journal of American Folklore*, but its use becomes regular in the 1930s and widespread in the 1940s (American Folklore Society 1907). In this period, it was largely the same network of scholars evoking the theme in both flagship journals.

4. Readers wanting to explore the conceptual issues at stake here have a wide vista to explore. Because of renewed attention that it has been receiving among American folklorists (for example, Otero 2020, 19–21) and others, one place to begin is with the neighboring concept of transculturation developed by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz ([1947] 1995, 98) and explored conceptually and empirically in a Native North Americanist context of special relevance to this paper by A. Irving Hallowell (1963, 523). I also acknowledge the salience of Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) influential, more recent, treatment of transculturation in relationship to what she calls contact zones.

5. I rely on Kroeber's formulation here rather than that found in the work of his teacher Franz Boas because it is conceptual in character and because it includes aspects of the metacultural arguments that I am exploring here. Examples of Boas's work on diffusion can be found throughout his *Race, Language, and Culture* (1940)—especially within its folklore studies papers.

6. After using this Swedish example, I discovered that, six months earlier, the Swedish government had made a surprise announcement noting the Turkish origins of the country's meatballs, producing something of a counter story to the appropriation narratives that center this paper. In covering this story, the *New York Times* linked, as I and so many other observers do, the meatballs to IKEA, noting among other things the popularity of Ikea's form of Swedish meatballs in Turkey. For purposes of tracking the place of social media in contemporary cultural appropriation episodes, it is worth noting that by preemptively coming clean about Swedish meatballs on Twitter, Sweden manufactured diplomatic goodwill, rather than derision, in Turkey (Yeginsu 2018). I thank Dorothy Noyes for calling this and other mediatized instances discussed in this paper to my attention.

7. Contemporary students focused on diffusion would need to go beyond the folkloristic and ethnological fields to achieve a robust contemporary synthesis. As an example, consider the terminological and conceptual debate in the field of international relations centered on "cultural imperialism" and "cultural transfer"

as two different ways of characterizing macro-level processes of cultural movement (Gienow-Hecht 2004). Cultural transfer reads as somewhat more active than diffusion but is intentionally used as a less power-laden alternative to cultural imperialism.

8. Such problems arising within the use acculturation theory, manifest in Native North American studies in connection with the related concept of Pan-Indianism, was the focus of a series of my essays (one with Victoria Levine) in which the music and dance practices of Indigenous groups in Eastern North America provided an instructive case (Jackson 2003a, 136–38, 2003b, 250–51, 2013, 176–79; Jackson and Levine 2002, 284–85).

9. For illustrative cases, see Lesser (1933) 1977; Strong 1936; Spicer 1962; and works summarized and cited in Spicer 1968. For the conceptual problems inherent in acculturation theory, see Jackson 2013, 176–79.

10. Readers seeking to compare classic social science conceptions of assimilation vis-à-vis acculturation are directed to Spicer 1968 and Simpson 1968. Writing during a period of reactionary social unrest and political change in the United States and Europe, much of it anti-immigrant and antiminority in character, I would note that my take on assimilation is less hopeful than those commonly articulated in the American sociology of the later twentieth century.

11. Beyond George Eaton Simpson (1968), readers will likely find Raymond H.C. Teske Jr. and Bardin H. Nelson's (1974) clarification of the differences between acculturation and assimilation helpful. My account is not in perfect accord with their more detailed treatment, as my aim is to set up a heuristic for cultural appropriation, but they attend also to the dynamics that I am stressing. A major difference between earlier accounts of assimilation and contemporary reactions to the concept seems to relate to the absence, in earlier accounts, of adequate treatment of racism and other discriminatory ideologies. These interfere with the outcome of shared identity and common participation in society that classic accounts of assimilation recognized and anticipated. What I am calling classic accounts of assimilation were shaped by the sociology of European immigrants to European-dominant societies.

12. My use of ideal type is methodological and follows from the classic work of German sociologist Max Weber (1949, 89–99). For a current assessment of ideal-type methods, see Swedberg (2017).

