

Public Abstract

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Deliberately playing on the word "tradition," in *Re/Presenting Traditions: Identity, Power, and Politics in Folklife Programming*, my research interrogates both current practices of re/presenting traditional cultures to the public, as well as the traditions of representation within the field of folklore. Moving between theory and case study this project ultimately works to identify roles and practices significant to constituting subjectivity and cultural identities. In recent years, representational studies have moved beyond obvious dichotomies of self and other, etic and emic; however, gaps still exist in our understanding of the ways in which representational strategies enact public policy, effect community development initiatives, and elaborate positive leadership within marginalized groups. This research project argues that the elaboration of cultural subjectivity is always a practice of presentation or performance; further, it posits that the re/presentation of cultures and traditions through public sector and academic folklore work can positively impact and enhance this always ongoing process. And while some of the examples, such as the folklife festival, come from a long history of public programming by folklorists, my example of educational programming within an alternative high school presents new ideas of what role folklorists may play in a classroom. With the tools of ethnography, understanding of narrative, attention to the processes of contemporary traditions and culture-making, and stern appreciation of ethical conduct in the field, I argue that folklore as a field is well positioned to make an impact in the twenty-first century.