

Decolonizing Development Through Indigenous Artist-Led Inquiry

Christine Ballengee-Morris
The Ohio State University

James Sanders
The Ohio State University

Debbie Smith-Shank
The Ohio State University

Kryssi Staikidis
Northern Illinois University

In this article four university art educators explore theories of self-determination and describe decolonizing, approaches to research that are built on mutual trust. As researchers we recognize that (re)presenting the stories of others—especially across international and transcultural boundaries—is both problematic and an ethical challenge. We acknowledge the risks that participants assume when sharing their stories, and follow the culturally sensitive strategy of having collaborating indigenous artists lead the research. In *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), Linda Tuhiwai-Smith,

advocates specific approaches for ethnographic research that can be ethically employed by non-indigenous researchers. The mentoring model (tiaki) is one in which the authoritative indigenous person guides the research. The adoption model (whangai) posits that researchers are incorporated into the daily life of the indigenous people, which eventually enables them to “sustain a life-long relationship which extends far beyond the realms of research (p. 177).

Over the past eighteen months, as a group, we have exchanged our thoughts as arts educators researching with indigenous populations—delivering position papers and performances at conferences in the Americas, Asia and Europe. Working across transnational settings, we have deepened our inquiries into ethically sound research practices—at times being humbled by the passionate commitments, visionary efforts and powerful testimonies of arts educators working to address critical social, cultural, economic and ecological challenges. We address pedagogical practices, curricula, cultural policies, administration, and research methods and are interested in recent programmatic and theoretical transformations unfolding in museums, universities, community-based settings, and electronic media that cross international borders. These changes

require “un-thinking” commitments to Western European formalist values, disciplinary territorialism, and the unquestioned conservation of existing cultural institutions.

The patchwork of stories stitched together in this paper challenges readers to create approaches to learning in and through the arts that serve the self-identified needs of communities and individuals. Co-authors include Christine Ballengee-Morris, an Eastern Band Cherokee who reexamines her work with Guarani leaders in South America and Appalachian populations in the late 20th Century and discusses issues of self-determination. Kryssi Staikidis recounts work with her Guatemalan Maya Tz’utuhil painting mentor (whose anonymity will be preserved), and shares video interviews she produced with him—discussing ethical challenges in making one’s collaborating artist’s stories known. These structured texts call attention to the ways researchers (un)intentionally create their stories. Debbie Smith-Shank forefronts her misgivings and discomforts about releasing research that is constructed from less than in-depth engagement with communities other than her own. She foregrounds the importance of storytelling and shares insights gleaned from conversations with Aboriginal women about art and life issues. Jim Sanders addresses his dis-ease at working with three middle and working-class white women graduate students researching Fair Trade with artists in Peru and Bolivia, and developing a fair-trade curriculum for an undergraduate writing course addressing multicultural issues. Sanders also explores his revisions of Museum Education and Management courses for an on-line Masters graduate specialization for Native American Indian students under the direction of Pat Stuhr and Christine Ballengee-Morris.

Seeing art education research as a process through which we might more deeply explore forms of social and cultural production, enterprise, engagement and interaction, we ask how arts education can serve the critical social, political, ethical, and moral challenges facing troubled and constantly evolving (inter)cultural contexts. And through what research methods, rituals of speaking, and/or forms of engagement can such causes be advanced?

According to presentations at the 2005 international symposium, *Vision, Space, and Desire: Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity* (sponsored by the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)) there is a noticeable lack of art/art education programs in the United States that prepare museum personnel and teachers in postmodern/postcolonial understandings and/or sovereign methodologies and practices. A primary purpose of this paper is to explore theoretical models and arts-based research practices that have challenged and changed how indigenous artists’ works are studied, (re)presented, and taught to multiple populations.

While Denzin and Lincoln (2008) insist that non-indigenous scholars learn to “dismantle, deconstruct, and decolonize Western epistemologies from within” (p. ix), we agree that the term *postcolonial* itself is unavoidably a construct of academe. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) reminds us that indigenous peoples trained by the Western academy struggle with the “demands of research, on one side, and the realities they encounter amongst their own and other indigenous communities with whom they share lifelong relationships” (p. 5) on the other. Given this conflict, how then are non-indigenous scholars and researchers to begin dismantling and deconstructing the Western epistemologies on which our communities of academic scholarship have been constructed? The first-person narratives that follow explore our individual experiences with decolonizing

methodologies while working in South and Central American, Australian and/or United States research settings.

Kryssi's Story I consider artistic mentoring as an ethnographic model that creates a two-way relational dynamic between my outsider autobiography and an insider's self-determined and negotiated narrative. The collaboratively created video interview with my Tz'utuhil Maya mentor demonstrates the evolution of our research process over time. This approach recognizes the complications that always arise from talking about people, rather than facilitating their own talk about themselves. As a non-Maya cultural outsider, artist, and ethnographer working with an indigenous artist in a *postcolonial* age, my research is unavoidably haunted by the destructive trail left by 20th century researchers who cruelly objectified, misrepresented and harmed indigenous cultures around the globe (Battiste, 2008; Dion, 2009; Diversi & Moreira, 2009; Madison, 2005; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Te Awekotuku 1991). This work has two objectives: first, to examine the possibilities and limitations of a cultural outsider's work with a Guatemalan Maya Tz'utuhil artist and painting mentor over the course of eight years, and second, to examine the ethics of qualitative inquiry in an indigenous context using video as a visual tool to foreground the voice of the Maya artist.

For indigenous communities, the era of the postcolonial is a phantom. As Grande (2004) notes, "... the project of decolonization centers on issues of land, labor, resources, language, education and culture as they relate to issues of sovereignty and self-determination" (p. 153). The issues that Grande addresses are present in this artist's discourse surrounding his painting's narrative themes and those ways in which he attempts to resist acculturation, preserve Maya Tz'utuhil traditions, and advocate for social justice. I worked as a student under the artist's tutelage as the artist guided my researching process and we shifted the locus of authority from that of traditional Western ethnographic models. Working through cycles designed by my Maya mentor fostered our collaborative process and created bridges of understanding.

I aim to present a *holistic* overview of the work we undertake; one reflecting multiple viewpoints and relying on the perceptions of the teacher as a *consultant* (Lassiter, 1998). As a cultural outsider, I acknowledge the impossibility of completely understanding the epistemologies informing my teacher's painting and pedagogical practices, but hold that shared creative and artistic languages and meanings embedded in our art exchanges allowed us to *speak* in new ways.

As researcher, I received art lessons, conducted interviews, wrote field observations, and painted visual field notes. The study used participants' constructs to frame definitions of art, spirituality and pedagogy. After years of building trust, we deliberated about ethical ways to present our work together, and my mentor asked that I, as researcher, student, and friend, record his story of the army massacre that took place against the Maya in his neighboring town, Santiago Atitlan in 1990. We came up with video interview questions, and he asked that the co-edited final product be distributed outside of his country. Affirming how he desired to be represented to an academy so distant from his life, the resulting collaborative video privileges his views, his voice and his paintings as a Maya artist and scholar who struggled to capture the destructive impact of a genocide against his Maya communities in Guatemala. The artist mentor risks retaliation so that

viewers may serve witness to suffering inflicted by a racist tyrannical regime. This research thus foregrounds the value of the visual as an important tool for qualitative inquiry (Pink, 2001).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOcD-J-rUBA>

[Figure 1. Movie clip situating the danger a collaborator confronts in sharing his stories]

Across continents, indigenous peoples have united to contest injustices perpetrated against them. Begaye, in Grande (2004), observes:

The history of Indian education often neglects discourse about colonization and genocide and acculturation and instead focuses on the survival of identity, community and culture. However, in recent times, Native American people have increasingly begun to empower themselves with the very tools of colonization that have been used against them. They are exercising their sovereignty, revitalizing language and culture, and becoming legitimate contenders in the political arena (2004, p. vii).

Christine: My story is about a Guarani tribe in Brazil, a relationship I first entered in 1994. Although the histories and timelines towards assimilation were different in many ways, as collaborating researchers we shared common journeys. Government agencies implementing relocation programs sent thousands of indigenous people to the city to face difficult challenges in unfamiliar environments. As in the case in North America, many Native peoples are generations removed from their homelands, as well as newer immigrants to unfamiliar lands; forced to work toward making sense of the tensions produced by and reactions to colonialism such as racism, suicides, assimilation, and poverty. It is the arts that provide common threads among many tribes and a connection to the processes of identity development and maintaining tribal affiliation. For the Guarani, this meant dealing with racism, a 70% suicide rate, and ten times higher unemployment rates than other Brazilians.



[Figure two, Carlos and Author Two at his reserve in Brazil. Photograph by Christina Rizzi]

A government program called FUNAI (National Foundation for Indians) set up an arts program, which exchanges art items for social or material services such as land right protection, schools, and health care. This has not been successful according to UNESCO (1995), because schools were not built, health care was not consistent, land right issues were not addressed, and suicide rates continued to grow. Karai, cultural leader of the Guarani in Sao Paulo, believed that his tribe needed to address the suicide and poverty issues in a self-determined way. Through guidance from teachings by Paulo Freire, Karai and tribal members began creating strategic plans. The first was to make and sell items such as feather and bead adornments, carvings, and baskets to generate funds, and to develop a theatrical production that educates non-indigenous people about the Guarani. They believed that once people understood their culture, traditions, and needs that they could reduce racist actions. This tribe continues to find ways to be self-determined. According to recent suicide statistics the rates are still climbing (Brazil Magazine Newsroom, 2009). The report states that due to almost no land, alcoholism, small reservations where hunting, fishing, and planting are impossible, and resistance by non-indigenous populations to recognizing land rights create strong prejudice, racism, poverty, and suicides have increased.