13. The best way to find such work is to just go looking for it, but the kinds of work that I have in mind can be illustrated by posts to the Native Appropriations blog (Keene 2020) or episodes of the syndicated radio program Native America Calling (2020).

14. The distinction between of eye rolling-grade cultural appropriation, often seen for instance in simple gestures and excesses of enthusiasm for appreciated foreign practices, and more egregious forms (ethnic fraud, racist mascots, corporate enclosures, etc.) arose in discussion with students in Dorothy Noyes summer 2019 folklore graduate seminar at The Ohio State University. I thank the participants in that seminar for helping me refine and clarify my arguments.

15. Participants in Noyes's graduate seminar (note 14, above) helped expose this point also. For government contracts based on ethnic fraud as one of my more serious examples, see the *Los Angeles Times* coverage by Paul Pringle and Adam Elmahrek (Pringle and Elmahrek 2019; Elmahrek and Pringle 2019).

16. There are other ways that the current situation with Bavarian dress is complex and changing beyond this evocation of tourism and appropriation. As a *New York Times* story by Katrin Bennhold (2018) noted in detail, young Bavarians are revitalizing such dress, wearing it in new ways in new contexts and, in doing so, evoking different issues of change and of insider-outsider status. I appreciate Dorothy Noyes for pointing me to this phenomenon. If we wanted to situate it provisionally in the matrix of kinds of changes, it might be seen in terms of revival or what Sabina Magliocco has characterized as *reclamation,* "a process by which groups reclaim, re-appropriate and rework elements of their culture previously devalued by a dominant culture" (2009, 228).

17. The strength of the German "Indian hobbyist" movement, in which Germans dress as, and perform, Native American life is worth noting in this regard (Eddy 2014; Haircrow, 2013; Taylor 1988).

18. The name of the event, and its associated dress ("prom") comes from the word prominade (Oxford English Dictionary). For such dresses as a kind of "ball dress," see Hegland (2010). For ethnographies of the event, see Best (2000) and Zlatunich (2009).

19. The dress style itself is an adaptation of older Manchu dresses and has a complex cultural history in China. That history is about class and other forms of difference in Chinese society, not only majority/minority status (Trower 2010).

20. In addition to Brown (2003), other prominent works relating to cultural appropriation in folklore, ethnology, or adjacent fields include Rosemary Coombe (1998; Coombe and Alywin 2014), Rebecca Tsosie (2002), Sabina Magliocco (2004, 2009), and recently, a public-facing overview by George Nicholas (2018). While Coombe's primary concern is the appropriation of intellectual properties and other elite assets by subaltern agents, she faces the conundrums of cultural appropriation in the more common sense being discussed here (1998, chapter 5). Nicholas's (2018) views are closely in accord with my own and with the perspective that I offer here.

I particularly highlight Magliocco's work because, while grounded in close, empathetic ethnography with neopagan communities where practices that might be called cultural appropriation are sometimes prominent, she offers a nuanced account of community-internal variation in values and beliefs on this issue. As importantly, she also offers an assessment that has a great deal of sympathy for, and understanding of, the views of Native American individuals and groups concerned about cultural appropriation (Magliocco 2004, 205–37). Magliocco also conceptualizes another neighboring mode of cultural change, *reclamation* (mentioned in note 16 above. See also Magliocco 2009).

21. I note in particular the work and publications of the interdisciplinary research group on the "Constitution of Cultural Property" led by Regina Bendix at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Interdisziplinäre Forschungsgruppe zu Cultural Property 2020) and the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage project directed by George Nicholas at Simon Fraser University (IPinCH 2016).

22. As a reviewer of this paper noted, "lateral appropriation" as a work-around for cases like those described by Swan and Jordan may depend on the kind of cultural materials that are in circulation. As argued here, it is the metacultural discourses that do (or do not) arise around the instance of cultural movement that matter but there may be, across as well as within societies, particular categories

of cultural forms that tend to provoke (ceremonies, sacred objects) or not provoke (food) metadiscourses of aggrievement. For a comparable metadiscourse-centered treatment of heritage, see Jackson, Müske, and Zhang (2020).

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