

College of Liberal Arts

Diversity and Inclusion Resource Module

TOPIC: Cultural Appropriation and Sensitive Ways of Learning about Other
Cultures

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I. Overview

Cultural appropriation refers to the adoption of the elements of a minority culture by members of the dominant culture. Cultural appropriation is a form of identity theft and a violation of the intellectual property rights of non-dominant cultures, such as indigenous cultures and those who have lived under colonial rule. Numerous incidents of cultural appropriation have occurred on college campuses nationwide, including the 2018 Blackface incident on Cal Poly campus. The module examines the concepts of cultural appropriation, cultural exchange, and intercultural learning, and includes a series of activities and exercises for students that emphasize sensitive ways of learning about and appreciating other cultures.

Diversity Module Contents

The PowerPoint template covers the following:

- Definitions and terminology related to cultural appropriation and cultural learning
- Reasons why cultural appropriation perpetuates racism
- Explanation of the psychological effects of cultural appropriation on members of minority cultures
- How to avoid cultural appropriation

You may obtain a copy of the articles listed below by opening the link in a new browser or by accessing a copy in the folder.

II. Annotated Bibliography for Instructors

1. **Cultural Appropriation Review Chapter**

This chapter contains section titled: who owns culture? Cultural appropriation and laws of ownership public domain and intellectual property rights (ipr) going public, making art re-naming, re-shaping: new contexts for re-appropriation conclusion

Biolsi, T. (2007). Cultural Appropriation. In *A Companion to the Anthropology of American Indians* (pp. 383-397). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

DOI: 10.1002/9780470996270.ch21

2. **Critical Analysis of Cultural Appropriation Article**

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

Rogers, R. A. (2006). From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation. *Communication Theory*, 16(4), 474-503.

DOI:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00277.x

3. **Who Owns Culture?: Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law**

It is not uncommon for white suburban youths to perform rap music, for New York fashion designers to ransack the world's closets for inspiration, or for Euro-American authors to adopt the voice of a geisha or shaman. But **who** really owns these art forms? Is it the community in which they were originally generated, or the culture that has absorbed them? While claims of authenticity or quality may prompt some consumers to seek cultural products at their source, the communities of origin are generally unable to exclude copyists through legal action.

Scafidi, S. (2005). *Who owns culture?: Appropriation and authenticity in American law* (Rutgers series on the public life of the arts). New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

4. **Research Study on the Psychological Harm Caused by Cultural Apporpriation**

Four studies examined the consequences of American Indian mascots and other prevalent representations of American Indians on aspects of the self-concept for American Indian students. When exposed to Chief Wahoo, Chief Illinwek, Pocahontas, or

other common American Indian images, American Indian students generated positive associations (Study 1, high school) but reported depressed state self-esteem (Study 2, high school), and community worth (Study 3, high school), and fewer achievement-related possible selves (Study 4, college). We suggest that American Indian mascots are harmful because they remind American Indians of the limited ways others see them and, in this way, constrain how they can see themselves.

Fryberg, S. A., Markus, H. R., Oyserman, D., & Stone, J. M. (2008). Of warrior chiefs and Indian princesses: The psychological consequences of American Indian mascots. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 30, 208-218.

DOI: 10.1080/01973530802375003

http://www.indianmascots.com/fryberg--web-psychological_.pdf

5. **Brief Guide for Instructors on Cultural Appropriation**

Cultural appropriation is a form of identity theft. It happens when someone adopts another culture's identifiable, tangible elements without honoring their cultural importance or significance. It includes everything from hairstyles to clothing to jewelry to musical style. Using historical context, current events, and useful sidebars, this resource helps readers grasp the magnitude of the problem, including how they may be participating in appropriation without even knowing it. When young people better understand cultural appropriation, and become actively involved in helping reduce harm, they will be better able to connect meaningfully with other cultures.

Crayton, L., (2018). *Everything You Need to Know About Cultural Appropriation*. Rosen Young Adult.

Retrieved from: <https://www.rosenpublishing.com/title/Everything-You-Need-to-Know-About-Cultural-Appropriation>

6. **The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation**

This book undertakes a comprehensive and systematic investigation of the moral and aesthetic questions that arise from the practice of cultural appropriation. Explores cultural appropriation in a wide variety of contexts, among them the arts and archaeology, museums, and religion. Questions whether cultural appropriation is always morally objectionable. Includes research that is equally informed by empirical knowledge and general normative theory

Young, J., Brunk, J., & Brunk, Conrad G. (2009). *The ethics of cultural appropriation*. Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

III. Annotated Bibliography for Students

1. **Brief Guide for Students on Cultural Appropriation**

Cultural appropriation is a form of identity theft. It happens when someone adopts another culture's identifiable, tangible elements without honoring their cultural importance or significance. It includes everything from hairstyles to clothing to jewelry to musical style. Using historical context, current events, and useful sidebars, this resource helps readers grasp the magnitude of the problem, including how they may be participating in appropriation without even knowing it. When young people better understand cultural appropriation, and become actively involved in helping reduce harm, they will be better able to connect meaningfully with other cultures.

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2. **The Difference Between Cultural Exchange and Cultural Appropriation**

A short newspaper article that explains the difference between showing appropriate appreciation of a cultural group and insensitive behaviors in our modern culture.

Jarune Uwujaren

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2013/09/cultural-exchange-and-cultural-appropriation/>

3. **How to Explain Cultural Appropriation to Anyone Who Just Doesn't Get It**

Article that explains why it's not OK to borrow culture rather than exchange it.