Debbie: I spent time in Australia in 2008 with a community of Aboriginal women. They and their artworks direct me to share their experiences and stories with you but I am challenged. I am challenged to teach about their culture, objects, stories, and histories sensitively and without privileging my white, western, and hegemonic historic research trajectory. While I was there, I listened to their stories and songs, and I made art.

Contextualizing my visit to this community was the historic "Sorry Speech" made by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on February 13, 2008. He apologized for to the "Stolen Generations," the 100,000 Aboriginal children, mostly of mixed blood, who were taken from their parents between 1910 and the early 1970s to be raised by non-Aboriginals under a government sponsored political assimilation policy. He said:

I move: That today we honour the indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were stolen generations - this blemished chapter in our nation's history. The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future. We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

<<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/13/1202760379056.html>> Retrieved Nov. 18, 2009

I was moved to tears amid white and black Australians and visitors as I watched the looped video of this speech in an art gallery, just weeks after the event. I reconsidered my own positionality and my Outsider status. I continue to be at a loss as to how to communicate my experiences without perpetuating the violence my hosts have endured from those in “power.” In the words of Patti Lather (2007), “In theorizing distinctions between loss and lost in working toward research practices that take into account the crisis of representation, how can writing the other not be an act of continuing colonialization” (p. 13) ?

As I was contemplating this paper, I heard another “Sorry Speech” by Mr. Rudd. On Tuesday, November 17, 2009, Mr. Rudd addressed a new apology to around 500,000 Australian children, called the "[Forgotten Australians](#)" who suffered physical and emotional abuse and neglect in the state-run orphanages and foster care system during approximately the same time period as the “Stolen Generations.” These “Forgotten Australians” were part of the Child Migrant Program:

The Child Migrant Program was initially begun in the 1920s with the idea of providing British colonies with a supply of white workers and to establish certain religious denominations. It has been estimated that over 150,000 children were forcibly emigrated to former colonies including areas in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. It is believed that between 7,000 and 10,000 were shipped to Australia alone between 1947 and 1967. <<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/paperchase/2009/11/australia-pm-issues-apology-to-migrant.php>> Retrieved Nov. 18, 2009

Does saying “sorry” help to heal residual scars? These thoughts were doubly resonant in my mind during my sojourn in Australia. My family was in crisis and Northern Illinois University (my academic home) had just survived a shooting spree during which six students died, many were hurt, and the delusional shooter took his own life. My agenda for the trip to central Australia was not research, but healing.

Jim’s Story: My research collaborations with graduate students conducting cross-cultural/international arts-based studies works toward the ends of human rights, economic, ecological and social justice, and considers arts education as an instrument of cultural diplomacy. As scholarly works, these studies gesture toward the need for exploring how power is multiply reproduced and distributed across race, gender, class and ethnicity in the design and conduct of transnational research, and in the promotion, consumption, sales operations, and laws governing inter/national fair trade of cultural properties. Surveying some of the varied research methods employed by students engaged in collaborative and cooperative, co-learning research one becomes acutely aware of alignments of research questions, philosophic and political standpoints, and the need for sensitivity toward the self-determined interests of indigenous collaborators. These studies reconfirm the value of U.S. researchers’ sustained commitment to respectful cultural exchanges; those that can lead to social transformation. Reflexively reconsidering both individual and group work toward rethinking the ends of arts education, we weighed the potential benefits and dangers of engaging in openly ideological research, and troubled our positions of power and privilege.

Over the past decades American education researchers in the arts have increasingly acknowledged the ethical, moral, economic and cultural challenges unavoidably encountered when conducting research across international boundaries. In the Americas, both hemispheres are experiencing intensified fiscal and ecological disparities, and class, gender, sexuality and race-based polarization (Madeley, 1992). The ever-widening gulf between those with and without power, access to education, health or basic service infrastructures poses political, social and ecological challenges for researchers, educators, neighborhoods, related social institutions and groups, while implicating producers and consumers engaged in cultural trade and commerce (Blowfield, 1998; Kocken, 2003). With the expansion of the policing functions of governments, from US preoccupation with national security and protecting borders and industries, to the forms of protectionism enforced by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Free Trade Agreements treaties, and GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), local, state, federal, and world government responses at times create new problems. These responses appear to largely ignore demands for key social services, not unlike those that remain unaddressed in the U.S. (e.g., universal healthcare, or human rights for citizens of all sexualities). These needs may be even greater in Nations still struggling to recover from centuries of colonial exploitation (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2002; Coote & LeQuesne, 1996). Given these challenges, local, state, federal, and international aid and development funding remain important policy consideration (Hage & Powers, 1992), and the social and political performances of individuals and corporations (Maignan, 2002), inevitably impact the contexts in which scholars research.

When directing graduate students engaged in participatory action studies and field-based research with indigenous populations, it is essential that faculty in higher education consider the methodological and philosophical lead of indigenous scholars in the field (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Te Awakotuku, 1991; Ballengee-Morris, 2002; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001); those who are committed to the development of ethical research conduct. As a gay Caucasian man, I consider it my civic duty to examine, discuss, and develop strategic plans for local change, and to applaud advisees' work toward developing economic and cultural infrastructural supports that collaborators contend could advance the well-being of peoples across hemispheres. Sustainable responses to these challenges can emerge from collectives and communities across cultural sectors. Such collaborative inquiry requires researchers to reiteratively reexamine the (in)formal structures advancing or frustrating shared goals and objectives (e.g., ecological, economic, and social justice), and demand the development of sound rituals of speaking.

Speaking With, Not For Or About Others

Recent advisee research has considered fair trade's commercial practice, history and grounding in both religious and political social change initiatives (Shaw & Clarke, 1999). Fair trade characterizes practices of (inter)national commerce that value sustainable development, equitable and transparency exchange, rights and better trading conditions for marginalized producers and workers (especially in the southern hemisphere). Fair Trade Organizations actively support producers, engage in educational initiatives designed to raise consumer and producer awareness, and campaign for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade. Students developed interventions that expanded the Fair Trade movement's commitment to public

education. Researchers' sites constitute spaces for communicating the value of developing ecologically sustainable and economically equitable cultural exchange. Each questioned how fair trade could be integrated within educational efforts in schools and communities, retail operations, fairs and festivals, and on-line commerce through actively involving producers in North and South America. These studies were grounded in (auto)ethnographic (Denzin, 2003) and participatory action research (Stringer, 2007). One used survey (Herman & Renz, 1997), and narrative research methods (Bakhtin, 1981; Casey, 1993), the second employed philosophic inquiry and self-study, and the third, a case study (Stake, 2000) methodology. These students were encouraged to collaboratively explore how their findings fit within the collective's shared research agenda and social change commitment involving fair trade. With their advising professor guiding the work, they pre-negotiated the unfolding of information and queries to be explored, set the stage for conference presentations designed to review historic colonial exploitations of populations that fair trade gestured toward redressing.

We collectively cross-examined this work and the risks of romanticizing the "native" other through commercial marketing practices, or mindless participation in self-marginalizing performances of indigenous cultural producers. Contending that through understanding potential patron's perceptions and values, Fair Trade advocates could more effectively lead consumers into action, one student began by exploring literature surrounding Fair Trade's inception, growth, principles, and context. Key among her findings was an acknowledgment that price and convenience (easy access to the fair trade product) were first among variables influencing consumer practices. These findings inspired a second study of the ways marketing reasonably priced fair trade cultural products on-line could eliminate the need for consumers to physically travel to a destination where those goods were being sold. This participatory action research now underway involves Peruvian artisans in Cajamarca co-designing their business model and web-based sales vehicles.



[Figure Three: Graduate Student Researcher & Cajamarca Artisan]

A second advisee sought to improve the practice of Fair Trade education through the design, execution and assessment of a participatory action research study (Brydon-Miller, 2004; Coghlan & Brannick, 2005), of local staff development processes. She developed a "civic, publicly responsible [auto] ethnography that addresses the central issues of self, race, gender, class, society and democracy" (Denzin, 2003, p. 259, and demonstrated how a localized study of a transnational development effort could further the growth of Fair Trade in the United States. This study's framework of hope viewed activist pedagogy (Friere, 1999) as engaging majority populations in redressing unjust distributions of power and authority. The study focused on the economic needs of artists in developing regions and marketed their work by connecting craft products to their makers' life-histories, and illustrating how story telling itself functions as a key component in successful marketing, sales and social consciousness raising efforts.



[Figure Four: Students, Volunteers, and Bolivian Weavers in Global Gallery]

The third study researched students' responses to curriculum and pedagogy that addressed economic, social and environmental injustice. After reviewing a range of strategies for dismantling personally and culturally constructed barriers that diverted students' attention from the existence of unjust trading practices, an ideological framework was constructed from the social justice

literature (hooks, 1994 & 2003; Kumashiro, 2004; Goodman, 2001; Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997, among others), and worked toward transforming the curriculum of a secondary writing course. Considering student reflexive writing and responses to viewed film(s), sampling of Fair Trade chocolates, and handling of Fair Trade craft and arts products as data, she demonstrated how the use of multi-sensorial experiences in the classroom could be an effective tactic for making the at-times difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998) of students' participation in the maintenance of the problem known. The graduate student theorized that by making the concept of unfair trade more tangible, students could begin to grapple with their power and choices as consumers—a process of self-examination that was integral to her teaching and student learning—a pedagogy that translated into direct action for social change.

