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Music Video Representations of the Township: A Resident, a Tourist, and a Critical Discourse Analysis

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Title: Music Video Representations of the Township: A Resident, a Tourist, and a Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract:

The co-authors of this research, Meghan and Sipho, met when Meghan offered to support Sipho's dissertation research into tourism in the townships of South Africa. He used his experiences participating in two music videos filmed in his home township of Langa to illustrate how visitors to the townships can decide to interact with this space and its residents in different ways.

Employing a critical discourse analysis, which is concerned with the ways in which texts (in this case the images of the music videos) are constructed within, and constitutive of, the world around us (Woods & Burns, 2018), the authors independently and collaboratively examined the texts produced in the two music videos from their very different vantage points. Critical discourse analysis examines relationships of power, which are multimodal and multidirectional, and asks what discourses and the ways in which they are produced and reproduced tell us is 'true' about the world. In this study, the authors consider how the texts accomplish a kind of persuasive work, in what are they trying to persuade us to believe is true about the township and its residents (Fairclough, 2003; Hyland & Paltridge, 2011; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Van Dijk, 1995; Woods & Burns, 2018, p. 31). We sought to learn how the images presented in the videos reinforce existing stereotypes or ways of knowing about the townships and their residents, and, conversely, in what ways do they resist and counter these familiar ways of knowing (Woods & Burns, 2018)?

In this presentation, the researchers, one white female Canadian and one black male South African, discuss their co-construction of a critical discourse analysis of two music video texts. This study is based in postcolonial theory, which suggests that ways of knowing about the foreign Other reflect and replicate colonized ways of knowing (Mouffakir & Reisinger, 2013; Urry, 1990). This representation of the Other usually done unconsciously, but not innocently. The authors used the texts of the music videos in order to explore what we felt were the assumptions that visitors to townships bring with them about the residents and the physical space. Our work examines processes of representation, postcolonial tourism, and interacting with the Other as hosts and guests. Through this work, we aim to demonstrate that representation is never innocent nor apolitical, though it may be unconscious, and has implications far beyond the immediateness of the tourism encounter.

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