

Tourist Harlem: Sidewalks, Cyberspace, and the In/Visibility of Race
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ABSTRACT

This research articulates a relationship between the physical community of Harlem, New York and the digital community comprising TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel related social media website. The purpose of this research is to identify forces of racial commodification in the tourism industry and analyze the role of digital technologies in this process. This research is important because tourism and digital technologies are active sites of racial formation and inequality, and TripAdvisor helps mediate the way they interact. This research employs a mixed-method qualitative approach to articulating the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship: discourse analysis of online reviews of a prominent cultural tourism company in Harlem, ethnography of that company's tour experiences, and techniques designed to bridge methodological gaps between these two. I find that the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship produces a three-layered discursive structure, with each successive layer less visible relative to each other. The first—and most visible layer—contains a discourse based in newly emerging conventions of online travel writing. The second layer contains a discourse reflecting touristic valuations of racial difference in capitalistic markets. The third—and least visible layer—contains a discourse reflecting histories and current patterns of racial oppression and inequality. Each of these layers are necessary to create a definition of race emphasizing its supposed benefits to economic growth at the same time it remains a hierarchical and exploitative social construction.

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General Audience ABSTRACT

This research analyzes links between the physical community of Harlem, New York—one of the most famous black communities in the world—and the digital community of TripAdvisor, the world’s largest travel related social media website. The purpose of this work is to understand how the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship works to place a monetary price-tag on the idea of racial difference and the role that digital technologies play in this process. This research is important because both tourism and digital technologies help shape the idea of race and the inequalities that result from it, and TripAdvisor is a crucial hub where they both meet. I combine analysis of TripAdvisor reviews of a single tour company operating in Harlem with in-person observations of that company’s tours. I find that the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship produces three distinct yet overlapping ‘conversations’ with each of these conversations being more or less visible relative to each other. The first and most visible conversation is one focused on travel-based storytelling. The second conversation is focused on identifying ways that blackness is valued during the tour experience. The third, and least visible, conversation is focused on the ways that racial inequality informs the tour experience. Each of these layers are necessary to create a new definition of race that highlights it’s ‘positive’ features while hiding it’s more undesirable characteristics.

This work is dedicated to Komal, Liam, and Cliff. And to the memory of Byron Lee Jamerson.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Theoretical Foundations.....	4
Chapter 2: Contextual Foundations.....	18
Chapter 3: Methodological Approach.....	35
Chapter 4: Mapping Sources of TripAdvisor Reviews.....	53
Chapter 5: Mapping Sources of Racial Valuation.....	79
Chapter 6: Racial Discourse in the Harlem-TripAdvisor Relationship.....	110
Conclusion: Summary and Ramifications.....	144
References.....	161

List of Tables

Table 1: TripAdvisor Rating's Analysis.....	81
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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to understand how the relationship between the physical community of Harlem and the digital community of TripAdvisor contributes to contemporary patterns of racial commodification. Harlem is located at the north end of Manhattan in New York and for the past 100 years has been home to one of the most famous black communities in the world. Harlem's blackness became famous during the 1920's and the period of the Harlem Renaissance—when black culture, for the first time, became pop-culture as a result of concentrated black artistic talent in the area and a cadre of white gatekeepers eager to capitalize on it. Between roughly 1930 and 1995 tourism virtually disappeared from the community as it descended into a common pattern of urban neglect and inner-city hardship for minority residents seen across the United States during the 20th century.

Today Harlem is supposedly in the midst of a 'second' renaissance, and—as was the case during the first Renaissance period—Harlem's blackness is a major driver of tourism in the community (Hoffman, 2001; Jackson, 2001; and Maurrasse, 2006). But Harlem's status as a *current* black space is threatened due to gentrification, which has resulted in more white and Latinx inhabitants and a black population at its lowest levels since the 1910's. Today Harlem's population—combining those of Central Harlem, East Harlem and Morningside Heights (formerly West Harlem)—is just over 400,000 individuals (furmancenter.org).

TripAdvisor is a website founded in 2000 as a space dedicated for consumer reviews of tourist attractions and has grown to become the world's largest travel related social media site. TripAdvisor receives over 450 million unique visits each month (Kinstler, 2018). Website users are able to rate, read and write reviews of hotels, restaurants, and attractions around the world. TripAdvisor uses the aggregate ratings provided by users to create rankings lists which have become influential throughout the broader global tourism industry because of their ability to sway consumer decisions (Leung et. al., 2013).

TripAdvisor represents the latest reimagining of a popular literary form—travel writing—which has long held a privileged position in Western thought due to the various ways it creates discursive connections between Europe (and later the United States) and the rest of the world (Behdad, 1994; Pratt, 2012; Smith, 2012). Although travel writing is not exclusively a western construct (Pratt, 2012), it has been used by the West to assert cultural and intellectual superiority over places and peoples targeted for colonization and economic exploitation (Smith 2012). One result of this development is that travel writing has been afforded the ability to define the parameters of racial difference (Said, 1978; Pratt, 2012; Behdad, 1994).

Due to tourism development in community, Harlem and TripAdvisor are becoming more closely linked. Accounts of tourism in Harlem on TripAdvisor are some of the most prominent outsider-generated representations of the community found on the internet due to the global reach and audience commanded by the platform (Jamerson, 2014; 2019). They therefore play an influential role in the narrative of Harlem as a black space irregardless of actual demographics. This research is important because tourism, digital platforms like TripAdvisor, and Harlem are each important sites of racial construction and inequality. Given that, it is arguable that each of these spaces interact with each other in specific ways that reinforce racial hierarchies within each social space.

The data for this project consists of ethnographic observations of a cultural tourism company operating in Central Harlem, discourse analysis of TripAdvisor reviews concerning that company, and techniques designed to bridge methodological gaps between them. The primary research question is: What are the processes through which the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor contributes to the commodification of Harlem's blackness? The primary analytic goal of this research is to more deeply understand forces of racial commodification—where price tags are placed on experiencing racial difference—as they relate to specific physical and digital environments. The primary methodological goal is to implement a research design thoroughly linking the offline social flows represented in taking a walking tour of Harlem, and the online social flows associated with online review writing. This mixed methods approach explains the roles that cultural tourism and online tourist reviews have in the process of racial commodification and the influence of digital technologies within it.

The tour company featured in this research is Harlem Heritage Tours (HHT). It was founded before TripAdvisor, in 1998, by Neal Shoemaker, who is a Harlem native and still the main tour guide. One of the reasons for Harlem Heritage Tours' success is the fact that all tour guides working for the company are African-American Harlem locals. It was one of the first companies to offer walking based—as opposed to bus based—tours in Harlem. Their tours are based in Central Harlem, which is still a majority African-American neighborhood. They focus on various aspects of the community's history and cultural legacy of blackness. And according to Neal, he was one of the first tour guides in the city to begin implementing mobile digital technology into the tour experience. Since reviews for Harlem Heritage Tours first began appearing on TripAdvisor in 2006, the company has consistently held the website's highest ranking for Harlem-based cultural tourism companies (Jamerson, 2014).

This doctoral research is a continuation of my master's research which focused on the content of TripAdvisor reviews themselves. I found that tourists—mostly from the US, Western Europe, and the Antipodes—find value (economic, intellectual, and

emotional) in experiencing the many textures of blackness a walking tour of Harlem has to offer—from soul food samples to being backstage at the Apollo Theater—yet the concept of race itself is notably absent in review content, as well as any awareness that today Harlem’s population is majority Latinx. This results in a disconnect between influential touristic representations of Harlem and the underlying conditions of racial oppression faced by Harlem’s minority residents. Further investigation of this disconnect requires a balanced methodological approach combining online discourse analysis, ethnographic observations of the tours themselves, and interviews with tourists and tour operators.

The first half of the study includes chapters concerning theoretical backgrounds of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship, contextual backgrounds of the relationship, and the methodological approach to analyzing the relationship, respectively. The next three chapters present research findings oriented around three identified ‘products’ of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship: 1) online traveler’s tales, 2) a valuating discourse regarding experiences with racial difference, and 3) a discourse that is anti-racist at the same time it contributes to persistent racial inequality. Each of these discursive ‘products’ are crucial ingredients to how the idea of race itself is commodified in the global market.

Objectives

Articulating the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor involves achieving three main objectives: The first objective is to interpret TripAdvisor reviews and the tours they are based on as a valuating discourse playing an important role in broader processes of racial formation and racial incorporation within global neoliberalism. These reviews are powerful representations of attraction-communities like Harlem, or the French Quarter, and they act to shape outsider perceptions of the community. Under current conditions of neoliberal capitalism the idea of race itself is considered—at one extreme—as an existential threat to the market dominated social order. On the other extreme, however, the idea of race is framed as a marketable asset—a reliable source of growth because of its nature as an inherently exploitative social construction (Goldberg, 2009). The tourism industry helps to mediate the distinctions between these two views because of how it values the continua of safety and danger, familiarity and novelty, comfort and adventure.

The second objective is to further develop critical inquiries of digital platforms like TripAdvisor as they relate to racial commodification in tourism. There is quite a large body of work concerning the commodification of racial difference in tourism, but not nearly as much concerning the influential role that digital technologies play in this process. We know that the tours directly influence the content of reviews but how might

reviews influence tour content? Online reviews, like many modes of digital communication, convert the personal experiences of users into algorithmically processed information which is then commodified through targeted advertising campaigns—linking companies and their products, potentially, with more compatible consumers. Many online reviews are concerned with the ‘quality’ of material goods and items but in the tourism industry online reviews are just as likely to be concerned with the ‘quality’ of social interaction.

The third objective is to develop a framework for understanding how conceptions of racial difference rooted in color-blind ideology are intertwined within tourism and its global production networks, using cultural tourism in Harlem and its attendant online discourse as an in-depth case study. Reviews concerning cultural tourism in Harlem tend to celebrate the community’s association with blackness and racial difference at the expense of acknowledging the underlying conditions of racial inequality within them, and by proxy, the inherent distance separating tourists from the community. This arrangement is black-loving at the same time blind to racial oppression, providing an ideal environment for the concept of race itself to become imbued with economic resonance. Each of these objectives will add to existing bodies of knowledge concerning intersections of race, digital technology, and the global market.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Foundations

Racial Formation and the Harlem-TripAdvisor Relationship

Omi and Winant consider race to be one of modern society's 'master categories' because of the way it has become a universal referent, or marker, of social inequality and injustice (2015). It has long played a primary role in determining 'insider' versus 'outsider' status in the modern world system (Goldberg, 2009; Omi and Winant, 2015). It has been described by Winant as a "fundamental organizing principle of modernity (2001)". The reasons for this development are fairly simple, yet its manifestations are extremely complex. Race is a status usually based on easily identifiable bodily differences, such as skin color or hair, but is also attached to cultural practices—both material and symbolic—and geographic location. Each of these traits are then used to categorize people in specific social hierarchies. Although criteria for defining race change over time and space, it has—until recently—typically been associated with differentiation based on visibility. Omi and Winant provide further explanation and historical context:

Who was a European, a settler, a free man, and who was an *Indio*, an African, a slave?...The exercise of power required these distinctions [and] the main criteria available for this purpose were phenomic: the visual appearance of the bodies that had to be judged, sometimes under pressure and with great speed—for violence was omnipresent—as like or unlike, similar or different (2015: 114).

These hierarchies have universally positioned racial whiteness at the top and racial blackness at the bottom of the social order. For Omi and Winant (2015), race is a way "of making up people" (105) and this occurs through the process of racial formation, or "a sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, or destroyed (109)." In this sense race is created over time within society through various sites or institutions of difference-making, such as the workplace, the family, the school, or government. These all act as loci around which the logic of racial difference is attached. Furthermore, racial identity is produced and extirpated within specific historical circumstances meaning its definitions and realizations change over time. Michelle Alexander, for example, has suggested that being black in America has had different meanings over time depending on the larger social and political contexts and the strategies involved in maintaining white supremacy (2010). Each era—slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration—represents a different meaning for blackness meant to justify continued racial oppression, where under slavery being black meant one was property, under Jim Crow one was a second class citizen, and under mass incarceration one is a criminal (Alexander, 2010).

Racial formation is enacted through the forces of racialization, or “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group (Omi and Winant, 2015: 111).” This is a process whereby classifications and judgements based on phenotype seep in to any and all areas of social life. Scholars have identified racialization processes in everything from abstract macro-concepts like ‘democracy (Mills, 1997)’, ‘history (Smith, 2012)’, and law (Williams, 1990) to smaller yet significant analytic sites such as film studies (Kilpatrick, 1999; Hughey, 2014) and recreational spaces (Harrison, 2013; Mele, 2012). Racialization, in turn, is driven by the execution of racial projects, which Omi and Winant define as, “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines (2015: 125).” For Omi and Winant, these projects exist at multiple scales and levels: “Projects take shape not only at the macro-level of racial policy-making, state activity, and collective action, but also at the level of everyday experience and personal interaction (2015: 124).” TripAdvisor, in this case, is relevant at the macro-level of “collective action” as much as it is at the micro-level of “everyday experience and personal interaction.”

Harlem’s blackness—from both demographic (Olshanksy, 1963) and symbolic perspectives (Jackson, 2001)—is the result of racial formation over time in a specific place. Racial projects combine the categorical properties of racialization with moral judgments based on those categories, then work to distribute resources—economic, emotional, intellectual, representational, etc.—based on the results. Racial formation is the result of racialization, which is itself driven by various racial projects. This makes the identification and knowledge of racial projects of critical importance for understanding the forces of racial formation as a whole. Seen from this perspective, the TripAdvisor-Harlem relationship is situated at the convergence of multiple racial projects, including tourism, capitalism, blackness, and digital technologies.

Tourism as a Racial Project

Omi and Winant’s narrative is a historical one in which they show how racial formation changes over time to produce new definitions of race across temporal space. They identify the colonial conquest of the Americas and slavery as two of the first and most important racial projects (2015; See also Desmond and Emirbayer, 2015). These two protracted historical episodes are responsible, “for produc[ing] the master category of race (Omi and Winant, 2015: 114)”. And according to many, including Omi and Winant, they still continue today, albeit in different form (Harvey, 2005; Smith, 2012; Stannard, 1992) These, however, were not the only racial projects borne of the modern age that have shaped contemporary definitions of race and manifestations of racial inequality.

Conquest and slavery resulted in a brutal dehumanization of non-European peoples justified through the creation of the category “Other” in religious, political, legal, and cultural discourse (Williams, 1990; Said, 1978). The “Other” is at the same time outside and lesser than the ‘civilized’ world from which it is apart. Earlier critiques of Otherness worked to shed light on how it became associated with negative traits over time, such as intellectual, religious or biological inferiority (Williams, 1990), violence (Fanon, 1963); or sexual deviance (Foucault, 1978).

But Otherness has, over time, also been associated with what MacCannell calls ‘positive’ traits as well, such as adventure, fantasy, sensuality, and escape (1976, 2011). While evidence of these ‘positive’ traits can be found in many cultural and economic arenas, they have been especially consolidated within the tourism industry. It is not coincidental that the tourism industry has been directly responsible for the notion that racially different people can be desirable rather than repugnant. In some cases, such as the case with “poverty” or “slum” tourism, even the repugnancy of Otherness acts as an attraction (Freire-Madeiros, 2013). In tourism, racial difference often functions as a marketable asset, rather than an economic liability (Jamerson, 2016a). The type of cultural tourism with which this study is concerned is particularly aimed at the direct commodification of racial difference, and at the same time reveals itself to be a quintessential example of a (smaller scale) racial project combining symbolic and material elements. In this case money is exchanged for an immersive yet temporary experience of racial Otherness in a partially controlled (guided) setting.

Tourism has a long history of shaping Euro-American definitions of racial Otherness as well as helping to structure racial inequality (Werry, 2011), which qualifies it as a racial project, using Omi and Winant’s (2015) description. Behdad (1994) explains that during colonialism tourism worked to culturally define the terms of racial otherness—where divisions of labor defined it economically and state violence defined it politically. John Urry (1972) writes that early British anthropology relied on and encouraged the dissemination and use of a book called *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, which acted as a guidebook for travelers in terms of how to understand, and in turn describe, their experience of the “savage”, “backwards” and “primitive” cultures they encountered while abroad. Travel writers not only helped defined popular conceptions of Otherness, they also helped to catalyze its commodification as it constituted one of the most lucrative literary genres of the colonial era (Behdad, 1994; Pratt 2008; Urry, 1972)

Tourism’s function as a racial project is to both define the Other and ‘fix’ the Other in a specific social position (Behdad, 1994). Tourism grew in the 20th century to become, by 2000, one of the world’s largest industries (Fainstein and Judd, 1999; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2009) as well its fastest growing (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2009). This was partially the result of advancements in travel technology, most notably

automobiles and jet airliners. It was also partially the result of increased leisure time, rising standards of living, and increased amounts of disposable income available to middle class segments of populations in the industrialized world. These groups also tended to be white and, at least in the United States, were able to enjoy increased prosperity in part because of the exploitation and exclusion of non-whites from more profitable economic sectors and opportunities. As a result of these developments, Alderman explains that, “The tourism industry, both inside and outside the United States, has traditionally adopted a white male gaze that obscures the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities while also perpetuating racist stereotypes (2013: 375).” In this way tourism became, like all other industries, a racialized one. Tourism is a racial project because of the way the economic imperatives and the logic of desire in the industry shape the way race and ethnicity are determined within it. It thus adds another piece to the larger puzzle of racial formation.

Omi and Winant (2015) describe color-blindness as the ‘new’ hegemonic manifestation of contemporary racial (un)awareness, or as Bonilla-Silva puts it, today’s “dominant racial ideology.” For Bonilla-Silva (2014), “This ideology...explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics...instead of proclaiming that God place minorities in a servile position, it suggests that they are behind because [for example] they do not work hard enough...(2-3).” Current political circumstances might suggest a change in that mindset and a reversal back to more overt forms of racial discrimination and prejudice, and one of the goals of this work is to determine if current political events and attitudes are reflected in online tourism discourse.

Omi and Winant pair the ideological hegemony of color-blindness with the economic hegemony of neoliberalism and suggest that neoliberal economic doctrine is itself a racial project. Neoliberalism is commonly understood to be an economic philosophy based on individualism, privatization, market logic and a state that does little other than protect these basic goals (Harvey, 2005; Goldberg, 2009; Greenhouse, 2010). Omi and Winant suggest these goals are directly tied to the rise of colorblind ideology (2015).

Neoliberalism as a Racial Project

For Harvey (2005) and Goldberg (2009), the economic philosophies at the heart of neoliberal thought simultaneously result in the re-distribution of wealth back to the upper classes and an infiltration of market principles and individualism into all areas of social life. Harvey describes neoliberalism’s rise as a reaction to Keynesian policies of ‘embedded’ liberalism, where the state took an active role in the management of national

economies and labor markets. Although its proponents tout neoliberal policy as inherently resulting in more ‘freedom’ it is quite narrowly defined by market participation (Norberg, 2007).

Harvey’s (2005) take on the development of global neoliberalism mirrors in some ways Goldberg’s (2009) discussion of racial neoliberalism. Both take a geographical perspective towards their respective topics, with Harvey arguing that neoliberalism spreads through, “uneven geographical development” while Goldberg argues that racial neoliberalism manifests differently in different national contexts. In the United States, for example, there are significant overlaps between the economic agenda of Keynesian liberalism and the political agenda of the Civil Rights Movement. This is clearly seen in President Johnson’s announcement of Great Society legislation: “The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time (Johnson, 1964, from Bruun and Crosby, 1999: 740).” Both Keynesian economics and the Civil Rights Movement represented a threat to white male political and economic hegemony and neoliberalism and color-blind racism became strategies to safeguard that hegemony (Goldberg, 2009, Omi and Winant, 2014).