The Recounting of Tales, Myths and Readings

The power dynamics of such actions unfolding transcultural contexts is a matter to which we now return, understandings recounted in tales, myths and their readings.

Debbie: My journey was one of navigation across cultural and racial identities and skin groups that caused my aboriginal friends and me considerable epistemological and ideological reflection. Because folk tales and myths are important to Aboriginal cultures as touchstones for passing knowledge to others, it seemed appropriate to use stories as our common language. I shared Smith family tales that evoked a lively call and response, eliciting laughter and tears. But my understanding of stories is not the same as theirs, and during listening times, I was often cautioned not to “steal” their stories. Aboriginal women’s stories have passed from mothers and aunties to daughters since the beginning of time, and a particular story is owned by a particular lineage. Only part of any story may be shared with Others, and with this caveat, Delores, an Aboriginal artist based outside of Alice Springs, shared her story of the *Seven Sisters* because I am an art teacher. While I wasn’t given the whole story, she did present me with a painting she made called “Ancestral Spirits” which she told me to share with my students. This painting and her other artwork based on her family story and her ancestral lands are her legacy and her gift to the world.



[Figure 5: <http://www.kitez.com/sevensisters/7sisters.htm#A02> Retrieved November 18, 2009]

The Seven Sisters are the stars in the Pleiades and there are multiple versions of this story throughout Australia. One story tells of a group of seven sisters who visited Earth. They looked for their favorite plateau to land on, but it was covered with little men. They called to the men to get out of the way, but the men refused so the sisters landed upon another hill. The men saw where they landed and decided to capture them, but the sisters ran and eventually the men grew tired of the pursuit, except for one. He kept following them. One of the sisters left the group to find water and the man followed her. She was drinking the water when she heard a faint sound. She looked up, saw the man, and raced off. He charged after and finally caught her. She yelled and screamed. He picked up a stick to quiet her and swung it. The woman jumped out of the way. He swung the stick again and again and missed and missed. The marks of his stick can still be seen on the side of a hill in that country. Finally the woman escaped back to the hill, looked up into the sky, saw her six sisters, and rose to join them. The man followed and became Orion. When the Pleiades are seen at dawn, it is said that this is a sign that the cold season is coming.

Kryssi: Because my Maya mentor guided the research process through creating the lessons for my learning, had a voice in the content of the writing, and took me into his home and world, we have developed life long bonds (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). As a student, my teacher set me up seated behind him in his studio, and modeled each part of the painting process for me - from color mixing to drawing to chatting about proportions, perspective, and traditional Maya courting rituals. This process enabled me to break through my own preconceptions about right and wrong ways of teaching (Behar, 2008). Such a dynamic where my Maya mentor guided the teaching and research process while I lived in his home and studied under his expertise was described by Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) as one way that a cultural outsider might work within an indigenous community.

My role as student enabled me to dismantle absolutes within Euro-American art pedagogy such as rendering from observation in nature which was not part of my mentor's conceptual framework. The site of power in a traditional ethnographic study shifted through this teacher-student dynamic. Nevertheless, power differentials were always in place, influenced by centuries of intrusive anthropological studies directed against indigenous *subjects* by white ethnographers, 'first world-third world' inequities, and the weight accompanying those who disseminate information and *represent others* in the academy. At one point, my teacher asked me to leverage that power for good. One day in the studio, he turned to me and began to speak of the terrible genocide that persisted for two decades in Guatemala, perpetrated against 200,000 Maya. He then asked me to record him making this information public so that this story could be heard by the world. Although leveraging my power at his request was complicated, as noted earlier, it also seemed essential. Jim Sanders asserts that I am now wrestling with my own angels - one asking that I oblige the artist's request for recounting the tale, and another maintaining that the protection of the collaborator is my responsibility as a researcher.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kgosdp09Do>

[Figure 6: Kryssi's teacher Testimonial]

Christine: As a Native scholar, I recognize tensions, negotiations and biases described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005). I find these necessary to acknowledge, given when writing or speaking about indigenous issues or topics, as the tendency is to speak in absolutes and to be heard as an authority and representative of all First Nations. Although I am indigenous, I was an outsider among this tribe. We found that a relational collaborative process helped us to expand beyond ourselves, our tribal memberships, and work toward global-thinking (Smith 2005). Self-Determined Indigenous Theories (Smith 2005) and practices connected us.

Self-determination is a political space where tribes have the ability to be free to act without external compulsion, to determine their own political status and to be self-governed without the influence of other countries. This status requires legal recognition by external powers to claim the right to self-determination. The American Indian Movement considers American Indian sovereignty necessary for shedding the shackles of colonialism.

