Art Research with Indigenous Populations: Reexamining International Cultural Policy, Heritage Tourism and Fair Trade

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Abstract:

The proposed paper critically examines *decolonizing research methodologies* designed to support arts educators as cultural producers who can shape and expand collaborative approaches to cross-cultural inquiry and in developing skills as cultural diplomats who can help shape stronger international relations through their studies and publications. After a brief overview of participatory action research (Springer, 2008), graduate student initiatives, and postcolonial approaches to research (Battiste, 2008; Staikidis, 2008; Te Awekotuku, 1991; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999) used by North American colleagues exploring regional artists’ works in Central, North and South America and Australia, I examine global approaches to heritage tourism (Ballengee-Morris, 2002; Ballengee-Morris & Sanders 2010), and the ethical challenges facing the development of cultural arts industries—particularly those researched by higher educators and the graduate students they direct in international cultural research and study abroad programs.

This presentation seeks to undermine the foundations of *cultural patrimony* that have formally suppressed self-determined approaches (Ballengee-Morris, 1999; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001) to cultural and economic development and sustained inequitable distribution of resources. The paper explores cultural agent accountability, alignment of stated missions and representational practice, and the impact of past and present policies on the future of arts education. The presentation questions which authorities get to determine what constitutes an *authentic* cultural product, who is authorized to recount its historic development, market/encourage cultural tourism, and benefit from the labor and resources invested in its production? The paper further considers how populations might benefit from alternative cultural research policies and practices, new deliberative processes (both physical and virtual), forms of historic/documentary production and publication, marketing and promotion.
In short, this paper troubles (Lather, 1995, 2003) the concept of reaching out, given outreach always/already assumes the author/researcher is central and others are on the margin. Similar to critiques of the collapse of critical theory’s surety (St Pierre & Pillow, 2000), calls for multicultural education (Lippard, 1996; Cahan & Kocur, 1990), and questioning of historic narratives (Chaat Smith, 2009; Prakash & Esteva, 1998), the paper interrogates the savior narrative and servicing of “others” framed by research. In Conclusion the paper calls for ethical participatory action research that recognize the epistemologies of populations with whom we research, greater sensitivities and responsiveness to indigenous protocols, and diligent work toward honoring the self-determined interests of collaborators, and developing practices of decolonizing research methodologies.

This presentation utilizes multi-screen digital projections, video clips and commentaries that challenges scholars and collaborators to work toward developing ethically defensibly arts education research with indigenous populations in international settings—those whose interests have traditionally been marginalized and whose knowledge and ways of living in the world have historically been known through the eyes and words of those who may have disregarded their interests.

References


**Identification form for the submission of abstracts on Arts Education**
(Research/case studies/experiences of best practices)

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