For Goldberg (2009), the main ideological pillars of neoliberalism also contribute to the phenomenon of colorblindness as well as the state’s continued and purposeful neglect of problems like persisting economic, educational, and health based racial inequalities. Under neoliberalism, racial and other social inequities do not fall under the jurisdictional domain of the state, rather, they are left for the market to mediate. For these theorists, the neoliberal state deals with racial difference in one of two broad ways: incorporation and suppression. Where Omi and Winant (2015) see the notion of incorporation as being applied to political, legal, and civic demands, Goldberg sees it as being more economically motivated, where racial difference is folded into the fabric of the global market (2009). Suppression is understood by Goldberg to be represented, for example, in increasingly militarized national borders and within the criminalization of racially marginalized groups. This is because the neoliberal state no longer regulates racial difference beyond the insistence of “‘individual equality’ for [a select group of] citizens (2009: 340)”. These are two methods by which neoliberal states ‘manage heterogeneity’. His conceptualization of incorporation—or “racial mixing”—is based on the idea of free choice, where it “is best informed and exercised through interactive engagements with others...Commerce thrives when people can interact and mix (2009: 342)”. In terms of racial incorporation, this means that a certain amount of racial mixing—anathema to the suppressionist perspective—is beneficial, even necessary, for tidy and profitable race relations. According to neoliberal economic logic the idea of race itself—once it is unshackled by state regulation—becomes another avenue through

which people can freely express themselves in market terms. In practice, however, Goldberg identifies major drawbacks:

Racial mixing may be deemed desirable, but its product, while embedding determining inputs from each of the ingredients, is exhorted ultimately to mimic the cultural and performative standards of those embodying historical power. In short, to mimic or otherwise emulate the standards and habits of whiteness, or Euro- or Anglo-mimesis racially preconceived. Performing parrots presupposed. (2009: 342)

Racial incorporation, as Goldberg sees it, reduces the idea of race itself to the level of stereotype. A significant part of this assertion is that race *is there*, and not hidden away with colorblind logic. Race is often quite visible and racism still overtly manifests itself in the neoliberal state. They are, in fact, necessary to its operation. But they have also seemingly gone underground, hidden and private. They operate in these circumstances through methods of both suppression (mass incarceration, housing segregation, gerrymandering) as well as incorporation ('diversity' initiatives, multiculturalism, inner-city empowerment zones, Black History Month). Neoliberal capitalism is always on the hunt for new economic frontiers for investment, in fact, it is a market imperative in order to avoid investment oversaturation in already established market sectors (Harvey, 2005; Luxemburg, 1968). Because race is a fluid social construct designed to maintain exploitative hierarchies in the first place, it is ideally situated to be a permanent fixture on this frontier. In this sense race might be called a dependable commodity.

The tourism industry, with its long associations with racial Otherness, is uniquely positioned to take advantage of this. It has been quite successful at racial commodification, and especially during the era of neoliberalism when it grew rapidly as a global industry: "In 2012, international tourist arrivals worldwide reached 1.035 billion...By comparison, there were just 166 million international tourist arrivals worldwide in 1970 (Bonham and Mak, 2014)." Not all types or versions of tourism work to directly commodify racial difference (Jamerson, 2016a), but it is important to remember that the tourism industry operates within and between several different industries and for myriad local, national, and trans-national business interests (Werry, 2011; Hjalagar, 2007). Therefore it is important to consider the ways that racial inequality permeates each of these elements (Jamerson, 2016a). A full consideration of this possibility is perhaps beyond the scope of any single research project, and by emphasizing cultural tourism we can narrow the analytic focus to a variety of tourism that places a price tag directly on the experience of racial difference.

Cultural tourism works to commodify race through organizing the concept around perceived loci of value (Jamerson, 2016a; Werry, 2011). In other words, different

aspects of racial difference become monetarily valued by tourism interests, including tourists, tour operators, and tourism policy makers. Loci of value are determined by both the economic climate and local racial dynamics of a given city, state, country, or region (Jamerson, 2016a). Loci of value in Harlem, for example, include soul food, the Apollo Theater, civil rights history, diasporic history and jazz (Jamerson, 2016a). What are the implications of this specificity in terms of the problems of neoliberal racial mixing as described by Goldberg (2009)? In regard to his earlier words the following questions must be posed: Does tourism—with its white male gaze—play a role in dictating the terms of blackness in Harlem? And does market regulation—and tourism by proxy—threaten the fluidity and agency of racial identity in these circumstances?

Tourism commodifies race primarily through incorporation and the way it both rearticulates and fixes race in order to produce profits but needs methods of suppression in order to effectively operate. As Goldberg explains, "...preferences [in market decisions], after all, can only be expressed and exercised in secure environments (342)." For Goldberg, the management of racial heterogeneity is ultimately about the preservation of racial homogeneity. Omi and Winant draw much from Goldberg's descriptions of suppressionist tendencies within neoliberal states:

This modern state governs a *civil* society. It has an *outside* that is not civil. Its outside consists of slums, occupied territories, prisons, and the underground underworlds where fugitives, undocumented, poor, and homeless people live (Mbembe, 2001; Davis, 2006; Goffman, 2009, Park 2013). "Those people" are dangerous, criminal, less "civilized," less deserving. Goldberg's "threat of race" centers on the frontier between these two social spaces, let us call them. They can neither be entirely joined nor separated. The border between them must be strenuously policed, an effort that requires electrified fences, Hellfire missiles, and extraordinary rendition. As Goldberg suggests, this is the form racism takes today: supervision and control of racial "threat" in defense of an ever-more confined and restricted zone of prosperity: the ostensibly "civil" zone of society.—Omi and Winant, 2015: 230.

Under neoliberalism, the relationship between the two social spaces described above—the 'civil' and 'not civil'—is historically marked through racial difference and increasingly regulated by market forces. Furthermore the market is one reason the two cannot be completely separated—the uncivilized world is often both foe and source of wealth for the civilized one—and tourism stands as one of the major connectors, both economically and culturally, between them. It bridges the divide but also supports the imbalanced relationship. Tourism both transgresses and buttresses the border between the civil and the uncivil, subject and object, white and Other.

Racial neoliberalism is fundamentally concerned with the definition and preservation of social borders as well as imbalanced political-economic relationships between racial groups. And borders are defined in part by how they are transgressed, how they limit movement, and the differences in the worlds they separate. Finally, Goldberg offers a description of the geographical variety of racial neoliberalism by focusing on how racial difference is managed by states (2009). He identifies several versions regional racializations--i.e racial Americanization, or racial Europeanization—that are useful in understanding how ideas of blackness in Harlem are interpreted by a transnational audience.

Race and Digital Technology

Digital technologies are essential to the efficient flows of commodities and information forming the backbone of neoliberal capitalism (Harvey, 2005; Steger and Roy, 2010) and they also help facilitate contemporary racial formation (McPherson, 2012; Chun, 2012; Nakamura and Chow-White, 2012). This section charts the linkages between scholars focusing on the intersection between race and technologies with the theories outlined above. First, digital technologies can be considered a racial project due to their representative powers and the material consequences of their use (or non-use). Second, digital technologies are racialized through their affordances—or what technology allows one to do—and their technical organization. Third, digital technologies—online review websites in particular—play a key role in the marketization and commodification of racial difference through their ability to convert experience into information.

Digital Technologies as a Racial Project

For Omi and Winant, racial projects include both signifying and structural elements that work together to define the parameters of racial Otherness as well as organize the resultant material inequalities. Media--“the means by which *content* is communicated between an origin and a destination (Hodkinson, 2011: 1)”-- become a crucial site to understand the way that racial projects work through signification. Modern media practices and forms in general work to denigrate racial Otherness through twin processes of under-representation and the promotion of stereotypes (Hodkinson, 2011). Hodkinson elaborates, and in the process draws his argument closer to that of racial formation, “In a broader sense, restricted or stereotypical media representations can be seen as one element of process in which the divisions between different ethnic groups are consolidated and hegemonic power relations are enforced (2011: 204).” On this count,

digital technologies are no different from other media technologies of the modern age (Fouche, 2012).

Patterns of negative racial representation have material consequences. Consider the 2000's competition between Myspace and Facebook for social networking supremacy. As boyd (2012) explains, over time Facebook came to be known as a white and upper class digital space while Myspace came to be associated with lower class, non-white signifiers, a "digital ghetto". She links the shift in preference from Myspace to Facebook to stark material reality by naming it "digital white flight". Today Facebook is one of the world's more influential companies, while Myspace is being mined by celebrities for Twitter's Throwback Thursday hashtag (#tbt) (Kleinman, 2015). Moreover online reviews—a popular type of digital representation such as those found on TripAdvisor—have direct material consequences because of their ability to influence consumer decisions (Jamerson, 2016b; Leung et. al. 2013; Jeacle and Carter, 2011).

Problems of negative representation within digital technologies persist, and in order to provide positive imagery to counteract the negative, one must first have access to the technology in the first place. This 'digital divide'—or the differentials in access to digital technologies along economic and racial lines—is the second side of digital technologies as a racial project. Many racial and ethnic minority groups, primarily because of economic reasons (Fouche, 2012) but also due in some case to geography, simply do not have the access to digital technologies in the first place (Sandvig, 2012). Needless to say, this is problematic concerning the issue of representational agency, but recent years have seen a proliferation of mobile digital technology that seems to be decreasing the overall gap in the United States (Fouche, 2012).

The digital divide has also, however, spawned another set of issues tied to the spread of color-blind rhetoric: the belief that, once given access to digital technologies, one will immediately be able to better their economic or educational situation (Fouche, 2012; Pieterse, 2010). This type of digital saviorism is heavily tied to larger themes of technological utopianism, where technology becomes a solution to all of society's problems (Kellner, 2002). In sum, digital technology represents a racial project because of the way it signifies and structures racial inequality which is oriented around a tension between access to and representation within these technologies.

Racialization of Digital Technologies

Two aspects of digital technologies need to be examined regarding their racialization, or how they come to take on racial characteristics: affordances and technical organization. Affordances deal more with the representational side of digital

technologies as a racial project. They are what a technology allows one to do, or “the social capabilities technological qualities enable (Baym, 2010: 44)” boyd describes how the affordances of Myspace and Facebook—in this case users’ abilities to alter digital space—became associated with racial difference:

...Myspace enabled users to radically shape the look and feel of their profiles while Facebook enforced a strict minimalism... While Facebook’s minimalism is not inherently better, conscientious restraint has been one marker of bourgeois fashion (Arnold, 2001). On the contrary, the flashy style that is popular on Myspace is often marked in relation to “bling-bling” a style of conspicuous consumption that is often associated with urban black culture and hip-hop (2012: 216).

boyd’s description of digital white flight is partly rooted in the ways that each website came to embody racially marked aesthetic practices through a difference in their affordances to users. It was also rooted in how these aesthetics then became the basis of judgements and opinions of the site’s users themselves:

“...many of the teens I interviewed who left Myspace saw [spammer scams] as proof of the presence of sexual predators and other “creepy” people... Many parents saw Facebook as a “safe” alternative to Myspace, primarily because it was not possible to make a profile truly public... Many reinforced the spatial and racial distinctions by demonizing Myspace and embracing Facebook. – (2012: 217)

Here again, we see the affordances of a particular website—in this case the ability for others to see one’s profile—was tied to issues of safety, both real and perceived. The racialization in this case occurs when issues of digital safety become linked to the already established racialized aesthetics of the website in question. But the racialization of digital technologies does not occur only through affordances as this process is also evident in their technical organization. According to Tara McPherson, digital technologies were designed and organized with the containment of racial difference at least in the back of many people’s minds:

The emergence of covert racism and its rhetoric of color-blindness are not so much intentional as systemic. Computation is a primary delivery method of these new systems, and it seems at best naïve to imagine that cultural and computational operating systems don’t mutually infect one another (2012:31).

MacPherson charts the links between the development of UNIX in the 1960’s—which then went on to influence contemporary operating systems such as LINUX and Mac OS—and the development of covert—or color-blind—racism in the United States following the Civil Rights Movement. UNIX-based programming rests on the

philosophy that a given program should do one thing and do it well, and that complex data streams are best managed by isolating component pieces and discarding troublesome bits, “Unsorted data go in one end; somewhat later, sorted data come out the other. It must be *convenient* to use, not just possible (Kernighan and Plauger, 1976, from McPherson, 2012: 27)” What happens during the data-sorting process must be hidden from the user to ensure both convenience and simplicity for the user—thus creating value (McPherson, 2012). In this way, the technical organization of digital technologies mirrors, for McPherson (2012), the organization of racial inequality under color-blind rhetoric and what she calls “covert racism” where racial inequality was hidden away in deteriorating inner-cities and explained away through neoliberal containment strategies (Omi and Winant, 2015; Goldberg, 2009).

Marketization of Race

The act of writing or reading an online tourist review converts experience into information and occurs through human-digital interaction. This conversion is crucial to understanding the ways in which racial difference becomes commodified and incorporated into the global market economy. As Castells (2010) has famously claimed, digital technology has led to the rise of an information-based economy, where, “the productivity and competitiveness of units or in this economy fundamentally depend on their capacity to generate, process, and apply efficiently knowledge-based information (2010: 77).” Although his assertions have also been contested as being technologically deterministic (Kellner, 2002; Pieterse, 2010), most globalization scholars identify advances in digital and information technologies as one of the hallmarks of the current period (Kellner, 2002). Digital technologies are important to tourism because they help tour operators and other business interests reach a global audience of potential consumers. Review sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp act as digital brokers for the tourism industry, connecting producers and consumers in online spaces (Leung et. al., 2013; Jamerson, 2016b). As a result, digital technologies play a major role in the operation of global production networks (see: Coe, Dicken, and Hess, 2008) as they connect different nodes of the tourism production process together.

Unlike most commodity chains—which involve the movement of goods and materials—tourism GPNs involve the movement of tourists from home sites to tourist sites, and tourist sites are based on the promotion and marketing of Attractions, in whatever form they take (MacCannell, 2010; Christian, 2016). Global production networks analysis specifically emphasizes the “social processes involved in producing goods and services and reproducing knowledge, capital, and labor power (Henderson et. al. 2002: 444).” In the case of the tourism industry, goods and services rendered involve the simultaneous production of both attractions *and* consumers for those attractions

(MacCannell, 2011, Werry 2012). When the attraction in question takes the form of experiencing racial difference—as is the case with cultural tourism—these practices then become racialized. Digital media has had a profound impact on both processes (Jeacle and Carter, 2011; Leung et. al., 2013).

TripAdvisor, for example, helps produce attractions through review content, and most significantly, its popularity index. These two affordances both define and rank attractions based on the supposedly ‘unbiased’ opinions of tourists themselves (Law, 2008). TripAdvisor then facilitates the movement of tourists because tourists use TripAdvisor reviews to determine where to travel (Jeacle and Carter, 2011; Leung et. al., 2013). Torres, for example, found that 84% of leisure travelers use the internet as a planning aid for trips (2010). And social media-based tourism websites like TripAdvisor are perceived as more trustworthy than other online sources of tourist information, for example, official tourism operator websites (Litvin et. al. 2008; Casalo, Flavian, and Guinaliu, 2011). This trustworthiness is part of what lends TripAdvisor a significant amount of discursive authority within the online tourism domain (Jeacle and Carter, 2011; Jamerson, 2016b). TripAdvisor for many potential tourists becomes their first source of information, their point of contact with the Otherness about to be experienced, therefore the marketized representations of race found on TripAdvisor theoretically play a significant role in shaping outsider perceptions of attraction-communities such as Harlem.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines—in broad theoretical strokes—a picture of the web of connections linking contemporary racial understanding, tourism practice and digital technologies in neoliberal marketplaces. Omi and Winant (2015) argue that race is formed through sociohistorical processes—such as slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration—that change over time. I suggest here that tourism should also be considered as one of these processes. Although racial difference is treated differently in tourism than in many other social arenas—i.e. the Other is often desirable rather than undesirable—it still works to create, maintain, and drive forces of racial inequality. Digital technologies work in the service of racial hierarchy in much the same way, but through different means, primarily through unequal access, misrepresentation, affordances, technical organization, and informationalization. Both circumstances are examples of social practices and discursive forms controlled (mostly) by conventions of white, male, Euro-American society which are then portrayed as ‘normal’ conventional standards. This is a common strategy in efforts to absolve contemporary whiteness of past racial sin.

While the notion that ideas of racial difference—along with digital technologies and tourism—change over time is important in understanding the links between them it is also important to consider the current historical moment as well as how these links may change across physical and digital space. Goldberg (2009) argues that today’s neoliberal-dominant economic climate sees ideas of racial difference becoming increasingly marketized and regulated by market, rather than state forces. This proposition involves states dealing with the idea—or threat—of race in one of two ways: incorporation and suppression. While tourism is argued here—and TripAdvisor by proxy—as mostly an instrument of incorporation, it also relies on suppression for its successful operation. Digital technologies may be read in this light as contributing to both strategies as well.

Finally, both Omi and Winant and Goldberg argue that society is becoming increasingly polarized along racial lines in the period following the Civil Rights Movement—at the same time this polarization is covered by color-blind rhetoric. Whiteness is still regarded—as it always has been—as the home of ‘civil’ society while ‘not white’ is equated with ‘not civil’. Both tourism and digital technologies serve to maintain this boundary, but they are also in positions to transgress it as well. Further understanding of these connections requires narrowing the analytic focus down to a case study looking at the relationship between two distinct communities—one physical and one digital. The next chapter begins this process by diving deeper into the contextual environments of history and cultural tourism practice in Harlem, and a critical genealogy of traveler’s tales and TripAdvisor.

Chapter 2: Contextual Background

Tourism in Harlem: Past and Present

Harlem Heritage Tours was founded in 1998 and offers walking tours of Harlem showcasing the community's cultural and historical heritage as an epicenter of the black experience in America. It was founded by Neal Shoemaker, who is also the primary tour guide, although tours are also given by guides Andy and Doris as well. Andy has lived in Harlem since the 1950's—being one of the first African Americans to attend Columbia University—while Neal, as advertised by the company website, was born and raised in Harlem. Doris is also a lifelong Harlemit, and once during a tour mentioned that she never left the neighborhood until she was in her 30's—when she visited family in Brooklyn. They offer tours focused on various aspects of Harlem's cultural attributes and history—such as Civil Rights tours, soul food tours, jazz tours, Gospel Church tours, general history tours, and Harlem Renaissance Tours. Most walking tours cost \$25 but some tours, such as the Gospel Church and Apollo Experience Tours, cost around \$40 per person.

Each tour visits sites in Harlem pertinent to the tour's theme but also tend to visit the same sites regardless of theme (for example many tours visit the spot where Marcus Garvey held his first public meeting in 1916 on W. 138th St.; most tour ends at the Apollo Theater). The walking tours last about two hours and based on my experience, contain anywhere from 4 to 30 tourists, most of which are white. Although Harlem's current incarnation is discussed often—particularly in regards to the threat gentrification plays to the existence of Black Harlem—its history is discussed just as much, if not more so during any given tour. In fact history is one of the main loci of value generating interest—and thus revenue—from tourists visiting the community.