Once Karai Mirin (Guarani) and I decided to work together, we negotiated our processes to be aligned in self-determined ways. Through long conversations, we decided to write an article about

decolonizing through the arts. Each word written was collaboratively chosen. This was the Guarani's story, not mine, and it was necessary that protocols approval were met. Tribe members met me and we talked about what they hoped to gain by telling their story and what they could lose. I recognized that these ramifications could be serious.

In 1996, I went back to Brazil to complete this project with Karai. I attended presentations that he made in Sao Paulo and we reviewed our work. Shortly after I left for the United States, he was arrested and accused of treason due to his public speeches about self-determination. I too was charged with using state funds to support a coup. The case was dropped. Through many conversations, the article, their story, was published in *Studies in Art Education* in 1999 (Ballengee Morris, 1999). Karai believes he is an example of what happens when indigenous people decide to speak for themselves. The recurring theme is resistance that is both positive and requires change, and is often met with negative resistance built on ignorance.

Approaching Arts-Based Inquiry With Eyes Wide-Open

A part of decolonialization involves the development of a critical consciousness for social/cultural change (Freire, 1972). A central point of this project was to model how the arts develop leadership skills, embrace collaborative practices, and create coalitions. The tribe members applied a consulting collaborative approach by interviewing and researching multiple view points/people and carried that method throughout the planning of the theatre performance and marketing of the arts. Smith (2005) states this process encourages reflective thinking and practice. Consulting collaborative approach includes critical forms of reflective experiences, cultural studies, and research experiences that can challenge established ways of thinking and acting by encouraging a re-examination of one's own values and practices. This process can build learning communities, which will support communities' lifelong successes and achievements through practices that question social problems, policies and ethical dilemmas.

Drumming, dance, and art exhibitions had provided educational fodder, entertainment, and political posturing for the first couple of years and then due to conflicts regarding land rights, which has often been interconnected with mineral or water rights, the non-indigenous did not respond well. Attendance to events slumped and venues were no longer available due to fear of riots.

The Guarani people believe that during artmaking, individuals become the closest to the fundamental and universal essence of life, reaching transcendental values through images that are a reflection of their feelings. Making art is creating and their highest deity is a creator; therefore, to create is to be at one with their creator. This is why the arts, the cosmos, metaphysics and mathematics are considered the foundation of their lives and educational curriculum. The arts are viewed as a social reformation tool that can educate both the indigenous and non-indigenous about the Guarani's history, heritage and culture.

Debbie: By situating myself as a curious and willing learner, I attempt to distance myself from colonial power spaces. However, I am clearly other with very white skin, Western university degrees, and only limited time within the community. The stories I hear are oral traditions; the paintings are visualizations of a culture that I cannot even hope to understand except tangentially.

Through their artwork, Aboriginal people express multifaceted relationships with their country, their understandings of the larger world, how it came into being, and their responsibilities for maintaining and reproducing their traditions. Each of the varied styles of artwork reflects a group's culture, historic journeys, and personal visions. Traditional Aboriginal society is a closely knit and interdependent unit where every member has responsibilities and social activities that are established through an intricate set of laws based on gender and age. The strength of each society lies in the strength of their broadly defined family groupings.

I have seen only small glimpses into these stories, so I can't tell them. I can however, tell mine. The methodology of autoethnography seems especially appropriate for interrogation of my experiences with Aboriginal artists. Autoethnography is "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. It privileges concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scene, characterization, and plot" (Ellis, 2004, p. xix).

My entry into this community at this particular time in history and with my own agenda assumed a political stance through the contexts of history, race, and traditions of artistry. It was a time for a different type of educational, research, artistic, and life journey. "Methodologically assuming no privileged signifier, no exclusivity no priority or predominance, here is where the journey of thinking differently begins: moments in the politics of truth (Lather, 2007, p. 9).

Kryssi: As I continued to read about the ethics of research and issues of representation (Battiste, 2008; Dion, 2009; Jones, 2008; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 2008), I grew uncomfortable speaking at conferences and writing articles that reflected my perceptions of my Maya mentor's views. And although I referred to and acknowledged my own subjectivity as part of the research process (Behar, 1996; 2008; Desai, 2002; Ellis, 2004), that did not seem enough anymore. The nagging question was, *Whose discourse is privileged?* And as I struggled with how to present this work justly in the academy, I realized that Luke Eric Lassiter (2005) was right: the gap between academically positioned and community-positioned narratives is essentially about the politics and power of representation; about who has the right to represent whom. But how might my presentation of this research respond to such issues of representation?

I felt that video as a medium for recording my mentor talking uninterruptedly could allow for his self-representation. In the video, his paintings inspire dialogue about the events of his life. Yet still I am the one who presents this work at conferences, and although he benefits as an artist whose work is widely seen, promoting the exposure of his Maya community, I benefit from the research as it becomes associated with my work as an art educator. My justification is that I recirculated the rarely heard narratives of a Maya artist whose work has not been much seen or appreciated in North America, and that I attempt to broaden the methods for teaching and researching art outside of a European model. The question remains: "How can I truly repay the artist whose work has contributed to my status as a professor?"

My Maya painting mentor allowed me to publicize his work, and he thanks me for doing so. Nevertheless, we are part of a power dynamic involving 'first world,' and 'third world, both

societies which discriminate against indigenous peoples. And, will I not distort his true intentions through an inaccurate translation?

Crazy Bull (1997) notes that reciprocity is critical in the research endeavor. As a student, I paid for all lessons and gifted the families with art supplies. I brought the artists copies of the videos that document their professional lives, the lives of their parents and grandparents. I give them copies of the journals that publish their works and pay for professional translations of those articles so my Maya mentors can read them. Is this enough? As much as I might convince myself that I am non-paternalistic, the research process is riddled with inequity. But, we have formed friendships for life. In the end, I tell myself that the intersections of cultures exist on multiple levels that form at best contestable sites.

Jim: I advise my students to un-naturalize colonizing practices of objectifying, naming and cataloguing subjects when assuming the role of research entrepreneur, ethnographer, historian and art educator, and to use the collaborator's categories, naming protocols, and frameworks. Further, fair trade graduate researchers have been asked to question by whose standards of fairness that their international commerce was being conducted? Opening up transcultural exchanges, while an educational opportunity, still requires all collaborators to sustain involvement in planning and self-critique. Presenting findings and sharing the collaborative research methods developed with colleagues in multinational contexts can extend the impact of fair trade, and help develop more equitable researching arrangements.

Researching In Ways That Might (dis)Serve Multiple Populations

I (Christine) contend that the selling of traditional cultures and arts has become profitable and has placed FUNAI in a position to decide who gets financial support and who does not. The paradox is that individuals from dominant cultures become experts and judges, who redefine culture and the arts through institutional policies they set; those that determine who and what will be a part of their institutions. In Brazil, these institutions select indigenous groups that demand the least and ignore those that want a voice. The struggle for power is the same whether it is for land, life, or arts. As a member of the Oneida Nation, Pam Colorado states that non-Indians will have "complete power to define what is and is not Indian, even for Indians" (Colorado in Churchill, 1992, p. 91). This is viewed as cultural genocide and as powerful as the smallpox filled blankets given to Native Americans in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Physical or cultural extermination that serves those who are in power and, no matter what the stated intentions, such acts are unforgivable.

From 1994-1998, two specific types of Guarani art were observed. The first, tourist arts, is made within their cultural traditions such as all feather art items that are made in the central spiritual house but which uses colors, shapes, and material determined by the market. The second type of items is also made within their cultural traditions; however, colors, materials, and usage are determined according to cultural, spiritual purposes. The children are taught the differences

between the two types by the process of making. Cultural items are made during preparation of rituals. The tourist items are made outside of those rituals in a factory-like atmosphere.

Karai Mirin stated that one of their goals is to remain traditionally rooted “to always remember that the arts provide us with that opportunity to survive” (personal communication, 1994). A Guarani community near Sao Vicente in the Atlantic Rain Forest is located close to their ancestral lands. Because they are still connected to place, their materials are closely related to their heritage; yet, they have chosen to make a division between what they sell to tourists and what they personally use everyday and for rituals. In an interview (2002), Carlos, the chief, explained their situation and perspective.

We are using our natural resources to sell to make money. We are trying to survive in both worlds —Guarani and dominant. We want to live and it is understood to survive now we need money. But the concept of rich is a dominant cultural concept and is not Guarani; therefore, it [being rich] is rejected. The dominant culture encourages the Guarani that money is a very good step forward, but to what, I ask? Our resources are depleting due to the demands being greater than our farming abilities. Times are getting hard (Ballengee-Morris, 2003).

Debbie: I am an art teacher and a teacher of art teachers. For decades, I have been proud of my ability to find images of artwork to enhance the art lessons I present to my students. I have been especially proud of my inclusion of the work of women artists and people of color as well as non-Western art exemplars in my various classrooms. I have always done my best not to trivialize other cultures and to look at them with lenses alert to the shifts in stance required when discussing art that may have its roots in spirituality. I thought I was doing a pretty good job until I found myself in an aboriginal community in central Australia in the Spring of 2008. Taking postmodern liberties I question voice, authority, honesty, and agency:

The red dirt’s seductive whispering came to me with a fortunate encounter and invitation for a grand adventure. I couldn’t say no to a visit to an art community in central Australia. I had absolutely no intention of conducting research or making artwork. I went to lose and heal myself in the heart of the Australian landscape.

Silence then talk. Silence then song. Isolation. Community. Song and a slammed door. Yelling. Silence. Numbness and thinking. And the stories in the paint and in the air. I am Other here. I laugh along with the other women when 12-year old Mary performs me-the-Other to the group of women. I wondered then, and continue to wonder how I must have misrepresented other Others over the years. Is it possible to adequately represent the verbal and imagic voices of Aboriginal artists to my students in U.S. art classrooms?

My students are primarily white and middle class. They have always loved looking at Aboriginal artwork – and of course it’s usually “dot paintings.” “So what is the difference between pointillism and Aboriginal dot paintings,” I asked my students in the past. Geez.

I am lost in a red sandstorm dry as a bone and as burning hot as an orange flame. I sweat in buckets. I am alone but part of the group.

To work through this complex self- and other-directed process, I returned to Vladimir Propp's (1928/1968) as a template for understanding my immersion in Australian Aboriginal culture. The tale becomes a primary signifier but it is autoethnographic. I cannot tell their story, but I can tell mine. I was very self-conscious speaking about them, and recognized that in Aboriginal communities you do not speak for another.

I left home in tears and with holes in my heart. I was as a babe, curious and unknowing in a landscape both strange and comforting. Like a seeker in Propp's morphology, I received well intended interdictions, "Don't go there by yourself!" "Be very cautious!" as if the middle class, middle aged, white American could not be safe with Aboriginal women. "They are not like us. They don't think like us." Like the protagonists in many of Propp's folk tales, I violated interdictions, was tested, met donors, acquired talismans, and I was led to answers I still don't fully understand. Like Propp's protagonists, I was marked physically and emotionally by the journey. I grew in strength and wisdom from the gentle teaching of my guides. I returned home transformed.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest that when researching personal experience, one's focus may be inward, outward, backward, or forward, a "temporality, past, present, and future" (p. 417). I must consider how to say what they wanted me to understand without speaking for them. As Myers discovered when he was asked to talk about his experiences with Aboriginal artists, "...in relying on my personal experience, I enacted a mediating position, speaking to what I had been told and how I had learned it, sharing my experience with the audience..." (p. 524).

I am Other. I speak their art and stories, but in the end I speak my own incomplete story of loss, finding, and renewal. I can't know the trials of the Stolen or Lost Generations or what it means to them to hear "sorry." My only recourse is to attempt research that does not cause more hurt even unintentionally.

Conclusions

An integral part of this collaborative writing project has been to both support and challenge each other in developing decolonizing methods for arts educators and writing up research conducted in transcultural contexts. We have turned to each other as we have collaboratively written up our research concerns in the form of an article. Most of us have also experienced new depths of discomfort and anxiety in critically interrogating our own actions, and engagements in academe.

Kryssi notes having awakened during the night prior to our group SKYPE conversation with anxiety thinking about subjecting her Maya friend and mentor to danger: "As I deliberated these issues, I decided that I would ask Christine to advise me the next day. She had worked with the Guarani community of Brazil and faced similar concerns as she served those with whom she collaborated, being asked to protect their families, even at times, putting her own family at risk. I confessed that initially, when presenting this work at conferences, fleeting public attention and limited access to lived-experiences lowered the levels of risk. When our conferences are over, there are few concrete

traces left. But regarding this on-line journal, where video clips can be integrated and posted on the internet, new risks and ethical issues again rise.

The next day on SKYPE, others confirmed the absolute need to consult with my teacher to clearly explain how the world would have access to his face, his words, and his views, once this video clip was published. Jim interjected that this conversation was exactly reflective of our writing and our concerns connected to the ethics of representing others and the power differentials inherently present when deciding what 'to do' about another person's life. Deb said I should do nothing without consulting my collaborator. I responded that even if my Maya mentor had initiated these video interviews to publicize the atrocity of such a genocide, because of his lack of contact with the internet as a site, could he fully know what this might mean for his life or that of his family?

As a group we recognize that Institutional Review Board's insistence that researchers not subject study participants to discomfort – but as researchers mustn't we protect our participants from our own well-meaning but potentially paternalist practices – ones that assume that a brown collaborator could not be fully aware of the dangers (s)he faced. As the conversation continued, Kryssi decided to play the video clips for her teacher on the phone so that he could decide if he felt comfortable with segments of those interviews going up for view across cultures. During this conversation he emphatically stated that he wanted his declarations made public at all costs. Assuming responsibility for her collaborator's well being, Kryssi reconfirmed his stance, despite knowing of the publication's expanded visibility.

At the 2009 National Art Education Association conference we performed our patchwork of narratives, ending the presentation by posing the following questions:

When can we know our students have heard the Other?

How do we know whose stories we are hearing?

What might it take to find the right words?

And how will we know we've found them?

Nine-months later, however, a new question has arisen; one regarding researchers' acknowledgment of the risks and dangers to which we subject collaborating co-researchers when we encourage their engagement in social struggles – knowing full-well that we advocate such political action from our safe spaces in U.S. ivory towers and pages of peer-reviewed journals.

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