

ABSTRACT

An Analysis of Cultural Appropriation in Fashion and Popular Media

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Fashion is an outlet for creative expression and a reflection of personal and cultural identity. Fashion designers increasingly use cultural artifacts as inspiration for clothing. Previous media studies looked at cultural appropriation and found its place in fashion through traditional media outlets such as television and magazines. This study used a two-pronged analysis of tweets and newspaper articles. Findings indicate overall that the tone of tweets emphasizing cultural appropriation was negative, with many highlighting celebrities, fashion and commentary on the concept. Newspaper articles on the topic were generally negative, emphasizing fashion designers and culture. A spike in news coverage occurred in 2015 and surged through 2017, possibly due to the coverage the topic received on social media.

Keywords: Culture, Cultural Appropriation, Cultivation, Social Learning, Fashion, trendsetters

An Analysis of Cultural Appropriation in Fashion and Popular Media

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Journalism, Public Relations, and New Media

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

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May 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Mia Moody-Ramirez for her mentorship through the graduate school process. Her guidance and support has helped me through an exciting two years and she has served as an amazing role model.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee, for I would never gotten to this stage without their guidance. To Dr. Bradley Owens, Dr. Lorynn Divita and Dr. Coretta Pittman, thank you for your support and guidance to help me put together this final product.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents. Thank you for being my rock and always believing in me.

DEDICATION

To Squich
Every Morning, I Love You

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Cultural artifacts, traditions and fashion have been central to the expression of individuals and societies for as long as a society has existed. Fashion, as defined by Brannon and Divita (2015), is a “style that is popular in the present or a set of trends that have been accepted by a wide audience” (382). For fashion, certain fabrics, designs and accessories have become essential to forming cultural identities and continuing cultural traditions. In today’s fashion industry, taking inspiration from other cultures’ designs and intricacy have become a norm. This paper examines cultural appropriation and its influence on fashion trends, cultural appreciation and the aesthetics of costuming.

In researching the topic, it is important to understand several facets of cultural appropriation. Per Ziff & Rao (1997, p. 35), cultural appropriation refers “to the taking of intellectual property, cultural expression, or artifacts” and applying it to an unrelated culture. Fashion has often proven a way of self-expression and a significant part of cultural identity. For example, Antony (2010) examined the importance of the *bindi* in Hindu culture, which has recently become trendy in popular fashion culture. What is meaningful in status and marriage in traditional Indian culture has become fashionable among a young and non-Indian population (Antony, 2010). Celebrities, whether they be models, popular mainstream film stars, or reality TV personalities, have come into the spotlight for several instances that brought forth questions of appropriation of culture. On the flip side of the issue, Green & Kaiser state that these celebrities use the issue to draw attention to themselves “and the products they hope to sell” (2017, p. 146). The State of

Fashion (2018) also found that consumers of fashion were using it as a medium of expression, a “growing desire to use their fashion choices to express their own style, self-image and values” (p. 44).

Another facet of cultural appropriation as defined by Rogers is that the practice “is involved in the assimilation and exploitation of marginalized and colonized cultures and in the survival of subordinated cultures and their resistance to dominant cultures” (2006, p. 474). Cultural identities arise through social practice, myths and rituals. For many people, fashion represents tradition. Fashion might also indicate wealth, class status and occupation. Fashion and clothing function to reinforce social ideologies and cultural identity (Antony, 2010). So, if clothing is significant to a particular culture’s identity, where is its place in popular fashion and trends? Fashion is often seen as superficial, which angers people concerned with maintaining traditions and honoring heritage (Thompson & Haykto, 1997). Green and Kaiser (2017) stated that “appropriation has been a cog in the fashion machine as long as people have engaged in trade and communicated cross-culturally,” but “it has recently become foregrounded in pop culture and mass media” (p. 145).

Hand in hand with fashion trends are those who follow and spread them. Brannon and Divita (2015) define trends as elements with “identifiable similarities across information sources related to style... characterized by building awareness of this new look and an accelerating demand among consumers” (p. 389). Models and celebrities seen on television, magazines, and social media that either wear accessories or model clothing from another culture play a part in the appropriation. Influential members of

society, or trendsetters, play a part in spreading cultural awareness and the perpetuation of said culture.

A key component to how trends begin and are perpetuated is the trendsetters – the celebrities and models who present the trend, which has been studied by fashion researchers for years. Trends such as celebrities wearing culturally offensive costumes to events or wearing cultural artifacts to festivals are common in popular media. Trendsetters play an influential role in society for creating, continuing and ending trends. In *Anatomy of a Trend*, Vejlggaard (2007) found that people such as celebrities or athletes or social media stars, often take off with a trend. Vejlggaard found that trends are not snap decisions made by influencers, but a part of a “simmering process,” where trends were already present, but muted until someone takes off with it.

Several theories provide insight into how people perceive cultural appropriation: social learning and cultivation theories. Social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura in 1977, explains that learning is done in a social context and people model behaviors and ideals that they are exposed to, which is how those who look at trendsetters are influenced by their behaviors.

Several theories offer insight into the act of cultural appropriation and where it stands in modern society. George Gerbner’s 1976 “Cultivation Theory” has power to predict cultural appropriation’s influence in fashion. According to the theory, what we see on television, and in translation popular media, influences how we see the world. In this case, if seeing cultural artifacts or garb in fashion media is common, it may not appear to be a form of cultural appropriation. Exposure, or lack thereof, could influence the difference between appropriation and appreciation of culture, which is developed by

cultivation. Many fashion critics might ask, if fashion brings forth cultural inspiration, why isn't fashion also spreading appreciation of the culture itself? The link between fashion inspiration and education of culture isn't there, which could be a prime offense in cultural appropriation.

Several pieces of literature explore the idea of cultural appropriation and its influence on fashion, including an examination of certain accessories in cultures and their significant meaning (Antony, 2010; Barbour, 2015; Coombe, 1993). Antony's study on the *bindi* in 2010 found that the traditional Hindu artifact lost its cultural meaning when appropriated to a different and unrelated culture, used as a accessory and not an indicator of class status as was its intended purpose. Comparatively, Barbour's (2015) study of the appropriation of Native American culture in a popular comic book found that popular media had taken symbols of Native American culture, such as the tomahawk and headdress, and applied to an unrelated American icon. However, there are gaps in the literature regarding cultural appropriation, particularly representations on social media platforms.

To help address this gap in the literature, this study uses a critical-cultural lens to analyze social media representations of cultural appropriation. Specifically, it offers a content analysis of tweets posted in 2017 to provide an in-depth look at how the issue of cultural appropriation is portrayed in social media through analyzing tones and themes of tweets. The study also looks at how the issue was discussed in news outlets around the world through an analysis of newspaper coverage from the years 2000 to 2017. The study analyzed how frequent the issue was discussed through the timeframe as well as if the

coverage could be categorized in three themes; positive, negative and neutral news coverage.

This study is important for several reasons. Most notably, it builds on the literature to offer a look at print and social media representations of cultural appropriation. Previous studies have looked at traditional platforms, but few have looked at how the issue translates and evolves as time goes on (Boden, 2006; Croucher, 2011; Flinn, 1997; Green & Kaiser, 2017). Secondly, the study applies the theories of cultivation and critical culture to the modern medium of social media by applying the concepts of the theories to real users' interactions. Critical theory has studied effects on society through the communication between themselves and groups, but Kellner (1994) states that there are "contemporary approaches to communication and culture" that have not been explored. The theory developed in the mid-1900s. Lastly, this study looks at the public's discourse on a sensitive topic that is rising in popular discussion, by discussing how cultural appropriation, a concept that has been around for years, finds new light in a tool everyone has access to: social media.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature on Cultural Appropriation in Fashion and Popular Media

Culture is an ever-changing and progressive facet of society (Antony, 2010; Matthes, 2016). The literature on cultural appropriation in fashion and popular media is divided into several threads—including the concept of culture, cultural identity and media representations of culture and fashion. To study cultural appropriation, one must understand the definition of culture and what makes something a part of it also relevant are the development of cultural identity and how individuals develop a cultural identity. These interests, among others, are important in the analysis of the representation of culture in popular outlets and platforms.

The Development of Cultural Identity and Appropriation

Previous studies indicate how different forms of societies express culture in different ways—through food, activities, music, all are indicative of culture, as show in Roger (2006)’s study of cultural artifacts and Antony’s (2010) study on Hindu tradition and marriage. Fashion has been a large part of expression of culture. This could be in the garments themselves, the creation of clothes, or accessories that carry a cultural significance (Antony, 2010). Carriere adds that culture as a concept is “a generalized term for the various norms and values within a given society” (2013; p. 272).

Matthes in 2016 asserted that cultural appropriation was often a “misrepresentation, misuse, a theft of the stories, styles, and material heritage of people who have been historically dominated and remain socially marginalized” (p. 343). An

example of this would be the use of certain accessories important to one culture and reduced to a mere fashion accessory in another. An example of this phenomenon could be the use of the traditional Native American headdresses as a form of hat or the use of dream catchers as tattoos. Cultural appropriation as a concept comes down to the use of the cultural artifacts without understanding the cultural significance of it. Parisi adds that an example of this would be how “dominant culture appropriates, largely through mass media ‘covers’ of African-American work” (1991, p. 127). Some studies found that cultural artifacts serve as cultural property.

Coombe argues that culture is property and “cultural property is a basic element of people’s identities” (1993, p. 264). Culture is specific to the development of identity and often the meaning is lost in translation when adapted to another culture. Similarly, Green and Kaiser (2017) said “both producers and consumers of fashion have long expressed a fascination with difference, ‘exotic,’ ambiguity, and uncertainty through style-fashion-dress” (p. 145). Coombe also said “modernism” is to blame for appropriation because it “appropriates otherness, constitutes non-Western arts in its own image...denying particular histories, local contexts, and indigenous meanings” (1993, p. 256).

Culture According to the Internet

With the development of new media platforms and social interaction, its impact on people and their communication continuously changing. Critical race and culture theories have studied this phenomenon as it progresses even furthermore with the innovation of group communication. The theory also plays a large part in the communication between person and culture in this study, as it brought forth critical

discourse of cultural appropriation concepts on social media. Critical theory, at its base, is the “critique of modernity and the developments and institutions associated with modern society” (Elliot & Calhoun, 2003, pg. 1) In this study, it is especially important because of its “critique of art and culture, in particular the consumer culture, advertising, the media and other forms of popular culture” (Elliot & Calhoun, 2003, pg.1). Similarly, Kellner (2003) said there would new research in the areas as society continuously developed new technologies and forms of communication. Culture and communication are tightly intertwined because “one takes ‘culture’ as the artifacts...the way in which people live their lives, the context of human behavior...it is intimately bound up with communication” (pg. 2). This theory creates a framework that applies to the development of society and new technologies.

Anguiano and Castaneda (2014) described critical race theory as essential for “examining how race and ethnicity operate within the context of communication practices and experiences” (pg. 108). CRT has looked at how the study of race “bring forward important questions” that drive the research in culture and race studies. It is important to acknowledge how social media has developed in its creation of easy communication for users and their outreach. Twitter, at the time of this study, has over 68 million followers and continues to have one of the fastest developing platforms (Fiergman, 2017).

Social Learning and Identity

Another way culture plays a part in developing a social identity is through the concept of social learning and the influence it has in developing an understanding of the individual’s surroundings. In a study conducted by Flinn (1997), “social learning is the

mechanism whereby cultural traits are transmitted and replicated” (p. 27). Culture and the meaning associated with it are translated through what we are exposed to. Social learning, as defined by Flinn, is “the general, all-purpose, non-selective sponge in which cultural information is acquired and transmitted” (1997, p. 26). Mass messages such as those that are exposed through television, print and social media platforms also play a part in social learning. Potter (2014) said these messages “form the culture,” that “the influence on the public” is shown by “reinforcement” (p. 1017), and that these messages create a “cultivation of assumptions about life and the world” (p. 1106). Similarly, Carriere in 2013 said people “cultivate [their] environment and our minds through certain means” (p. 270).

Closely related to the concept of social learning and the development of identity is the influence of powerful and public figures, including their reaction to culture and cultural appropriation. As Russell, Schau and Crockett wrote a 2013 paper, “viewers then appropriate meaning about cultural diversity through their relationships with characters, actors, and celebrities to aid in constructing their own identities” (p. 122). Exposure to what they see on television and in other popular media mediums influences what they see as appropriate or inappropriate and help develop their own cultural identity.

In 2006, Sharon Boden analyzed how children developed identities and found that many relied on role models and celebrities as ambassadors of culture. Boden’s study concluded “children’s investments in sports stars/pop stars as commercial icons...begin to chart the way in which popular culture can shape childhood identity” (2006, p. 296).

Since impressions are created early on, it’s important to create equal representation of other cultures in media. Similarly, Tian and Xiong (2013) studied the

cultural translation of the Disney film *Mulan* to the traditional tale of *Fua Mulan*. “The audio-visual industry in the U.S.A. has worldwide influence” (Tian & Xiong, 2013, p. 862) it therefore plays a significant role in cultural appropriation and an absence, or shift in of representation of other cultures. Croucher said heavy exposure “to television use often leads to an inability to distinguish the ‘reality’ of television from objective reality” (2011 p. 260). Furthermore, Parisi stated that “televised representations of African-Americans back away from the representation of realistic characters in realistic backgrounds” (1991, p.132).

In discussing representation of minorities in media, it is important to consider those watching. Rogers (2006) said “acts of appropriation and their implications are not determined by the intent or awareness of those engaged in such acts but are instead shaped by, and in turn shape, the social, economic, and political contexts in which they occur” (p. 476). This concept translates to real life in a way that though the person committing the act of appropriation might not believe or now it is appropriation based on if they are educated in what it means to appropriate. Matthes stated that to understand, one must see how “the source of the representation, coupled with the social inequalities...[this] plays a key role in explaining what can make cultural representations harmful acts of appropriation” (2016, p. 352).

Fashion has long been used as a way of expression and the development of cultural identity. According to Thompson and Haykto (1997), fashion has ties to “conditions of self-worth; the pursuit of individuality; the relation of appearance to deeper character traits; the dynamics of social relationships, gender roles, sexuality,

standards of taste, economic equality, and social class standing; and the societal effects of capitalism and mass media” (1997, p.15).

In an article by Hussein (2005) as cited in Antony (2010), appropriation of culture is “the convergence of multiple places and cultures” and this act “negotiates and renegotiates their identities” while providing no opportunity to allow these places, symbols and narratives to negotiate their own way into popular culture. Cultural identities develop through social practices, rituals and exposure. “Fashion and clothing jointly function to reinforce social ideologies” but popular media and society “make it appear to be natural and disconnected to human action” (Barthes, 2004, as cited in Antony, 2010). Similarly, Matthes stated that “cultural appropriation goes hand-in-hand with misrepresentations of culture” (2016, p. 366).

Fashion, being an outlet that several communities and societies use for creative expression, is often criticized, both for appearance and for cultural meaning. Thompson and Haytko (1997) concluded “one can choose to interpret fashion as an exciting realm...or to dismiss as superficial” (1997, p. 16). Fashion also serves as a statement to the outside world as well. Metta Winter said that “a deep reading of fashion tells us much about the state of culture at a given point in time” (2004, p. 20). Fashion designers, such as Victoria’s Secret, are often criticized for appropriating cultures through costumes used by models that represent, and in turn stereotype, other countries and their respective identities.

Culture Cut from Cloth

A study by Russell, Schau, and Crockett (2013), cultural diversity in popular media “had been long investigated as matters of social justice and welfare” (p. 119).

Similarly, Green & Kaiser state that “at a foundational level, appropriation begins with imitation” (p.146). With an increase in use of social media, specifically hashtags such as #CultureNotACostume, more people are calling out fashion that offends them and what they believe is cultural appropriation of cultures. Social media has served as a tool of accountability in calling out what is deemed as inappropriate. Carriere (2013) said that the concept of “cultivation has potential to be examined [as a result] of the human meaning-making process” (p. 272).

Several aspects of different cultures have been used for fashion accessories. Examples of this could be the use of the traditional Native American headdress as a head accessory often seen at music festivals such as Coachella, the use of afro-style hair for those with natural straight hair, or a traditional garb being used as a costume, often seen at Halloween time. All indicators tied to specific cultures with their own meanings, used as fashion accessories with no cultural meaning. According to a study of indigenous art by Shand, “appropriation as a mode of cultural engagement is dependent on an ability to separate a given object or design from its cultural milieu for the purposes of its employment in a different one” (2002, p. 56).

By selecting only small aspects of a culture’s fashion and applying it to an unrelated form of clothing choice, the person is not representing the culture and only appropriating it for their needs. For example, in 2015, Chad Barbour analyzed a popular comic book hero’s representation in Native American culture during a feature comic. Barbour found that the hero often would depict Native American culture in stereotypes, wearing headdresses, war paint, and more (2015). Barbour said the amplification of the visual signs of ‘Indianness’ marginalizes or even erases actual Native presence” (2015, p.

270). The act of perpetuating visual stereotypes is another facet of cultural appropriation. As Flinn said in 1997, “individual actions reflect motivations programmed by the cultural system” in which they live and thrive (p. 26). Similarly, Carriere found that culture “is created by the people, for the people, dictating future action guiding the person in a directed manner, yet subjected to being interpreted and acted upon by each individual” (2013, p. 272).

Antony (2010) examined the use of the traditional *bindi*, made popular in recent news by model and celebrities donning them at music festivals or at concerts, such as Katy Perry and Gwen Stefani. The *bindi*, a traditional accessory in the Hindu religion, represents marriage and social class (Antony, 2010). For most that have sported an accessory such as this, most have little to no understanding of the cultural significance of the accessory. Antony says, “specific meanings and discursive associations are communicated based on the historical and social contexts surrounding fashion choices, including who wears them” (2010, p. 347). By understanding various culture, you can avoid appropriation and show appreciation. In their analysis of the fashion industry, Winter (2004) found that even in moving forward in society, people “keep alive categories of people, defined in racial or subcultural terms” (p. 17). Fighting appropriation begins with understanding it and getting rid of stereotypes.

Costumes and Culture

A major aspect of cultural appropriation is costuming, such as for holidays including Halloween. The question comes into play: if one chooses fashion specific to culture to serve as a costume, is he or she appreciating the culture and educating others? Thompson and Haytko said that “cultural meanings manifest in consumer interpretations”

of fashion (1997). In a study performed by Brown in 2005, “culture cannot be reduced to an inventory of objects with marginalizing its most important features” (p. 41), which is what ultimately leads to ideas of cultural appropriation. Similarly, David Oh found that “borrowing of others’ culture is appropriative, namely, because it does not create lasting commitments to the borrower; it can be added or removed freely” (2017, p. 376).

A paper by Young (2005) indicates cultural appropriation can appear in popular culture in different ways, including subject appropriation, in which an outsider uses a cultural product other than his/her culture; content appropriation which is the use of cultural content other than their own for their own use; and object appropriation, meaning that outsiders could possess a physical object of cultural significance and transferred to a culture that isn’t theirs. In regard to using objects from other cultures to signify a costume or accessory, Oh (2017) found that when exposed to those objects, an “audience does not learn about [the] culture” but rather see the object as simply that (p. 377).

Cultural Appropriation and Cultivation

Aligned with Gerbner’s 1976 Cultivation Theory, what we are exposed to is how we interpret other costumes and what we see as cultural appropriation. The theory suggests that the constant or lack of exposure to certain issues develop what one sees as right and wrong (Gerbner, 1976). Due to a possible lack of cultural representation in popular media, some individuals might view cultural appropriation as nonexistent when it comes to fashion. When looking at leaders in the fashion industry to dispel stereotypes and appropriation, Winter said the public is “still not seeing true diversity there” (2004, p. 20).

Cultivation theory and social learning theory influence how one sees other cultures and how to react to acts of appropriation. Findings have found that popular, mainstream media shapes and influences culture, which can be both helpful and dangerous.

Profiting Off Culture

An important way to understand how cultural appropriation exists is by seeing how it spreads. As seen in previous studies, the media plays a large role in perpetuating stereotypes, gender roles and cultural sensitivity (or lack of). Representations of other races, cultures and lifestyles is important in breaking down the cultural barriers that exist.

Barbour (2015) found in his analysis of the “When Captain American was an Indian” comic that the use of icons for the imagery portrayed played dangerously stereotypical, such that the being “Indian” was “transmitted via key and recognizable icons” and that “the icons bear little accuracy and disconnect from realism” (p. 270). Taking icons and images from a culture is often seen as ways to profit off of these individual aspects of other cultures. Maeve Eberhardt and Kara Freeman (2015) found that when it came to taking aspects of culture, it was not uncommon to find majority races “co-opting” other cultural forms and “then enjoying more profit than those whose creative powers initially produced them” (p. 306).

Within the media, exposure to social media and direct access to viewing and interacting with each other and role models plays an influential part of finding a place in society. Croucher (2011) found that the internet would also play an important role in the cultural development process. Regarding minorities, Croucher found that the internet also served “defend their group identity” (2011, p. 262). Similarly, several studies find that

the Internet, as well as other media, exposed people to images of culture, notable celebrities and role models. For children, as Boden (2006) found, role models and “celebrities are cultural fabrications that embody social types” (p. 290). Exposure to these images shape what we believe and how to interact. The Internet, television, print media, all are sources of “information for children about the role of fashion and the consumption of image” (Boden, 2006, p. 289).

Eberhardt et. al (2015) also noted that these role models and celebrities “are actively constructing in these contexts a persona that is not themselves” (p. 304). In their study of hip-hop icon Iggy Azalea, Eberhardt et al. found that the white rapper “represents an extreme and dangerous instance of...the appropriation of black cultural forms by whites” (2015, p. 309). Azalea also crafted her “public persona around what is desirable and desired of African-American female bodies in the mainstream without having to grapple with...the struggles of the lived experiences of African-American women” (Eberhardt et al., 2015, p. 320). Similarly, Vejlgard said that “for centuries, women in India and Indian immigrants...have used henna to decorate their hands” and as a representation of culture, but after a model picked it up, it became popularized in the United States and distanced from the original group of people it was created by (p. 31).

Cultural property is not often made for profit but instead holds significance. That is lost in translation when it is appropriated by outsiders of the culture. Social media has served as the issue’s strongest critic. Green and Kaiser (2015) found that “consciousness and criticism of appropriation have proliferated throughout the blogosphere, social media, and other online and print outlets over the last decade” and really picking up steam in 2016 (p. 145).

CHAPTER THREE

Research Questions

After reading the relevant literature, the first research question driving this study asks how social media users react to the concept of cultural appropriation. The question measures for the tone of the reader.

RQ₁: What is the tone (positive, negative, neutral) of tweets regarding the concepts of cultural appropriation?

The second research question analyzes the themes found of in the dataset of tweets.

RQ₂: What are themes found in the tweets selected?

The third research question analyzes how frequent the issue of cultural appropriation and fashion is portrayed in news media.

RQ₃: How frequent was the issue covered in news media around the globe?

Methods

For this study, I analyzed a combination of traditional and social media content. For the social media sample, I selected 230 tweets for analysis using the advanced search tool on Twitter. Initial findings took a snapshot from the dataset of all tweets revolving around the topic of cultural appropriation on Twitter. For the traditional news media sample, I gathered newspapers articles published between Jan. 1, 2001 and Dec. 31, 2017. I used an advanced Lexis Nexis search using the search terms “cultural appropriation” and “fashion.” These dates were selected as a reflection of the presence of

popular music festival Coachella, where several celebrities have been reported to don “offensive costumes” and receive backlash from social media users (Andrews, 2017).

An initial analysis was used to analyze how frequently cultural appropriation was mentioned in both social media and traditional media platforms. As seen in Table A.1, the initial findings revealed that there were approximately 325 posts regarding the topic, with 303 unique Twitter users, yielding a total of 877,457 impressions. The tool used for this initial finding was Keyhole, which analyzes Twitter and Instagram posts surrounding a topic or hashtag. The tool tracks items used on social in real-time and can search a hashtag, an account, a specific keyword or even a URL. The tool studies only Twitter and Instagram, where hashtags dominate. For this study, I used it only for the initial findings portion of my study and only used Twitter by searching for the keywords “cultural appropriation and fashion.”

In the search bar, I selected to search for tweets that referenced and included the term “cultural appropriation.” The limitations for the search included the tweet had to be in English and had to be between the dates of Nov. 1, 2016, and Nov. 15, 2016. In the subsequent tweets that came from that search, I only analyzed original tweets. I excluded retweets, duplicated (copy/pasted) tweets, replies and any tweets that were a YouTube or Facebook synced tweet. Tweets that are synced to Facebook and YouTube are self-generated by a user’s social media post and are often just a copy of an item found on Facebook or YouTube. They are easily distinguishable because of a link associated to the tweet.

For the sample used in the final study, I selected 230 tweets from two tabs on the advanced search results. The first 115 tweets were selected from the latest tab on the

Twitter search (Table A.3). The second set of 115 tweets was selected from the top tweets tab (Table A.2). In looking at the unique 230 tweets, no repeated tweets were included. I compiled the tweets into an Excel spreadsheet, including the tweet, the Twitter handle of the person who tweeted it and a link to the tweet. The tweets were analyzed for themes and tone.

Regarding tone, in defining the category and determining what tweet went into what category the following parameters were used:

- Negative tweets had negative connotations, meanings and often times swear words. Tweets with negative connotations often included negative tones through sharing of opinions and viewpoint from the user, as well as criticizing celebrities, fashion designers and fellow users.
- Positive tweets had positive connotations and wording. Tweets with positive connotations included users oftentimes praising celebrities, fashion designers and fellow users.
- Neutral tweets had neither positive or negative connotations, but instead were neutral.

Regarding theme, in defining the category and determining what tweet went into what category, the following parameters were used:

- Tweets were categorized into five themes: Concept discussion, Celebrities, Costuming, Fashion and Opinion/Commentary.
 - Tweets with a concept discussion theme included a user discussing different concepts of cultural appropriation, such as power, race, class, etc.

- Tweets with a celebrities theme included a user discussing a specific celebrity and/or celebrity action.
- Tweets with a costuming theme included a user discussing specific costumes indicative of a specific culture/demographic.
- Tweets with a fashion theme included a user discussing specific fashion trends or designers.
- Tweets with an opinion/commentary theme included a user discussing cultural appropriation in terms of sharing an opinion or just commenting on their account with no direct focus.

The other research aspect of this study looks at how frequent the issue and discussion of cultural appropriation appeared in news outlets from Jan. 1, 2000, until Dec. 31, 2017. For this, the search terms for Lexis Nexis were “cultural appropriation and fashion.” The data was compiled from the search results of those terms within the timeframe selected. After frequency of the topic was measured, articles were looked at for whether they had a positive, negative or neutral theme. The articles were categorized in these three themes based on the tone of the coverage, such as whether it criticized celebrities and fashion designers (negative), reviewed a fashion line or art show (neutral) and praised a celebrity, designer or demographic for discussing cultural appropriation openly and with a positive frame (positive). The years 2000, 2013, 2014 and 2017 were selected for this analysis, as these year showed significant numbers in frequency, or lack thereof.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

In the initial findings, the sentiment of the tweets analyzed were 37.2 % negative, 46.8% neutral, and 16% positive. The demographic of users were 70.7% male and 29.3% female. Finally, initial findings also found that the top hashtags associated with the original one searched were #Racism, #sjw (which stands for social justice warrior), #socialjustice, #whiteprivilege, and #americans.

In the analysis of the 115 tweets selected from the Top Tab on Twitter, 77.39% of tweets were negative. Negative tweets emphasized the tone surrounding the concept of cultural appropriation on social media and its place in modern fashion.

Examples of negative tweets included examples “@maxargon: That's cultural appropriation and he should be immediately banned from ever working again. The racist pig” and “@mchawk: But we're still totally ok with cultural appropriation, yeah? Ok, just checking.” The tweets found in the Top Tab that were categorized as negative had negative connotations for and against cultural appropriation. Examples of negative tweets are shown in Figures B.1 and B.2.

Displayed in Table A.2, negative tweets found in the 115 total tweets from the Top Tab, neutral tweets made up for 17.39% of them. Examples of neutral tweets include “@womenwriter: ‘Shriver started a dialogue about a topic that obviously touched nerves.’ on cultural appropriation” and “@RickNothing: Due to pedigree collapse, cultural appropriation is impossible.” These tweets that fell into the neutral category did

not have positive or negative connotations for or against cultural appropriation, and often times were just comments or questions regarding it or a piece of work surrounding it.

Finally, as seen in Table A.3, positive tweets made up 5.22% of the total tweets. Positive tweets from the Top tab include “@TaemoMarie: Cultural appropriation is disrespectful no matter what culture you're appropriating. If it isn't a part of your culture...don't do it” and “@C_mutea: Need more empathy 4 all.” The tweets that fell into these categories often carried positive connotations against or for cultural appropriation. Another example of positive tweets can be seen in Figures B.3 and B.4.

In the analysis of the 115 tweets from the Latest tab, the general sentiment for both sets of tweets was negative. As seen in Table A.3, the first set of 115 tweets analyzed from the Latest tab on Twitter, 56.52% of the tweets were negative. Some examples of these sort of tweets were “@bruceme: This obsession with 'cultural appropriation' is leading us down a very dark path” and “@SLLcoolJ: Cultural appropriation of an actual disease is up there with the s----- things affluent white people ever did.” Of all the negative tweets, there were negatively worded tweets that advocated for and against cultural appropriation.

As also seen in Table A.3, neutral tweets made the second largest group at 39.39% of tweets analyzed. Examples of tweets that I counted as neutral were “@hullnewTU: "I did a sombrero count on Halloween. I counted eight." -A freshman Tulane student on cultural appropriation” and “@sawyerleemusic: could attempting to adopt a cultural style for possible termination of that cultural deficiency be misunderstood as cultural appropriation?” The tweets that fell into this category were

often just questions regarding cultural appropriation or observations and didn't carry any negative or positive connotations.

Finally, positive tweets only made up 6.09% of the total tweets analyzed from the Latest Twitter Tab (Table A.3). Examples of positive tweets included “@2cody2waldron: wait what if cultural appropriation is actually cultural appreciation” and “@lydiaallthetime: Just finished listening to the latest Writing Excuses podcast, on colonialism and cultural appropriation. Sooo good.” Tweets that fell into this category were tweets that had positive connotations for or against cultural appropriation.

As seen in Table A.4, of the total 230 tweets analyzed, the main themes prevalent in tweets were the sharing of opinions/commentary, celebrities and the discussion of concepts surrounding cultural appropriation. Tweets that fell into the opinion/commentary theme were 42.2% of the total sample. An example of this tweet includes “@beinlibertarian: I think that the people that complain about cultural appropriation are just misguided...” Tweets that fell into the celebrity theme accounted for 21.4% of the total sample. An example of this theme included “@dannyruston: Honey G is the definition of cultural appropriation, this is why everyone hates white people.” Finally, tweets that fell into the concepts theme accounted for 18.4% of the total sample. An example of this tweet included “@:TaeamoMarie: Cultural appropriation is disrespectful no matter what culture you're appropriating. If it isn't apart of your culture...don't do it.” Illustrated in Table A.4, the remainder of the sample fell into fashion and costuming themes.

Lexis Nexis Analysis of Frequency of Coverage

In the analysis of Lexis Nexis articles, I looked at how frequently cultural appropriation was discussed in news articles from 2000 to 2017, and found an increasing trend in news coverage of cultural appropriation and fashion. The time frame was selected based on the launch of the popular music festival Coachella. Articles for years where coverage was significant were then analyzed for negative, positive or neutral themes. An article with a negative theme included information that accused or criticized fashion designers and celebrities of cultural appropriation, racism, etc. Positive themes included the author of the article describing new fashion trends defying the concept of cultural appropriation. Articles deemed as neutral were reviews that neither agreed or denied cultural appropriative actions.

In 2000, only two articles were written that used the terms “cultural appropriation” and “fashion. In 2000, an article titled “How low did we go?: 2000: A year of inanity, absurdity, stupidity and just plain craziness,” the author, columnist Doug Camilli, discussed 2000’s most memorable moments in several parts of the world. This article was one of two that were published in 2000 in Arts and Entertainment section of *The Gazette*, a publication in Montreal. In this article, the concept of cultural appropriation was not a major aspect of the article and more of a minor detail. However, the author linked the example of “Rhode Island officials deciding to decorate the state with dozens of 6-foot-tall statues of Mr. Potato Head” with “cultural appropriation, or racism” because of one dressed in a sombrero and serape. Because of the author’s link to negative themes, this article’s overall theme was negative, with its comparison to racism.

As seen in Table A.6, of the two articles, one of them were negative and the other neutral. Both were published in Canadian newspapers.

Little was written on the subject, as seen in Table A.5, and there wouldn't be until 2013. In 2013, the analysis found that 21 articles were written. Of the 21, Teddy Wayne's article "Explain Twerking to Your Parents" discussed the act of cultural appropriation by celebrity singer and actress Miley Cyrus. The article was published on Sept. 1, 2013, in the *New York Times*. This article gives an example of how Cyrus, a wealthy white woman, appropriated a dance typically associated with African-American women. Wayne also discussed how the act was being passed off as "a rebellious reclamation of her sexuality" and not a "brazenly cynical act of cultural appropriation." Wayne was one of many authors found in the research who used cultural appropriation as a concept in which to call a celebrity out on potentially offensive action. As seen in Table A.7, of the 21, 13 of the articles were negative, five of them were positive and three of them were neutral. Most of the articles found in this year were also mostly outside of the United States, from publications in China, Thailand and Australia.

An increase in articles continued in 2014, when 56 articles were published. Of the 56, an article published in DNA on May 1, 2014, by Manish Mishra titled "What to wear at a music fest.; With Coachella fest sending out heebies-jeebies across the style spectrum, After Hrs decodes sartorial picks for musical concerts" discussed the negatively seen outfits at popular music festival Coachella. Similar to articles found in this year, Mishra writes about how the internet called out celebrities such as actress Vanessa Hudgens for wearing a bindi to the festival, stating that "No Fashion Woodstock costume is complete without a little cultural appropriation." As seen in Table A.8, of the

56, 31 of the articles were negative, 14 of them were positive and 11 of them were neutral. More articles were found to be written from publications inside of the United States, such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, but mostly the news coverage was from outside of the U.S.

Finally, an increase in newspaper coverage was seen in 2017, when 325 articles appeared in magazines and newspapers around the world. An example of this would be Robin Givhan's "Fashion is finally figuring out diversity - in ways that actually matter" published in the *Washington Post* on Sept. 7, 2017. Givhan mentions the fashion industry still lacks representation of other cultures, but that it is slowly improving. As seen in Table A.9, of the 325 total, 163 (half) of the sample was looked at for themes. Of the 163 sampled, 69 of the articles were negative, 61 of them were positive and 33 of them were neutral.

The findings, as shown in Table A.5 and in Figure B.5, show a sharp spike in coverage beginning in the mid-2010's and growing in 2017. From the years 2014 to 2015, coverage doubled. Comparing the years when the issue first began to pick up, 2017 saw almost six times the articles as opposed to 2014.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Study findings suggest that the general tone on both social media and newspaper coverage on cultural appropriation was negative. Of each category of tweets analyzed, tweets showed negative tone through word usage and overall sentiment. The tweets had common threads of negative sentiment surrounding misuse of cultural artifacts as accessories, fashion shows mishandling culturally inspired attire and inappropriate costuming by cultural outsiders. The results also reflected heavily what was found in the literature surrounding development of identity and the implications that pursuing a culture for profit carrying negative sentiment (Antony, 2010; Russell et.al, 2013; Rogers, 2006). These events, such as the 2017 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show with a theme of "Nomadic Adventure" but seen as Native American-Tribal themed (Matera, 2017) or a line of "Navajo" products from popular fashion line Urban Outfitters (Berry, 2011), controversy and social media will predictably follow.

Of the total sample of tweets, the top three themes found were commentary, celebrities and concepts surrounding cultural appropriation. Social media has served as a platform easily accessible to all and has allowed users to share their views with each other and the world, which is reflective of the findings in this study. Users in the sample selected shared their opinions and commentary on the issue through their tweets. Use of social media has also allowed users to be able to have access to contact with and about celebrities, which was once unattainable in the days before the rise of social media. The

results reflected what was found in the literature: social media as a platform is a tool for discussion and accountability (Green & Kaiser, 2017). Finally, the results found that though cultural appropriation has been around for years, social media has allowed a public discussion. Users tweeting about concepts surrounding cultural appropriation, such as class, race and power prove that social media has permeated public discourse and critical culture theory. The findings found that the remaining two themes were not as prevalent in the sample: costuming (2.7%) and fashion (15.3%).

The third research question, regarding how frequently the issue of cultural appropriation was covered in news media, reflected the literature by observing a spike in news coverage beginning in 2015-2016 and almost doubling each year. Green and Kaiser (2017) found that though the issue has existed for decades in fashion, it picked up on social media and the internet as a whole in 2016. The analysis of frequency also found that to be true. The news coverage surrounding the concept of cultural appropriation was found to be largely negative in the years leading up to 2017, but there was a surprising jump in positive news coverage of the issue. Illustrated in Table A.6, even when there was scarce coverage of the issue, negative coverage still plagued the issue's media spotlight. In 2013, there was a rise in total articles (as seen in Table A.7) but more than half of them were still negative, with just under a quarter of the articles showing a positive theme. In 2017, the total number of articles sampled still showed mostly a negative theme (seen in Table A.9) but there was a close presence in positive coverage, with a difference of almost five percent between negative and positive. This finding could mean many things, but with a steady increase in news coverage, and the expectancy of social media power to continue grow, there could be an increase in these types of findings

in future studies. What was once seen as a sensitive topic has now been brought to the forefront of public discourse.

Similarly, the results reflected what tone was expected surrounding the concept of cultural appropriation, as many social media users discussed the misuse of cultural artifacts, such as *the bindi* and Native American headdress.

The results also reflected how cultivation theory works in a new age. The examples chosen found that the influence of trendsetters and fashion designers has moved onto the new platform of social media. Social media has served not only as a platform for influence, but also a way of holding said trendsetters and designers accountable for violations, such as cultural appropriation. The results also revealed a surprising finding: social media has opened the door to critical discourse. Of the sample that was pulled, all of the users used the platform to discuss several sides of the issue, to share opinion and insight to current topics.

The results indicate that studies of social media are important because of its rising power and influence in public discourse. The discourse shown in the results proves that social media as a medium could be the next step in developing cultivation and critical race theory, moving it to the next age. Social media also played a huge role in propelling the discussion on cultural appropriation to the forefront of public discourse. As seen in the results of the newspaper analysis, there was not much coverage of cultural appropriation until the peak of social media use in the 2014-2017 timeframe. This reflects the notion that due to access to social media and direct contact with each other and celebrities, social media also serves as a “watchdog” platform, where users can discuss sensitive topics directly to those they see offending it (Green & Kaiser, 2017). Social

media has also allowed users to engage in conversations with each other about these concepts. This phenomenon has not been seen in decades of studies due to recent spike and development of social media sites, such as Twitter.

This study demonstrated how the critical theories of culture, race and cultivation migrate to the modern age. Culture permeates society and the exploration of cultural appropriation on social media and traditional media platforms demonstrates how discourse is moving to more open platforms. This study also found that there have been significant spikes in news coverage of the cultural appropriation concepts due to an increase in the use of social media. Critical theory and cultivation were created in the mid to late 1900's, but its effects are still prevalent in today's society.

Limitations

There were several limitations in my study that could be adjusted to serve as grounds for future research. One of these limitations could be the criteria by which tweets were selected. For this study, I used the first 115 tweets of two different tabs on the Twitter advanced search, but there was hardly organization for how the tweets showed up. On the Top tab, the tweets were selected by most popular from the category, whereas on the Latest, it went from the last day of my criteria. This could limit my content since the data set was any tweets from November 1 to November 15, but I was only exposed to a fraction of that on the Latest tab. In the future, a researcher could access the Twitter API and analyze a more spread out or complete data set.

Another limitation to my study could be addressed by defining the criteria more deeply. For example, I selected a tweet because it had a certain connotation for either or and not for something specifically. Future researchers could analyze both sides for a more

in-depth study. Future studies could also look at a user's influence or outreach based on their profile and following.

An unforeseen circumstance that could have affected my Twitter analysis could be any blocked accounts or reported tweets that Twitter may have taken down during my study. There is really no way to know if this happens, which could affect the tweets I did use for my analysis. In the future, researchers could access more of the Twitter API to figure out what tweets to use and to lock in the ones that may have been deleted.

Conclusion

In their study, Tian & Xiong used an analogy that is fitting to the idea of cultural appropriation:

“As the ancient Chinese saying goes, when a tangerine grows to the south of the Huai River, it is a tangerine; when it grows to the North, it becomes a trifoliate orange...[this] also applies to human cultural production in which a cultural product will undergo transformations due to the change of cultural environment.” (2013, p. 872)

The idea that different cultures translate differently in other cultures is the basis for understanding and combatting cultural appropriation. The literature finds that cultural appropriation is a growing problem in several aspects, including the lack of cultural diversity on television, exposure to other cultures, etc. In my findings, the tone of cultural appropriation on Twitter was negative, for both sides.

Cultivation theory suggests that what one is exposed to influences what and how they will develop meanings for the world. If this is true, then the exposure to other cultures is directly tied to cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. If more were exposed to different cultures, there would be more appreciation than appropriation. In the

relevant literature, cultural appropriation has had a negative cause and effect on culture and identifies the harm of the marginalized culture.

Similarly, Green and Kaiser said that “fashion designers and celebrities have employed this public consciousness to draw attention – both positive and negative – to themselves and the products they hope to sell” but while social media users continue to draw attention and criticize designers and trendsetters for cultural appropriation, “the discourse simultaneously draws attention to individuals and/or brands” committing the offense.

The results of this study suggest that cultural appropriation continues to be a tough and sensitive topic for several. I believe that this study helped open the door for future research and the ability to analyze what the meaning of cultural appropriation is and how it affects culture universally and those around the world as a whole. The articles selected for this analysis also reflect this by being dominated by negative coverage from several news outlets, predominantly from news publications outside of the United States. For the years selected, all the articles from each year were mostly negative, though it showed a surprising spike in positive news coverage in 2017.

It is also important to study how culture appropriation affects our relationships with other cultures and within their own. It is an important topic to research because as Green and Kaiser said, the discussion of cultural appropriation and fashion is taking place in popular media over academia. Due to this significant factor, future studies should bridge the gap to understanding the deeper causes and effects of cultural appropriation. It is also important to study social media as a platform for this discussion because of how

much it is becoming a part of research and life. This study is a relevant addition because of its application of cultivation to social media and specific modern mediums.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Tables

Table A1. Initial Findings from Keyhole (Nov. 1 – Nov. 15, 2016)

Sentiment	Demographic	Top Hashtag
37.2% negative	70.7% male	#racism
46.8% neutral	29.3% female	#sjw
16% positive		#whiteprivilege

Table A2. Top Tweets Twitter Analysis of 115 Tweets

Tone	Percentage of Tweets
Neutral	17.39%
Negative	77.39%
Positive	5.22%

Table A3. Latest Tweets Twitter Analysis of 115 Tweets

Tone	Percentage of Tweets
Neutral	37.39%
Negative	56.52%
Positive	6.09%

Table A4. Themes found in Total Sample of 230 Tweets

Themes	Percentage of Tweets
Concept	18.4%
Celebrities	21.4%
Costuming	2.7%
Fashion	15.3%
Opinions/Commentary	42.2%
TOTAL:	100%

Table A.5. Lexis Nexis Analysis: News Coverage of “Cultural Appropriation,” “Fashion”

Year	Number of articles using search terms
2000	2
2001	1
2002	7
2003	10
2004	5
2005	3
2006	3
2007	2
2008	4
2009	7
2010	5
2011	3
2012	6
2013	21
2014	56
2015	117
2016	172
2017	326

Table A.6. Theme Analysis of Articles in 2000

Theme	Percentages
Neutral	50%
Negative	50%
Positive	0
Total:	100% (2 articles)

Table A.7. Theme Analysis of Articles in 2013

Theme	Percentages
Neutral	14.3%
Negative	61.9%
Positive	23.8%
Total:	100% (21 articles)

Table A.8. Theme Analysis of Articles in 2014

Theme	Percentages
Neutral	19.6%
Negative	55.4%
Positive	25%
Total:	100% (56 articles)

Table A.9. Theme Analysis of Articles in 2017

Theme	Percentages
Neutral	20.3%
Negative	42.3%
Positive	37.4%
Total:	100% (163 articles)

APPENDIX B

Examples of Tweets



FIGURE B.1: An example of a negative tweet.

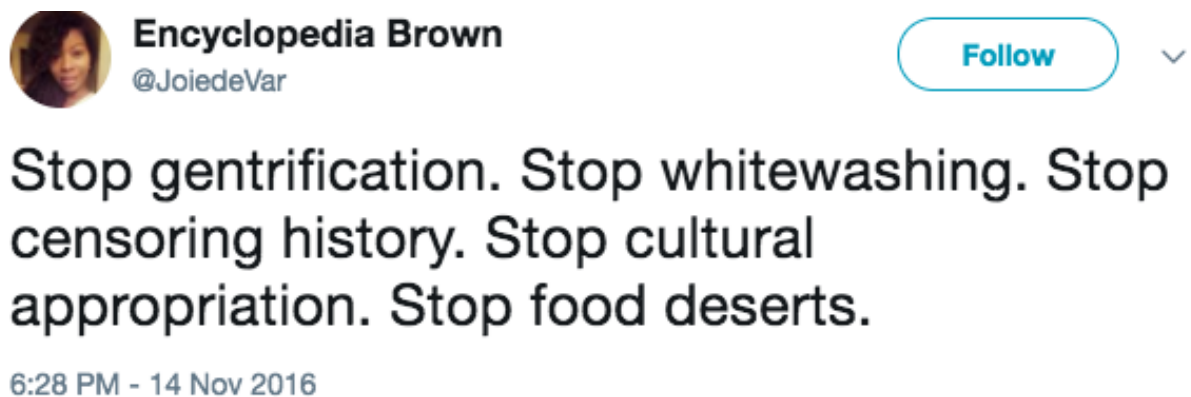


FIGURE B.2: An example of a negative tweet.

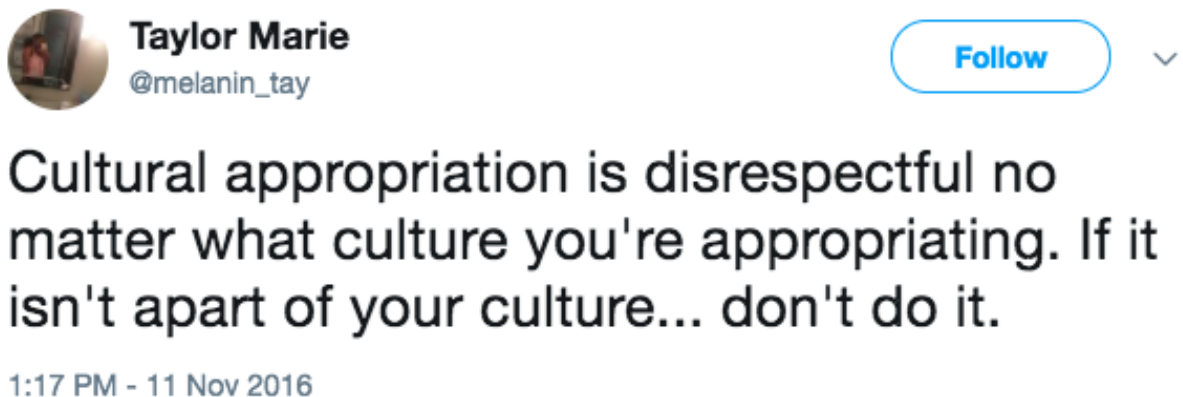


FIGURE B.3: An example of a positive action tweet.

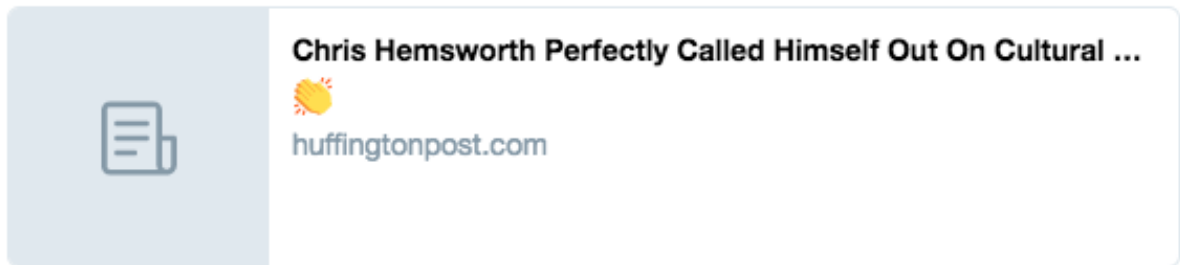


Chétina M
@C_Muteba

Follow



Need more Empathy 4 all **#NoDAPL** -->
Chris Hemsworth called himself out on
cultural appropriation
huffingtonpost.com/entry/chris-he ... via
[@blackvoices](https://twitter.com/blackvoices)



Chris Hemsworth Perfectly Called Himself Out On Cultural ...
huffingtonpost.com

12:54 PM - 11 Nov 2016

FIGURE B.4: An example of a positive tweet.

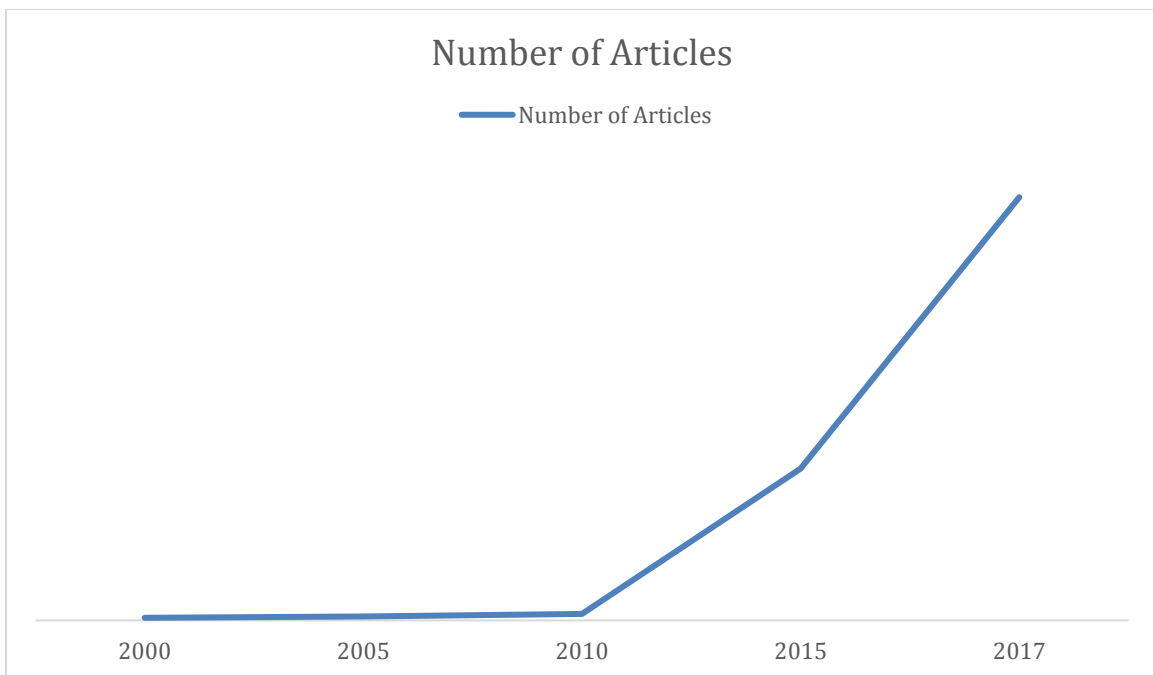


Figure B.5. Figure representing frequency of news articles covering “cultural appropriation” and “fashion” from 2000 to 2017.

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