Harlem's history tends to be compartmentalized during tour presentations into distinct eras based in part on the perceived interests of visiting tourists. Each of these eras may be associated with what Jackson terms “white Harlem” or white versions of the community. For Jackson (2001) there are several versions of white Harlem, including 1) “the preindustrial enclave of Dutch settlers turned English nation-builders turned Irish

and Italian subway construction workers (177)”, 2) “...a hot spot of the roaring twenties, a patronizing, philanthropic, and philandering white Harlem (177)” and 3) “...the recommercialized Harlem, an undoing of Harlem, an almost apocalyptic result of continuing gentrification, a threat not yet realized but fully recognized (177).” One of Jackson’s informants, Cynthia, adds a notable fourth version:

When white people see Harlem, they see garbage in the street and poor people. They see evil. Um, they see murder, crime. And they see that and they think that they can make all kinds of, they can say things about Harlem. That it is a bad place.....2001: 176

Based on Cynthia’s and Jackson’s descriptions as well as my own previous findings regarding touristic descriptions of Harlem (Jamerson, 2014), I’ve identified 5 distinct historical eras to be of specific interest to touristic practice in Harlem today. The first era is pre-black Harlem, the second is the Harlem Renaissance, the third is Civil Rights Harlem, the fourth is Criminal Harlem, and the fifth is Gentrified Harlem. This is not intended to be a comprehensive description of each of these eras, rather an overview to show how they each relate to tourism practice in Harlem and its attendant digital representations.

Pre-black Harlem

Harlem is globally famous today for being an epicenter of blackness but it has only been settled by African-Americans and other Afro-descended peoples for the past 100 years. The story of how Harlem became black, a prominent one in tour presentations, is similar to that of many black communities in American cities in the Northeast and Midwest (Kusmer, 1972; Osofsky, 1964). It is a story involving white flight, housing segregation, discrimination, and violence. American inner-cities haven’t always been black, they have been made that way over time through patterns of overt, legal, institutional, and color-blind racism. Prior to a large influx of African Americans in the 1910’s Harlem had been home to mostly German and Irish immigrants followed by Italian and Jewish immigrants. Before that, it had been home to many of the city’s wealthiest residents, including for a time, William Waldorf Astor (Maurrasse, 2006). Osofsky (1964) has called Harlem “New York’s first suburb” (From Maurrassee, 2006). Maurrasse explains that, “Before the arrival of the immigrants in the late 1800’s, Harlem was home to the city’s elite (2006: 17).” Harlem was a playground for nascent industrialists in the days of the horse and buggy, but overconstruction and speculation in residential real estate north of Central Park—due to the anticipated benefits of rail extensions—led to falling prices and landlords were increasingly considering renting to

African-Americans despite resistance from Harlem whites (Maurrasse, 2006). According to Maurrasse:

“...ultimately, Harlem’s whites shared no uniform strategy or voice around real estate. Some were going to sell and could not be convinced otherwise. In their desperation to rent out vacant residential units, landlords began to relax their restrictions against African-Americans, facilitating this uptown exodus (2006: 18)”

These developments were taking place in Harlem creating “pull” factors bringing increased numbers of African-Americans to Harlem. There were also “push” factors involved as African-Americans living in more southern parts of Manhattan were driven out through a combination of development, racial terrorism, and other coercive measures (Maurrasse, 2006). Three places in particular were once home to sizeable African-American communities but are notable now as the home of some of New York’s most iconic institutions and popular tourist attractions: Penn Station (site of the Madison Square Garden), Central Park, and Wall Street (Maurrasse, 2006).

Harlem Renaissance

By the time of the Great Migration of African-Americans from the US South to the Northeast, the major African-American community in New York was Harlem. The stage was set—as the most prominent black community in one of the world’s most prominent cities—for the incredible output of cultural, artistic and political expression that was to follow. But almost as soon as Harlem became consolidated as a mostly African-American community and center of artistic output, it also became a tourist attraction. Contemporary tourism in Harlem often hinges on this history.

During the Harlem Renaissance main attractions included the growing artist population in the community and the area’s popular jazz clubs (Maurrasse, 2006). In fact, many of the artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as the jazz clubs, depended on white patronage for their livelihood. The Harlem Renaissance, in other words, was accompanied and boosted by a tourism boom, or white people identified by Zora Neale Hurston as “Negrotarians” (Carreiro, 1999). Dowling discusses tourism during the Harlem Renaissance as another version of the popular upper-class 19th century pastime of slumming, or ““outsider” interactions with marginalized “insider” voices (2009: 1).”

This period has been identified as lasting from roughly 1920-1935 and is credited with bringing African-American culture and literature to more ‘mainstream’ i.e. white audiences (Maurrasse, 2006; Jackson, 2001; Rhodes-Pitts, 2011; Franklin and Moss,

2000). And some of the best known spaces, landmarks, and individuals of the era persist in Harlem's collective memory and geography and it is an era prominently featured in Harlem tourism. The Harlem Renaissance has helped to define Harlem to a global audience, and it is a large part of what tourists pay to see when they visit. As Jackson explains, "...Harlem's worldwide acclaim stems from this particular Harlem of yesteryear and is based on the popularity that Harlemites enjoyed among white Manhattanites at the time (2001: 27)" Although the Harlem Renaissance resulted in increased visibility and celebration of black culture it also took place at the whims of white gatekeepers (Maurrasse, 2006). Carl Van Vecten, for example, (and author of the very controversial *N****r Heaven*) facilitated the relationship between Langston Hughes and publisher Alfred A. Knopf. "White mobster" Owney Madden presided over one of the most famous—and famously segregated—nightclubs of the era, the Cotton Club (Maurrasse, 2006: 22). As Hughes (1964) wrote of the time:

"Downtown! I soon learned that it was seemingly impossible for black Harlem to live without white downtown...The famous night clubs were owned by whites, as were the theaters. Almost all the stores were owned by whites, and many at that time did not even (in the very middle of Harlem) employ Negro clerks. The books of Harlem writers all had to be published downtown, if they were to be published at all. Downtown: *white*. Uptown: *black*."

The beginning of the Great Depression signaled the beginning of the end of the Harlem Renaissance as businesses closed, jazz crowds disappeared; and the artists left town (Maurrasse, 2006). The final blow was the riot of 1935, sparked by, "police brutality, or the rumor of such (Maurrasse, 2006: 25)." After that Harlem became known as a more of a classic urban slum than a bohemian wonderland. The community would fall upon harder times but retained its reputation as a global center of blackness. As a result it would come to occupy an important place in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's.

Civil Rights Harlem

This is the only historical era I have added not discussed by Jackson (2001) as a version of white Harlem. I suggest the reasons for this lie in Harlem's role in developing the pluralistic perspective of minority Civil Rights, meaning that Harlem was known—as black communities in many other Northern cities were known—as a community that did not necessarily want to completely integrate into white American society. The Civil Rights Movement is a prominent historical theme within Harlem Heritage Tours but is framed to emphasize connections with the largely assimilationist goals and strategies associated with Martin Luther King, Jr. and not with the more pluralistic goals and strategies favored by Malcolm X, for example. This is curious considering Malcolm X's

much more prominent role in Harlem during the 1960's but begins to make sense when one considers the average—white—customer served by Harlem Heritage Tours.

The pluralistic side of the Civil Rights Movement has been considered more hostile to whites than the assimilationist side, Franklin and Moss stating that African Americans in Northern cities were more likely to advocate for a specific kind racial separation than those in the South (2000). The 1960's saw racially motivated riots in urban centers across the United States with the major narratives surrounding these riots emphasizing black violence toward whites (or at least white property) (Franklin and Moss, 2000). In short, the Civil Rights history of Harlem does not fit neatly into white approved narratives of the period. This is one possible reason Jackson (2001) does not name a version of 'white Harlem' coinciding with the Civil Rights Movement, and is potentially why Harlem Heritage Tours goes to great lengths to emphasize Harlem's connections to the Dr. King led wing of the Civil Rights Movement. This is also due to one of Neal's community connections, made clear to me during a Gospel Church.

Neal grew up going to Canaan Baptist Church, notable because in 1967 Wyatt Tee Walker, one of Dr. King's most trusted lieutenants, was called to be the minister there. As Neal discussed it during one tour, Walker was placed there by King himself, "King wanted to recreate the successes of the South in the Northern cities (March, 2017)." Due to Neal's connections with the church this is where he takes groups on Sunday morning gospel tours. While Walker himself lives in a retirement home outside the city, his son, Wyatt Tee Walker Jr., is an active church leader as well as accomplished singer and flautist. During our visit to New Canaan Baptist he performed a solo utilizing both skills. And as our group gathered outside the church to continue with the rest of the walking tour, Walker Jr. came outside to say hello to Neal and our group, he thanked us for visiting, and wished us safe travels on our way home. We had been primed beforehand to understand the historical significance of this meeting through Neal's presentation, though not informed it would happen. This sort of in-person interaction acts as a powerful representation of 'living history' for tour participants, but in a way this particular interaction—as evocative of history as it is—obscures more accurate historical trends regarding Harlem's presence in the Civil Rights Movement.

Criminal Harlem

This historical era is most aptly described by Jackson's (2001) informant Cynthia, who discusses how whites commonly perceive Harlem as a "bad" or "evil" place. African Americans in Harlem have been commonly portrayed as 'edgy' or 'risky' by outsiders as long as they have resided in the community (Jackson, 2001; Dowling 2009), but this version of white Harlem veers directly into the realm of danger and violence, and is

associated with some of the worst stereotypes of Jim Crow America. During the 1970's conditions for Harlem's residents deteriorated in terms of joblessness, social safety nets, and general neglect from city government. These developments are directly related to the neoliberal economic reforms experienced by the city. As David Harvey explains, New York was the first major city in the global North to implement significant neoliberal policy, and it led to worsening social conditions for minority communities:

Working class and ethnic-immigrant New York was thrust back into the shadows, to be ravaged by racism and a crack cocaine epidemic of epic proportions in the 1980's that left many young people either dead, incarcerated, or homeless, only to be bludgeoned again by the AIDS epidemic that carried over into the 1990s. Redistributions through criminal violence became one of the few serious options for the poor, and the authorities responded by criminalizing whole communities of impoverished and marginalized populations.—2005: 47-48

For Michelle Alexander, the period described above is when African-Americans and other racial minorities in the United States move from being 'second-class citizens' as under Jim Crow to the status of 'criminal' in the service of a new system of racial control rooted in mass incarceration, or, as she puts it, the New Jim Crow. Stereotypes of violence and menace once legitimating Jim Crow were now folded into an ostensibly 'color-blind' justice system that essentially locked them into place, institutionally speaking—providing a clear example of what Goldberg terms 'conservative racism', where current institutions operate to 'conserve' already existing racial inequalities and stereotypes (2009). Harlem's perceived criminality during this period goes hand in hand with its abject poverty, and these perceptions have been gradually woven into today's tourism industry in Harlem. Furthermore, touristic interest in poverty goes beyond Harlem and is a long lasting and global phenomenon (Freire-Madeiras, 2013; Dowling, 2007).

Based on my prior participation and observations of Harlem Heritage Tours this period is dealt with by tour guides at arm's length. It is used mainly as a comparison to other eras, particularly the current era of gentrification. Tour guides emphasize that it was not a safe place to live. But they also emphasize that this period represents just two decades out of a century of black settlement where even community insiders thought the community unsafe. For guides at Harlem Heritage Tours, this period is too prominent in terms of the way Harlem is commonly imagined by outsiders. It is an image they actively work to dispel. During one tour Neal, for example, used several examples of outsider rhetoric concerning 'criminal' Harlem, mostly from feature films such as *New Jack City* and *American Gangster*. These films, he explains, portray a historically specific representation of Harlem, and not the current situation, and uses presentational aspects of the tour to provide evidence of his point. He started this particular tour,

however, by recalling President Trump’s language regarding black inner-city areas during the 2016 presidential campaign, which were steeped in the rhetoric of criminality. He asks our tour group not to listen to Trump, but to see with their own eyes the vibrancy of New York’s—and the world’s—most famous inner city black community. Today, Harlem is no longer a ghetto, and is in the midst of a second ‘rebirth’.

Gentrified Harlem

Although the artistic and political achievements of 1920’s Harlem have been given the name *Renaissance* this period is in many ways the origin point of Harlem’s blackness. It did, after all, see the creation of reams of Afro-themed—and produced—artistic and literary output, and the consolidation and popularization of jazz music as a black aesthetic form along with Harlem becoming a black space. The current period, beginning roughly in 1994 with the creation of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, has seen the white presence in Harlem increase through both corporate infiltration and residential gentrification. Not coincidentally, it is also seen as generally safer and more hospitable (Dessus, Pischke, and Tuborgh, 2007). I spend more time discussing this era because it’s what tourists now see when they visit Harlem, and tourism growth has been a major strategy in efforts to economically revitalize the community.

Tourism in Harlem has increased exponentially since the mid-1990’s, mirroring a similar decrease in crime (Dessus, Pischke, and Tuborgh, 2007). Harlem has grown in stature as a tourist destination based on its history and cultural heritage (Hoffman, 2003; Maurrasse, 2006). Maurrasse explains that, “. . .in the years prior to September 11, 2001, Harlem was second to the Statue of Liberty in terms of New York tourism destinations. . .receiving 1.4 million visitors per year (2006: 32).” There’s no question that the march of neoliberal globalization has changed drastically the face of the community—for example, Latinx groups now make up the largest ethnic category in Harlem as a whole; and the small, independent vendors once lining 125th St. have been replaced by national and international retail chains. Harlem is now more economically and socially integrated within greater New York than ever before—a valuable stretch of still relatively cheap real estate located 15 minutes from Times Square and 45 minutes from Wall Street.

In 1990 Harlem had a poverty rate of 42%, and an unemployment rate of 18%, both of which were well over the national average, and had seen no significant change since 1980 (Oakley and Tsiao, 2006; Busso and Kline, 2007). These conditions lead to what Lilly Hoffman and others have described as a “ghetto economy” where primary businesses include fast-food outlets, liquor stores, check-cashing and pawn shops; and where a large segment of the economy is located in the ‘informal’ sector, and often tied

to drug trafficking and other illicit activities (Hoffman, 2003; Bingham and Zhang, 1997; Porter, 1995). Harlem was by no means alone, as inner-city minority residents across the country faced similar conditions. The Clinton administration, in true neoliberal fashion, tried to alleviate these problems through a policy of inner-city economic development called the Empowerment Zone Initiative (Chinyelu, 1999; Oakley and Tsiao, 2006).

In 1994 Harlem became one of 6 original beneficiaries of Empowerment Zone funds, derived from Federal block grants in the amount of 100 million dollars for each community to use at it saw fit. The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) , which included almost all of Harlem, also received matching 100 million dollar amounts from the state and city governments of New York. Corporate donations and investment brought the total amount to some 390 million dollars. Almost one third of that amount was spent developing the tourism industry in Harlem, by far more than any other original empowerment zone (Oakley and Tsiao, 2006). The logic behind this development initiative is exemplified in Micheal Porter’s influential article concerning the ‘competitive advantage’ of the inner city (1995). Porter argued for wealth ‘creation’ rather than wealth ‘redistribution, a philosophy at the heart of neoliberal rhetoric concerning the search for ‘new economic frontiers’:

A sustainable economic base *can* be provided in the inner-city, but only as it has been created elsewhere: through private, for-profit initiatives and investment based on economic self-interest and genuine competitive advantage—not through artificial inducements, charity, or government mandates...These businesses should be capable of not only serving the local community but also of exporting goods and services to the surrounding economy (1995: 55-56).”

What made Harlem so different from other empowerment zones was its cultural heritage and history of marketing that heritage to tourism interests (Hoffman, 2003). Unlike in Bronzeville (Chicago) or East Baltimore, Harlem has tourist assets both material— for example the Apollo Theater—and symbolic—the historical legacy of the Harlem Renaissance (Hoffman, 2003; Oakley and Tsiao, 2006). While these are obvious Harlem attributes to highlight in tourism promotion, Hoffman argues that the marketing of diversity itself—in which tourism is heavily implicated—serves larger functions as well (2003). For example the major corporations investing in the empowerment zone because of broader positive—and potentially lucrative—associations with cultural diversity. As Hoffman puts it, “The pursuit [of associations with diversity] and cultural branding reflects the fact that minorities are the fastest growing (new) population (2003: 290).”

Tourism serves the community theoretically by creating jobs, and plays a central role in exporting one of Harlem’s main commodities—it’s culture—to a global audience.

But in practice, the implementation of the empowerment zone only served to create low-paying service and retail sector jobs while raising real estate prices, creating a

situation where long-time minority community residents are failing to see upward social mobility while the land itself increases in value, thereby threatening their ability to live there. Chinyelu (1999) has aptly characterized the Empowerment Zone as a ‘Trojan Horse’ because most of the project’s money was used as a way for big business to infiltrate the area and extract profit from the residents instead of empower them, economically or otherwise. Chinyelu ultimately compares the establishment of the UMEZ with how Global South nations have been exploited under neo-colonialism: “In the end, the UMEZ merely represents the classic ploy to economically exploit a third world country; that is, rapid growth stimulated by foreign investment. Such growth, however, does not represent development, since the conditions of the residents have not improved (1999: 49).” Oakley and Tsiao corroborate this claim by finding that socioeconomic conditions did not improve for EZ residents as opposed to non-EZ residents in Upper Manhattan (2006).

Tourism development in particular has tended to be centered in still majority African American Central Harlem at the expense of greater Harlem’s majority Hispanic population (Davila, 2004). So business has increased and Harlem is in the midst of yet another cultural rebirth, this time fueled by tourism, it also remains an economically disadvantaged and impoverished community fueled by unequal opportunity. And continuing gentrification poses an existential threat to Central Harlem’s claims to blackness, as evidenced by a recent *New York Times* article suggesting that black Harlem has indeed ‘ended’ (Adams, 2016). But this claim seems premature, as the population of Central Harlem is still majority African American, 125th Street is still lined with its famous street vendors, block parties are still common on warm weekend afternoons, and Harlem Heritage Tours are still guiding groups of tourist through the neighborhood several times a week.

Harlem Heritage Tours Online

While Harlem Heritage Tours’ online presence is heavily tied to that of TripAdvisor, it also operates a website that is influential in its own right within the online tourism domain. A Google search combining the words “Harlem” and “tourism” feature HHT’s independent website listed prominently toward the top of the organic search results. This is also the case with searches combining “Harlem” and “history” as well as “Harlem” and “Civil Rights”. In my conversations with tour participants this website was often cited as a reason—along with positive reviews—for booking a tour with HHT.

The website features a large banner with a scrollable list of pictures. Most of these images contain pictures of smiling tour groups at various points in the tour. Based on my experiences taking tours with HHT many of the groups featured in these images are

larger than average, and more racially diverse than average. Many of the pictures seem to be of student groups, with a large portion of these being mostly black student groups. Directly above the photo banner are links to descriptions of different tours, a blog called written by Neal called “Cultural Harlem”, HHT merchandise, an “about” section, and finally a link to related services offered by HHT that are geared towards the local community. These programs include public exhibitions at the HHT office, a “Harlem Heritage Book Club” and a “membership” option for businesses who want to work with HHT. This section begins with the question: “Over one million tourists visit Harlem annually, but are they visiting your business? (HHT website, 2019).”

Directly below the photo banner, written in enlarged text, is much of the basic information a potential visitor would want to consider before booking a tour (the following is directly transcribed from the website, including grammatical errors):

Harlem Heritage Tours offers the most authentic Harlem walking/bus tours, all our guides were born raised and still live in Harlem. We love Harlem and take great pride in showcasing the rich history of our home, and it’s many contributions to global culture. If you want an in depth, culturally rich, insider’s view of Harlem from true Harlem locals book one of the Harlem tours listed below or call us at XXX-XXX-XXXX—Here is link to the calendar page.

Must tours depart from the Harlem Heritage Tourism and Cultural Center, come experience our daily cultural presentations/shows, get visitor information, and buy unique souvenirs made by Harlem locals (HHT website, 3-8-19).

In addition to the links bar at the top of the home page, the photo banner, and the short description, there are also links provided below to individual tour offerings and a sidebar with an immediate calendar showing which tours are available on which days in the next three weeks. Although this might seem redundant the major purpose of this website is to provide access to tour information, and more importantly, the means to choose and book a tour. Some visitors might plan their New York trips around their Harlem visit (and have stated so on TripAdvisor), and want make sure to book a tour that they really want to experience. Other potential visitors want to visit Harlem, but only if they can make it work with their schedule. The organizational structure of the HHT website accommodates both kinds of search patterns. The website also seems to be a digital link between the company and the community of Harlem as well due to the presence of material directed at the community, rather than potential tourists.

So what do Harlemites think?

Harlem has had a long and complicated relationship with tourism. It is one of the reasons Harlem became globally famous in the 1920's; it virtually disappeared between 1929 and 1990; and today is one of the most prominent business practices in the community. The contemporary tourism boom in Harlem is a part of the larger global growth in international tourism, in which dominant global cities—New York, Paris, Tokyo, and London—have been major beneficiaries receiving both tourists in transit as well as being premier destinations themselves. Harlem is marketed as one of the New York's major 'cultural' attractions (Hoffman, 2003). But many native Harlemites take offense to touristic framings of the community even if that means tourists are visiting the community and spending money (Jackson, 2001; Maurrasse, 2006).

Harlemites in general have a strong sense of ambivalence towards tourism, its presence in the community, and its importance to the local economy (Jackson, 2001; Maurrasse, 2006). On one hand, as Jackson explains, some community residents feel as if they are on display like fine art in a museum, or rare wildlife in a reserve. Jackson calls this a "terroristic tourism...that impinges on human beings in museological ways, forcing the living exhibits to see their very objectification and to return that horrific gaze in kind (2001: 179)." This dynamic, Jackson suggests, leads to a kind of dual objectification. The tourists, while watching, are also being watched. One of Jackson's informants, Dexter, puts it this way regarding tourists' presence in the community:

We look at them and learning more from them than they ever learn from us, you know, from looking at us. They come up here and they the ones on display. We just doing our thing, living our life, and they snapping pictures. But we taking mental pictures in our head that last longer. And we check them out big time.—
Jackson, 2001: 178

This perspective is indicative of the suspicion inherent in tourism practice in Harlem and the possibility that it fosters negative interracial interaction. This is the source of much tension within low-income communities targeted by the tourism industry (Freire-Madeiros, 2013; Jackson, 2001; Maurrasse, 2006; Williams, 2014) And some tourism companies, such as the brief, now defunct, but infamous "Bronx Ghetto Tours" made no secret to cater to the touristic desires of whites wishing to see the unadulterated poverty of the black inner city (Iaboni, 2013). But the other side of the coin positions tourism from a perspective that can bring people closer together and where difference can be appreciated and celebrated (Werry, 2011). Not coincidentally, this is also the perspective from which economic value is derived from the experience of racial difference (Werry, 2011).

Harlem receives over one million tourists a year and the practice is a significant part of Harlem's contemporary economy (Hoffman, 2003, Maurrasse, 2006). As Maurrasse puts it, "Although most residents and community organizations have not found

ways to directly benefit from tourism, the presence of tourists from around the world brings additional services and attention from local government (2006: 96-97).” Writing during the earlier years of the 2000’s Maurrasse describes an atmosphere of reluctant hopefulness that tourism might prove to improve Harlem’s economic prospects, but it has since become clear that tourism development is the policy equivalent of ‘fixing’ a leaky pipe by putting a bucket under it to catch whatever drops out. Tourism now represents another use for the community imposed from the outside, and community members must contend with it.

For their part, Harlem Heritage Tours emphasizes the more positive perspective of tourism while acknowledging the challenges posed by the negative perspective:

The goal is to respect the privacy and integrity of those who live and work in Harlem, and at the same time expose visitors to all that makes Harlem special. Because of our sensitivity, we receive more support from grass roots Harlem than any other tourism company in the community. Over the past ten years we have meet [sic.] people from all over the world and we feel that tourism is a great tool to promote positive domestic relationships and heightened foreign diplomacy. (HHT Website (About) 5-9-17)

When walking around Harlem with Harlem Heritage Tours, dirty looks from passerbys happen, but they seem to be few and far between (as far as we know). One notable occasion was when Andy stopped our group in front of a very full beauty salon on Lenox Ave. He was explaining the historical importance of the beauty and cosmetics industry to Harlem’s economy, and he didn’t seem to notice that the salon customers looked—displeased—as to our presence. What’s more likely to happen in a given moment, however, is that a maintenance worker at an apartment complex will shout “Welcome to Harlem!” across the playground, while at other times locals will dance along to Bobby Womack’s *Across 110th St.*, or Cab Calloway’s *The Hi De Ho Man* as Neal is playing it—via iPad and portable Bose speaker—and the group walks past. Most of the time it’s warm welcomes, greetings, shout-outs, and hellos.

As Dexter reminds us, tourists are under surveillance as much as the locals are during these walking tours. But the tourists in many—probably most—cases will share stories of their travels with friends and family back home, they are also increasingly sharing their stories with a global audience of like-minded people through their interactions in the online tourism domain, and in websites like TripAdvisor (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The surveillance of outsiders by insiders remains confined to the community—through actual and digital word-of-mouth—while the surveillance of insiders by outsiders becomes technologically and transnationally dispersed. Which narrative produced from these surveillances, then, is likely to be more influential? In this case, as the next sections shows, digital influence lies in part with TripAdvisor’s

prosumers—users simultaneously producing and consuming content—and in part within the website’s organizational structure.

Harlem on TripAdvisor

Harlem Heritage Tours and TripAdvisor

For the past few years, Google searches including the words “Harlem” and “Tourism” have produced results with Harlem Heritage Tours near the top of the organic search results. As of (5-16-17) it sits near the top of the list. The company also appears near the top of the list for Google searches involving “Harlem” and “history”. It is also the highest ranked tour company based in Harlem within the internet’s most popular travel website, and has been since at least 2013 (Jamerson, 2014). This sustained digital prominence is the reason I initially selected reviews from this company for my Master’s research and is a primary reason why they remain relevant as objects of study. When tourists search online for information—which the vast majority do (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010)—about potentially visiting Harlem, they will probably come across links to both the company’s website and online reviews concerning the company on TripAdvisor.

TripAdvisor advertises itself as “The World’s Largest Travel Site” and contains hundreds of millions of user generated reviews regarding tourist experiences in hotels, restaurants, and attractions. It has the largest share of an expanding market for travel related consumer reviews (Leung et. al., 2013; Kinstler, 2018). Reviews on the website consist of two main features. The first is a user rating between 1 and 5 ‘bubbles’ which sums up the tourist’s impression of a service in one standardized measure and narrative content describing the experience of the service itself. The end result is both an archive of touristic experience and a system of categorized rankings of that experience. As discussed in the previous chapter, it has become a key part of contemporary tourism global production networks as it links consumers and producers directly in digital space as well as allows tourism dependent businesses the opportunity to become globally visible. The catch, of course, is that they become globally visible through the words and opinions of their customers.

TripAdvisor initially rose to prominence because of its reputation for trustworthiness in providing unbiased reviews written by real tourists, where a biased

review would be written with the intention of helping the service being reviewed in term of its online representation (Law, 2008). Although there is growing evidence that biased or ‘fake’ reviews are increasingly problematic, TripAdvisor remains an influential digital hub for the global tourism industry (Ayeh, Au, and Law, 2013). The website is distinguished by affordances of prosumption, where site content is both produced and consumed by its contributors (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). In other words the writers of reviews are also the primary readers of reviews. This has led to widespread characterizations of TripAdvisor, by both the website itself (particularly in its early years) and the academic community as an online community, or an example of a particularly themed social media site in the vein of Facebook (Leung et al., 2013; Jeacle and Carter, 2011).

Much of the academic and popular discourse surrounding TripAdvisor is around its identity as a form of ‘new’ media (Leung et al., 2013). This perspective can usually be detected when the analytic focus of a scholarly article or blog, for example, emphasizes its digital affordances at the expense of broader historical and social contexts in which it is situated. It is more likely to compare TripAdvisor to other examples of social media, for example. However, the raw data largely responsible for TripAdvisor’s success and popularity—the individual review—constitutes a digitally re-formed version of a very old narrative form: the traveler’s tale. Henry Jenkins (2006) concept of convergence is useful in understanding how TripAdvisor is simultaneously ‘new’ due to its digitality and ‘old’ due to the narrative construct it relies on. Nick Couldry (2012) takes this argument further by suggesting that convergent media are inherently stratifying, as they create social divisions based on older and established systems of inequality through differentials in both access and representation. This leads to a need for more socially conscious theories concerning convergent media’s affordances. One avenue towards this end is critically engaging with the histories of convergent media themselves. Therefore, in order to properly examine the digital side of the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor, we need to historicize it as well.

Colonialist Roots of TripAdvisor

In other work (Jamerson, 2016b) I have historicized TripAdvisor’s position in the online tourism domain by viewing the website’s organizational structure through the lens of Orientalist critique supplied by MacCannell (2011) and Behdad (1994). MacCannell (2011) discusses the notion of ‘positive’ Orientalism, or the Other as Attraction, while Behdad (1994) argues that representations of the Other as Attraction in different genres of 19th century travel writing were crucial in dictating European perceptions of global colonial conquest and therefore justifying its practice. Travel writing in the 19th century was able to generate perceptions of trustworthiness based on ‘expert opinion’ in the case

of the single-author travelogue (See: Volney, 1959; and Chateaubriand, 1968) and also based on the ‘expert organization’ of the multiple-author travel-guide, such as the Handbook (See: Urry, 1972) discussed above (Behdad, 1994). In other words, the travelogue tends to elicit ‘personal trust’ (see Mayer et al., 1995) from readers while the travel-guide tends to elicit ‘systems trust’ (Giddens, 1990) from readers. These sources of trust converge within the organizational structure of TripAdvisor, which is an algorithmically produced repository of singular traveler’s tales (Jamerson, 2016b). TripAdvisor is thus able to combine different sources of discursive authority—expert and systems based—within its organizational structure (Jamerson, 2016b).

The Other as Attraction—as it is positioned within TripAdvisor—is a more subtle form of denigration than the Other as Enemy or Pariah but acts to reinforce racial hierarchy nonetheless. In Du Boisian terms this is because of how it hides racial oppression behind a veil of amicable—ideal—interracial interaction. The concept of ‘anti-conquest’ is useful here for investigating precisely how a commodification of the supposed ‘desirable’ qualities of Otherness works to hide and obscure the undesirable sides of Otherness and how these representations maintain racial inequality (Pratt, 2008; Herman, 1999). As Herman puts it:

Anti-conquest involves glorifying the Other at the same time that the Other is denied real power...It is the positive representation of Others that serves to displace blunt modes of racial differentiation and to rearticulate them in ways that make Otherness seem natural rather than constructed and imposed...Anti-conquest is, therefore, a part of conquest in no way antithetical, but only masquerading as different by operating backwards (1999: 77).

For Pratt (2008) anti-conquest is an important function of traveler’s tales within larger projects of colonial expansion—both geographical and ideological. She has originally defined it as, “...strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony (2008:9).” As Pratt understands it, perhaps the most undesirable aspect of Otherness for those residing in the cultural, economic, and racial ‘centers’ of society is the historical guilt of its creation and the physical realities of its imposition. Travel writing, she maintains, was responsible for constructing representations of European innocence in the face of rapacious colonial conquest, thereby providing a discursive cover under which the brutality of expansion could be hidden (2008). Furthermore, “Only through a guilty act of conquest (invasion) can the innocent act of anti-conquest (seeing) be carried out (Pratt, 2008: 65).” So the concept of anti-conquest, in other words, is a discursive technique acting to both legitimate and solidify racial hierarchy through its framing of the oppressor as an innocent party. The distinction between anti-conquest and conquest drawn here mirrors distinctions made by Goldberg (2009) between

incorporation (anti-conquest) and suppression (conquest) as well as MacCannell's notion of 'positive' versus 'negative' Orientalism (2011).

In the case of Harlem Heritage Tours we need consider the following: If the writing and reading of TripAdvisor reviews constitute acts of anti-conquest, does that mean tour participation itself—the experience from which the review is based—constitutes the underlying act of conquest? While this is a tempting conclusion, it's more likely that the reading and writing of TripAdvisor reviews constitutes a digital manifestation of the anti-conquest present in the original touristic act—in this case participation in the tour itself. The underlying acts of conquest, in this context, are being carried out through contemporary strategies of racial suppression such as gentrification and mass incarceration.

Anti-Conquest in Harlem

From a historical perspective it seems clear that the logic—and results—of anti-conquest parallel those of slumming narratives as described by Dowling (2009), and particularly as they relate to Harlem. Slumming narratives were—not coincidentally—simultaneously white creations *and* the most prominent global representations of Harlem. Dowling goes so far as to name Van Vechten the 'inventor' of mythic Harlem, as "...no one individual did more to contribute to Harlem's popularity for white society during [the Harlem Renaissance] (2009: 143)." But can we see evidence of anti-conquest of within more contemporary digital representations of outsider opinion?

In the most general sense: Yes. Each individual review represents an experience heretofore 'unknown' to the writer of the review now being expressed as 'known'. At the very least, this is a form of intellectual or mental conquest, to say nothing of the economic backdrop leading to the experience in the first place. In fact, the review itself acts to hide or obscure other—more unpleasant—realities. In the case of Harlem Heritage Tours for example, reviews revolve around a glorification of Harlem's blackness even as they neglect the gentrification casting Harlem's blackness into question. Civil Rights—and racism attacking civil rights by proxy—are explained as belonging to the past, and not to Harlem's present. The Harlem presented on TripAdvisor is one where jazz constantly echoes off the sides of the brownstones, and where the spirit of King still lives. The reviews are color-blind at the same time they are black-loving in the sense that blackness is being enjoyed with no sense of awareness of the damaging socio-historical conditions contributing to Harlem's perceived 'uniqueness'.

These tourists—in all facetiousness—are innocent of *all that*, and in fact might be helping to correct these unseen problems just by their very presence. I found in my master's research that reviews seem to exemplify contemporary color-blind logic as defined by Bonilla-Silva (2014) but with an added twist that they also revel in the idea of cultural difference as well. From a historical perspective it seems as if the roots of color-blind discourse in many ways can be traced back to earlier discourses of anti-conquest as well as that of lenticular logic as described by McPherson (2012). Each of these strategies relies on the maintenance of racial hierarchy through its construction as somehow normal. This necessarily involves some type of discursive mechanism acting to 'hide' the more visceral realities of its imposition, and TripAdvisor is in a prime position to accomplish this. But TripAdvisor, like all travel writing, is not a one way street. As Pratt (2008) demonstrates (and as Dexter exemplifies), the watched are just as likely to use the tools of the watchers, and no traveler's tale is an unfiltered—or objective—narrative. Each review says as much about the writer of the review as it does about the attraction the reviewer is describing.

Conclusion: Linking Harlem and TripAdvisor

Based on theoretical and contextual evaluations of possible links between Harlem and TripAdvisor, it seems clear that this physical-digital relationship is a conduit through which the racial commodification of Harlem occurs. What is not clear, however, is the nature of the process by which this takes place. How, exactly, does this sequence—visitor to Harlem writes online review of their visit—contribute to the monetization of the community's racial difference? What occurs during this sequence that enables Harlem's racial valuation? Furthermore, the above concepts offered by Pratt (2008) warrant a consideration that this relationship does not solely accommodate economic objectification but is also potentially an avenue to disrupt dominant narratives of black Harlem, resist the forces of gentrification, and strengthen claims to the community as a black space. The problem is that some things seem to remain lost in translation. Certain elements of black Harlem—emphasized during tours—are ignored by reviewers.

Chapter 3: Methodological Approach

Research Question

The main question this research poses is: What are the processes through which the physical-digital relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor contribute to the commodification of Harlem's blackness? More specifically, this research asks how and in what ways this relationship both highlights some dimensions of Harlem's blackness while dismissing others to uncover a tension between the visibility and the invisibility of race in both tourism practice and its digital discourse. This research conceptualizes both tourism and digital technologies as racial projects interacting in specific ways to reinforce racial hierarchies within each of these social spaces. In this sense, the object of this study is the relationship between tourism in the physical community of Harlem and tourist discourse in the digital community of TripAdvisor.

One way to understand this relationship is to take a qualitative approach in the form of a concentrated and bounded case study of one tourism company operating in Harlem and its correspondent TripAdvisor reviewers as well as in-depth interviews with tour operators and shorter exit interviews with tourists. This boundedness is not only spatial—confined to one community and one website—but temporal as well in the sense that the reviews being analyzed here represent a small snapshot of digital discourse during a specific period of time (2006-2017). Ethnographic study of a cultural tourism company offering walking tours in Harlem may seem obvious, as the tours themselves are modeled in many ways after an ethnographic or anthropological excursion. Ethnography in tourism marks, for Bruner (2005), a rather weak boundary between subject and object, as tourists have on many occasions been described as 'amateur anthropologists' (Werry, 2011). The choice of discourse analysis for its digital counterparts is somewhat less obvious. I could, for example, take a more quantitative

approach and use data mining software to cover much more digital territory. But online discourse analysis, besides being more stylistically suitable next to ethnography, offers distinct advantages in digital environments (Recuber, 2016). According to Recuber:

Everyday actors make available their thoughts and experiences online in a variety of ways and at a great diversity of sites. This is often at a scale far beneath the thresholds for big data, and in many ways difficult to capture with the kinds of automated content and sentiment analysis too associated with quantitative approaches to textual research (2016: 48-49).

For Recuber (2016), online discourse analysis is able to reveal meaning in small groups of texts and in the process uncover “the messiness of everyday life” in a way that is more transparent and reflexive than big data methods, much like ethnography. I also include questionnaire responses and discussions of informal conversations between tour guides and myself to serve as a bridge between the ethnographic observations of the tours and discourse analysis of tour reviews, helping to fill methodological gaps between them. A qualitative approach to the relationship in question here is suited to understanding the ways in which racial meanings and categorizations are produced from it. Primary data for this project include TripAdvisor reviews (N=152) of Harlem Heritage Tours and ethnographic observations of the tours offered by this company.

Methods

Discourse Analysis

Theoretical Approach

Recuber distinguishes between content analysis (See Berelson, 1952) and discourse analysis (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009) as ways to qualitatively analyze digital texts. He argues that discourse analysis is the more appropriate technique because content analysis is more geared towards the quantification of textual content—its *manifest* content (Berelson, 1952)—and “is criticized for its pretense to objectivity and its lack of sensitivity to the nuances of the texts being analyzed” (Recuber, 2016: 50; See also Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). According to Recuber:

Discourse analysis, by contrast, is often couched as the more reflexive practice, more attuned to the ways that institutions and culture are “enacted and reenacted moment-by-moment” and to the idea that “language-in-use is everywhere and always political (Gee., 1999: 1).” Discourse analysis is, then, also concerned with “the latent meaning of discourse(s)...what is suggested by them or even what is hidden by them (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009: 8).” –2016: 50.

Discourse analysis is concerned more with uncovering latent meanings and establishing methodological transferability—“the degree of similarity between two contexts, what we shall call ‘fittingness’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).” But that does not mean that certain amounts of simple quantification—and subsequent suggestions of objectivity or examinations of manifest meaning—are not present in its practice (Recuber, 2016). Discourse analysis involves sampling because, to use one example, the identification and determination of the frequency of key words is an important step in the process (Vann, 2009; Recuber, 2016). I have found the identification of key words to be crucial in deploying a discourse analysis to analyze TripAdvisor reviews because of how they signal common patterns and themes between reviews (Jamerson, 2014). Finally, Recuber discusses one variant of discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis (See Fairclough, 1989)’, that seems particularly relevant given the nature of the relationship under scrutiny: “...critical discourse analysis moves through the description and interpretation of texts in order to determine the way other discourses, institutions, and ideologies have come to condition those texts (Recuber, 2016).” In short, critical discourse analysis allows one to connect manifest meaning to latent meaning concerning a given text or group of texts. It also allows one to understand how these meanings are both informed by—and help to shape—broader social beliefs and practices such as racial commodification.

Practical Approach

For this segment of the research I draw from my master’s research involving sample selection and general coding schemes. I scrolled through every review concerning HHT on TripAdvisor checking for word counts. Each review that was 150 words or more was included in the sample for discourse analysis. The final list compiled and used in this study was completed in January, 2018. 150 words tends to be long in terms of review content but these reviews include more detailed narrative descriptions of the tours and the possibility of richer analysis.

The final list of 152 reviews was assembled into a Word document containing each review (plus other pertinent information such as user name, location, rating, helpful votes, and reviewer ranking.). I then made three copies of the list and used those for coding—one for each analytical perspective. Each review is analyzed based on these perspectives—described below—using an open-focus coding technique, where larger trends are first identified through keyword (or key-phrase) frequencies and the smaller patterns are identified and described within each circumstance. These smaller patterns are the textual contexts for placing these keywords within larger theoretical discussions. For example perceptions of authenticity are a major source of value for reviewers but it is described differently based on which aspect of the tour is perceived as authentic (Jamerson, 2014). Furthermore, the idea of authenticity itself plays important roles in

forces of racial valuation, the traditional narrative content of traveler's tales, and the logic of color-blindness (which revolves around the lack of 'true' racial authenticity). The goal of this part of the research is to identify patterns within larger discursive trends in order to discuss online discourse in a more meaningful way as it relates to racial representation.

Ethnography

Theoretical Approach

In a statement echoing Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach (Tucker, 1978: 143) Soyini Madison states that critical ethnography, "resists domestication and moves from 'what is' to 'what could be' (2012: 5; See also: Carspecken, 1996; Denzin, 2001; Noblit, Flores, and Murillo, 2004; Thomas, 1993). By 'domestication' Madison refers to the way socially constructed systems of differentiation and inequality come to occupy positions of normality within the social worlds that produce them. She describes it as a research practice intended to rupture the belief, for example, that racial inequality is inevitable; due to essential differences (cultural, attitudinal, biological, intellectual, etc.) associated with racial minorities themselves. Critical ethnography, therefore, has, "an ethical obligation to make a contribution toward...greater freedom and equity (Madison, 2012: 5)". Furthermore:

The critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control.—
Madison, 2012: 5.

In this case, I argue that what seems—on the surface—like a relatively simple sequence: Visitor to Harlem writes online review of their experience; is both supported by and helps to support larger—also largely hidden—systems of racial containment and exploitation. A critical ethnographic perspective to tour participant-observation allows me, for example, to understand the tour company itself partly as an anti-racist endeavor whilst understanding the larger tourism industry in which it is situated as largely a racist one.

Practical Approach

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggest ethnographers in the field take only 'jottings' in order to aid the memory when writing up more detailed field notes immediately after exiting the field. This approach to ethnographic field work isn't always feasible given the nebulous and ever-changing reach of the 'fields' itself—especially in digital spaces—but it is particularly suited for this task because of the temporal and spatial boundedness of this specific ethnographic site and the ephemerality

of the tourist experience. As soon as I step out of the cab to join the tour group, I am in the field, and will remain so until I leave the tour group and catch a cab back to my hotel. Once I get to the hotel I take the more detailed field notes described by Emerson Fretz, and Shaw (1995) based on fresh memory and jottings, trying to write steadily at least an hour for every hour spent during the tour (including waiting for the tour to end and other breaks during the tour, this can be anywhere from 3-5 hours). For this research I include material from fieldnotes taken over the course of 5 years of intermittent visits to take tours in Harlem.

I found during my fieldwork that I was often unable to maintain much of a covert presence as a researcher due to the fact I was constantly holding a small notebook and jotting down observations regularly. Tour participants would ask me about it, normally by inquiring if I was a journalist. I would tell them why I was taking the tour and most seemed interested to hear more about my research project. My presence as a researcher was even more pronounced during my weeklong period of fieldwork in July, 2018. Neal had started introducing me as a researcher during the beginnings of tours and I was handing out questionnaires to tour participants in post-settings. I was able to ask tour participants if they would like to fill out questionnaires during down moments of the tour and give them time to consider their agreement because of this arrangement.

Questionnaires and informal conversations

The first two kinds of methods in this project have limitations as to their ability to adequately describe the link between a website and a marginalized community. The tourists I ended up observing were not be the same tourists supplying the reviews included in the discourse analysis (although that has happened once). And by the same token, ethnographic observation of tours gives me a good sense of the tour guide's presentation, but not their motivations or intentions for it. Interviews become a way to solve both problems but I found that it would not be possible to conduct interviews with either tour participants or tour guides (for different reasons), so I had to adjust. I ended up devising a questionnaire based on interview questions for tour participants to pass out in immediate post-tour situations. And I had informal conversations with Neal Shoemaker, where he ended up asking me more questions than the other way around.

In light of these differences and limitations I am guided by two interview techniques discussed by Madison (2012). Tourists questionnaires contained a few easily answered questions based on the Spradley Model (1979). I hope to conduct a formal interview with Neal at some point in further stages of this research, and will use the more in-depth Patton Model (1990) if the opportunity arises.

Spradley Model

This interview technique emphasizes questions focusing on 1) Descriptive Questions, 2) Structural or Explanation Questions, and 3) Contrast Questions. Descriptive questions include those asking “for a recounting or depiction of a concrete phenomenon (Madison, 2012: 31)”. In this case descriptive questions will be geared towards any digitally based research which may have led to an individual tourist coming to participate in a tour with Harlem Heritage Tours. *Did you conduct online searches before your visit to Harlem, and if so, what did that entail?* Structural or Explanation questions deal with explorations of, “the organization of an informants cultural knowledge (Spradley, 1979: 131).” These questions largely focus on the contextual elements of the phenomenon initially uncovered through descriptive questioning (Madison, 2012). In this case questions would emphasize the reasons the individual wanted to visit Harlem in the first place. *What are the reasons you decided to take a tour of Harlem?* (This is a very different question than *What are the reasons you decided to take a tour of Harlem with Harlem Heritage Tours?*) Contrast questions, “evoke unlike comparisons (Madison, 2012: 32)”. These questions help to uncover symbolic meaning because, “the meaning of a symbol can be discovered by finding out how it is different from other symbols (Spradley, 1979: 157).” In this case questions posed to tourists might include: *What other activities are you doing in New York?* or *How would you compare this tour to other cultural tourism experiences you’ve had?*

One issue to consider when conducting tourist interviews is convenience and the challenge of speaking to individuals or small groups in immediate post-tour settings. This is really the only time when it is convenient—for me—to speak with someone, but for a given tourist this is often an inconvenient time to give an interview. There are dinner reservations to make, trains and cabs to catch, another tour or landmark to view. To complicate matters further all tours end in the lobby of the Apollo Theater, where post-tour loitering is frowned upon (as Neal has explained the lobby staff do him a favor by letting us in). Outside the lobby is one of the busiest sections on the busiest street in Harlem, and there are often special events gathering crowds or lines of people waiting for an evening show at the Apollo. Because of these factors tours tend to end rather unceremoniously, and tour groups seem to scatter and disperse, rather than formally disband. I quickly found that the best way to ask tour participants about their online search patterns in immediate post-tour settings was to incorporate short questions based on the Spradley Model into a questionnaire where I could print multiple copies and pass them out to tour participants at the tour’s conclusion. Upon collecting the completed questionnaire I would quickly look over the responses and was usually—though not always—able to chat with the respondent about what they wrote. These short conversations were helpful in adding deeper context to the written response.

Patton Model

This interview technique draws from a more in-depth set of question types. These include: A) Behavior or Experience Questions, B) Opinion or Value Questions, C) Feeling Questions, D) Knowledge Questions, E) Sensory Questions, and F) Background/Demographic Questions. The goal of this interview method is to understand more than just basic circumstances, as with the case of tourists. The goal in this instance is to hear another side of the story of tourism in Harlem—Neal’s side. In terms of interviewing Neal, I’d like to find out more about how he started and developed the company, why he got into this business, and how he feels about tourism as an economic boon to the community. I particularly like to know about how he engages in online reputation management through monitoring online reviews. I’d like to know his thoughts about TripAdvisor versus Yelp, for example, and about how he cultivates positive relationships with the community. I had the chance to sit down with him in March and he paints a very complicated picture regarding the challenges and rewards of doing tourism in Harlem.

During this conversation he verbally agreed to consent to a formal interview (one which would require signing a consent form), but when I returned to Harlem after having received IRB approval for the interview he did not agree to sign the consent. As a result I was not able to ask him the specific questions I have regarding his presentations strategies and relationships with both the community of Harlem and with TripAdvisor. One of his stated reasons for not being able to sign the consent form was that he had not had time to read my research and had not decided whether the project was in his or his company’s best interests. I never formally interviewed him we did have several one-on-one conversations which I discuss at different times in the following chapters.

Summary of Fieldwork Data

In total this research contains observations from 8 tours between March, 2013 and July, 2018. During the weeklong period of more concentrated fieldwork I obtained 10 questionnaire responses and had three separate conversations with Neal. I was hoping to obtain at least 15 questionnaire responses but the small nature of the tour groups—and the fact that many tour groups are composed of yet smaller groups like couples and families in which one person did the online search—meant that for each tour I would get at most three responses. I do not highlight my conversations with Neal as a major source of data for this research but brief discussions of them are helpful his perspective on tourism in Harlem, and how he manages HHT in the online tourism domain.

Institutional Review Board

I received IRB approval for this research in June, 2018.

Analytical Approaches

The mixed methodological approach combines ethnography, online discourse analysis and—to a lesser extent—tour participant questionnaires and conversations with tour participants and tour guides. This approach allows for a thick description of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship at three analytic levels—with each giving attention to the links between sidewalks and cyberspace. Racial commodification does not operate solely through the valuation of racial difference. It also relies on the production of traveler's tales in order to disseminate the valuating message. Furthermore, the physical-digital relationship scrutinized here is situated within a specific historical era in terms of the social construction of race and available media technologies, one dominated by color-blind logic and digital computation (Omi and Winant, 2014; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; McPherson, 2012). Combining these perspectives—dissemination, valuation, and racialization—should shed light on some of the underlying interactions and social forces contributing to contemporary racial commodification. Each aspect identified here will be analyzed by blending the results of each method described above—resulting in three distinct findings chapters.

Traveler's Tales

The first perspective is concerned with the most obvious and visible produce of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship: online tourist reviews. TripAdvisor reviews represent a contemporary form of digitized travel writing, which is defined here as narrative depictions of experiences in places away from home. These stories have historically played a significant role in shaping Western conceptions of racial Otherness. For Linda Smith traveler's tales play an important part in the larger process of *Trading the Other*:

Trading the Other is a vast industry based on the positional superiority and advantages gained under imperialism. It is concerned more with ideas, knowledge, images, beliefs, and fantasies than any other industry. Trading the Other deeply, intimately defines Western thinking and identity. As a trade, it has no concern for the peoples who produced those ways of knowing.—2012: 93

Traveler's tales, in this sense, act to inform potential traders of Otherness about the knowledge or value contained in a given iteration of Otherness—in this case black Harlem. TripAdvisor's role in this process is no different, it just operates in a relatively

new discursive environment. From the perspective of the production of travel writing, discourse analysis will emphasize how the tour experience is converted to narrative form and what each review might say about the writer's positionality. Ethnographic observation of the tour experience is crucial to give context to narrative descriptions of the tour experience online as well as situate the reader more generally in the world of the tour. Methodology for this perspective is developed around prior conceptual models concerning the way TripAdvisor produces trustworthiness and authority (Jamerson, 2016b). Specifically, reviews were analyzed for evidence of narrative similarities to earlier genres of traveler's tale (building off of Behdad's 1994 arguments) and the ways in which review writers assert authority over Harlem in the online tourism domain.

Bricolage Effect

The second perspective, following the original research, concerns how ideas of value are articulated in review content by tourists and within tour presentations. The methodological approach to digital discourse analysis will be similar but will also be taking on a new batch of reviews. Initial findings suggest tourists find value in the temporary cultural immersion offered by the tour company (Jamerson, 2014). This immersion is the result of a *bricolage effect*, where different sources of value converge to confer upon the tourist a sense of belonging to the neighborhood while simultaneously offering a vivid window to the past. *Bricolage* is an analogical concept used to describe how different elements of immediate culture and social structure are combined—in an endless series of reconstructions—in order to produce a specific mode of understanding the world; or a specific version of reality (Levi-Strauss, 1962; Hebdige, 1979; Ramazani, 2006; Duymedjian and Ruling 2010). It may be used to describe both cultural tourism in Harlem and online tourist reviews. The analogy itself is derived from Levi-Strauss, who observes that the tinker, or handyperson, is able to create or modify objects using a finite 'set' of available materials, and often for purposes different than their original use:

His [the bricoleur] universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make to do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relations to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. —1962: 11.

Levi-Strauss applies this observation to the ways in which indigenous peoples create a unique sense of reality relative to their place in a given physical and spiritual environment through the creation of folklore, language, and oral tradition—what he calls the ‘science of the concrete’ (1962). And as the above passage suggests, the process of bricolage itself is carried out, or enacted, by the *bricoleur*, who often has a, “familiarity with the elements that make up [her] environment and an ongoing practice of diversion and permutation of elements in the bricolage process (Duymedjian and Ruling, 2010).” I suggest the process of bricolage is a crucial part of larger processes of racial commodification within cultural tourism and on TripAdvisor because of its power to imbue economically inert elements of culture and social structure with monetary resonance through strategic rearrangements.

Both cultural tourism and online tourist reviews depend on the rearrangement of existing cultural elements to give each tangible meaning as sources of both knowledge and value. With cultural tourism in Harlem, for example, the tour guides—or *bricoleurs*—rearrange elements of Harlem’s blackness using technologies, movement, storytelling, face-to-face interaction, and relevant spaces and places to create a sense of touristic value that is potentially at odds with the original roles of the elements of the cultural set being framed touristically. Put another way, neighborhood churches in Harlem do not exist for the entertainment of white tourists, yet on Sundays in some Harlem churches there are often more tourists than congregants (Soteriou, 2015). Ethnographic observation of tours will be helpful to understand the way Neal and Andy’s efforts at bricolage work to partially suture tourists into a world of their creation but framed within the conventions of cultural tourism practice.

Bricolage effects may also be observed in the organizational structure of TripAdvisor, which itself can be described as engaging in work as a *bricoleur*. Site users are inundated with personal—and algorithmically rearranged—accounts of experience and various ratings systems. Discourse analysis is key to determining how exactly tourists express these feelings and find value in them during the tour and the ethnography will help to provide context to tourist descriptions of Harlem online as well as highlight what tour operators and tour participants seem to value. Coding for discourse analysis from this perspective will follow from a conceptual model of both value production within the tour experience and the valuating discourse needed to shift attention towards racial otherness in the direction of ‘positive’ traits’ (Jamerson, 2014). Specifically, reviews were analyzed according to what reviews valued—or did not value—about the tour experience. Sources of value were coded as either static—such as landmarks and historical information—and dynamic—such as host style, presentational strategies, and community interactions.

Racetalk

The last analytical approach is concerned with the Harlem Heritage Tours-TripAdvisor relationship in the context of racial formation and the dominant ideology—color-blindness—undergirding contemporary racial inequality and regimes of racism (Omi and Winant 2014; Goldberg 2009). Methodologically this approach is heavily influenced by Bonilla-Silva’s (2014) work on uncovering color-blind racism through its emphasis on tours and reviews as an informal kind of racial discourse. Color-blindness, for Bonilla-Silva, is an ideology but can be revealed and studied through discourse analysis (2014). He identifies four frames of color-blind rhetoric, 1) *Abstract Liberalism*: where, “ideas associated with political liberalism and economic liberalism are [used] in an abstract manner to explain racial matters (2014: 76).” 2) *Naturalization*: which, “is a frame that allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences (2014: 76)”. 3) *Cultural Racism*: “Is a frame that relies on culturally based arguments to explain the standing of minorities in society (2014: 76). And 4) *Minimization of Racism*: “A frame that suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances (2014: 78).” Reviews, interviews, and tours were analyzed in this approach looking for evidence of the legitimation (use) or de-legitimation (non-use or rejection) of each of these frames.

I found, however, that there was very little evidence of any of these specific frames of colorblindness. On the contrary, reviewers tend provide very positive comments regarding Harlem’s blackness. Most negative comments, for example, are geared towards HHT’s services and not the community in general. Therefore the review discourse seems to de-legitimate through non-use older and established patterns of color-blind rhetoric. Recent scholarship regarding expansions of color-blind research—including notions of diversity ideology (Embrick, 2011; Smith and Mayorga-Gallo, 2017) and frames of racial interaction that ignore power relationships (Jayakumar and Adamian, 2017)—have been useful in highlighting themes of racial discourse in tour presentations and on TripAdvisor. The tours themselves seem to adopt an explicitly anti-racist stance as a way to disrupt traditional themes of color-blindness; but often this viewpoint is hidden in presentational strategy. This perspective will analyze the tours as an anti-racist project and the reviews as project more geared towards perpetuating color-blind racism. This perspective uses the racetalk involved in both tours and reviews and interviews to understand the discursive disconnect between tour content and review content as tourists convert their experiences into information through writing online reviews.

Trustworthiness

There are many ways to evaluate the trustworthiness of qualitative analysis (Cho and Trent, 2014). But I am guided here by both Lincoln and Guba (1985), described by Cho and Trent as “*the platform for [evaluating qualitative research]*”(2014: 678)”. I am also guided by Decrop (2009), who advances a model of methodological trustworthiness specifically targeted towards qualitative approaches to tourism research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define a set of qualitative research criteria meant to be analogous to commonly accepted criteria for sound quantitative research (Cho and Trent, 2014). These four criteria include *credibility* (standing in for internal validity), which include, “elements that allow others to recognize the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants’ experiences (Cho and Trent, 2014: 680).” This means the research design and outcomes need to be both representative and inclusive of the perspectives of the research participants. This is one reason why, for example, I’ve included ethnography of cultural tourism as a way to contextualize the discourse analysis of online reviews of cultural tourism, and vice versa. The data included in this research is not representative because it is typical—Harlem Heritage Tours is the highest rated Harlem-based company on TripAdvisor and tops Google search lists—but because it is prominent. And while I have not spent very much time ‘in the field’ I have had a prolonged engagement (five years at this point) with this specific research and the challenges of linking physical and digital worlds. This includes multiple conference presentations and two publications based on various aspects of the original research project.

The second criteria discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is *transferability* (standing in for external validity), described as, “the ability to transfer research findings from one group to another (Cho and Trent, 2014: 680).” The goal here is to be able to apply both research design and findings to other analytic sites. One way to do this is to do the same basic analysis on the same site—at a different time—as is the case here. This research model can also potentially be performed on any cultural tourism company that has a digital presence. This research does not invent or otherwise use methods specifically tailored to this case, it rather employs established and broadly used methods and attempts to fit them together in a novel way. This involves thick description of both touristic practice and its accompanying online discussions as well as the use of analytic devices such as bricolage and anti-conquest which can be applied in both physical and digital contexts.

The third criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is *dependability* (standing in for reliability), described as “when other research follows the decision trail used by the researcher; having peers participate in the analysis process (Cho and Trent, 2014: 680).” This criteria is met by the research having quality professional oversight (through either peer-review or, in this case, a capable and thorough dissertation committee) as well as the

research itself being able to be ‘replicated’ in some way. This research is in many ways being ‘replicated’ but also building upon a previous research design (Jamerson, 2014).

The fourth criteria listed by Lincoln and Guba concerns matters of *confirmability* (standing in for objectivity), or a, “self-critical attitude on the part of the researcher about how one’s own preconceptions affect the research (Cho and Trent, 2014: 680).” This criteria necessitates a careful and measured reflexivity on the part of the researcher regarding their positionality—ultimately their place of power—in the research process. I base my comments (found below) on a model provided by Emirbayer and Desmond (2015) regarding reflexivity in race scholarship.

Decrop (2009) discusses issues of trustworthiness in tourism related qualitative research through highlighting Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four criteria for trustworthiness and through a more extended discussion of triangulation—or “information coming from different angles or perspectives...used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research problem (2009: 162).” For Decrop triangulation is “probably the most comprehensive way of building trustworthiness into research design (2009: 161).” I employ multiple forms of triangulation throughout this research:

Data Triangulation: Three main forms of primary data analyzed here include 1) TripAdvisor reviews of Harlem Heritage Tours, 2) ethnographic observation of Harlem Heritage Tours, and 3) individual accounts of the tours (from both tourist and tour operator’s perspective) and how they are represented and discovered online.

Method Triangulation: As described above, each of the main data sources generally corresponds to a specific research method. 1) TripAdvisor reviews → discourse analysis, 2) Harlem Heritage Tours → ethnographic observation and 3) individual accounts → interview analysis.

Theoretical Triangulation: The three main theoretical perspectives this research draws on are racial formation, racial neoliberalism, and digital race studies, even though strands of various other theoretical traditions are present as well, including post-colonial, Orientalist, critical tourism theories, and symbolic interactionism.

Informant triangulation: The three main types of informants in this research include 1) tour operators, 2) tour participants, and 3) review writers. The potential interviewees during my fieldwork are different from the people who’ve written reviews included in this analysis (except for one notable case).

Multilevel Triangulation: This type of triangulation involves “making a distinction between different levels of analytical interest in qualitative research (Decrop, 2009: 163).” In the case of this research it might be more apt to say I’m interested in making a distinction between three different analytical arenas—bricolage effect, traveler’s tales,

and racetalk. Each of these three analytical perspectives requires inputs and explanation from each of the three main data sources, meaning that interpretations from each of the three main research methods need to blend together in this part of the analysis.

Interdisciplinary Triangulation: Tourism research is defined by Decrop (2009) and others (Dann and Cohen, 1991) as being inherently ‘multi-disciplinary’ and this project is no different. Beyond its sociological interest in intersections between race, tourism, and digital technologies, it is indebted to thoughts and voices ranging from history to marketing and from anthropology (Levi-Strauss, 1961) to accounting (Jeacle and Carter, 2011).

Reflexivity

My discussion of reflexivity is based on Emirbayer and Desmond’s “three tiered” typology of reflexive positions in which race scholars find themselves during the course of the research process (2015). In this sense it might also be referred to as *Reflexive Triangulation*. Desmond and Emirbayer draw from Bourdieu’s insight in *Pascalian Meditations* (1997) that, “...our commonsense assumptions preconstruct the objects of our inquiry at several distinct levels, each more deeply hidden than the last (Emirbayer and Desmond, 2014: 33).” In order from least hidden (most superficial) to most hidden (least superficial) these levels include:

The social unconscious: In simplest terms, this level involves reflexivity regarding one’s social position within the racial order: or one’s racial identity. I am a white man with a privileged economic background—and in a privileged scholarly position—from Virginia, doing qualitative research within Harlem and concerning Harlem’s presence in the online tourism domain. I grew up in a family that made an annual pilgrimage to Walk Disney World in Florida with occasional ‘big’ trips to Europe for example, or Tanzania. Am I a credible and trustworthy person to be doing this research, or am I merely another “Negrotarian” going,--in the words of a popular song from the Harlem Renaissance-- “inspectin’ like Van Vecthen”? Well, for one, you won’t see me say or write the “N” word...ever, much less use it in the title of a novel. And this is just a very blunt example of how reflexivity of social position necessarily affects the writing process, in my case justifiably taking a word completely off the table. In fact, I tend to have much more in common with the average tourist from a racial, class-based, and often occupational perspective. Most tourists booking with HHT are white English speakers, either in New York for business or pleasure. Most arrive by plane. Furthermore, many of the tours feature student groups led by educators, and during my initial round of discourse analysis one of the largest sub-sets of reviewers consisted of professional educators (Jamerson, 2014). To share just one example, one time one of my

tour mates was a Brazilian graduate student researching favela poverty and during the course of our conversations during the tour recommended I read Freire-Madeiros' (2013) work on favela tourism. It would probably not have been cited in this work otherwise. In relation to Harlemites I'm more experientially distant while in relation to tourists I am more experientially intimate and this will necessarily affect my interactions with Neal in different ways than with tourists.

The main way I address these concerns involves efforts on my part not to write 'for' or 'about' Harlem's residents or the tourists who visit, for that matter. I try instead—to use a term favored by Trinh Minh-ha (1989)—to write *alongside* these groups. This perspective keeps me in the habit of constantly thinking about how my personal experiences and socialization as a white male might be affecting the research. I never can *know* what it's like to be a Black Harlemite so my research makes no pretenses towards such claims. But I have spent years at this point learning about the effects and consequences of race and racism from macro-, micro-, and meso-level perspectives and in both my teaching and research I am required, beyond any personal desire (of which there is much)—to show how damaging racism is to both individuals and society. As I tell my students in courses dealing with racial difference—I can't draw from personal experience in explaining these topics—but I can provide access to voices that do know from personal experience and help make connections between them and larger problems of racial inequality within the social world.

My whiteness is one of the reasons why I've chosen to study tourism as it relates to race in the first place: Other than graduate school my personal experiences regarding racial difference do not extend much farther than that. I've had a quite a few black friends, roommates, acquaintances, and mentors. During much of my graduate coursework at Virginia Tech I was often the only white male in a given seminar. But even considering these most valued and meaningful relationships, my social world—as it is for many academics—is a mostly white one. I can read as many books as I want about race and racial difference and racism and inequality—but because of my social position there are limits as to how I can process that information into personal knowledge which inherently affects my research and my writing. Studying tourism as it relates to race allows me to include more of my personal experience into the research and writing process while keeping those limitations in mind.

The disciplinary unconscious: This level of reflexivity concerns the disciplinary constraints of scholarly work, or how preconceived notions of the racial order—beyond those sourced in one's social position—are embedded in “the specialized fields of intellectual or scholarly production”. It is described by Emirbayer and Desmond as more hidden and less superficial than the social unconscious. As they put it, “Structures and dynamics of a scholarly field profoundly affect how larger societal (racial) influences

come to expressed within it (39).” Different disciplines, tourism studies and critical race studies, for example, come to differing—and often directly oppositional—conclusions regarding the same social phenomena, like the practice of cultural tourism in Harlem.

As scholars working within a single discipline tend to write for others in their discipline it becomes increasingly self-referential, with fewer and fewer inputs from other disciplinary sources, creating a ‘silo effect’ of differing and competing ‘knowledges’ walled off from one another. This leads to unfortunate and ultimately untenable “all or nothing” propositions regarding persistent racial hierarchy in social life (Desmond and Emirbayer, 2015). For example, TripAdvisor either presents ‘positive’ representations—the perspective of a neoliberal multiculturalist—or peddles ‘negative’ ones—the perspective of a critical Africanist. Either tourism is ‘good’ for Harlem—the likely perspective of a marketing or business school—or it’s ‘bad’—the likely perspective of critically minded sociologists or anthropologists. By the same token, in terms of intersecting race and digital technologies a geographer or economist might be more interested in racial disparities in access to digital technologies while a cultural studies or literary scholar may be more interested in how racial Others are represented within them.

Emirbayer and Desmond suggest ways to avoid this problem include finding “the location [of the discipline] within the larger universe of social science (39)” and “try[ing] to understand and map out the commonsense, or *doxa*, of each intellectual context (39).” This means understanding that conventions of theory and practice between disciplinary perspectives in the social sciences have far more in common than their differing conclusions regarding social outcomes would suggest. The aforementioned marketing school and critical anthropologist both, for example, probably believe their perspective is one that will lead to greater well-being for Harlem residents. I suggest that various strategies of triangulation employed consistently throughout this study guard against the silo effect by continuously keeping various theoretical approaches and disciplinary assumptions in conversation with each other—thereby putting each to scrutiny.

The scholarly unconscious: According to Emirbayer and Desmond this level of reflexivity is hardest to grasp because it contains the most deeply embedded preconceived notions regarding the racial order. It involves the scholarly way of life itself. For Emirbayer and Desmond, the scholastic life contains:

...A characteristic attitude of pure, disinterested, thought, of detached intellectuality, unconstrained by social an economic necessity and drawn toward a playful ‘as if’ mode of engagement with the world and its problems...virtually all [scholars], like fish in water, remain less than fully aware of how their thinking *as scholars* carries with it unexplored assumptions that distort their perceptions of the racial order (43).”

They argue—per Bourdieu—that the scholastic life leads to preconceived notions surrounding the racial order in three distinct ‘realms of social thought’. The first occurs in the cognitive realm where the trappings of the scholastic life lead many to think of human action in terms of either agency or non-agency. The second occurs in the moral realm and is characterized by a moral universalism that is the main culprit, as Emirbayer and Desmond see it, in the rise of racial color-blindness. The third occurs in the aesthetic realm, where, “pure disinterested pleasure [becomes] the norm of all possible cultural experience.” According to Desmond and Emirbayer this mindset results in either, “condescension toward the putatively inferior ‘popular culture’ of stigmatized minorities”, or “cult-like celebration or affirmation of or the ‘authenticity’ of those same racial groups.” As far as this research is concerned the most compelling part of this argument is the description that the scholarly life is fundamentally one of leisure, as if all scholars—at least one some level—are perpetual tourists.

I had a similar realization—though not as expansive as the one suggested by Emirbayer and Desmond’s argument—six years ago while taking a graduate course at Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand titled *Indigenous Knowledge, Consciousness, Ethics, and Values* taught by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies* was one of the first books I read in graduate school and I had just recently committed to pursuing a PhD in sociology when the opportunity to take this class arose. I was excited not only to add a unique experience to my graduate education, but also to go back to New Zealand, where I’d previously visited an ex-pat/old college friend living near the school. During my six week stay I lived in a dorm and my former roommate was right down the street. I had class every morning for three weeks from 9-12am including outside reading, writing assignments, and art projects. In short, I was acting like a student, and surrounded by the trappings of being a student while there...but I never felt like one. I was always a tourist. Even in the dorm, because I hadn’t lived in a dorm since my freshman year as an undergraduate, so it felt nostalgic and cool. Even in class, where I was taking a class from a pretty famous—by my standards—indigenous scholar and in a room full of brilliant Te Reo speaking Maori graduate students. What was I going to say in that context about indigenous consciousness? When I wasn’t in class I was hanging out with Pakeha (white New Zealanders) doing Pakeha things like mud runs, skiing, camping trips, and dubstep shows. Maori consciousness was only there when I wanted it to be, just like anything else on vacation. This may ultimately be the most important underlying factor involving my positionality, at each of these various levels of reflexivity within this research: I can just walk away from it if I feel so inclined. And in performing this research, much like tourism, I am also engaging in a privileged—and privileging—act.

I reflected on this tension between student and tourist roles extensively in a paper for a graduate qualitative research methods course and the experience in many ways inspired me to continue studying tourism. How can I propose an argument for critically

understanding a source of social inequality like tourism without acknowledging my role in it? This level of reflexivity also calls into question the fragile boundary between ethnography and cultural tourism as described by Bruner (2005)—in this case does this mean there is even a boundary at all? As far as Harlem is concerned, at least one ethnographer has actually gone on a walking tour of Harlem as part of her research in order, “to know what the packs of visitors were being told (Rhodes-Pitts, 2011: 7)”, as if the researcher was not a visitor herself. I try to draw a boundary between myself and tourists—still acknowledging my status as a privileged outsider and visitor as well—by, for example, working on this project for 5 years and attempting to make myself aware of my preconceived ideas concerning tourism, digital technologies, and the racial order on at least three mental levels.

Conclusion

I am intrigued by notions of resistance to BIG data. It does not have to be BIG resistance. Just a little one, with our daily encounters with all subjects and objects, is fine with me. I would like to see how data become subjects and subjects become data, to treat them with similar ethics and respect that they want to give the individual subject under neoliberal ideology.—Marek Tesar (Koro-Ljungberg et. al., 2017: 59).

Although I hesitate to call this research an example of ‘resistance’ to BIG data, it certainly is resistant to it. If the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor is one partly defined by what Chandler (2015) calls ‘datafication’ then a quantitative analysis of that relationship risks being reduced to one more data point among millions (much like a single tourist review). In this sense qualitative inquiry becomes a way to approach BIG data with critical distance as well as greater intimacy. As, Koro-Ljungberg et. al. point out, “...it is puzzling that during the times of extreme global complexity, increasing diversity, and decreasing equity scholarly attention meanwhile is more and more drawn to big ideas, overly generalizing conclusions, regression to the means, sameness thinking, and knowledges of the masses (2017: 63).” I am using small batches of ethnographic observation, interview materials, and online tourist reviews to describe this relationship precisely because it is complex, and big, and exploitative. There is room for qualitative inquiry in these circumstances because of its potential to put the complexity and big-ness of this relationship into a perspective showing how it works to maintain racial inequality.

Chapter 4: Production of Travel Writing: Mapping the Sources of Review Content

Introduction

Perhaps the most obvious products of the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor are the actual reviews. These reviews come from two primary sources, the tour itself and the social location—or positionality—of the reviewer. This chapter analyzes both of these sources. It first offers an ethnographic description of the general structure and content of Harlem Heritage’s various tour offerings meant to situate the reader within the world of the tour and to provide context for later discussions of bricolage and racetalk. This description separates the tours into three parts: 1) First Impressions: Setting the (Back)stage, 2) Walking Content: The Moving Tourist Bubble, and 3) Parting Ways: Goodbyes at the Apollo. Each of these parts are common to all tours and together form a sequence through which a tour participant transitions from Harlem outsider to insider, and back to outsider again. This enclosed experience forms a major part of the online review, but the other source—the writer’s social location—may be just as important in determining how Harlem is ultimately written about on TripAdvisor.

This is important because TripAdvisor reviews, beyond having a major influence on Harlem Heritage's success, also represent influential digital representations of Harlem life in general. During tours the tour guides act as the major arbiters of Harlem's culture and history, thus assuming most of the authority over how the community is represented to tourists. Once a tour participant goes online and writes about the tour on TripAdvisor, however, authority over how the community is represented shifts in their favor. This makes at least a summary analysis of who the writers are an important step in describing the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor.

The second part of this chapter uses mainly discourse analysis of TripAdvisor reviews, along with ethnographic reflections and the results of a tour participant questionnaire to discuss the positionality of the review writers. Some reviewers reveal limited demographic information attached to their user profiles, but many do not. Almost all reviewers, however, engage in some form of 'credentialing' in their narrative content. I define credentialing as a strategic deployment of personal information during the course of a written review to add legitimacy and authority to its content. Some reviewers do this more than others, especially those identifying as educators, but it is common throughout the sample. Finally, this chapter ends with an analysis of the narrative structure of review content based on Behdad's (1994) distinctions between travelogue writing and travel guide writing. I find that many reviews feature—as Jenkins (2006) might describe it—a convergence between the narrative structures of these two genres of travel writing.

First Impressions: Setting the (Back)stage

The accounts provided here are based on participant observations of Harlem Heritage Tours over the course of a March weekend in 2017 (two tours) and the first week of July, 2018 (six total tours). Each tour lasted between two and four hours depending on the size of the group and type of tour being offered. Each tour, even for those of the same type, was different than others in terms of route taken, architectural highlights pointed out, and historical information covered. But all tours, however, had the same basic structural elements in terms of beginnings, middles, and endings.

The initial moments of the tour are some of the most important from the standpoint of both tourists and the tour guide. For the tourist this is the transitional period in the shift from Harlem outsider to insider through tour participation. For the tour guide, the goal during this period is to facilitate that transition through informal conversation with individual tour participants, and concluding with a more formal presentation by the tour guide concerning the rest of the tour, thus solidifying new roles and a distinct group dynamic. This period lasts about 30-35 minutes from the time when the group begins to coalesce—roughly 15 minutes before the tour is scheduled to begin—and through the end of the tour guide's presentation, when groups step outside and begin walking through Harlem's streets—usually about 20 minutes after the scheduled start

time. All tours, no matter their theme, begin at one of two indoor locations—the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture on 134th Street or the Harlem Heritage Tours (HHT) office on 116th Street.

The Schomburg Center and the Harlem Heritage Office

Each of these locations is spatially organized to prime the newly arrived outsider to consider a strong connection to Harlem’s position as a center of blackness. At the Schomburg Center, for example, groups literally stand over Langston Hughes’ ashes during the tour guide’s opening presentation. The Harlem Heritage Tours office has a large poster sized photo of Malcolm X meeting with other Harlem civil rights leaders with a caption reading “YOU ARE STANDING RIGHT HERE” and an arrow pointing to a small sliver of sidewalk visible in the background behind X’s shoulder. The Schomburg Center also has a public art or museological installation free to visit, and these are often incorporated into tours. For instance, in July 2018 the Center featured a Black Power exhibit, which focused generally on the pluralistic side of the Civil Rights Movement—the side advocating a retreat from white society—and more specifically on the role of the Black Panthers within the larger Black Power scene. Tour guides are quick to point out that the group was wrongly associated with violence and the exhibit itself focused on the Panthers’ efforts at community building, providing a direct but unspoken contrast to current patterns of gentrification.

There are also significant differences between the two locations. The Schomburg is more institutional and authorial, and in addition to museological and artistic exhibits it also houses a publicly accessible basement archive. The ground floor lobby where tours initially gather has interior windows where visitors can look down on researchers in the archives. The interior of the lobby area is built in dark stone signifying modern, bureaucratic authority. There is a front desk with a security guard and receptionist as well as a separate coat check office. All visitors must state their business for coming inside to the front desk. Tour participants, once identified as such, are directed in a friendly manner toward a waiting area with benches to the side of the front desk. This setting creates a specific kind of first impression for tour participants, especially if they are about to embark on a tour emphasizing Harlem’s past. The building itself is presented by tour guides as both an example of history and a site of history-making. More specifically, it is historical because of its emphasis on history-making. One of the tour guides, Doris, for example, discussed the legacy of the building’s namesake, Arthur Schomburg by talking about how he wanted blacks “to have a history”. In short, the building adds historical legitimacy not only to perceptions of the black experience for tour participants but also for the tour guides using the building as a starting point for tours.

Since 2013, the lobby area has expanded, presumably to make it more tourist friendly. The gift shop has moved into a larger space and the old gift shop has been converted into an art gallery. Tourists used to be restricted to the main lobby area but are now allowed to wander through the main hallway past a theater and into the exhibition space. When I conducted a self-guided tour I visited the Schomburg by myself to understand public access versus the private access represented by tour participation. I was able to visit all areas of the building including the basement archives area, where I looked for information on tourism and slum narratives during the Harlem Renaissance. The front desk and coat check staff were very accommodating and there did not seem to be much of a difference between gaining access as a member of the public or as a member of a private tour. These types of similarities in access are significant because one of the primary selling points of such tours are the promise of ‘backstage’ experiences with the implicit understanding that this requires a special kind of access, one not available to the general public. But at this point the tour participants are not aware of such discrepancies. This specific setting, combined with the tour guide’s opening performance, sets the stage for the walking portions of the tour to follow.

In contrast to the institutionalized setting of the Schomburg center, the Harlem Heritage Tours office is a testament to local “Do-It-Yourself” entrepreneurship. The office itself is about the size of the waiting area where tourists are asked to meet at the Schomburg, and occupies a central position on a block where businesses are still characteristic of what Hoffman (2002) calls a ‘ghetto economy’. The Martin Luther King public housing towers are located down the block on the south side of 116th Street, and the office itself sits in between a combination luggage shop/ hair braid salon and a vacant fried chicken restaurant. The interior of the office is decorated with enlarged, poster-sized photos of Harlem luminaries, an antique bicycle, and contains numerous black plastic folding chairs, a table, and a sound system. There is a bathroom located in the back of the space. This particular bathroom is significant because I’ve seen Neal working in there at least three times trying to fix things and reviewers at various points within my sample (between 2006 and 2018) have mentioned how poor the bathrooms are at the office; reviewers have also commented on how this space seems disorganized, and therefore unprofessional. But based on my observations this space may be even more effective at priming tour participants for the rest of the tour than the Schomburg center.

The primary reason for this is the degree of control Neal has in the office space versus the visitor lobby of the Schomburg Center. As far as I observed Neal is the only tour guide to give opening presentations at the HHT office, and while he will give opening presentations at the Schomburg as well, he seems to be more at home at this location. While most tours start in the early afternoon, the most popular tours—Gospel Church Tours—start at 9 on Sunday mornings. On these mornings, Neal uses the HHT office to prepare tour participants and set up the rest of their experience. On all three of

the Gospel Church Tours that I participated in, the scene was quite similar, with the exception of more time spent on the sidewalk in front of the office during warmer weather.

I would arrive at 8:45 and was usually the first person there. Other tour participants would gradually arrive over the next 15 minutes, and Neal would always arrive right at 9 and let people in to the office. He would cue up music, usually jazz standards early in the morning such as Louis Armstrong's "Wonderful Life" and Ella Fitzgerald's rendition of "April in Paris." He would also provide Entemann's snack cakes, potato chips, juice and water for people while we waited (the food was always eaten). Additionally, on all three Sunday Gospel tours I participated in a neighbor higher in the building would come in, singing a vaudevillian version of "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen", then announce to everyone that he was cooking breakfast upstairs, and that there might be leftovers. He would end his intervention with a bow, saying "welcome to Harlem". Neal would play it off each time as if it were a spontaneous gesture from his neighbor, named 'Hamburger', a welcoming sign of things to come.

The formal tour presentation doesn't start until 9:20 (this is a pattern with most tours, getting started walking a few minutes past official start time). Before then people sit, eat, and start making conversation with people outside their immediate group and also with Neal. Neal seems to use this time to gather basic information about the group and finalize a presentation strategy or route through the neighborhood. For tour participants this is a chance to gain some measure of familiarity and comfort not only with Neal and the Harlem setting, but with other people in the group as well. I was often asked about the notebook I was carrying for field jottings, and these conversations would last well into the actual walking portion of the tour, off and on. At 9:20 Neal makes sure everyone is seated and begins his formal presentation, and from the office it is less than a two block walk to New Canaan Baptist Church. Unlike using the Schomburg Center to begin these tours (it's closed at this time anyway), the spatial organization of the office and the tour guide's greater control over the activities within it lends itself to a greater sense of cultural immersion. The Schomburg, on the other hand, lends itself more towards feeling a sensation of historical immersion.

Opening Presentations and Tour Guide Style

The activities within and movement from these specific indoor locations to the sidewalks of Harlem begin a suturing process meant to draw the tour participant deeper—if only for a few hours—into the fabric of the community. In terms of social interaction, this begins in a more informal way and within these physical settings. As the group gathers a tour guide will come in and start asking those present if they've signed up for a HHT tour. Reservations are easily checked through smartphone apps' emailed receipts of purchase. As this is happening tour guides are also making small talk with tour

participants, asking about where they live, their reasons for visiting New York, and sometimes their reasons for visiting Harlem. Small talk amongst tour participants continues, usually revolving around where everyone is 'from' and other tourist activities being done in New York, and interests in visiting Harlem. The tour guides will offer some information about themselves during the course of this small talk, usually geared at first toward their background and experience in guiding walking tours in Harlem. And as all of the tour guides reiterate during their opening presentation: one cannot understand today's Harlem without understanding its history.

Although each have distinct presentational styles, all tour guides agree on the importance of history and each uses the first few minutes of the tour to begin establishing rapport with tour participants. Their distinct styles become more readily apparent as each gathers the group to hear the opening presentation. These opening presentations contain general information about the route the tour will take and some of the specific sites being visited as well as information about pre-black Harlem and each tour guide takes a different approach in conveying this information. The tour guides themselves are frequently mentioned by name on TripAdvisor as being the single most important factor in determining whether or not a person enjoyed the tour.

Andy

Andy Owens is by all accounts a man in his late 80's, shorter, with a short white mustache. He's African-American, but lighter skinned, with blue eyes; a result, he told me, of his Swedish heritage. He is originally from Minnesota and has lived in Harlem since the 1950's, having been one of the first African Americans to attend Columbia University, where he studied acting. On the one tour I took with him the weather was very cold and he seemed to be swallowed up by his large, dark blue coat and black knit cap with the word HARLEM in white, spelled out in bold letters. Andy's age is a rather curious topic because of how it is discussed on TripAdvisor, where there are some inconsistencies in how it's reported but uniformly understood by reviewers as a positive attribute.

Andy's background comes through in his presentational style. His main presentational method is storytelling, usually short stories punctuated with a related joke of some kind. During our one tour together he began with a version of Harlem's origin story that ended with a joke about how the Indians who sold Manhattan Island to the Dutch for some trinkets had thought they'd gotten the best of the Europeans, who had clearly just given away the items for free, since the concept of land ownership was

‘incomprehensibly arrogant’. He then moved to a short discussion of how Harlem became black, emphasizing the subways as a major facilitator of black movement to the area. But he then pivoted to the present day through discussing the concept of history then emphasizing the gendered nature of the concept—HIStory—as a means to communicate Harlem’s long running support of the Clintons and specifically Hillary’s bid for the 2016 presidency.

Doris

Where Andy is a natural storyteller (who also has professional training), Doris is more of a natural historian (who also probably has professional training). In appearances she reminded me of a female version of Andy: older, shorter, lighter-skinned, wearing a short-sleeved collared shirt, hat, cotton pants and orthopedic walking shoes. Before coming to New York for fieldwork in July 2018 I had never heard of her, as she had not been mentioned on TripAdvisor up to that point. But according to her she’s been working with Neal for a while, as part of a larger 23 year career giving tours of the Harlem area (I never did find out exactly how she came to be a part of the HHT team, or ever learned her last name). I learned through the course of three tours that she was a lifelong Harlemit who had only rarely ever left the neighborhood, and only when she was well into adulthood.

While much of her opening presentations come in narrative form, it is much more historically oriented and detailed. She also begins her presentation with a version of the story of how Harlem became black. However, in contrast to Andy—who tended to skip around Harlem’s historical eras in his opening presentation—Doris presents a more linear vision of Harlem’s past, starting with early European settlers and providing detailed accounts of not only the history of the area, but also the history of the black folks whose descendants would eventually settle there. She made a point to mention how she also was giving tours of an archeological site near Wall St. that had once been an African burial ground in the late 17th century.

Neal

Neal Shoemaker is the most frequently written about tour guide on TripAdvisor, as he is the company founder and main guide. Neal is considerably younger than Andy and Doris, he’s thinner and kind of lanky, standing comfortably over 6 feet tall, with dark skin. He dresses very casually while giving tours, wearing Harlem themed t-shirts (many of which he’s made himself) and jeans in warmer weather, and in colder weather throwing a heavy coat over that basic ensemble. One thing I noticed about his self-presentation on more than one tour were that the shoelaces on his worn Converse All-stars seemed to be perpetually untied. Neal has a tendency to speak quickly, which he

tells tour groups. This is evident both speaking with him on the phone and in person (He tells people it's a New York thing).

Neal's presentational style is very much centered on inclusivity and he relies on a combination of his knowledge of Harlem's past, his community relationships, and his charisma to try and get tour participants to 'imagine' themselves taking part in some of the historical events described during the opening presentation. The Sunday morning gospel tours are held in conjunction with a Civil Rights themed walking tour, with many of the stops occurring within a 5 block radius of the HHT office. During the opening presentation at the office he will get people to stand up and lock arms with him, mimicking the locked arms of Civil Rights protesters, swaying back and forth, chanting "We shall overcome....". He will close his eyes while speaking—in part to slow himself down but it's also as if he is imagining the scene along with his audience. He wants participants to feel as if they are a part of this history, not just passive listeners. Neal also discusses the history of pre-black Harlem but as he is doing so will gesture towards the outside and mention a church that used to be a synagogue, or, like New Canaan (the church we are about to visit) an old theater. Each of these specific architectural histories speaks to larger histories surrounding how Harlem became a black community.

The opening presentations end with a brief description by the tour guides of the route the walking tour will take, focusing not on street addresses but landmarks and the sites of historically significant events. No single tour I took followed the exact same route as another one, but in general tours starting at the HHT office make their way north toward 125th Street. Tours that begin at the Schomburg Center generally make their way south toward 125th Street. All of the tours I took (with the exception of the Gospel Workshop tour) ended with a walk from African Square to the Apollo Theater along 125th Street, Harlem's main business artery and east-west thoroughfare. Most tours conclude inside the lobby of the Apollo.

Walking Content: The Moving Tourist Bubble

As tour groups leave the HHT and the Schomburg, they do so having established a basic group dynamic with clearly defined roles as well as a commonly received presentation regarding Harlem's past. This sets the stage to feel a greater sense of immersion and attachment to both the community and the other members of the group during the walking portion of the tour. As the group moves from these indoor locations to the sidewalks outside, it forms a moving tourist bubble that stretches and changes shape as the group moves around the neighborhood, guided by the actions of the tour guide and the sights of the community.

The general structure of the walking portion follows a pattern of movement and then stopping at various points of interest for discussion. The tourist bubble clumps together during moments of discussion then stretches out during times of movement, with group participants walking in groups of two or three down the more narrow East-West side streets but often spreading out to cover wide areas of the broader sidewalks lining the North-South avenues. Either way, I often observed community residents taking wide berths around the group, or have to loudly say “Excuse me!” when passing through. When Neal leads tours, the bubble effect is enhanced by music—typically either renaissance era jazz or 70’s Motown and funk—played from an Ipad and portable speakers as we walk through the neighborhood. Sometimes community residents will dance along to the music as we move by. Neal—and to a lesser extent the other guides—also facilitates interactions and transactions with community members in other ways, such as bringing groups into locally owned businesses or buying something from a street vendor and giving it to tour participants as a keepsake. These are the moments and interactions that—when successfully executed by the tour guides—complete the suturing process and provide the cultural immersion that tour participants seek.

Alongside these moments are the actual historical sites and scenes of events constituting the more tangible ‘attractions’ Harlem Heritage Tours advertises access to. Although the specific sites visited differ according the various tour themes, there is also a lot of overlap between them as well. For example, all tours emphasize the importance of churches in understanding Harlem’s identity, and groups stop to have discussions about this in front of at least one church on every tour. Tours starting at the Schomburg usually make their way up a couple blocks to 136th Street to walk by Abyssinian Baptist Church, the community’s most famous church and one uniformly described by all HHT tour guides as upper class. Andy and Doris both described it as ‘bougie’. Long a cornerstone of the Harlem’s upper-crust community, the folks who once lived along Striver’s Row, Abyssinian Baptist is also a major tourist attraction. On Sunday mornings the line for visitors to attend services often stretches around the corner. All of the tours I participated in also emphasize the importance of the brownstone row houses to Harlem’s unique culture and frequently stop to have discussions of their history, architecture, and, most recently, how they have become some of New York’s most coveted residences.

A Sunday Morning Walk-through

I turn now to a more detailed description of the Sunday morning gospel tour. These tours stand out from most of HHT’s other offerings for 4 reasons: 1) They spend a considerable amount of time inside New Canaan Baptist Church taking in gospel performances and church life, 2) They are the most popular tour offered by the company, for example the three largest tour groups I participated in were all on Sunday mornings, 3) It is the most frequently written about tour on TripAdvisor, and 4) these tours feature the most

intimate interactions from a host-guest standpoint, with by far the most interactions between tour participants and community members.

I discussed the beginning moments of these tours in the previous section, and will start from the time groups leave the HHT office. It is only a block and a half walk down 116th St. from the office to New Canaan Baptist Church, which is located in a converted theater. Neal ends his opening presentation with some words about how to properly appreciate the upcoming church experience for tour groups. We should, he tells us, think of the black church not just as a place where there's great gospel music, but as a pillar of the community, one responsible for holding the community together during its worst times, and one that is still very much active in that role.

As we walk down the sidewalk toward New Canaan Baptist Church one of the first things we see is a line of people stretching down the street in the opposite direction. This is the line for the general public visitors—those who aren't aligned with a tour group but want to view the service anyway. As part of the HHT group, however, we bypass this line and go straight to the front doors. We hear the ushers before we see them, "GENTLEMEN...HATS OFF!" "CELL PHONES OFF NOW" "ABSOLUTELY NO PICTURES". These folks are written about in reviews as rather brusque, and it's easy to see why. But then again, this is church. I always made sure to wear at least a tucked in collared shirt on these tours, but many tour participants took a more casual attitude toward their attire, dressing more for the walking portion of the tour than for being in the church environment (this was especially the case on hot days). On more recent tours I've noticed that the ushers now use portable metal detectors to check visitors' bags and pockets before being admitted.

Once inside visitors are guided by church members to steps leading up to the balcony level, which is the designated area for tourists, or 'visitors', at New Canaan. The balcony holds around 250-300 people, and each time I visited it was almost full. The ceiling over the balcony is low, and comes down almost low enough, it seems, to block someone's view of the stage, but not quite. The congregation in the lower level is completely hidden from the balcony, even if one sits in the first row (which is not allowed, as church members sit on either side of the ends of the first row to prevent tourist from sitting there). But during later visits to New Canaan I noticed that there has been a large video monitor set up behind the pulpit broadcasting the service and on this monitor there is a much clearer view of the congregational area: each time this area was less than 50 percent full.

Guests are seated during a lull in the service, which in its entirety last almost 3 hours. Tourists come during the middle portion, which is reserved for musical fellowship. As guests get seated the pews behind the stage where the famed choir performs are empty, the only sign of future occupation is the presence of handbags placed

along them. The size of the choir can vary on a weekly basis, and it's possible to tell how big the choir will be that day by the number of handbags on the pews. Per traditional gospel style, the music builds as more and more sonic elements are added, such as more singers, clapping, audience participation, and instrumental collaboration. Musical selection includes a mixture of famous pop songs re-created with Gospel themes. Prince's "I Would Die 4 U", for example, is performed from Jesus's perspective, while Tina Turner's, "Simply the Best" is reimagined as a song praising Jesus.

Each song gets applause from the crowded balcony area and as the musical portion of the service ends it seems clear that this is the primary reason why the tourist crowd is there. During this time Neal will suddenly arrive to usher his group out before the larger crowd leaves. The racial segregation present at New Canaan Church services—with the white visitors confined to the balcony and separated from the black congregation—is thick with irony given that the balcony itself was once meant to house black audiences during theatrical performances in the 1930's. And the scene at New Canaan Baptist on Sunday mornings is in many ways a microcosm of the role of tourism in the community in general and of the tensions between hosts and guests often found in tourism practice. Indeed, one reviewer even discussed it as a "kind of apartheid" while on the other hand it is easy to understand that black churchgoers in Harlem may be uneasy about letting white outsiders into their house of worship during the most sacred time of the week.

One of the advantages of visiting New Canaan Baptist through HHT is the ease of entry and exit from the church service. This creates a rather seamless transition from the tour office, to the church, on onto the sidewalks of Harlem for the walking portion of the tour. As groups leave New Canaan, Neal will give a short speech about the importance of churches to the Civil Rights movement, linking this specific church (as discussed previously) with the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Neal then pivots back to the history of pre-black Harlem and moves into the Harlem renaissance by drawing our attention to 1925 Graham Court., a large apartment building designed and built by the Waldorf-Astoria family. He cues up Ella Fitzgerald's "Drop Me Off in Harlem", which is also a sign that we are going to start walking. The moving tourist bubble has been created. We will then move back down 116th Street in the direction of the HHT office to the inner courtyards of the MLK housing towers. We clump together here and Neal imagines us as a pick-up basketball team (I got to be the power forward one time.) He usually chooses the youngest members of the group and assigns them Harlem style basketball nicknames. Charles from Australia, for example, becomes Aussie C. We'll then move through the Shabazz market, where many of the street vendors on 125th Street were relocated as part of gentrification efforts in the 1990's. We are located directly behind the HHT office, though you wouldn't really know it if you were on a tour for the first time because of the route Neal takes to get there. At this point we begin making our

way north toward 125th Street, stopping at various points of interest (other churches, businesses, and, brownstones). Once we turn the corner onto the 125th Street the final phase of the tour begins, concluding with a flourish at the Apollo Theater.

Parting Ways: Goodbyes at the Apollo

The majority of tours offered by HHT end with a promenade down 125th Street that ends at the famous Apollo Theater, a major highlight of all tours. By this point the suturing process is more or less complete, just in time for tour participants to experience Harlem's main business artery and busiest street. The crowded nature of the setting in the three blocks from African Square to the Apollo precludes any stopping and this is also when Neal turns up the music, usually playing funk or soul by this point. On nice days the level of activity as we travel down the busy sidewalk is akin to a moving dance party, with vendors and more passerbys than normal dancing along to the music.

