2016

Culture for Sale: The Appropriation of Japanese Style Tattoos through Transculturation

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Culture for Sale: The Appropriation of Japanese Style Tattoos through Transculturation

(TITLE)

BY

Evan Lohmann

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2016

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Abstract

Japanese style tattoos onto the bodies of celebrities in the United States articulate a lack of awareness towards this ancient art form through their appropriation of historically inaccurate images. The prominence of these celebrities in magazines circulated within the United States act as powerful mediums which may lead to the commodification of certain Japanese symbols in capitalistic societies like the United States. I use post-colonialism, Orientalism, transnationalism and hyper identification as the theoretical framework and semiotics as the methodology in order to examine fourteen magazine covers that showcase celebrities in the United States sporting noticeable Japanese style tattoos. The overall analysis provides insight into the traditional meanings behind certain Japanese images, explains how each celebrity's tattoo can be understood through the selected theoretical framework/methodology, and details transculturation as the dominant form of appropriation that the majority of these images fall under.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my father, mother, and sisters, all of whom have been so supportive of my continued education. Their support has given me the strength and encouragement necessary to achieve the very best in all that I do.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me in the completion of this thesis, including my fellow classmates, committee members (Dr. Elizabeth Gill and Dr. David Gracon), and Dr. T.M. Linda Scholz, my thesis advisor. It is with the guidance and diligence of these individuals that I was able to complete this project ahead of schedule and meet my goal of obtaining a graduate degree. I am forever grateful for their patience, perseverance, and feedback in choosing to working alongside me. Thank you.

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Chapter 1: A Postmodern Approach to Body Modification

Introduction and Rationale

The practice of tattooing as a form of body modification can be found in almost every aspect of U.S. popular culture, from prominent actors in the entertainment industry to sports icons in athletic arenas around the world. At one time reserved for specific subgroups considered to be on the fringe of society (e.g., criminals, outlaws, sailors), tattooing has seen a vast increase in popularity within the past few decades. According to Roberts (2012), it is estimated that the number of U.S. Americans with tattoos ranges anywhere from one in ten to one in five. In addition to an increase in the number of individuals with tattoos, the concept of tattooing itself has undergone a drastic redefinition that has taken on an undoubtedly different meaning than for previous generations.

Dating back to the Greek and Roman empires, tattooing was once considered a trademark of the deviant, a form of punishment or physical indicator of one's criminality (Fisher, 2002). Drawing on a Foucauldian framework, Gustafson (2000) interprets this particular use of tattooing by the Greek and Roman empires as a mechanism for control, quoting *Discipline and Punish*, "But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (Gustafson, 2000, p. 24). By marking their bodies, Greek and Roman states could more easily control the movements of criminals, turning their bodies into agents of the state through visible signs indicative of their perceived social role. Though tattoos throughout history were more

often than not associated with criminal offenses, it wasn't until the late nineteenth century that tattoos, ironically, became associated with the wealthy upper class (Fisher, 2002).

Despite the varied socioeconomic groups seeking tattoos in Europe and the United States during the late 1800's, tattooing alone did not serve as a unifying element among the classes, in fact, it stood to further separate them; those in the lower class who received tattoos were still thought of as deviant miscreants while those in the upper class were seen as worldly and well-traveled (Fisher, 2002; Roberts, 2012). To upper class individuals during this time, brandishing a tattoo meant that you had money enough to travel and the ability to consume other cultures, an appropriation that could be read as a type of permanent commodity or evidence of one's wealth, particularly if the tattoo received was inked in a foreign language. Though the increased prevalence of tattooing during this time period seems to coincide quite well with the increase in modernity and the invention of the first tattoo machine, tattoos were still read as somewhat garish, outlandish, and were thus shortly removed from the upper classes' repertoire for several decades to come (Roberts, 2012).

The current fascination surrounding tattoos for younger generations, particularly in the United States, stems in part from their prevalence in mediated popular culture. Pop-icons in all forms of media, from music videos to magazine covers, have softened the image of body modification, encouraging fans to follow in their footsteps (Carmen, Guitar, & Dillon, 2012). People like Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp are among some of the most notorious stars to strut the red carpet in attire that accentuates their body art, though this celebrity tattoo phenomenon is not limited solely to actors and actresses in Hollywood. It is estimated that around fifty percent of members in the National

Basketball Association (NBA) are tattooed, including high-ranking players such as Michael Jordan and Shaquille O'Neal (Koust, 2006). Tattoos were also normalized, or given a "softer" image, when popular toy and childhood icon Barbie released Butterfly Art Barbie in 1999, a version of the doll that showcased a permanent tattoo on her stomach (Carmen, Guitar, & Dillon, 2012). As the art of tattooing began transitioning into the realm of "family friendly" during the late 1990's, via popular culture, society began to distance the concept of body modification from the stigmatizations previously associated with the act of permanently marking one's skin (Carmen, Guitar, & Dillon, 2012). Though this transition has gained considerable ground in the past few years, there are still some stigmas that permeate the thoughts of the older generations.

The prevalence of tattooed personalities, both on and off the screen, either real or fictional, can be seen as lionizing the subcultural art of tattooing, allowing body modification to be used as a primary communicative tool for various youth cultures around the world (Koust, 2006). According to Carmen, Guitar, and Dillon (2012), the motivations behind getting a tattoo typically fall into one of three categories: (1) as a symbol of an important event, love, or friendship, (2) to signal group membership, and/or (3) as a marker of one's individuality. Digging deeper into these three categories and the rhetoric of display, individuals may choose to become tattooed as a way to acknowledge some degree of internal/personality change, as a way to protest and resist the dominant society, or simply to be perceived as more youthful (Chao, 2006). Though individuals who receive tattoos more closely identify with other tattooed individuals, they still remain distinct as individuals, allowing inked art to tell the story or history of their transformation up until the point of being tattooed (Chao, 2006). The ability to

communicate one's identity through permanent markings on the skin, it should be noted, is not free from misinterpretation, especially when considering tattoos of cultural symbols oftentimes associated with another country. Those receiving the tattoo must rely on their own intuition or the tattoo artist, some dependable authority, to achieve what they believe to be an "authentic" cultural meaning.

An example of this is the fury that actress Angelina Jolie sparked after receiving a tattoo on her left shoulder blade while in Thailand. Jolie's tattoo features five vertical rows of ancient Khmer script, which is said to be imbued with spirituality and superstition according to ancient Buddhist text (Thornhill, 2015). Tattoos of this nature are believed by some to bless the wearer with magical powers that bring about good luck and protection from evil spirits, a belief that many Buddhists do not take lightly (Thornhill, 2015). The tension surrounding Jolie's permanent inking comes specifically from Thai citizens who claim that her tattoo, like the many other tattoos that U.S. Americans and Europeans receive in Thailand, is a misappropriation of Thai culture (Thornhill, 2015). Many Thai Buddhists believe that U.S. Americans and Europeans with tattoos similar to Jolie's are done purely as fashion statements, that there is no belief behind the tattoo, and that one should not simply opt for a tattoo based on aesthetic reasoning (Thornhill, 2015).

Similarly, singer and songwriter Madonna received criticism for the Hebrew tattoo displayed on her upper right arm. Though the script that Madonna chose to exhibit does not actually form a Hebrew word, it does symbolize one of the many names for God written in the Kabbalah, a school of mystical thought originating from Judaism (Baran, 2009). Criticism over Madonna's tattoo comes from the Jewish community who claim

that body modification is forbidden under Hebrew law, that these laws are sacred to the Kabbalah faith, and that breaking them is inexcusable (Baran, 2009). Despite the criticism surrounding her tattoo, including whether the tattoo is permanent or temporary, there is the possibility that Madonna never meant to offend anyone by infringing upon these sacred laws, that it was her ignorance towards traditional Judaic law that led the pop-star to blindly ink her skin.

The plethora of academic research on tattoos typically fall into one of two categories: they either (1) portray tattoos negatively by focusing on body modification as deviant behavior or (2) they view tattoos as positively contributing to fashion and the formation of an individual's distinct identity. While these two categories represent accurate aspects of tattooing culture, I propose a third category of research that investigates the relationship between tattoos and their meaning when taken out of historical/local context. More specifically, this category includes how individuals receive tattoos of symbols not within their social or cultural practices, suggesting that such tattoos are a cultural appropriation in which a particular country's cultural symbols are exoticized. For instance, traditional Japanese style tattoos have been given their own genre within that tattooing subculture and are easily some of the most sought after designs. In this study, I proposed and answered the following research questions:

RQ1: Which Japanese style tattoos or Japanese symbols are often tattooed on celebrities' bodies?

RQ2: What does the display of Japanese style tattoos by celebrities in the U.S. suggest about our understanding of cultural appropriation?

I selected fourteen covers from various popular magazines that showcased celebrities sporting noticeable Japanese style tattoos in order to see how public figures appropriate a particular aspect of a culture outside of their own. I began by looking at industry magazines, such as *Inked* magazine, to see which and what types of celebrities were openly showcasing their works of body art. I then searched through some of the most common magazines currently in circulation within the United States that these celebrities appeared in, making sure that each cover selected had clear images of the selected celebrities' Japanese style tattoos, ruling out any covers where the celebrities' tattoos were not legible to the average viewer despite the knowledge that these celebrities did in fact have Japanese style tattoos hidden beneath their clothing. In looking at these magazine covers, the second chapter answered the first research question concerning which Japanese symbols are often tattooed on celebrity bodies in the U.S. and what those symbols may represent. The third chapter then facilitated a discussion about our understanding of cultural appropriation as it relates to this study on Japanese style tattooing, advocating for transculturation as the dominant category of appropriation in which these particular tattoos fall under. Understanding cultural appropriation becomes necessary if we as a society wish to challenge the status quo and critique the exploitative and oppressive thoughts that have become so entrenched within the U.S.' history as a nation.

Perspectives on Tattooing in Japan

In Japan, it is still quite common to see the sign, 'No Tattooed People Allowed', overtly displayed in the windows or doorframes of saunas and pools despite the legality of tattooing in the island nation. Unlike Europe or the United States, where tattoos are

slowly making their way into mainstream society, Japan still struggles with the acceptance of what was once a source of historical and sociocultural conflict (Yamada, 2009). Dating back as far as 10,000 B.C., tattoos in Japan were used for both spiritual and decorative purposes, though the first actual written record of this kind of tattooing was found in the *History of Chinese Dynasties* around 300 A.D. (Waytowich, 2014). In this text, Japanese men were depicted as adorning their faces and bodies with permanent ink, acts that eventually came to be normalized in early Japanese societies. It wasn't until around 600 A.D. that tattoos took on a more negative connotation, transitioning from acts of ornamentation to labels of criminal punishment (Waytowich, 2014). In these instances, tattoos served to mark an individual's crime and where the offense was committed, a type of branding reserved for those who had committed only serious crimes (Waytowich, 2014). Bearing the markings of a tattoo in Japan at that time meant that individuals faced the possibility of being ostracized by members of their immediate family and could potentially be denied all participation in community life, a severe form of punishment for a society where social cooperation is highly valued (Iwai, 2010).

While tattooing was often times used as a form of punishment or a type of ranking system within Japanese society, where the lower classes were inscribed for classified identification (Iwai, 2010), other groups slowly began to mark themselves for a perceived different type of identification. Kishobori, or a vow tattoo, was widely practiced among geishas and prostitutes as an expression of their love towards a particular client; vow tattoo's consisted of the lover's name and the Japanese character for life inscribed on the inside of the arm (Yamada, 2009). Criminal organizations also adopted the practice of tattooing, the most notorious being the Japanese yakuza; many yakuza who made the

decision to devote themselves to a life of crime were tattooed as proof of their commitment and loyalty towards the organization (Yamada, 2009). As the yakuza began to adopt these elaborate designs in the form of body suits, usually worn beneath one's clothing, tattooing began to represent unresolved conflicts within the organization, including symbols of character traits that the wearer wished to emulate (Waytowich, 2014). Paralleling the popularity of tattooing criminals at the time, it is also suggested that perhaps the yakuza's tattoos originally served as marks of punishment for previous crimes committed, that these tattoos were expanded upon on at later points in time in order to prove one's manliness (Yamada, 2009).

Outside of vow tattoos and tattoos as organizational identification, tattooing was a common tribal custom among several indigenous populations throughout Japan, including the Ainu, a population hailing from Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido, and the Ryukyu, natives of what is now Japan's Okinawa prefecture (Yamada, 2009). The motivations behind indigenous tattooing are manifold, including signs of religious beliefs, indications of sexual maturity, and for therapeutic purposes (Yoshioka, 1996). The stigmatization and social oppression resulting from such tattoos ultimately served as a platform from which these various populations could rebel against authoritarian rule.