Kovie Biakolo

<https://www.alternet.org/culture/cultural-appropriation-pho-lionel-shriver-jamie-oliver-marc-jacobs>

4. **5 Reasons Cultural Appropriation Perpetuates Racism**

Ashleigh Haughton

<https://www.theodysseyonline.com/break-down-of-cultural-appropriation>

5. **A Decade of Racism at Cal Poly**

An excellent Mustang News article outlining a decade's worth of racist incidents at Cal Poly's campus.

Isabel Hughes

<http://mustangnews.net/watkins-blackface-another-mark-on-cal-polys-timeline-of-racism/>

IV. Media Resources

1. **7 Myths about Cultural Appropriation DEBUNKED! | Decoded | MTV News**

Excellent 6 minute video explaining why cultural appropriation is offensive to minority cultures.

Franchesca Ramsey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXeJDhRGOuI>

2. **Project Humanities**

This toolbox of resources includes news articles, videos, and writing that demonstrate the urgency of engaging in critical dialogue regarding cultural appropriation. We invite you to explore these resources and help us build our database. Look out for upcoming programs designed to address this and other issues pertaining to cultural awareness. <https://projecthumanities.asu.edu/content/cultural-appropriation>

3. **Teaching Tolerance**

Website that provides teaching examples with lesson plans. Appreciation and Appropriation Outside the Classroom By distinguishing between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation, teachers can help students better understand cultural enrichment spaces.

Susan Coryat, Colleen Clemens

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/appreciation-and-appropriation-outside-the-classroom>

4. **Cultural Appropriation Awareness Project**

A series links to articles on cultural appropriation in the media.

<http://theculturalappropriationproject.tumblr.com/>

V. Sample Classroom Activities

1. **LESSON PLAN: Exploring Dress, Culture and Identity in American Indian Objects and Dress**

Lisa Falk, Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona, Tucson

<http://www.locallearningnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Falk-Module-Lesson-Plan.pdf>

2. **Classroom Discussion Questions: Addressing Cultural Appropriation in the Classroom: Tools and Resources**

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/global_learning/2016/12/addressing_cultural_appropriation_in_the_classroom_tools_and_resources.html

Jason Papallo and M'Liss DeWald

Assessment within a group discussion can often depend on participation points and other areas of interaction. Use the following discussion questions to encourage a deeper level of thinking on these issues.

Can students identify cultural appropriation?

What cultural appropriation have you witnessed in the media (television, magazines, music, etc.)?

- If you saw someone wearing or doing something that was culturally offensive, what would you do?
- Is what I am doing or wearing perpetuating any racial or religious stereotype? Am I reducing anyone or any culture down to a caricature?
- When shopping ask yourself if what you want to buy is tied to a culture. Is it accurately representing that culture or stereotyping it?
- Think about your favorite artist and whether or not you have ever seen them wearing or doing something that was cultural appropriation. Think about the popularity of this person and the impact they have on their fans. Many will assume that if they do it, it is okay. Question this notion.
- Have you ever worn anything just because you were trying to make a "fashion statement" without realizing it is from another culture and is cultural appropriation?
- Are you really appreciating a culture when it is represented from something bought from stores like Target, Wal-Mart, or another commercialized chain stores?

Questions to have students ask themselves on whether or not what they're doing/wearing is okay:

- Is it offensive to any race, religion, culture, belief, group of people, etc.?
- Does it mock/make fun of/or represent a certain group of people/culture/belief/etc. in any way?
- Does it reinforce stereotypes?

- Did people from the other culture endure negative experiences that people from your culture have not?
- Are you wearing it just because it "looks cute"?
- Do you think that because your favorite celebrity/icon/whoever is wearing it, it makes it okay?
- Did your friend, who is part of the culture it originated from, tell you that they don't care if you wear it because it doesn't offend them? Does this mean it doesn't matter?

To all of these questions, if a student answers "yes," then they shouldn't do it. Even if one person isn't offended, it doesn't mean others won't be. Gently remind students to take caution and be thoughtful.

3. Debate: Is Cultural Appropriation Wrong?

This assignment describes how to conduct a classroom debate on the topic of cultural appropriation.

Question: Is cultural appropriation morally wrong?

The classroom is divided into two groups. One group will argue that the answer to the above questions is "yes" (this group will argue against the permissibility of cultural appropriation). The other group will argue that the answer is "no" (this group will argue in favor of the permissibility of cultural appropriation).

Dr. Chad Vance

<http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil215/debate3.pdf>

4. Ideas for Classroom Activities

- a. Have students take pictures of examples cultural appreciation that they have seen in their daily lives or on school campuses.
- b. Bring something you find in your home that exemplifies cultural appropriation.
- c. Print out examples of cultural appropriation that students observe on the internet or for example on social media (e.g. memes...)
- d. Have conduct an investigation of advertising and online shopping to find examples of cultural appropriation.

VI. Tips and Pitfalls

1. Common Reasons Why Students Resist Arguments Against Cultural Appropriation

- a. You're just looking for something to be offended by. It's just clothing, hairstyles, decorations, whatever...Don't you have something better to worry about?
- b. I'm just showing appreciation for the culture
- c. I don't find it offensive, and I asked someone from that culture and they said it was ok
- d. Fashion, art, film, music always borrows from other sources. It doesn't hurt anybody
- e. You're just trying to tell everyone what to think
- f. So because I'm white, I'm automatically racist?
- g. If Chinese people wear blue jeans, aren't they appropriating my culture? Or what about Black girls wearing blond weaves? Or how about speaking English?

7 Myths about Cultural Appropriation DEBUNKED! | Decoded | MTV News

Excellent 6 minute video explaining why cultural appropriation is offensive to minority cultures.

Francesca Ramsey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXeJdHrGOul>