

2017

Ideologies of Hospitality: Deconstructing a Tour Guide Narrative

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Recommended Citation

Lynch, Paul A. (2017) "Ideologies of Hospitality: Deconstructing a Tour Guide Narrative," *Critical Tourism Studies Proceedings*: Vol. 2017 , Article 61.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.tru.ca/cts-proceedings/vol2017/iss1/61>

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Title: Ideologies of Hospitality: Deconstructing a Tour Guide Narrative

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Session Type: Presentation

Abstract:

Ideology refers to “a body of ideas that reflect the beliefs and interests of a nation, political system etc. and underlies political action”; further, “the set of beliefs by which a group or society orders reality so as to render it intelligible” (Collins English Dictionary, 2000, p. 767). All hospitality is ideological, drawing upon socio-cultural beliefs. Such ideological foundations of hospitality are often taken for granted, and only occasionally thrown into relief, for example, when experiencing welcome in a less familiar cultural or social context. Ideologies of hospitality include or exclude the Other, drawing upon a linguistic construction and discourse justifying rules, formal and informal, of welcome. Who gets welcomed may vary over time according to who is deemed welcome within society at a particular moment.

This presentation considers ideologies of hospitality which informed a coach tour guide commentary on a day trip into China. Literature regarding tour guide narratives and ideology (Brin & Noy, 2010; Cohen-Hattab, 2004; Dahles, 2002; Huang & Weiler, 2010; Kim, Timothy, & Han, 2007; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) is briefly reviewed, alongside consideration of the literature concerning hospitality and ideology (Holliday, 2010; Kroskrity, 2005; Tobin, 2015).

The presentation draws upon findings from part of a larger ethnographic study exploring experiences of welcome based upon analysis of a variety of data sources including autoethnographies, questionnaires, photographs, and observations. Specifically, an account by a western male of a coach tour guide commentary on a day trip into China is analysed, focusing upon the ideologies of hospitality underlying aspects of the coach tour guide’s narrative. Themes emerging from the ethnographic study are presented: tour as embodiment of national hospitality; language, stereotyping, and welcome; hierarchies of welcome; instrumental and political hospitality narratives; asymmetrical hospitality; arbitrary hospitality; ideologies of hospitality.

Brief consideration is given to the theoretical, practical, and ethical/moral implications of ideologies of hospitality, from the perspective of the tourist as recipient, as well as consideration of the broader social implications. It is concluded that ideological hospitality is, metaphorically speaking, part of the barbed wire that surrounds the hospitality interaction, barbed wire that constrains the hospitality guest/tourist who is raised on the pedestal of welcome. The purpose of the barbed wire in relation to constraining the guest/tourist is discussed alongside the ethical dilemmas such hospitality constraints give rise to.

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