As modernization began to spread throughout Japan during the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), including new concepts and ideas from the West, the practice of tattooing became synonymous with barbarism and was officially banned until the end of the Second World War, though Japanese artists were still allowed to tattoo foreigners including U.S. American sailors docked at Japanese ports (Iwai, 2010; Yamada, 2009; Waytowich, 2014). Based on the long history of tattooing in Japan, pricking one's body

with pigment still possesses extremely negative connotations in Japanese culture today, leading tattoos to become associated with gang activity, public indecency, and other anti-social aspects of traditional Japanese society (Hiramoto, 2015). The stigmatizations that tattoos possess in modern day Japan thus have greater consequences than for most Western nations like the United States. For example, receiving a tattoo may exclude an individual from a wide range of occupations, meaning that discrimination based on the possession of body art is a common occurrence still practiced in Japan to this very day (Hiramoto, 2015). Tattoos may also exclude a person from entering a business establishment or eating at a local restaurant.

Despite the stigmatization surrounding tattooing culture in Japan, many of the younger generations have slowly begun to embrace the idea of one-point tattoos, a Western-influenced type of tattooing where the individual bears a single marking (Yamada, 2009). This fascination with the West, the United States in particular, has led Japanese teenagers to forgo traditional Japanese stylized tattoos in favor of Western-style motifs; in this sense, the traditional meanings one would typically associate with Japanese tattoos have become compromised by the influence of dominant Western cultures (Yamada, 2009). As a result, traditional tattooists do not publicize their business and rarely accept new customers, creating tensions between contemporary tattooists who utilize Western styles of tattooing, such as new school or American traditional, and traditionalists who strictly preserve the cultural institution of Japanese style tattooing (Yamada, 2009). These polarized attitudes of practice in Japan are best understood as a result of globalization.

The Problem with Globalization

The phenomenon of globalization has produced a society that is in a constant state of fluidity; people, ideas, money, and even social movements are transnational, crossing borders and cultures often unilaterally (Shome & Hedge, 2002). These unequal flows of capital and culture, as noted by Shome and Hedge (2002), challenge our theoretical framework for studying and understanding culture because globalization is not homogeneous, nor is it sporadic. Rather, globalization represents a constant connection to culture on a global scale that challenges our understanding of power, disempowerment, marginality, and centrality. Globalization can thus be understood as the product of multiple modernities entrenched in the re-articulation of culture and capital.

Yamada (2009) notes how the ancient art of tattooing is a good case in which to examine the characteristics of globalization. He views the contemporary practice of tattooing in Japan as representational of pre-modern values that have been lost in transition from a modern to a postmodern period. In traditional Japanese society, the meanings of tattoos were social symbols that aided in the formation of one's identity. Nowadays, these social linkages are no longer as important though they can and do still possess various stigmatizations within society. Since tattoos today are more individualist than they are collectivist, they are being mass produced in order to meet the clients' needs in what Yamada (2009) considers to be an ever evolving consumeristic society. Ironically, Japanese tattooing is now being imported to Japan in reverse, appearing as Western one-point tattoos that can be seen as fueling a relatively new trend among Japanese youth.

Tattooed bodies in Japan may be less negatively stereotyped than they once were hundreds of years ago, but the traditional values and beliefs associated with their meaning have weakened. These meanings have consequently become co-opted by the Western world, particularly by the United States, leading one to question whether the practice of Japanese tattooing reflects "true" Japanese culture. Nevertheless, the appropriation of body art does not happen by chance, nor does it happen by mutual agreement. It is mainstream culture which determines whether or not such practices become mainstream or marginal (Yamada, 2009). In this sense, globalization can be seen as forcing Japanese tattooing practices out of marginalization by changing the meaning behind the traditional nature of tattoos. This is partially due to their appropriation within conventional U.S. American culture.

Methodology: Semiotics

For Saussure, the production of meaning was heavily dependent on understanding language as a system of signs (Hall, 1997). Signs in this sense include sounds, images, written words, paintings, photographs, or anything that allows an individual to express or communicate ideas in ways that allow for greater understanding. Thus, material objects, such as magazine covers, seemingly function as signs that serve to communicate meaning from one person to another. Saussure insisted that signs could be broken down into two further elements, the signifier and the signified (Hall, 1997). The first element, the signifier, relates to form, the form being the actual word, image, photo, etc. whereas the second element, the signified, is the corresponding concept that is triggered by the form (Hall, 1997). For example, the image of a cell phone (signifier) correlates with the concept of wireless technology (signified).

In semiotics, however, there are two terms that can be used to describe this relationship between the signifier and the signified that warrant discussion: denotation and connotation. Denotation is oftentimes described as the definitional, "literal", or most obvious meaning that one could attribute to a sign (Chandler, 2014). In this sense, a signifier presents a homogenized representation of a sign to all viewers of a particular culture that at any given time would be recognized as possessing a very specific, one-dimensional meaning, alluding to the notion that denotation refers to signified meanings as being culturally specific. Connotation, on the other hand, is a shift in denotative meaning used to refer to the socio-cultural and, oftentimes, personal association that any number of people may contribute to a particular sign under review (Chandler, 2014). These interpretations may relate to and be based upon a person's class, age, ethnicity, or any number of individual identifiers unique to the person(s) reviewing the sign(s); connotation thus attempts to understand the multiplicity of meanings that may be attributed to a sign based upon factors of individual difference. This multiplicity may then contribute to the loss of historical meaning pushing the sign into the realm of the mythical and ideological.

The concept of a denotative semiotic approach was utilized methodologically for this study in order to understand how popular magazine covers (the sign) ostensibly contribute to a more homogenized understanding of Japanese tattoos (the signifier) and their appropriation/interpretation within the United States (signified). The tattoos in each magazine cover were chosen for consideration based on their placement and design while the magazine covers selected for review fall into one of three categories: (1) tattooing magazines, (2) men's health magazines, and (3) magazines dedicated to trends in fashion.

These magazine covers were selected in particular for their popularity among various social groups around the world, including the various racial and ethnic social groups within the United States.

Theoretical Framework: Orientalism, Post-Colonialism, Transnationalism, and Hyper-Identification

According to Edward Said (1978), Orientalism refers to the West's attempts to tame the static, undeveloped societies of the "Far East" (mainly China and Japan) in ways that situate Western nations as rational, flexible, and superior to all others. Through this definition, Orientalism posits the East as being in direct contrast to the West. For U.S. Americans, these Eastern nations are seen as considerably different from the United States in almost all aspects of life, bringing about a lack of interest and understanding surrounding certain beliefs characteristic of countries that comprise the Orient. Said (1978) notes that though this definition of Orientalism is still maintained by several nations around the world, certain Western European countries have had a much longer history of coming to terms with the Orient. According to Chao's (2006) work on tattooing and piercing, European modernism in the nineteenth century was conceived through the invention of primitivism. In this sense, once having seen the exotically different, Europeans labeled it primitive, transforming the objective notion of what was seen into the subjective notion of what was considered primitive. This is due in part because of the proximity of the Orient adjacent to Europe and the fact that the Orient is a place that was once home to some of Europe's oldest and richest colonies; in essence, the Orient has helped to define what it means to be Western in Europe by showing European nations what they are not. The United States' lack of history in the Orient, in part because

of distance, is just one of several factors that contribute to Americans' lack of interest and knowledge about cultural practices native to the "Far East".

In her article titled *Orientalism as a form of Confession*, Andrea Teti (2014) suggests that Orientalism's power as a discourse lies in its ability to present itself as the sole truth about the Orient, rather than one of many possible truths. This view represents a central argument to Said's claim that Orientalism is a Western style of domination which focuses on restructuring and maintaining authority over "Far Eastern nations". Orientalism is thus perceived as a corporate institution promoting a particular style of thought (Teti, 2014). Hinting at the macro-structural level in which Orientalism operates, Said (1978) explicitly claims that as a discourse, Orientalism retains the ability to "manage-and even produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (p. 11). This idea of control over the Orient allows Western nations to claim truth to the inner workings of "Far Eastern" nations in order to meet the needs necessary for understanding why things in the Orient operate in the ways in which they do. For the purposes of tattooing in Japan, applying an Orientalist discourse to this sacred art has allowed the United States to alter the meaning behind what it means to acquire a traditional Japanese tattoo as a type of permanent commodity.

The historical relationship between the United States and Japan is a perfect example of Orientalism's ability to manage and influence particular nations of the Orient. On July 8th, 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy sailed into the Tokyo harbor and forced Japan to enter into trade with the United States (Commodore Perry and Japan, 2009). Japan, at the time, had no established navy with which to defend

its borders, thus, the Japanese were made to agree to the terms and conditions as laid out by Perry and the United States (Commodore Perry and Japan, 2009). This particular instance between the U.S. and Japan came at time when all Western powers sought to open new markets for their manufactured goods abroad, and though Perry's fleet of naval vessels was relatively small, the Japanese knew that this was just the beginning of Western interest towards their island nation (Commodore Perry and Japan, 2009). Though it only took a year for Japan to formally agree to open its ports to the U.S. and another four years for Japan to allow foreigners to reside within its borders, many Japanese sought isolation from the encroaching Western influence (Commodore Perry and Japan, 2009). This Western demand for trade is what eventually led to the creation of a new, centralized government within Japan and the exchange of Japanese goods worldwide.

The incorporation of Western influence in Japan really took off towards the end of World War II because of the structural changes that took place in Japan, including the alteration of the Japanese psyche. These drastic cultural and social changes challenged the historical balance of yin and yang forcing the Japanese to undergo a considerable identity crisis where they subsequently had to redefine themselves and what it meant to be Japanese in a now globalized society (Ohashi, 2008). Ohashi (2008) notes that prior to the end of World War II, the Japanese psyche was a collective one where most individuals shared the same common beliefs. It wasn't until the end of World War II that the Japanese lost their sense of self, allowing a new cultural shadow filled with a hunger for wealth, power, and success to develop and essentially change what it meant to be Japanese (Ohashi, 2008).

The relationship between the Occident (the West) and the Orient is ultimately a relationship of power, domination, and hegemony. Said (1978) believes the Orient was Orientalized not because it was considered "Oriental" by nineteenth-century standards, but because it submitted to being made Oriental; the "Far East" allowed the West to speak for and represent them to the rest of the world. In doing so, the interconnectedness between the East and the West was developed primarily as unidirectional where the Eastern "other" became functional to and structured by its relationship to the West (Teti, 2014). Orientalism thus depends on the positionality of Western superiority where the Westerner rarely loses the upper hand and where Western consciousness remains unchallenged in who or what is considered to be "Oriental," a type of thinking that may come across to researchers as a type of colonial rule (Said, 1978).

If the lessons of nineteenth century colonialism have taught us anything, it should be that the prefix "post," when attached to the term colonial, does not mean an end to that which it is appended (Shome, 1998). Rather, the term "post" suggests a thinking beyond its appendage that examines and problematizes the complex power relations surrounding colonialism. Thus, post-colonialism as a theoretical framework is best understood as a critical response that aims to think through the problems posited by colonialism, proposing that not all traces of colonialism have in fact disappeared (Shome, 1998). The post-colonial, as Peter Hulme (1995) notes, is comprised of two distinct dimensions. The first is a theoretical project that thinks through the problems of colonialism, never once suggesting that all colonialisms are the same. The second dimension of post-colonialism signals a shift from a time of direct territorial rule, during the age of empires, to a time of cultural reproduction, a type of global capitalism, where former colonial powers

reproduced the same logic of their ancestors in order to assert their dominance in today's global society (Shome, 1998). Tattooing culture in the United States is but one example of cultural reproduction that capitalizes on the uniqueness of an ancient Japanese art form. The term "post" in post-colonialism therefore begs us to re-examine our previous understandings of colonial relations in order to see how colonialism still permeates contemporary thought.

According to Peter Hulme (1995), the post-colonial needs to be seen as a descriptive term, not an evaluative one, whereby post-colonialism is understood as a complex matrix of colonialism in which new relations and identities are constantly being produced and reproduced. As an example, Shome (1998) notes that because of the colonial occupations by Western superpowers, such as Great Britain and France, and the subsequent phase of decolonization on the part of these nations, there came a vast movement of people migrating from former colonized countries to the bustling centers of former colonial powers. These shifts in populations, coupled with the dependence of former colonized countries on the investments in the capitalism of the West, demonstrate the complex global relations previously mentioned. If one attempts to trace the reasons and causes behind these conditions, it becomes apparent that they are the direct result of the aftermath of colonial rule, proving that the prefix "post" suggests a departure from direct colonial occupation but not a departure from colonialism altogether.

One of the biggest criticisms of postcolonial studies surrounds the question of who can speak for or represent the views of the "other," a thought paralleling an Orientalist approach to modern day cultural discourse (Hasian, 2001). In this sense, post-colonialism may be viewed through a lens of reinvention where the ways in which we

perceive culture become suspect, questioning how we come to know what we know based on who is in charge of communicating difference. Historically, the West has always served as the voice for the East (the colonizers for the colonized) leading critics to wonder whose experiences are actually being represented in current literature and how those experiences have subverted the meaning behind traditional cultural practices (Hasian, 2001). In his essay titled *Getting Past the Latest 'Post': Assessing the Term 'Post-Colonial'*, Anandam Kavoori (1998) postulates that postcolonial intellectuals complicate the matter when the very discourse that they attempt to examine has more to do with acquiring institutional visibility than intellectual inquiry, a tactic that undermines the theoretical underpinnings of post-colonial studies in favor of opportunism. Shome (1998) counters this by first acknowledging that there is no denying the imperialist impulses that guide scholars in academia and second, by proposing that one cannot simply essentialize identities in the way that Kavoori seems to. Rather, scholars and researchers must work to intervene, change, and undo what has previously been produced by finding new ways to negotiate the structures being critiqued (Shome, 1998). The purpose of this thesis aimed to do just that, to change previous thoughts towards tattooing in the United States in order to comprehend the diverse reasoning behind the appropriation of foreign tattoos, specifically Japanese tattoos, within a dominant Western society. Studying the appropriation of Japanese tattoos in the U.S. in particular may help to uncover how tattoos as permanent commodities play into peoples' understanding of culture and ultimately how those people choose communicate their identity to the rest of the world.

Another criticism often times directed at post-colonial scholars is that they are Western-trained and that their stance, politics, and intentions towards this area of research within academia should be suspect (Shome, 1998). It may be true that several post-colonial scholars are Western-trained, from a Western epistemology, but Shome (1998) sees this predicament as just another area of exploration within post-colonial studies. After all, many prominent intellectuals are/were trained as a result of colonialism to which they have the potential to become the subjects of study. According to Shome (1998) we have little choice in the matter, viewing post-colonialism from a Western prospective, because we are constantly subject to colonial intellectual domination, a quandary that has become characteristic of current post-colonial studies. Post-colonialism, combined with notions of globalization, thus questions how identity becomes a source of immense struggle, an area best explained from a transnationalist point of view.

Territorial colonialism may have been viewed on a global perspective but these colonial encounters were relatively contained, fixed within physical boundaries of time and space. It wasn't until the development of globalization that culture began to cross the margins of corporal location, spreading from one country to the next in a process known as transnationalism (Shome & Hedge, 2002). According to Shome (2006), a transnational feminist prospective is seen as:

> refus[ing] the additive area studies logic of interrogating the global—the "we are the world" model of a benign internationalism that naively ignores historical responsibilities and the continuing legacies of colonialism—past and present—

> through which nations, culture, economics, and desires remain intimately and violently linked today. (p. 256)

Within our own field of communication studies, Shome (2006) notes that multiculturalism has been so U.S. centered that little room has been left to examine the ways in which America's relations with other countries, oftentimes violent, have impacted populations in the rest of the world. Instead, the United States tends to focus on its own nationalism without connections to a larger, more global scale, producing a nation that is unable to associate the national with the international (Shome, 2006). Transnationalism thus becomes salient for studying the practice of tattooing within the United States because of what I argue to be U.S. Americans' inability to connect certain tattooing styles within a larger cultural context. It is not enough to label a tattoo as being "foreign" without knowing the circumstance(s) from which the tattoo traditionally originated; co-opted meanings thus become taken for granted as "real" and "traditional".

The theoretical impulses of transnationalism, as noted by Shome (2006), are of particular significance to media studies where the media, to which I include magazine covers, situate a central site upon which global discrepancies are constantly being staged. The media thus enables broad representations of transnationalism through which the body is constantly being scripted and re-scripted through the use of colonial logic in order to achieve a specific end. In an international context, the body, through the media, is used as a type of imagery to create a sense of cultural citizenship whereby varying populations consume the aesthetics and looks characteristic of another country (Shome, 2006). This consumption affords individuals a sense of cultural empowerment because of their ability

to reproduce foreign logic on a smaller, domestic scale; one no longer has to travel to far off lands in order to consume culture or be perceived as culturally competent.

The appropriation of Japanese body art practices by U.S. Americans has become quite a fad within the United States today. The displacement of these tattoos on the bodies of some of Hollywood's most famous celebrities has enabled them to recode their bodies as "hip" and "cool," spreading their logic to the minds of the everyday person through the power of the media. Thus, the consumption and subsequent appropriation of foreign tattoos within the United States as a form of transnationalism has afforded American's the ability to create a new logic of disembodiment where the historical significance of a particular tattoo becomes fleeting, void of any substantial cultural awareness. This process of globalization and transnationalism ultimately results in representations that have become characteristic in the creation of an individual's identity—a process inherently linked to notions of hyper-identity.

According to Homi Bhabha (1994), there is a space that exists between the labels associated with one's individuality, a path between fixed identities where cultural hybridity acknowledges difference without assuming an imposed hierarchy of order. Hyper-identity can thus be defined as having access to two or more identities in ways that challenge our sense of what it means to live in a post-colonialist society (Easthope, 1998). Contesting our notions of identity, Easthope (1998), drawing on the works of Homi Bhabha, articulates cultural difference as the in-between spaces which intersect the domains of variance, allowing individuals to walk a fine line between two or more supposedly static identities. In this way, having access to differing values and beliefs within mainstream society allows individuals to create a unique identity informed by

what they perceive to be genuine culture. Such is the case with body modification; the prevalence of foreign, "exotic" imagery in the media, due in part to globalization, has allowed the everyday individual to create an identity based upon the cultures they consume on a daily basis. But more than the ease of access, hyper-identity can also be seen as incorporating real or supposed meaning into a person's understanding of culture, a development that in recent years has only served to foster this notion of cultural hybridity.

The formation of a new identity through the use of foreign tattooing in the United States is best exemplified through our understanding of hyper-identification, wherein individuals are able to create new, more cultured representations of themselves based upon the imported images that they consume in popular media today. The prevalence of Japanese tattoos in Hollywood has resulted in a relatively new phenomenon within the United States where this particular style of tattooing has been deemed as "hip" and "cool". Western perceptions of Japanese tattooing practices have thus resulted in the co-construction of one's identity wherein the true meaning behind these tattoos have been altered in order to serve the needs of the American people. This subverted meaning of Japanese tattooing practices can be looked at as a direct result of globalization and best understood as the product of Orientalism as explained by Edward Said; through Orientalism, we are able to see how the United States has normalized the tattooing practices of a "Far Eastern nation" that were once thought to be both barbaric and primitive. Though the American people may be vaguely aware of the extent to which the meanings of traditional Japanese tattoos have been altered, a look at some popular

magazine covers will reveal the degree to which this ancient art form has been taken out of context.

In the next chapter, I examined fourteen magazine covers from *Men's Health*, *Inked Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *Details*, *Bello Sport, Tattoo Life*, *Nylon Guys*, *Shape, D'Scene,* and *Code* in order to reveal which Japanese style tattoos are more often tattooed onto the bodies of celebrities in U.S. circulated magazines and what those tattoos may represent. It should be noted that though *D'Scene* is technically a London based magazine, with this particular issue showcasing a prominent British soccer player and model, it was chosen for the simple fact that U.S. Americans represent this magazine's largest subscriber base with 44% of all readers being located in the United States. After their examination, I then used the covers of these magazines to facilitate a discussion about cultural appropriation as it relates to our understanding of Japanese style tattoos in order to determine which categories of appropriation these tattoos fall under. The themes that I uncovered in these next two chapters provided insight into some of the problems attributed to the advancement of globalization. In the final chapter, I concluded by reviewing my findings and the implications of these findings. It was my goal to challenge dominant Western perspectives about the Orient in order to build a greater sense of understanding about the implications of the appropriation of certain cultures' symbols that may be viewed as vastly different from our own.

Chapter 2: The Meaning Behind Stylized Tattooing

Symbols and signs are often used as a way to communicate to others within society and as such, tattoos serve as representations of not only one's self, but also one's perceived interactions with whom they consider to be their peers. While the art of tattooing can be read as a person's attempt at disassociating themselves from conventional society, it can also serve as a connection to alternative social groups who may have an increased interest towards this form of body modification. This idea of self-expression, according to Yamada (2008), is a response to a set of events that a person may be experiencing in their life. The proposed analysis that follows analyzed the relationship between Japanese style tattoos and their meaning when taken out of their original and historical context. However, in order to comprehend the ancient art of Japanese tattooing, one must first understand the traditional meaning attributed to some common forms of imagery used for this type of self-expression as well as how the placement of these images add to their overall distinctive nature.

Common Appropriations

The reasoning behind a person's choice in tattoo design is inherently personal in that no two people attribute the exact same meaning to any one particular design. In this sense, tattooing represents a personalized art form for which its significance is restricted solely to the individual who chooses to adorn their body with intricate works of permanent ink. The personal nature attributed to tattooing is of great concern for scholars who hesitate to attach a definitive meaning to something that is, for all intents and purposes, fluid and devoid of any one singular implication. Thus, the purposed meanings that follow should be seen as a rough guideline, a suggestion, on how to read particular

shapes and symbols reflective of traditional beliefs, values, and norms in Japanese culture.

In looking at the various covers of magazines currently in circulation within the United States, it quickly became apparent that the posed celebrities were sporting noticeable tattoos that stood out as being distinctly Japanese. There were five images in particular that seemed to be prominent in at least two tattoo designs on each cover, leading one to believe that these specific images, because of the popularity of each magazine, serve as a basis for readers who may also have interest in this particular style of tattooing; the celebrities in these instances may be viewed as promoting a reified understanding of Japanese style tattoos. The images reflected on the tattooed bodies of the fourteen selected magazine covers were either: (1) a tiger; (2) a geisha; (3) a koi fish; (4) chrysanthemum or lotus blossoms; or (5) a dragon. The meanings attributed to each image outlined below have been developed in consultation with the *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*, a publication by James Hall (1996) that addresses the symbolism represented in various East Asian, including Japanese, art forms.

Tiger. Often fabled in East Asian art as a wild prowess, the tiger is said to be representational of physical strength and power. Drawing on Taoist teachings, tiger and dragon, yang and yin respectively, are the principle animals of the ancient pseudo-science feng-shui; the tiger represents land and water while the dragon represents air, a combination that symbolizes the two main forces converging upon the universe. In certain sects of Buddhism, however, red tigers are considered to be demonic, evil forces that at one point in time could only be propitiated through the sacrifice of human blood. The symbol of a tiger in this way may come to signify a person's desire to embody the

power and strength associated with the tiger or, conversely, the tigers' aggression and carelessness for others.

Geisha. In ancient times, the geisha stood as a representation of all things feminine, the ideal woman who was able to entertain her male counterpart(s) time and time again. This "hold" that geishas had over the male population was said to be representative of her power and control over society. The unavailability of geishas for anything more than entertainment purposes can be used in tattooing as a way to symbolize a person's dreams and aspirations that may be just out of their reach.

Koi Fish. The koi fish has several different meanings in Japanese art and society, including good luck and fortune as well as wealth and abundance. In ancient times, however, koi fish were said to represent fertility and marriage, a concept that may explain why some fish to this day are still considered to be some of the best aphrodisiacs known to humans. In tattooing culture, the symbolism surrounding koi fish may indicate a person's aspirations to improve themselves and their disposition in life by becoming prosperous.

Chrysanthemum or Lotus Blossom. The blossom of a chrysanthemum in Japanese society is often regarded as a solar flower, a flower whose petals are fabled to radiate like the flames of the sun. Often times seen as a sign of perfection, the chrysanthemum eventually became synonymous with longevity, joy, and royalty. Since the chrysanthemum blooms during the winter months it is said that this flower serves as the mediator between life and death, between Heaven and Earth. As a tattoo, the symbol of a chrysanthemum may come to signify not only a long life, but a complete and happy one as well.

Lotus, on the other hand, is the name of a species of water-lily that is considered to be sacred because of its innate ability to thrive in a watery habitat, water serving as a symbol for the creation of the universe. In certain teachings, the lotus blossom enters into the realm of meta-physics in that it symbolizes the pure essence of human nature; the lotus is thus considered to be Enlightenment itself. Shrines all around East Asia, including Nepal, China, and Japan, are adorned with engravings of lotus blossoms as a way to represent purity and divinity. A tattoo consisting of lotus blossoms may then serve as a symbolic representation of one's spirituality or stride towards harmony.

Dragon. The East Asian dragon represents a rare and always fleeting creature that was at times thought to be a cosmic spirit and, in contrast to prominent Western depictions of dragons, was said to be wise, a term that eventually became synonymous with royalty. Dating back thousands of years, the dragon in ancient Japanese society was worshipped as the bringer of rain and good harvests and near every dragon's mouth was depicted a flaming ball, similar to a white pearl, that was used to symbolize the thunder that oftentimes accompanied the rain. Today, those who adorn their bodies with various interpretations of dragons do so as a way to signify their strength, power, and primal instincts associated with the forces that symbolize nature and the creation of the universe.

Signifier and the Signified: Interpreting Popular Japanese Art Forms

In evaluating each of the fourteen magazine covers, it is important to understand how the images depicted contribute to our understanding of what each traditional Japanese form may represent. To this end, semiotics was used as a way to evaluate the shape, color, and structure of the five most common tattooed images (the signifier) in order to evaluate the possible meaning(s) behind each individual design (the signified).

Semiotics benefited my analysis because I was able to reveal how readers may be exposed to elements that each design may come to represent and to what extent those representations reflect customary Japanese imagery. A post-colonial framework proved useful in assessing the degree to which these particular images may have been taken out of traditional or historical context and how their commodification by celebrities in the U.S. may come to reflect notions of Said's Orientalism.

The magazine covers that showcased celebrities with noticeable tiger tattoos, the signifier in this case, contained several of the same design elements but with slight variations. One of the tiger tattoos featured on *Inked* (2012, September) and *Nylon Guys* (2013, May) consisted of solid black lines while the remaining tattoo on the cover of *Inked* (2012, August) incorporated some of the orange color that one would typically associate with a tiger. The color black in tattooing is required for all other colors to have a sense of depth and variation of hue while also acting as a barrier that separates the outline of an image from the color used to fill in particular areas. Psychologically, black is considered to be a forceful color representative of formality and convention while at the same time communicating sophistication and excellence (Wright, 2008). Due to these psychological characteristics, black is said to create a perception of weight and seriousness that is not possible with other colors. Thus, the symbolism surrounding black as the only color represented in one of these tattoos may have been chosen in order to signify a sense of stability and elegance or as a nod to the earlier forms of tattooing which lacked a more refined color palette.

In terms of the actual art work represented through these tattoos, both images embody, or signify, a Buddhist representation of a tiger (i.e. with open mouths,

outstretched claws, and a look of bewilderment conveyed through inked on facial expressions). These representations parallel Said's notions of Orientalism; these particular depictions of Japanese tigers are portrayed as barbaric, other worldly creatures in need of being tamed. The inking of these hostile looking creatures onto the bodies of Westerners may come to signify the Western world's ability to tame such creatures. Ultimately, these representations of tigers as untamed beasts negate other variations of what a tiger in Japanese culture actually signifies, mainly the tiger's strength and power as one of the most prominent forces to converge upon the universe, a deity of sorts. The repeated use of the tiger as a wild beast by celebrities for the purpose of tattooing may impress upon U.S. Americans the image of a tiger as this aggressive animal, hunter, and predator. Those with Japanese style tiger tattoos may then choose to associate their inking(s) with all of the negative traits one might attribute with tigers, leaving out a more traditional interpretation of the animal as this powerful guardian of humankind.

The second set of tattoos, or signifiers, chosen for analysis is considered by some to be a representation of pure femininity, the geisha tattoo. There were two magazine covers, *Men's Health* (2013, July) and *Tattoo Life* (2015, April), which clearly exhibited celebrities' brandishing geisha tattoos, one of which was done solely in black ink on the body of a male model and the other in full color on the body of a female model. Aside from the difference in color, which was a constant theme in all tattoos reviewed, these two particular depictions of Japanese geishas took on very different approaches in terms of their unique presentations. The tattoo of the geisha outlined in solid black, no color, showcased only the geisha's head, leaving viewers to conceptualize the remaining aspects of the geisha's body not incorporated into this specific tattoo. The post-colonial

reproduction of this particular image, coupled with the Orientalist notion of othering, adds to sentiments of sexual objectification in part because of how Japanese women were once perceived by Westerners many years ago. Prior to the West's emergence in Japanese markets, Japanese women were viewed as heathen's for their perceived sexual practices, practices associated with concubinage, polygamy, and prostitution (Kuo, 2015). These particular views came about because of Westerners' thoughts towards geisha's in what were once considered to be pleasure houses; the idea of women entertaining men for profit, whether sexual in nature or not, led to the degradation of Japanese women throughout the Western world. By incorporating aspects akin to exoticization into this tattoo the wearer, a Westerner, through appropriation, is able to change the significance behind such a specific Japanese image by perpetuating the sexual objectification of Japanese women, a classic case of the West attributing meaning to certain aspects of a non-Western nation. Without the use of the full body, this particular tattoo lacked the feminine characteristics one might typically attribute to geishas in traditional Japanese society and may serve to signify an older way of thinking that dehumanizes these particular women. However, only using the face of the geisha may allow viewers to signify beauty with the image of a woman rather than turning this particular aspect of Japanese society into something overtly sexual. Despite the fact that geishas at one point in time served as forms of sexual entertainment, they did not present themselves in an overly erotic fashion nor were they considered a part of Japan's sex industry (Smith, 2008); the over sexualized nature attributed to the work that geishas performed in ancient Japan can thus be viewed as a Western appropriation.

The tattoo of the geisha in full color, on the other hand, depicted the figure of a woman from the waist up. This particular image portrayed a geisha wrapped in a blue kimono with her right shoulder exposed, a symbolic representation of the type of work that these women were thought to perform, and continually thought to perform, in Japan. Representing a geisha with her kimono falling off, skin exposed, may come across as a type of sexual objectification that parallels the iconic pin-up tattoos that so many U.S. Americans receive as part of the American traditional tattooing style. The blurring of these two styles, Japanese and American traditional, in this instance takes the focus of the geisha away from her traditional representation in Japanese society as a professional and not a prostitute. Thus, the perceived image of a geisha, the signifier, by U. S. standards may signify Japanese women as sex symbols, negating the power that these particular females had in choosing whether or not to entertain, with traditional dance and costume, certain male clients. Geishas were also privy to the political intelligence of their clients, meaning that these particular women held insider information that could make or break their male clients should such information be made public (Smith, 2008). The power that these women had over their clients, however, oftentimes went unnoticed and was rarely harnessed as it was a part of their unwritten code of honor (Smith, 2008).

The third design analyzed serves as a symbol for humanity's perseverance, the koi fish. There were four magazine covers which depicted a koi fish tattooed on the bodies U.S. celebrities, though two covers from two different magazines used the same celebrity as their front page model. All three images serve as signifiers, were tattooed in color, despite one magazine cover being printed in black and white, and all three images shared some basic characteristics. The noticeable characteristics that seemed to translate from

one tattooed image to the next were the color of the fish (orange) and the use of water to frame the fish in what symbolizes its natural habitat. Each tattoo was large enough in size that the fine details surrounding the design elements became rather apparent and, consequently, problematic.

The subtle differences in how each fish was drawn highlight the diverse nature of this particular tattoo, aiding in the analysis and overall perception that koi fish have within the United States. One difference that individuals may notice upon first glance surrounds the facial structure of each fish; the first image displayed on the covers of *Details* (2009, December), see Appendix A, Image 1, and *Rolling Stone* (2010, February) signifies what seems to be a modern day representation of a koi fish, the second image displayed on the cover of *Rolling Stone* (2001, May) looked as though the tattoo artist took a new school approach towards the overall design (giving the fish exaggerated features), and the last image displayed on the cover of *Inked* (2011, April), see Appendix A, Image 2, seemed to have taken an interpretive approach in trying to replicate a koi fish with distinctively Japanese characteristics. Due to the lack of continuity in designs, the wearers can attribute their own interpretation to the signifier that is the koi fish, recreating multiple signified understandings surrounding each tattoo. The last tattoo, for example, which incorporated a racialized stereotype of Japanese features such as the caricatured "squinty eyes" and whiskers into the facial design of the koi fish, can be viewed as a representation of Said's Orientalism; the celebrity is basing the Japanese-ness of this particular image off of Western depictions of the Orient, and as such, her tattoo can be seen as perpetuating a distorted and caricatured representation of Japanese people.

The next difference that became inherently evident was the direction that each fish was swimming in (i.e. upstream versus downstream). In traditional Japanese art, having a koi fish swim upstream is symbolic of its determination to succeed, whereas positioning a koi fish swimming downstream can signify the straying away from one's core values. Only one of the tattooed symbols of a koi fish was positioned swimming upstream, signifying that celebrity's determination to succeed, or continue to succeed, as a professional musician. The other two tattoos, however, were depicted swimming downstream, signifying either their care-free attitude in life or their lack of understanding when it comes to Japanese semiology. This hodgepodge of designs by celebrities in the U.S. underscores the lack of continuity attributed to the image of a koi fish in the United States, allowing individuals to continually redefine the meaning of this particular Japanese symbol within U.S. culture through an Orientalist lens; individuals can assess their own meaning to something grounded in a "Far Eastern culture".

The fourth set of tattoos analyzed was the chrysanthemum and lotus blossom, images that serve as representations of harmony and spirituality within contemporary Japanese society. Three magazine covers, *D'Scene* (2014, October), see Appendix A, Image 3, *Inked* (2011, February), and *Bello Sports* (2013, September), showcased celebrities sporting noticeable flower tattoos, two of which depicted a lotus blossom on the bodies of male models while the remaining tattoo took on the form of a chrysanthemum inked onto the body of a female adult film star. Each of the lotus blossom tattoos were inked in color and framed by other artwork that, arguably, does not have any set relation to this specific Japanese emblem. In fact, one lotus blossom tattoo was positioned on the neck of a celebrity model just above an image of Kali, the Hindu

goddess of change and destruction. By crossing cultures in terms of tattoo design and placement, the signified meaning behind these particular tattoos become muddled and subject to confusion as to whether or not they serve as symbols of Japanese or Indian culture; more importantly, in a traditional context, the lotus blossom signifies harmony whereas Kali signifies devastation. The confusion as to the signified meaning of this particular celebrity's choice in tattoo placement and design can be critiqued through the use of Orientalism; positioning two culturally different tattoos into a single design negates the individual differences that make each culture represented unique from one another. Thus, forcing these tattoos into the same social category serves as a way to blend Japanese and Indian cultures into one hybrid culture without acknowledging their differences. The meaning attached to an image of a lotus blossom next to an image of a Hindu deity is therefore not symbolic of certain elements that this particular flower is said to hold in modern day Japanese society; this clash of cultures through the use of tattooing thus reduces the significance that each symbol holds in their respective cultures, allowing multiple signified meanings to surface as a result.

The most ironic part of these lotus blossom tattoos is that only one of them incorporated water into their design, despite the lotus blossom's reputation for thriving in watery habitats. The tattooed depiction of the chrysanthemum, on the other hand, is set against a background of clear blue water even though this flower, in contrast to the lotus blossom, is symbolic of the sun. These details, not necessarily of the images themselves but of their backgrounds, do not align with the traditional context that each flower falls into, thus perpetuating post-colonialist thought; each of these tattoo's serve as a reimagined version of their iconic Japanese counterpart taken out of traditional context.

This reinvention of conventional Japanese symbols can essentially be viewed as the conflating of two cultures where the hegemonic practices of the U.S. overpower traditional Japanese thought, contributing to the lack of understanding about cultural practices outside of the U.S. because of expectations of assimilation. Assimilation in this instance is characterized by an adaptation process whereby an immigrant or group of immigrants become absorbed into the host culture, muddling the cultural norms typically associated with each group (Lum, 1991).

The last tattoo image analyzed for this study was that of a dragon. Only two covers depicted dragon tattoos on the bodies of U.S. celebrities, one outlined and shaded in black and the other having incorporated a few pops of color into a mostly black outline. The image of the dragon tattooed onto the body of the male musician, and displayed on the cover of *Code* (2001, January), seems to be more in line with a traditional Japanese interpretation of the dragon because of the watery background this particular tattoo was set against. Dragons were fabled to bring with them rain as a sign of good harvest, so incorporating a water element into the overall design acts as reference towards traditional Japanese thought. Thus, the ideological representation of this particular dragon signifies Japanese culture to onlookers, even though the tattoo is still representative of post-colonialist appropriation. The only element missing from this tattoo would be the white pearl that is most often associated with dragons in ancient Japan, a representation of the thunder that oftentimes accompanies the rain. The face of this particular tattoo was the most concerning part of the design; this image of a dragon looked a bit menacing when, in all actuality, these particular creatures were thought to be wise and tame, not necessarily ferocious. Depicting dragons as violent creatures

illustrates Said's notion of Orientalism where the Orient is characterized by acts of barbarism, acts that are not customary portrayals of the serpent like beasts. Presenting them as such may lead to notions of anthropocentrism, where the intrinsic value of humans is said to outweigh all other species thus certain organisms, such as the dragon, are made to seem destructive (The Gale Encyclopedia of Science, 2008). This view may ultimately lead individuals to create designs that signify the dragon's power over its wisdom.

The image tattooed onto the leg of the female musician, and displayed on the cover of *Shape* (2012, November), however, did not incorporate the same aspects of a dragon that the first tattoo does; the overall image lacked a water element but depicted the dragon holding a white pearl. This tattoo also lacked a lot of attention to detail that might have helped to portray the dragon as this ancient, wise being, including the pearl, which looked like a ball in the dragon's claw. When creating a dragon tattoo it is important to add these particular aspects of water, old age, and a pearl in order to signify a meaning congruent with tradition. The failure to do so reinvents the dragon, through magical realism, as this demonic monster, something to be feared as opposed to a benevolent creature that brings with it life and goodwill.

Positioning Makes Perfect

When it comes to making a great tattoo, it takes a lot more than just artistic ability. Oftentimes the placement of a tattoo can be a deciding factor in whether or not a person actually chooses to go through with the process; the right placement can make a tattoo comical, poignant, or especially meaningful for the person whose body becomes adorned with ink. Thus, the placement of each image is just as important in interpreting

what significance a particular tattoo holds for the wearer as are the aesthetic elements attributed to each particular design. Though there are many factors that play into a person's choice of location for a tattoo, in the following section I outline some of the most common locations for both men and women from Western nations as well as explain how the placement of Japanese tattooed images, in particular, have been altered for Western commodification.

Scutt and Gotch (1974) have identified two locations most common among male "skins" (those who receive tattoos) for tattoo placement, the first of which is the arm. In their study of 2,000 Navy participants, Scutt and Gotch (1974) found that of the 923 men (46.2%) tattooed, 98 percent carried their tattoo's on their arms. Continuing on with their study, the authors found that the next most common location among these men for tattoo placement was the chest, with fifteen percent having some sort of ink in this area. Women, on the other hand, were found to be a bit more private with their tattoo locations, generally opting to receive these permanent images on the breast, shoulder, or hip (Roach-Higgins, Eicher, & Johnson, 1995). Apart from convention, men and women may choose different locations based upon the perceived function of the tattoo. Women, for instance, who regard their tattoos as decorations of aesthetic beauty intended for personal pleasure may choose a location that is intimate, reserving the pleasure or enjoyment of the tattoo for those with whom they become close.

The placement of a tattoo in a location thought to be private may also serve as a way to assure that an individual's ink, man or woman, will not act as a signifier labeling them as a deviant member of society by casual acquaintances. This is particularly true for individuals living in traditional Japanese society. Japanese individuals who receive

tattoos keep their artwork private and hidden from public view, mainly because of the stigmas still associated with tattooing in modern day Japan. The yakuza are but one example of a group of people who tattoo the majority of their bodies in such a way that it can be hidden by their everyday dress; only when in the presence of other yakuza will a member reveal their tattoos, otherwise, members keep their tattoos concealed with long-sleeved, high-necked shirts. The placement of tattoos beneath one's clothing then becomes personal in nature; hidden tattoos hold a special meaning for the individual who wears them and may signify a particular meaning that might not translate from one person to the next.

In contrast to the Japanese, many U.S. Americans choose to tattoo parts of their body that either cannot be covered up or are extremely difficult to conceal. The placement of tattoos by U.S. Americans may then signify the attention one wishes to attract to themselves as a possible sign of non-conformity. Of the fourteen magazine covers analyzed for this study, six tattoos were located somewhere on the arm below the shoulder, three were actually on the shoulder, two were on the outer thigh, two were on the neck/chest, and one was positioned on the buttocks, though these celebrities, it can be speculated, purposefully modeled their tattoos in such a way that served to reveal the intimate placement of each image. In looking at these covers one can see how the placement of tattoos for males versus females parallels the above mentioned study; the outer thigh and buttocks tattoos were all inked onto the bodies of female celebrities and could easily remain covered with the use of pants or knee length skirts. The men, on the other hand, positioned their tattoos in places that were harder to cover up such as the neck and lower arm, locations congruent with Scutt and Gotch's (1974) findings; twelve of the

fourteen tattoos examined were inked onto the chest or arm of male celebrities, the two most popular locations for male tattoos.

Probably the biggest difference in traditional Japanese tattoo placement versus the placement of Japanese tattoos by celebrities in the U.S. would have to be the incorporation of one point tattoos. In ancient times, as well as in contemporary society, the Japanese dedicated to this particular art form tattoo the majority of their body with various motifs that are somehow all connected through a common background. In the United States, however, it is extremely common to have various Eastern and Western images tattooed together in such a way that they are not connected to one another through a cohesive design. Thus, Japanese tattooing techniques in the United States, including placement, can be considered cultural appropriations of Japanese semiology because the techniques used do not reflect the practices of tattoo artists in Japan today. The one-point tattoo is therefore used to signify a more Western style of tattooing where tattoos are not a part of one single intricate design; rather, these tattoos serve to stand on their own. Of the fourteen magazine covers examined, half portrayed celebrities showing off Western style one point tattoos while the other half incorporated Japanese elements into a sleeve, a back piece, or a chest piece.

Reflections of Post-Colonialism

Historically, Japan has always been viewed as the colonizer, never the colonized, though Peter Hulme (1995) argues that modern day interpretations of post-colonialism reflect a shift from the time of territorial rule to the age of intellectual dominance. This intellectual dominance allows a new type of colonization where culture is reproduced as a form of capitalism for the sake of making a profit. Even though the tattoos on the bodies

of these celebrities in the United States were not intentionally meant to serve as forms of colonization, by taking culture specific tattoos and altering them to individual tastes, the impact of each tattoo allows historical accuracy to become muddled. Despite the stigma surrounding tattoos in Japan, many Japanese tattooists view U.S. Americans' appropriation of traditional Japanese symbols as overly simple and positioned poorly, a sign of post-coloniality and, possibly, ethnocentrism on the part of the Japanese (Mitchell, 2014). By this notion, the Japanese may view their tattooing style as superior to all others because of the history and difficulty associated with Japanese style tattoos, something that cannot be easily replicated. Ultimately, individuals who receive Japanese style tattoos that don't reflect traditional Japanese thought may be imbued with a false sense of Japanese culture because of the inaccuracy in details surrounding each design.

Overall, each of the tattooed designs analyzed illustrated just how far from tradition that this particular art form has come. While there were a few tattoos that incorporated some elements that might be considered characteristic of ancient Japanese tattooing, most celebrities took an interpretive approach in the actual application of these five common images both in design and placement. From a post-colonial lens, each of these images signifies the power that the U.S. has in shaping foreign culture; once aspects of another culture enter into the United States through various mediums, they are re-imagined in such a way that alters what those cultural symbols may typically signify. This alteration in the significance of cultural symbols is part of the process of assimilation where foreign cultures eventually come to resemble the host culture, in this case the United States.

The magazines used for analysis, and subsequently the tattoos on the bodies of some prominent celebrities in the United States, have enabled the everyday person to re-script their body through the lens of transnationalism; individuals are able to use the imagery associated with Japanese style tattoos as a means of instilling within themselves a sense of cultural citizenship. The inaccuracy of such images, in terms of their altered appearances, however, leads to a false sense of cultural awareness, yet people continue to consume the aesthetics of other countries and in doing so, recreate the meanings attributed to traditional symbols of that foreign culture. In order to understand how to navigate the waters of cultural awareness, the next chapter clarified how we come to understand whether or not one can be viewed as appropriating a culture different from their own. It becomes necessary to understand all aspects of appropriation because one may assume that they are using the symbols of a foreign culture as a form of exchange without realizing that these symbols have actually been inked out of context. There is a fine line between what constitutes cultural exploration versus cultural appropriation, so the next chapter will shed light on the different categories of appropriation that exist in order to see which category the tattoos analyzed thus far fall under.

Chapter Three: Japanese Tattoos as acts of Appropriation

Appropriation in this day and age is a difficult concept to understand though Richard Rogers (2006), author of *From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation*, provides a useful conceptualization to help unpack our understanding of the various categories that make up appropriation. Rogers' (2006) article applied to this study for the simple reason that Japanese style tattoos exemplify certain characteristics of each category that the author has conceptualized. The purpose of the next section defined the four categories of appropriation as laid out by Rogers (2006) in order to see which category the majority of these Japanese style tattoos that are inked on celebrities' bodies in the United States illustrated. I argue that the majority of these tattoos can be understood as acts of transculturation partially due to the ethnocentric nature characteristic of the United States and the lack of understanding towards the traditional meaning of Japanese symbols used for tattooing as noted in the previous chapter. The celebrities on each of the fourteen magazine covers, for example, have all to some degree altered the overall design and placement of traditional Japanese tattoos based on their understanding of tattoos, and these particular images, from a Western point of view. It is my belief that this analysis will serve to bolster Rogers' (2006) argument that culture, through transculturation, is a relational phenomenon constituted by acts of appropriation, not an entity that merely participates in it.

Cultural Appropriation

An outsider's uncertainty about a particular tradition or belief held by a foreign culture underscores the need for individuals to possess a greater sense of knowledge

spurred on by cultural awareness. Cultural awareness in this sense facilitates meaningful scrutiny whereby some representations of a foreign culture are thought to be grounded in accuracy while other representations are viewed as mere appropriations. According to Rogers (2006), cultural appropriation is broadly defined as "the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture" (p. 474). For instance, taking the intellectual property, traditional knowledge, or cultural expressions of a non-dominant group in the forms of re-imagined dance, dress, music, cuisine, medicine, or religious symbols can be seen as altering the meaning behind what a particular culture considers to be sacred. This alteration, it should be known, happens despite the notion that those who engage in appropriative acts might not be aware of the extent to which they are appropriating symbols of another culture (Scafidi, 2005). In the United States particularly, appropriation almost always involves members of the dominant group "borrowing" from the cultures of various non-dominant groups. This borrowing allows the dominant groups in the United States to appropriate certain aspects of non-dominant groups in ways that lead to processes of commodification spurred on through the assimilation of foreign immigrants within U.S. borders.

Under these circumstances, immigrants are expected to learn English, dress in Western clothing, change their names, and essentially renounce certain aspects of their culture; yet, U.S. Americans who may be a part of the dominant group are then allowed to take those aspects of an immigrant's culture (e.g. Mexican food), which may have been forsaken in favor of assimilation, and Westernize them (e.g. Taco Bell). Thus, the United States may be viewed as perpetuating acts of "borrowing" because of the pressures put on foreign immigrants to assimilate in such a way that allows dominant

group U.S. Americans to turn around and commodify certain aspects of those immigrants' culture. Another piece of cultural appropriation could also include the re-imagining of one's own culture as a way to acclimate or blend in to a society different from their own; this relates to pluralism, where immigrants may choose to maintain their cultural norms but in such a way that allows them to "fit in" with the dominant society in which they reside (Lum, 1991). Cultural appropriation by these two notions, borrowing in particular, may then also be understood as the claiming of another's meanings, ideas, or experiences in order to advance one's own agenda, a type of integration or possession oftentimes used without explicit authority or right (Shugart, 1997). This furthering of one's own personal goals outside of a specific cultural or historical context denies the realities associated with a particular culture, serving to perpetuate modern day notions of post-colonialism that can be understood through the theoretical framework of Orientalism as laid out by Edward Said (1978).

Orientalism maintains that because the West, at one point in time, was not educated on the Middle and "Far East" they began to view groups of people living in those particular areas with a certain degree of prejudice. This view of prejudice is directly linked to aspects of ethnocentrism which, according to Martin and Nakayama (2001), is defined as the idea that one's own group or culture, usually equated with nationality, is superior to all other cultural groups. The concept of ethnocentrism is entrenched in the history of the United States, including their interactions with Asian nations like Japan, as noted in chapter one. The United States' entrance into Japan in the 1850's came out of the "need" to expand markets globally and find new nations that could supply industries back home with the raw materials necessary to increase production (Commodore Perry

and Japan, 2009). It was because of Japan's lack of naval defense that the United States was able to infiltrate mainland Japan and change the structure of Japanese society to mimic the centralized government that characterized the United States at the time. Ultimately, to fill in these gaps of the unknown, the West began to create a culture and image that would later be used to describe these various groups of individuals, including the Japanese, whom the West knew little to nothing about. This "new culture" that the West was able to create only served to solidify aspects of post-colonialism that came from a switch in territorial rule to a time of intellectual domination.

Cultural appropriation thus brings to light the violent historical oppression of colonized groups in such a way that can be seen as spreading misconceptions and stereotypes about particular Asian cultures like that of Japan. By appropriating certain aspects of marginalized cultures (e.g. yoga), many Westerners may be viewed as using a foreign culture in order to look "cool" or for the purposes of turning a profit. The need to look "cool" through the appropriation of marginalized cultures ties back into our understanding of what it meant to be cultured in the late 1800's; people wanted to consume the aesthetics of another culture so as to come across as someone who was well traveled and knowledgeable about the different aspects of countries outside the United States. This sentiment is certainly applicable in today's society where to be cultured means to own objects, among other things, of foreign countries even when the traditional meaning behind said objects is unknown (Roberts, 2012). Owning these foreign objects may also serve as a response to ethnocentrism whereby for U.S. Americans, particularly white U.S. Americans, develop the perception that they are in fact worldly and understanding of other cultures because of their possession of foreign objects. In looking

at the commodification of a foreign culture, this next section will aim to explicate the various forms that cultural appropriation can take in order to understand under which form(s) of appropriation the Japanese style tattoos analyzed for this study fall.

Types of Appropriation

Cultural appropriation according to Rogers (2006) is an active process whereby one has to actively integrate another's culture into their own; this differentiates from mere exposure to foreign cultural objects, such as dress, music, and religious symbols, where the foreign objects are not actually incorporated into a person's everyday life (e.g. playing traditional Indian music at a Holi celebration on a U.S. American university campus). This active process of taking the ideas or objects of a particular culture and integrating them into another culture can be broken down into four categories as outlined by Rogers (2006):

1. **Cultural exchange**: the reciprocal exchange of symbols, artifacts, rituals, genres, and/or technologies between cultures with roughly equal levels of power (e.g. the Dutch adopting English as their de facto second language, see p. 478).
2. **Cultural dominance**: the use of elements of a dominant culture by members of a subordinated culture in a context in which the dominant culture has been imposed onto the subordinated culture, including appropriations that enact resistance (see p. 480). An example could be persons from Asian countries, like China, Japan, and South Korea, changing their birth names in favor of a Western name that is easier for U.S. Americans to pronounce.
3. **Cultural exploitation**: the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or

compensation (see p. 486). For example, the co-option and reinvention of other nations' holidays such as Cinco de Mayo and St. Patrick's Day.

4. **Transculturation**: cultural elements created from and/or by multiple cultures, such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic, for example, multiple cultural appropriations structured in the dynamics of globalization and transnational capitalism creating hybrid forms (see p. 491). An example is the common practice of handing out fortune cookies in U.S. Chinese restaurants even though this type of a cookie does not exist in China itself.

Using these four categories of appropriation, I identified which categories are illustrated by the tattoos I previously analyzed. In glancing at the fourteen magazine covers analyzed for this study, it becomes readily apparent that the incorporation of certain elements characteristic of Japanese style tattooing onto the bodies of these celebrities can be placed into three out of the four categories listed above (cultural exchange, cultural exploitation, and transculturation), each of which was examined in greater detail below.

Cultural Exchange

According to Rogers (2006), cultural exchange functions as the ground against which the meaning and significance of cultural dominance or exploitation is highlighted, a function that is twofold in nature: (1) it establishes standards by which all other types of appropriation should be judged and (2) it demonstrates the inadequacy of pluralist and transparent models of power. While "pure" cases of cultural exchange are extremely difficult to identify, few cases exist in which power imbalances are not an important element. For example, Rogers (2006) notes how Japan's ownership of international

media companies may influence U.S. American culture just as much as U.S. American ownership of media companies with substantial presence in Japan may come to influence Japanese culture. The symmetrical or asymmetrical power relations between two or more cultures may thus manifest itself as a dominate-subordinate relationship or as a voluntary acceptance of cultural exchange (e.g. the Dutch adopting English as a second language purely for economic purposes, not out of pressure from the United States or the United Kingdom). Out of all the tattoos analyzed for this study, only two images, both representations of a koi fish, exemplify certain aspects of cultural exchange.

Koi Fish. Two depictions of koi fish analyzed (*Details*, 2009, December, *Rolling Stone*, 2010, February, & *Rolling Stone*, 2001, May), see Appendix A, Image 1, come to reflect notions of cultural exchange and are the only images analyzed to actually do so. These particular koi fish more closely follow Japanese style tattooing techniques that make it hard for readers to assess how far from appropriation these images may have come. These designs also take into account the background elements that serve to connect all images into one cohesive design. For instance, both tattoos incorporated water, flowers, and Japanese kanji into the background design which, as noted previously, is most certainly characteristic of Japanese style tattoos. The direction that one of the fish was swimming and the lack of continuity in designs across the board may be the only problematic elements that stick out to connoisseurs of Japanese imagery. Thus, one may look at these images as engaging in cultural exchange where the elements of the designs more closely resemble that of the traditional Japanese tattooing style.

Cultural Exploitation

Cultural exploitation of Japanese culture by the United States goes back to the mid 1800's when the United States first entered into trade agreements with Japan. From that point on, U.S. sailors began docking their ships in Japanese ports in order to conduct business and subsequently became some of the first foreigners to receive Japanese style tattoos in Japan. Though these U.S. American sailors were limited to certain ports within the island nation, Japanese style tattoos became a way for these men to commemorate their time in Japan; tattoos representing Japanese culture thus became more of a souvenir because of the lack of reciprocal exchange, and could be viewed as something that was exploited rather than understood (Mitchell, 2014).

Cultural exploitation in this sense most commonly refers to certain aspects of colonization or post-colonization where the symbols, artifacts, or ideas of other cultures (e.g. Japanese style tattoos) are taken and used by a dominant culture (e.g. the United States), without reciprocal exchange or for purposes other than their intended use. Paralleling post-colonial thought, cultural exploitation involves the "mining" of foreign knowledge that is then shipped back home for public consumption, knowledge that in modern times may explicitly refer to the cultural customs and artifacts used by people of foreign cultures to bring about various means to an end. Taking these thoughts, ideas, and artifacts (e.g. sacred dances, rituals, and objects) out of their original context may then serve as a way to strip individuals of their culture by forcing them to view certain aspects of marginalized cultures, inclusive of their own, through a more dominant lens.

Pushing these colonized cultures into assimilation thereby reinforces the dominance of the colonizing culture, a process that many immigrants to the United States

experience and is subsequently incorporated as an important step on their journey towards becoming an "American." By trying to incorporate Western ideals into these colonized cultures, those doing the colonizing have effectively redefined the various customs and traditions of another people so as to meet the needs of those that reside within the dominant group, leading to the mass production of culture as a type of good or service for sale. This production of certain aspects of a foreign culture as a type of good or service for sale ultimately contributes to how the rest of the world may choose to view that culture by attributing a subverted meaning to something that has a deeper understanding to members of that foreign culture. Appropriations of this kind may then lead to cultural degradation insofar as the depictions of colonized cultures are more susceptible to distortion because of how far they've been removed from cultural and historical context.

Once certain aspects of a foreign culture have undergone the process of appropriation, they typically enter into the exchange system, different from cultural exchange, where those aspects may then be bought and traded, perpetuating the commodity machine (Rogers, 2006); a prominent example of this in today's U.S. society could be the merchandise sold by professional sports teams who's mascots are made to be representations of Native Indigenous tribes. Conflating certain aspects of a non-dominant culture with reified meanings promotes a lack of awareness about one's participation in cultural exploitation and by altering aspects of non-dominant cultures, individuals run the risk of changing their meanings and functions thereby promoting cultural degradation. Throughout history, the Western world has been viewed as one of the biggest players in cultural appropriation and degradation and the use of Japanese style tattoos by U.S.

Americans, I argue, is just one example of this process. The specific images analyzed in chapter two that fall into cultural exploitation, because of their known origins yet co-opted meanings, are the koi fish tattooed onto the body of a female musician and the chrysanthemum that is tattooed onto the body of an adult film star.

Koi Fish. There was one koi fish tattoo (*Inked*, 2011, April) analyzed, see Appendix A, Image 2, that was an obvious appropriation of Japanese culture, reflecting notions of cultural exploitation. This would be the design that attempted to incorporate the physical features of the Japanese into the design of a koi fish. Looking at this tattoo, it came across as a caricature because of the stereotype of the "squinty eyes" that it possessed and the long whiskers that stem from its mouth. By giving the koi fish these particular caricatured features, this image fell into the realm of racial stereotyping. Racial stereotyping is concerned with the exaggerated pictures, mental or otherwise, that we hold about members belonging to a particular racial group. Through racial stereotyping, this celebrity fails to take into account the individual differences that make up Japanese society; she is essentially painting a picture in the minds of viewers that perpetuates a racial stereotype of all people in Japan.

Chrysanthemum. The image of the chrysanthemum in this category was been taken out of context in such a way that is hard to ignore upon first glance, leading one to believe that it also serves as an act of cultural exploitation. This particular magazine cover from *Inked* (2011, February) features an adult film star with a tattoo of a chrysanthemum on her left shoulder, wearing only a pair of underwear, and using her arms to shield her breasts from the public's view. The wording that appears to the left of the celebrity, in bold black letters, reads "The Sex Issue." This idea of showcasing a

female celebrity on a prominent tattooing industry magazine, nude, with a Japanese style tattoo, in a sex issue nonetheless seems to perpetuate the idea that women are objects for men to observe and look to for pleasure. The sexualized nature of this cover may then come to be reflected in how one chooses to interpret the meaning behind this tattoo because of the allure that this particular celebrity possesses. This confusion forces readers to question whether or not this tattoo was done as a nod to Japanese culture or as a way to compliment this celebrity's figure. This tattoo may also come across as an appropriative act used to complement the celebrity's figure because of the background that this particular flower is set against; most people who understand Japanese imagery know that the chrysanthemum is not a flower that thrives in watery habitats, thus the misuse of a watery background in this tattoo may come across as part of the design's aesthetics, not necessarily something that is indicative of Japanese culture.

Transculturation

Transculturation, and thus hybridization, involves the appropriation of one culture by several other cultures in such a way that the identification of the single originating culture becomes unrecognizable; imported cultural elements may then be seen as taking on features the longer cultural hybridity is allowed to develop (Rogers, 2006). These processes synthesize new cultural genres while at the same time break down the traditional cultural categories one may have been accustomed to. Transculturation thus does not refer solely to the blending of cultures but represents a larger set of conditions under which this blending occurs; including the power of capitalism and the lasting effects of post-colonialism, both of which can be deconstructed using the concept of Orientalism. This blending of cultures is at the heart of post-colonialism where artifacts,

thoughts, and ideas are taken out of context and changed to fit the needs of the dominant culture. The hybridization associated with transculturation can then be viewed of as a direct result of the asymmetrical power relations, cultural dominance, and exploitation that follows when one culture aims to colonize, whether realized or not, another culture. The images from chapter two that fall into the category of transculturation are those of the tigers, the geisha, the two lotus blossoms, and both depictions of the dragon.

Tiger. The images of tigers tattooed onto the bodies of two different celebrities in three different magazine covers (*Inked*, 2012, September, *Inked*, 2012, August, & *Nylon Guys*, 2013, May) were prime examples of images that may be discernably hard to read as acts of appropriation or acts that promote exchange and thus fall into the category of transculturation. The artistic rendering of both tigers was done extremely well, with shading in all the right places. For all intents and purposes, these designs looked as though they represented the tiger quite well. It is only once the tattoos were analyzed up close and through an Orientalist lens that the problems with each design, in terms of cultural accuracy and signified meaning, come to light. Each design depicts the tiger as a ferocious animal through the use of outstretched claws and the brandishing of razor sharp teeth. In looking closer at the face of each tiger, one notices that both tigers also have furrowed brows, signifying that they are angry or upset for one reason or another. The facial expressions combined with outstretched claws and open mouths make one feel as though the tiger were ready to attack at any given moment. This leaves one to question how close to traditional Japanese tattooing styles both of these tattoos really are. A tiger does signify power in Japanese society, but the Japanese also regard the tiger as a brave creature that protects humankind. So, how can a creature who is supposed to be a friend

to the human race look as though it is ready to attack all of those who gaze upon its outline? Both celebrities could have been influenced by the tiger's strength when selecting their designs, an aspect that does incorporate a part of Japanese thought, but by the same token, each design negates the calming aspects that are placed on tigers by the Japanese throughout history. This design is arguably one of the most easily tattooed Japanese images that walk a fine line between appropriation and something grounded in historical accuracy; while some features of Japanese style tiger tattoos are accurate, they do not necessarily embody or embrace all features associated with the tiger.

Geisha. There was one image of a geisha (*Tattoo Life*, 2015, April) in particular that when analyzed might come to reflect notions of transculturation in such a way that it reads not only as an appropriation of Japanese culture, but also of Japanese women. This particular image may be viewed as sexually objectifying women in Japan because of the promiscuity conveyed through various design elements. This objectification may then call into question the reasoning behind this particular celebrity's choice in design in part because of the gender stereotyping that it conveys. The element that sticks out the most as an appropriation of Japanese culture is the kimono that can be seen falling off the shoulder of this particular geisha. This re-imaged depiction of a geisha conflates ideas of Japanese culture with the Western idea of a pin-up tattoo. Thus, the blurring of cultures that takes a Japanese woman and depicts her in the same fashion as a Western style of tattooing may come to reflect notions of transculturation. Transculturation makes it hard to distinguish aspects of the host culture from those that have been added in by the dominant culture, thereby perpetuating the idea of geisha's as purely sex workers.

Perpetuated ideas like this one may then co-opt how the Western world chooses to view Japanese women by associating their image with that of the re-imagined geisha.

Lotus Blossom. The remaining two tattoos of lotus blossoms onto the bodies of male celebrities ran into issues of placement that seemingly complicated the nature of these particular Japanese style tattoos and how they might be interpreted, once again falling into the category of transculturation. In each design, the placement of the lotus blossom was surrounded by other images and elements that one would not necessarily consider to be Japanese. For instance, the image of the lotus blossom above the depiction of the Hindu goddess Kali (*D'Scene*, 2014, October), see Appendix A, Image 3, may allow people to think that the overall design of this model's tattoos are reflective of Indian culture especially since both images are not of equal proportion. The larger image of Kali in relation to the smaller size of the lotus blossom may negate what the lotus blossom signifies in Japanese culture because individuals may link both images to representations of Indian culture. In the other tattoo design that depicts a lotus blossom (*Bello Sports*, 2013, September) the flower is surrounded by spiders, a cross, and stars. These elements are not characteristic of Japanese imagery and seemingly blend Western designs in with those of an East Asian culture, a prime example of transculturation. Ultimately, the surrounding design elements of both of these tattoos make it hard for anyone to specifically identify these tattoos as Japanese because they do not incorporate other Japanese stylized elements into their overall designs. Thus, one may come to question whether or not these celebrities' tattoos are acts of exchange or appropriation because of the nuanced designs that re-image the lotus blossom in ways that blend multiple cultures together through notions of transculturation.

Dragon. The last set of tattoos taken into consideration as acts of transculturation was that of the dragon (*Code*, 2001, January & *Shape*, 2012, November). Each of these tattoos may come across as appropriations for the simple fact that both of these dragons have menacing expressions inked onto their faces. Again, dragons were seen more as benevolent creatures as opposed to beings that brought with them wrath and destruction. The misuse of the face to convey expressions of anger may alter the meaning behind what the dragon stands for in contemporary Japanese society. It should be noted, however, that a Western understanding of the dragon may be that of a creature to be feared. Thus, those in the United States, including the celebrities themselves, may interpret these designs as representations of Japanese style dragon tattoos because of their understanding of dragons in contemporary U.S. American culture. The subtle differences in how the East versus the West perceive dragons ultimately reflect notions of transculturation because of the blending of U.S. American and Japanese thought towards this mythical creature.

Commodifying Japanese Style Tattoos

The tattooing of traditional Japanese symbols onto the bodies of U.S. Americans can be seen as incorporating Japanese culture into U.S. culture because of the permanency characterized by this type of commodification, leaving one to question which of the four categories of appropriation listed above do the Japanese style tattoos on the bodies of celebrities in the United States fall into. I argue that the majority of these tattoos reflect notions of transculturation because of the co-opted meanings attributed to Japanese style tattoos in the United States. Being that these celebrities are often in the spotlight for one reason or another, their understanding of traditional Japanese symbols is

then promoted to public audiences in such a way that may inspire the everyday person to emulate certain tattoos but with their own personal take on the images, further perpetuating this idea of transculturation. Thus, the commodification of Japanese style tattoos not only negates the history associated with tattooing in Japan as an act used to characterize the outcast in society, but may also serve to blur the lines between one's understanding of U.S. American and Japanese culture because of the subjective meaning that a person may attribute to his or her cultural tattoo.

Fetishizing the Tattoo

The tattooing of Japanese symbols onto the bodies of celebrities in the United States may thus come to reflect notions of commodity fetishism because the origin of such symbols is relatively unknown. These cultural appropriations, which have become hybridized, represent a movement where cultural signifiers stop signifying their intended purposes; the recreation of Japanese tattoos, which stray away from their traditional representations in Japanese society, begin to lose their intended meaning because of the blending of cultures that allow individuals to recreate tattooed images through a more Western perspective. To a certain extent, the beliefs attributed to these particular Japanese tattoos succumb to the power of U.S. Americans insofar as the history, language, and mythology associated with aspects of each of the five images analyzed is overlooked and eradicated from dominant ideology. Thus, the majority of these tattoos may come to reflect one particular category of cultural appropriation as outlined above: transculturation (cultural elements created from and/or by multiple cultures, such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic). Appropriation by means of transculturation can thus be seen as allowing people to bypass certain cultural

experiences that would serve to inform their decision on receiving a Japanese style tattoo by allowing them to distance themselves from that culture altogether. Disassociating culture from experience and history, in this case, allows the United States to be viewed as holding a certain amount of power over marginalized cultures like Japan; a dichotomy that not only became particularly true as soon as the United States forced its way into Japanese markets during the mid-nineteenth century, creating an empire in which all other cultures significantly different from the U.S. were deemed "marginalized", but is also representative of Roger's (2006) fourth category of appropriation, cultural dominance.

While there are those who believe that everything from eating a burrito to doing yoga is appropriating culture of some kind, we have to take a step back and ask ourselves, where do we draw the line between what constitutes patterns of cultural appropriation and what is deemed "appropriate" in terms of cultural exploration? People may not fully understand the extent to which these appropriations occur in everyday life, especially if they are part of a dominant culture, so learning how to explore a culture with a certain degree of sensitivity becomes a necessary step towards cultural awareness.

The concluding chapter that follows unpacks our understanding of cultural appropriation thus far by summarizing the findings in chapters two and three in order to answer the research questions posed in chapter one. I then use my findings from chapters two and three to show how transculturation is the most common type of appropriation that exists today and that it can be combatted through the idea of cultural exploration. Lastly, I explicate the limitations associated with this study and the implications that my analysis may have on future studies surrounding Japanese style tattoos. It is my hope to

instill within readers a sense of cultural awareness whereby individuals can assess the appropriateness of "borrowing" from other cultures, an important piece to understand when deciding whether or not to permanently ink one's skin with the signs and symbols of another culture.

Chapter 4: Appropriating Tattoos through Transculturation

In traditional society, the meaning of tattoos was a social and collective affair that projected certain images upon groups of people (i.e. criminality) (Turner, 1999). In contemporary society, however, these social linkages associated with the art of tattooing are no longer viewed as important, rather, the practices of tattooing have been reinvented in order to present individuals with more personalized forms of body modification. Taking this perspective into consideration, tattoos can be defined as "the social construction of traditional patterns of sociability in the modern world" (Turner, 1999, p. 41). Turner (1999) also points out the important relationship between consumerism on a global scale and that of contemporary tattooing culture: "globalization has produced a mélange of tattoos which are ironically self-referential and repetitive, and the very hybridity of tattoo genres playfully question the authenticity of these commercial body marks" (p. 40). Through my analysis of Japanese style tattoos, I argue that this particular style of tattooing reflects a category of appropriation known as transculturation, a process that reflects the blurring of two cultures into one seemingly homogenized culture whose origin is relatively unknown. Understanding transculturation became useful in answering the research questions that I posed in chapter one:

RQ1: Which Japanese style tattoos or Japanese symbols are often tattooed on celebrities' bodies?

RQ2: What does the display of Japanese style tattoos by celebrities in the U.S. suggest about our understanding of cultural appropriation?

Scholarship surrounding post-colonialism, Orientalism, and the hybridized identities associated with transnationalism require scholars to explore the complex

relationships that exist between power and the physical or social world in ways that deconstruct the meanings associated with a particular culture in order to have a base from which appropriation can be understood. Shome and Hedge (2002), among others, seek to challenge the theoretical frameworks associated with these notions of cultural identification because understanding culture means understanding the ways in which globalization contributes to a homogenized view of marginalized people. As a white, Western scholar who has been exposed to largely Western scholarship, I was left questioning my own approach to this study and was subsequently challenged to dig deep into the history of tattooing practices in Japan. I therefore had to understand my positionality within current academic discourse before I could attempt to explicate the cultural practices of a "Far Eastern nation". This process prompted me to ask questions about appropriation and what in particular defines an act of appropriation.

Through the use of fourteen magazine covers circulated within the United States, I was able to see first-hand how far from Japanese culture the tattoos of each celebrity were appropriated; by inking traditional Japanese art forms onto their bodies, the celebrities on each of these magazine covers blurred the lines between two seemingly different cultures through a process known as transculturation. To support my argument, I will address my findings in chapters two and three before discussing how we might combat the rise of globalization through processes of cultural exploration. I conclude this chapter by discussing the limitations of my research and provide recommendations for further research into the matter of tattoos as co-opted forms of body modification.

Findings in Chapters 2 & 3

In chapter two I analyzed the covers of fourteen popular magazines currently in circulation within the United States in which the posed celebrities could be seen sporting at least one noticeable Japanese style tattoo. My research was focused on using a semiotic analysis to investigate the relationship between tattoos and their meanings. Semiotics allowed me to understand how far the tattoos on each celebrity were taken out of historical and cultural context, thus altering the signified meaning traditionally attributed to such images in modern day Japan. Through my analysis, I was able to find five common images tattooed onto the bodies of prominent celebrities in the United States: (1) a tiger; (2) a geisha; (3) a koi fish; (4) chrysanthemum or lotus blossoms; and (5) a dragon. Each image depicted, lacked traditional elements characteristic of these symbols in modern day Japan, though any elements that could be viewed as traditional in these tattoos were often co-opted by other Western elements whether in design, placement, or through the blending of various background elements not representative of Japanese culture. This lack of attention to detail in each signifier supports Yamada's (2009) argument that cultural identity has become commercialized to the point of standardization, changing the signified meaning of each tattoo in ways that promote a false sense of individualization through the promotion of a dominant cultural ideology. Furthermore, the alteration of these images promotes notions of post-colonialism and Orientalism by changing the meaning behind images characteristic of a marginalized, "Far Eastern nation".

In chapter three I aimed to differentiate between the different aspects that make up cultural appropriation in order to see where each tattoo analyzed fell in regards to the

most common categories of appropriation. Cultural appropriation is defined by Rogers (2006) as an active process where one person integrates another person's culture into their own. Breaking down the categories of cultural appropriation into cultural exchange, cultural dominance, cultural exploitation, and transculturation, it became apparent that each celebrity's tattoo exemplified certain aspects of cultural exchange, cultural exploitation, and transculturation, though transculturation was the dominant form that these particular appropriations took. In terms of cultural exchange, only two tattoos of koi fish promoted an understanding of Japanese culture through the use of a cohesive background that blended various Japanese cultural elements together. For cultural exploitation, there were two tattoos in particular that had a blatant disregard for Japanese culture. These were the images of a caricatured koi fish tattooed onto the body of a female musician and a chrysanthemum that was tattooed onto the body of an adult film star. Transculturation, on the other hand, is where the rest of the tattoos fell in terms of appropriation. These tattoos reflected a lack of understanding about the traditional design elements and placement of each tattoo in such a way that blended Japanese and U.S. American culture into a single design; the cultural signifiers in these instances begin to lose their intended meaning in such a way that attributes new meaning to some of the most commonly used Japanese symbols.

Overall, while it may be extremely difficult to assess the appropriative nature of each tattoo without direct interaction from these celebrities, I argue that transculturation, through the blending of Japanese and U.S. American cultures, perpetuates misrepresentations of Japanese culture and is the most common form of appropriation that exists in our globalized society today. In a world inundated with globalization, the

origins of goods and services bought and sold in the marketplace, including tattoos, are difficult to trace back to any one single culture. Globalization thus brings to light how co-opted appropriation can be because of the many hands that an idea or artifact may come in contact with it. Our understanding of these tattoos and the four categories of appropriation thus highlight just how subjective notions of appropriation can be because not everyone will view Japanese imagery in the same light.

My analysis in chapters two and three serve as prime examples for understanding the effects that globalization has on marginalized cultures throughout history, supporting Shome and Hedge's (2002) proposal that globalization is the product of multiple modernities in which culture is re-articulated as capital. Though this idea of transculturation mentioned in chapter three may be viewed through a less critical lens, because it does in fact expose individuals to aspects of a number of cultures, transculturation does not actually facilitate an understanding that would allow something like a tattoo, for example, to be used in a non-exploitative manner. The increase in globalization, which promotes transculturation, develops a need for people to view culture from a lens outside of the dominant one they may be used to. Using Holmes' (2016) four ways in which to explore culture, I will demonstrate how to effectively combat the rise of globalization through cultural exploration. These four ways of exploring culture will be useful in learning how to minimize appropriating the tattoos of marginalized cultures for exploitative purposes.

Understanding Culture through Exploration

For many, cultural exploration lends itself to acknowledging the power dynamics at play as a result of globalization. Cultural exploration thus promotes a responsibility for

people to educate themselves on and listen to people of marginalized cultures so as to understand as much as possible about the subtle ways in which their cultures have been appropriated and exploited throughout history. In this sense, cultural exploration is not a matter of telling people what they can and cannot do, but rather, it becomes a matter of telling people that they don't live in a vacuum and that there are many social and historical implications that result from appropriating the ideas and artifacts of marginalized cultures. The key to successful exploration of another culture is to understand and learn as much as possible in order to broaden one's perspective on matters that allow them to connect with others cross-culturally (Holmes, 2016).

Thus, people need to consider the implications of their cultural appropriations through the empowerment of knowledge. This allows for the creation of awareness and understanding which can minimize the appropriation of another culture's objects or artifacts. Holmes (2016) of Greenheart Club International, an international corporation aimed at empowering members to engage in cultural exploration, offers four ways to explore and take part in another culture without using it in an exploitative manner: (1) examine your own culture; (2) listen first; (3) consider context; and (4) share your own culture.

Examining one's own culture is done through the process of self-reflection. Through self-reflection, individuals are able to better understand difference and determine what is important in their own culture which can then be used as a platform to understand what may be perceived as important by other cultures with whom they may come into contact with. This means that if individuals realize that a specific aspect of their own cultural background is central to their cultural identity and that it would offend

them if someone were to use it without fully understanding what it meant, others may feel the exact same way. A person of Hindu faith, for example, tattooing an image of the Virgin Mary on their arm because the drawing looked pleasing to them may not sit well with those whose religion has a deeper understanding and meaning towards that specific image. In this case, some Christians would come to expect that Hindu person to understand more about the role of the Virgin Mary in their religion before proceeding with what may come across to some as an act of sac religion. Examining one's culture is therefore a step towards cultural understanding that not only allows a person to fully grasp how much of an impact culture has on our everyday lives, but also understand how their culture may come to interact with other cultures they may come into contact with.

Listening first is probably one of the best ways to understand another culture because listening forces a person to check their privilege at the door, meaning that by listening to someone of another culture, individuals are posited to relinquish their perceived power in favor of learning from those who may be viewed has having a lesser amount of power. By listening to those who are a part of a marginalized culture, one is able to understand the implications behind certain aspects of a foreign culture that interests them. Listening also helps to broaden a person's worldview by helping them to understand the history behind marginalized cultures in ways that may reveal similarities between the marginalized culture and their own. Understanding the history behind a marginalized group of people, like the Japanese, will ultimately help to combat stereotyping which will in turn downplay a person's Orientalist view of the world, an important step towards cultural education.

Considering the context of a particular element that seems unfamiliar allows one to really understand the various aspects of a marginalized culture and why certain items, symbols, or ideas are so important. Understanding the significance behind certain practices of another culture will help individuals to decide whether or not their own actions show signs of respect or mere appropriation (or exploitation). For example, because tattoos in Japan at one point in time were considered to be marks of criminals, taking Japanese images and inking them in a location that garners a lot of interest may not necessarily reflect what tattoos in Japan represent today. If a person determines that their actions are in fact appropriative and not explorative, considering the context of another culture will allow them to develop an alternate view so as to make the change from exploiting the marginalized culture to engaging in cultural education and exploration.

Lastly, the most important part of any cultural exploration, and what helps to distinguish it from appropriation, is the ability to create a space where people of different cultures can exchange thoughts, ideas, or objects associated with their culture, learn something about another culture, and partake in a mutual understanding of one another's background. This step is most important because it operates as a two-way street, promoting both awareness and understanding to all parties involved. If one chooses not to engage in this two-way understanding of cultural knowledge, such as the history behind the practice of tattooing in Japan, then they may be seen as promoting the sentiments attached to post-colonialism and Said's Orientalism.

Leveraging Cultural Difference

Culture is something that is ingrained within each and every one of us no matter the culture in which we were raised. By leveraging our cultural differences, we as human beings are able to obtain more output with a given input, meaning that we are able to achieve a greater sense of cultural awareness through a reciprocal process of exploration and exchange if we take the time to understand what makes certain aspects of an individual's culture unique from our own (Davis, 2013). In doing so, we must also understand that cultural interactions are never outside of power imbalances where one culture/nation is perceived as having a greater sense of authority over another. Davis (2013) notes four steps that individuals can take in order to leverage cultural differences: (1) recognize that cultural differences do exist; (2) be aware that adapting to these differences may include moving outside of one's own comfort zone; (3) learn to incorporate these differences into one's daily life by analyzing particular situations from various cultural perspectives; and (4) proactively seek ways to integrate that culture into one's understanding of the world around them. This understanding of how to leverage cultural difference encourages individuals to take a proactive stance in seeking out new and creative ways to understand what it is that makes one culture different from another, a process that, as noted above, allows for the adaptation and integration of difference that may initially be outside of one's comfort zone. In terms of tattooing, this could mean learning the history behind the practice of tattooing in Japan and consulting someone of Japanese origin before idly inking their skin with images that represent a foreign culture.

This lack of understanding about cultural difference is what gave rise to the concept of Orientalism as laid out by Said (1978); "Far Eastern nations" were labeled

barbaric, other worldly, and in need of reform all because the West failed to invest time in recognizing that cultural difference is something to be leveraged rather than something to be feared and conquered or colonized. This failure to recognize cultural difference encourages the growing animosity between two cultures because one culture views itself as superior to another. Therefore, are people who continue to assess the same notions as outlined by Said any better than the Western powers of the nineteenth century? The concept of ethnocentrism may play a part in why these labels continue to be used by Western nations like the United States because of the thought that the certain Western nations continue to be superior to those of the "Far East"; this may be why Japanese style tattoos in the United States can be seen as blending Western elements with those of Japan, because the United States does not want to fully relinquish the power that it has in helping to develop tattoo styles that reach a global audience. The need for cultural exploration then becomes an even more important step on the path towards developing a greater sense of cultural awareness.

Ultimately, exploring a culture different from our own means to understand the values and history associated with cultural backgrounds different from our own in such a way that difference doesn't mean one person or culture is better or worse than another. By continuing to view difference as a road block to cultural exploration, we risk the continual promotion of appropriation when difference can actually be leveraged to promote cultural awareness. In the end, culture is something that defines us from the moment we enter this world and continues throughout adulthood in part because we are socialized from birth to understand or view the world through a specific lens. We obtain everything we know through interactions that span years, thus it is nearly impossible for

cultural awareness to be obtained overnight, whether by education or interaction. Once we understand our own culture and learn to properly explore the differences that come with other varying cultures, only then can we seek solutions to bridge the gaps in communication and understand each other in order to leverage cultural differences to get the most out of these cross-cultural relationships. Thus, if one wants to show an interest in Japanese symbols through the use of tattoos, one must research and engage in or with Japanese culture so as to replicate an image that depicts actual aspects of Japanese history.

Limitations

There were a few limitations that I was faced with in conducting this study. The first issue surrounds my access to magazine covers. In order to get a broader range of magazines from which to base my analysis, I had to rely on magazine covers found on the Internet. The Internet provided a wide range of covers from which I could choose, cutting down on the time and money I would need to devote to finding magazines whose covers depicted celebrities with a very particular tattooing style. The next issue I faced was related to the visibility of tattoos on each of the celebrity bodies analyzed. The majority of magazine covers that I looked through were framed in such a way that either the celebrities' bodies were covered head to toe in clothing or their bodies were cut out of the overall image, leaving only a headshot for consideration. I had to carefully choose covers that showcased full body images where some aspect of each celebrity's body was exposed (i.e. shirtless, in a bathing suit, wearing shorts or a tank top). Thus, my research is in no way indicative of all the Japanese style tattoos that any one celebrity may possess.

The third limitation is that I was not able to speak with each of the celebrities posed on the selected magazine covers. By not having access to the subjects under review, I was not able to fully understand the reasons why they chose the specific tattoos that they did or why they chose to place their tattoos in the locations that they did. Thus, I had to rely on my theoretical framework and methodology in which to develop my own conclusions about the appropriations of the five selected images. Similarly, because this study did not involve human participants, I was unable to generalize my findings to a greater population which could then be used to confirm or disconfirm my analysis. The ability to find people who also had Japanese style tattoos would have taken considerably more time than I have allotted for this particular research.

The final, and arguably most important, limitation to this study was that I was limited by language and culture in determining what was considered to be traditional and what was not. For this study, I situated tradition on a timeline where the history of Japan prior to World War II, and the massive influence that Western powers had on this island nation, constituted collective (traditional) ideas that were held by a vast majority of the people for several decades if not hundreds of years before their forced participation in globalization. Thus, the use of contemporary Japanese thought, again, specifically for this study, is reflective of the altered beliefs that followed the Japanese' involvement in World War II at a time where their sense of self dramatically changed.

Future Research

Looking at the future research of body modification as acts of appropriation on a broader scale, researchers may wish to incorporate other aspects of modification not touched on throughout this research. This could include a look at body piercing,

scarification or any other popular practice whereby an individual's body changes and transforms because of some aesthetic reasoning in order to see what other forms of body modification, outside of tattoos, may suggest about cultural appropriation. Each of these forms of body modification can be traced back to ancient civilizations and, just as I have done here, a post-colonial framework coupled with a semiotic analysis could be used in order to see just how far from tradition these other forms of body modification have truly come. It would be great to see how other forms of body modification parallel the appropriation of cultural tattoos while also recognizing the differences that each form of modification may take in today's global society.

Specifically looking at the art of tattooing, future research could incorporate other cultural tattoos outside that of the Japanese. This may include a look at Arabic tattooing practices in the United States or even tribal symbols that could be tied back to the Maori populations in New Zealand. Tracing each form of cultural tattoo back to its roots may provide a deeper understanding of why so many U.S. Americans choose to appropriate the images that remain characteristic of another culture.

Narrowing the scope of research down even further, future studies pertaining to the appropriation of Japanese style tattooing may decide to look at this ancient art form from the vantage point of the Japanese. This could include deeper discussions on current tattooing practices in Japan, the importation of Western culture in Japan through the use of one point tattoos, or simply to fully understand how the Japanese contend with the West's appropriation of their cultural symbols as forms of permanent commodities. I find it important to incorporate both sides of any issue into a discussion and though I was only able to scratch the surface of this topic, however briefly, the insight that Japanese persons

could disseminate upon this research would allow for greater dialogue and more well-rounded exploration into the various aspects associated with cultural appropriation.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, I feel as though tattoos are often times overlooked as acts constitutive of appropriation. I believe this has a lot to do with the transcultural nature of tattoos as being combinations of two or more cultures into a single design so much so that the origin of any specific tattoo becomes lost. Transculturation thus complicates our understanding of what it means to receive a Japanese style tattoo because the Japanese elements of the tattoos analyzed in this thesis are so far removed from traditional Japanese society that they may be perceived as something indicative of U.S. American culture. What's more is that each and every time cultural tattoos, like those from Japan, are inked out of context, society pushes itself further into the realm of ignorance. If the United States is to be considered a confluence of many cultures, ethnicities, and religions, we can no longer ignore the pluralism of the world that we live in.

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Cover Page. (2001, May). *Rolling Stone.*

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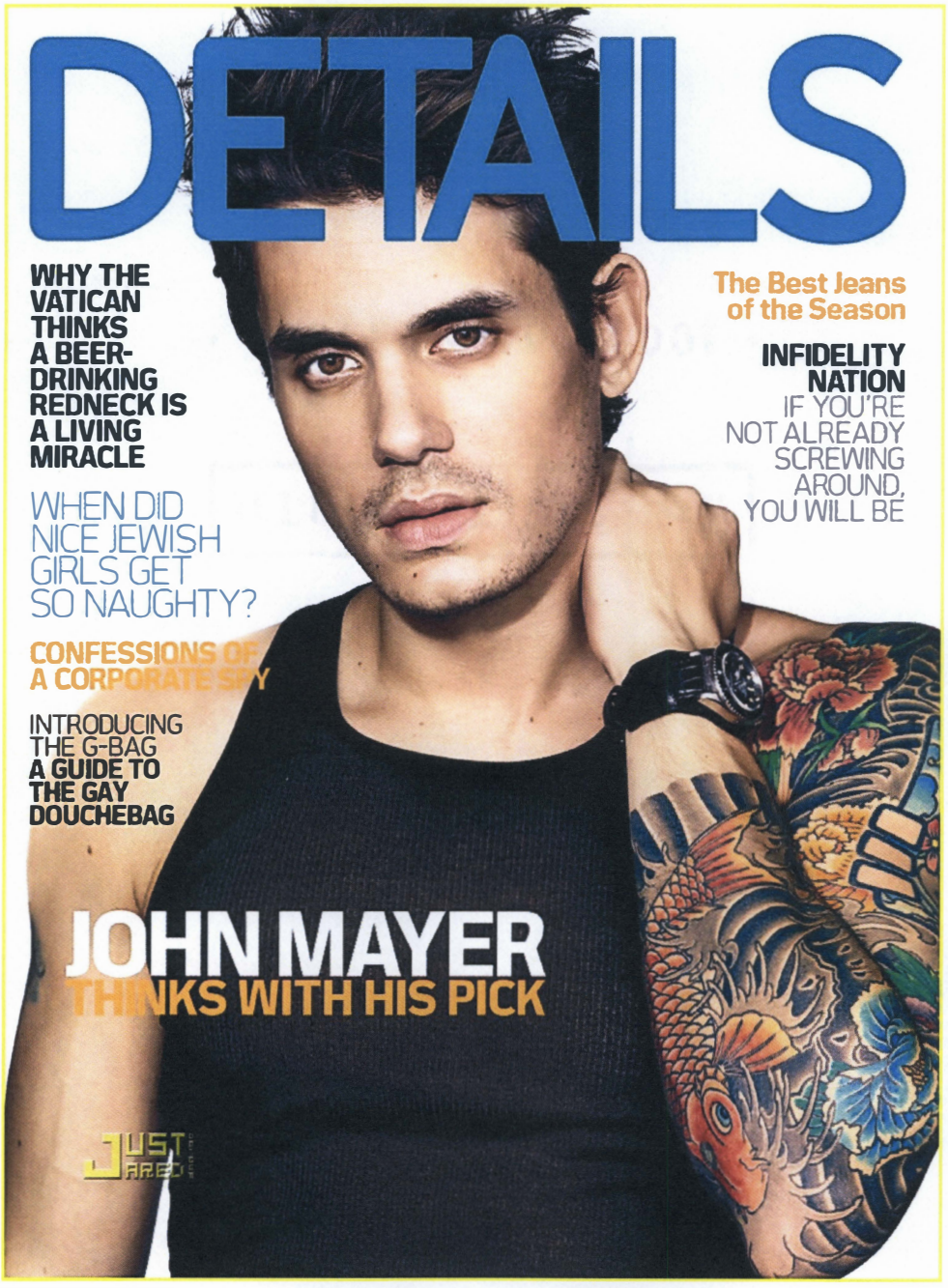
Appendix A

Image 1: Cultural Exchange



Cover Page. (2009, December). *Details.*

Image 2: Cultural Exploitation

Cover Page. (2011, April). *Inked*.

Image 3: Transculturation

Cover Page. (2014, October). *D'Scene.*