By the time we arrive under the famous marquee the group has sometimes grown in size, with folks wondering what all the music is about. Neal stops us here so tour participants can take pictures of both the marquee and the sidewalk itself, which memorializes all of the famous performers to have graced the theater stage along a black walk-of-fame. We then move into the lobby, and, unlike the rest of the public, go past the velvet ropes into the theater itself, where we're allowed to get on the stage and touch the famous tree stump which all performers must touch for good luck before taking the stage. We are not allowed to linger, and it is clear our ability to even be here at all is due to an arrangement between Neal and the Apollo staff. He hustles us in and out of the famous space, telling us we only have a small window and to take pictures while there's a chance. It seems as though before we even have a chance to ponder the historical weight of the space we're in we're ushered back out, to the other side of the velvet ropes, leaving as quickly as we came. The tour concludes with one last group gathering in the lobby where Neal talks about how much fun he had showing us around, and gives tips and instructions for how to leave Harlem for the next item on the tour participant's New York itinerary. Here we are again recognized ultimately as outsiders who have paid for the experience.

Spatiality of the Apollo

The socio-spatial interactions and movements that take place inside the Apollo Theater at the conclusion of tours are in many ways a metaphor for the experience of the tour itself. For tour participants these moments represent the final stitches that enclose the memories of their Harlem experience. And in attempting to create lasting and positive memories for their clients HHT has chosen the ideal location.

Just as tours begin inside in strategic locations primed to help tour participants understand why Harlem is famous, they end in Harlem's most famous space, and one of the most famous spaces associated with blackness in general. The movements inside the theater itself distinctly mirror the overall sense of ephemerality of only feeling—rather than being—'immersed' in blackness for just a few hours. The movement from the lobby area past the velvet ropes is particularly symbolic of the temporary 'pass' into blackness the tour has just allowed the participant. This was directly expressed, for example, by a black bystander one time as we walked from the sidewalk into the lobby, "Y'all with him (gesturing to Neal)...means y'all are black today. Enjoy the Apollo."

There is no more sacred space in Harlem than the stage of the Apollo, and tour participants seem to genuinely be awed when they are able to stand on it. Over the course of several tours I heard a few people comment on how small it seemed, suggesting the theater itself literally occupies a larger-than-life presence in the consciousness. On earlier tours we lingered here for a while but during later tours our time in this space was limited to no more than five minutes. During this time Neal, normally full of things to say, wouldn't speak very much. In my observations tour participants tend to follow his lead. The brief scene in the theater often becomes one of silence and reverence, yet punctuated by the sounds and flashes of smartphone cameras going off. By this point he's done enough for tour participants to appreciate the space without his intervention.

The movement past the velvet ropes (guarded by Apollo staff) represents the final steps into the heart of Harlem's blackness for tour participants. The movement from the theater space, back through the velvet ropes, and into the lobby represents almost the complete removal of the tour participant from it. This is when the formal disbanding of the tour group occurs. Here is where Neal shifts to a discussion of transportation logistics or local restaurant recommendations. Tour group members will exchange brief pleasantries and well wishes with each other, and all will then go on their own separate ways.

On one occasion, our ending conversation turned to the subject of TripAdvisor. As Neal was giving some tour participants advice on the best way to get to Central Park from the Apollo (walk South), another participant asked Neal how he felt about writing an online review of the tour. Neal seemed to hesitate, but then said—as long as it was a good review—that TripAdvisor was the best website to write one. He then repeated this advice to the rest of the tour group as it was disbanding. Neal informed us that TripAdvisor had recently changed its algorithm to privilege higher percentages of positive reviews, as opposed to privileging tour companies with the most reviews, and recently he had been telling people not to write reviews when asked because of this change. Neal's hesitation in this moment is indicative of the ambivalent relationship between his company and TripAdvisor. On one hand, as he told me in a different

conversation, TripAdvisor has made him a lot of money, but on the other hand, it has also gained an undue amount of influence over the future of his enterprise.

At the same time tour participants become outsiders again, tour guides lose their authority over how to represent Harlem to them. This is the moment when authority over digital review content on sites such as TripAdvisor shifts from being largely held by to the tour guides—and their power to shape audience receptions to the community—to being largely held by former tour participants—with their power to reach potential consumers. Suddenly, former tour participants are authorized to act in their new role as travel writers and online evaluators of the tour’s content.

The Impact of TripAdvisor Reviews

The tour itself is only one major source of the online travel writing. The other source is the positionality of the reviewers. I use my observations and conversations with other tour participants, and more directly, use the reviews themselves that include demographic information as well as credentialing to more fully consider the writers and readers of review content. It’s also important to understand the narrative styles employed by reviewers in the course of recounting their Harlem experience, as this is also an expression of positionality. But before the significance of reviewer positionality can be explained we first need to briefly consider the impact of the reviews themselves.

Questionnaire Responses

During the closing moments of tours—typically in the lobby of the Apollo on the sidewalk side of the velvet ropes—I was able to pass out small questionnaires to tour participants asking about their online search habits while preparing to visit New York. When respondents would finish the questionnaire and hand it back I would briefly review their responses and ask some short follow-up questions. I found that 10 out of 11 respondents had consulted TripAdvisor reviews concerning HHT as part of their searches. These low numbers can be attributed to several factors. I did not get permission to hand out questionnaires until relatively late in the fieldwork process so I was only able to pass them out to the last 5 tours in which I participated. Most of these tours took place during the week, when groups are typically smaller, as these were. But even in larger groups I did not get many responses because larger tour groups are often composed of smaller groups or families. In these cases usually one person from each of these smaller groups would fill out the form.

Most of these respondents had also looked at other travel writing sites in addition to TripAdvisor such as the Lonely Planet, as well as the HHT website itself. One respondent from Isreal mentioned a Hebrew language Facebook group for Isreali tourists

visiting New York, where Neal's tours in particular come highly recommended. This was the only respondent who did not report consulting TripAdvisor. In general respondents describe a triangulated search process—first performing a Google search, then looking at different online review sites, and also looking at the company website—leading to the final decision to book with HHT versus another tour company.

TripAdvisor reviews were important for respondents, but perhaps the most important online presence that swayed respondents' decisions towards booking with HHT was the company's website itself (which TripAdvisor has recently removed direct links to). One respondent, a middle aged white man from Melbourne, Australia, said the company website looked more 'legitimate' than other Harlem tour company websites. Indeed, if one performs a Google search of the words "Harlem" and "History" HHT's website pops up near the top of the list. Nevertheless, while the website may help tip the scales toward HHT's favor, if the reviews aren't favorable on TripAdvisor, then one's decision making process might not even make it to that point. The reviews, then, seem to serve as a baseline, or standard, from which consumer decisions are considered in these circumstances. And as stated in previous chapters, the influence of online reviews in determining consumer decisions, and therefore the success or failure of a business, is rapidly increasing (Leung et. al, 2014).

HHT's TripAdvisor Readership

The sample from TripAdvisor used in this research contains 152 reviews, which represents a little less than 25% of the current total of reviews found on TripAdvisor concerning HHT. TripAdvisor has recently included a feature where users can click on a contributor's profile and receive information about how many readers their contributions get. This measurement is not geared toward a specific review written by a contributor, rather the number of readers a contributor has accumulated over all of their written content on the website. One reviewer, pengemex, from Hungary, for example, has a total readership of 490,000 people, but has also written 651 reviews total on the website (both are high numbers for the sample). On the other hand, lwoodsny, for example, has only contributed one review to the website (it's about HHT) and that review has been read 1000 times, which is more than the average number of readers pengemex may have for any single review. When the total readership numbers for this sample are added up, they exceed 1.5 million potential readers. Another measure to understand the impact of these reviews is the number of helpful votes a review has received. This is a more forceful indicator that a review has been read and considered because it requires the reader to actually click on a tab saying that the review has been helpful to them. This measure may

be an even stronger indicator of whether or not a tour has been purchased based on the reading of a review. Collectively this sample contains 2,347 helpful votes.

Positionality of Reviewers

Who are they?

There is limited demographic information available on TripAdvisor regarding individual review writers. In addition to my observations of tour participants in HHT as well as conversations with Neal, I'm able to sketch a short demographic profile of HHT's and TripAdvisor's consumer base. In general the tour participants I observed seemed to match, more or less, the limited but observable demographic information found on TripAdvisor, with some small differences. This is only a start toward understanding the shared audience between TripAdvisor and HHT but knowing the basic racial, age-related, gendered, and geographic make-up of both tour participants and review writers is useful for understanding how reviews are created, and where they come from.

Race

Based on my observations of tours and conversations with Neal the majority of people taking tours with the company are racially white. Demographic information content such as reviewer photographs (a rarity) also reveal a mostly white crowd. The second most visible group on both tours and on TripAdvisor are African Americans. The whiteness of most tour groups continues to stand out in quickly gentrifying Central Harlem—where there are still more black faces than white ones—and racial difference in general is much more visible during the tour experience. This changes, however, as one moves online to discussions of HHT on TripAdvisor, where personal discussions of one's racial positionality, or other clues as to that identity, are largely hidden.

There are several notable exceptions to this trend, however. For example, (104) Lucy G, from Vancouver writes that, "Everyone should take this tour, young and old, least [sic.] we forget how many fought so hard to gain what was denied for so long, and I say this as a blond middle aged white skinned woman." Meanwhile, (67) Jade S from Garden City, NY, writes that, "I left the tour with an increased sense of pride for my African-American ancestry and more knowledge about how African American and Hispanic culture impacted New York City (March 3, 2013)." This quote from Jade S is notable because it is the only time in the sample a reviewer self-identifies as African American in written review content.

Other African American reviewers are identified through profile pictures, or in the case of Alvin M for example, through listed organizational affiliations. He writes in the opening sentence of his review, "We are the Metuchen-Edison branch of the NAACP." Although this is not a direct reference to the writer's racial identity, it does strongly

suggest blackness. Those that do self-identify their racial background tend to be white. Like Facebook, for example, TripAdvisor does not provide a space on user demographic profiles for racial identity. So most clues as to an individual reviewer's race must be divulged through more indirect means such as a profile pictures, or through information included with credentialing.

Age

There is a large age range in TripAdvisor writers based on available information. On TripAdvisor this is represented as a series of age categories and most who do provide this information are in the 35-49 bracket, with the second highest being 50-64. One big difference between tour participants and review writers is that there are usually at least a few children or teenagers on each tour, and one of Neal's main client categories are student groups. This leads to the sample itself having a fairly high number of reviews written by educators, and discussions by parents of how much their children liked the tour are frequent in review content.

Gender

There seems to be a relatively even split in terms of review writers between men and women but I seemed to notice more women in general on tours. For example, I took a tour where I was the only male participant but did not take a tour where the group was all male. Research suggests that women tend to write more than men in digital spaces (Baym, 2011) but in this case no clear pattern emerges. There may also be a gendered difference in the number of helpful votes a given review receives.

Location

Reviews seem to be evenly split between those identifying as from the United States and those identifying with other countries. In terms of the national audience, people identify as coming from all over the country, with a larger group identifying as being from the Northeast, and specifically from New York. In terms of the international audience the countries mostly represented include those in Western Europe and the Antipodes (Australia and New Zealand). Neal also mentioned that he gets a lot of Israeli clients as well. Only one reviewer in the sample identified as being from a Global South nation (RogerL from Sucre, Bolivia), however, I took tours with people from Brazil and Chile. Understanding reviewer nationality is important because perceptions of racial difference change across national contexts, which affects the way Harlem, a specific and localized site of racial difference, is interpreted in online travel writing. And as the next section shows, discussions of positionality serve a distinct purpose in establishing a reviewer's authority over their representation of Harlem

Credentialing: Why are they writing?

Earlier in this chapter I defined credentialing as a strategic deployment of personal information during the course of a written review to add legitimacy and authority to its content. Although frequent throughout the sample, this phenomenon may be encapsulated by (77) Rick C (Oct. 8, 2012). He spends quite a bit of space—about a third of overall content—in his review discussing his and his family’s racial, age-related, gendered, geographic, occupational *and* class-based positionality in regards to his evaluation of the tour:

“My sister, wife and I are children of the 60’s originally from LA. My sister and I are middle class whites who married first generation children of Mexican and Chinese immigrants who came to the US searching for a better life. We have heard our families [sic.] stories. My wife and I have spent our careers doing community work in the inner city and felt strongly that Neal is the real deal. Our family and career experiences resonate with the story told by Neal Shoemaker.”

Rick C essentially argues here that his unique positionality better qualifies him to effectively evaluate the tours than perhaps other review writers. In this case the reviewer seems to be attempting to appeal to socially conscious—probably white—potential tourists who are perhaps concerned about how visiting Harlem as a tourist impacts the community. In the same way, Jade S’s discussion of her racial background signals to other potential African American tourists that the HHT experience is valuable for them. This is a major strategy employed by review writers in assuming authority over how Harlem is being represented on TripAdvisor, and it occurs in varying levels of centrality in a given review from small to larger scale.

Most instances of small-scale credentialing occur in the beginning of the review as a way for the writer to give the reader some small impression of themselves. Many times it does not say much about who the reviewer is. (45) LondonJuly2009, for example, begins their tepid review (3/5 stars) by stating that, “We just returned from a vacation in NYC (November 19, 2013).” This sentence by itself does not tell the reader much about who this person is, but it does tell the reader that they were in New York for vacation, and presumably took the tour for pleasure rather than for educational reasons, for example. It also clues the reader in to the fact that the review writer had a companion during the tour. Though it is not explicitly stated by the reviewer, based on the use of the plural first person pronoun, the reader may assume that the writer’s opinion of the tour was also shared by their companion, thus strengthening the authority of the review itself.

In another example of small-scale credentialing, Roger L from Sucre writes that his Harlem tour “was a surprising highlight during a see-everything-in-five-days visit to NYC”. Furthermore, he writes, “We’ve done countless tours in 60 plus years of travel in

the US and other countries, but we've never had a more enthusiastic and skilled guide (July, 2013).” Here Roger L is using his positionality, much like Rick C, to insert further legitimacy into his account. However, where Rick C draws on a wide array of life experiences, Roger L more specifically asserts his credentials as a tourist and traveler in order to make the case. We also learn from these passages that Roger was not traveling alone, was probably busy doing mostly tourism related activities in New York, and that the Harlem tour was not intended as—although ending up being—one of the ‘main events’ of the trip’s itinerary.

It’s clear that reviewers reveal information about themselves during the course of the writing process. But the *amount of* credentialing that occurs in a given review is also an important factor in discussing reviewer positionality. Most reviewers spend most of their time writing about the tour itself, and when credentialing occurs it is usually of the small scale variety such as that found in the abovementioned reviews by LondonJuly2009 and Roger L. Rick C’s discussion of his personal identity is an example of more medium scale credentialing, which takes up about a third of total review content.

In another example of medium scale credentialing, (65) catherinestratford writes that, “Our group of 15-16 year olds from the UK were totally engaged by Neal’s tour of Harlem. He asked me, as their teacher what particular topics the students had studies and then tailored our tour to that brilliantly. Our tour will be a highlight of our week’s trip to Washington DC and New York.” This writing reveals much about the positionality of the reviewer. The most prominent part is that she is an educator and was traveling with a group of British teenagers. We also find out that they are taking what I found in my informal conversations with tour participants to be a common type of international tourism to the United States: the East Coast tour, with definite stops in New York and Washington DC, and sometimes followed by further travel south to Florida and Disney World (in the case of European tourists), or west to one of the major coastal cities like Los Angeles or San Francisco, or the Grand Canyon (in the case of Australians and New Zealanders). We can also assume that this group of students comes from a privileged economic upbringing to be able to afford a school trip of this magnitude. The more a reviewer includes credentialing information in their review, the more they rely on their positionality when generating authority over touristic representations of Harlem. No group, it seems, does this more than self-identified educators.

A reviewer named (140) drhistory, for example, writes that:

“I’ve been taking Canadian university students to Harlem for five years now, and had the good fortune, on my very first visit, to hook up with Neal Shoemaker and Harlem Heritage tour. Neal and his crew have been an essential part of educational experience I have provided my students...For the last two years I have used Neal’s space, the Harlem Heritage and Cultural Center, to screen films,

play music, and hold class... When I began teaching a class on the culture and politics of the Harlem Renaissance, going to Harlem was an optional field trip. I now teach the entire class in Harlem every spring, with the Heritage and Cultural Center as our home base and Neal as our key resource person and local authority (June, 2008).”

These words make up over half the total review, and there is no detail at all in this review about the contents of a single tour, just a general mention that the walking tours are offered. This review, then, is mostly about the reviewer, and not Harlem Heritage Tours. The extent of the credentialing seen here is such that it's clear a strong claim is being made that the writer believes their positionality to be more important in giving an account of the quality of this tour company than giving an account of the tour itself.

Credentialing typically occurs at either the beginning of the review, the end, or both. And whether they occur on a larger or smaller scale within the review, the very presence of information regarding the identity of the reviewer signals a recognition that the terms of representational authority have shifted from the tour guide to the former tour participant. Even the small remarks such as those provided by LondonJuly2009 tell a review reader that the review writer is, for the most part, a ‘typical’ or ‘normal’ tourist. For TripAdvisor, this may be a more valuable kind of review because it reminds readers that reviews are written by ‘real’ tourists, just like them, thus making the following content more familiar, relatable, and easier to visualize.

While credentialing tells us specific information about the identity of the review writer, and is common throughout the sample, it is not found in all reviews. The bulk of the content in any single review, however, tends to focus on narrative descriptions of the tour itself. One aspect that all reviews share, for example, is the presence of at least one of two distinct styles of travel writing—but usually both.

Narrative Style: How are they writing?

In 1994's *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, Ali Behdad explains how touristic representations of colonized groups gained popularity through the circulation of two distinct kinds of travel writing. The first style to emerge was that of the travelogue, a first-person account of a European traveling through distant locations and recording and describing sights, activities, people, etc. The second form of travel writing—emerging later with the dawn of the mass tourism industry—was the travel guide, which was and continues to be written in an ‘authorless’ style, where first person narration is replaced by second person narration. Essentially, travelogues use

pronouns like “I” and “we” and verbs like “was” and “were” while travel guides use pronouns such as “you” and “your” and verbs like “is” and “are”.

These differences may seem slight, but as Behdad explains, their specific usages in these contexts serve to create distinct kinds of writerly authority over how colonized groups are represented. Travelogues reflect more of an inward gaze on the part of the writer, looking back over their experience, sharing those memories with readers, and ‘fixing’ them in a specific frame of reference (one that usually glorifies certain aspects of Otherness while glossing over underlying conditions of oppression). Travel guides, on the other hand, place the reader at the center of future action, the narrative thus fostering a more direct connection between reader and subject matter, yet once again fixing the Other in a specific, and subservient, position. In the case of the TripAdvisor reviews analyzed here, both styles seem to be employed by review writers, and most often elements of each may be found a given review.

In order to provide further context for understanding reviewer writing style I provide three examples of complete reviews. The first is written entirely in the style of a travelogue, the second is written almost entirely in the style of the travel guide (the least common way to write reviews), the third review contains elements of both types of travel writing (the most common way to write reviews).

Travelogue Style

The first example here is supplied by the aforementioned (25) **pengemex** from Budapest. This reviewer identifies as male and in the 35-49 age group. Each of the metrics listed for this reviewer are high numbers in the sample. This makes pengemex, according to TripAdvisor, the most experienced review writer among the group analyzed here. He has written 651 reviews on TripAdvisor while gathering 379 helpful votes. He has visited 191 cities and qualifies as what TripAdvisor calls a “Level 6 Contributor” which signals to other readers how much the reviewer uses the website in general. Level 6 is the highest achievable level. His total readership is 490,000 people.

Reviewed October 30, 2014

[Great gospel experience](#) (4)

We had a bad expression at the beginning as the tour guide waited the group inside a building a half block away from the agreed corner while we were standing in the rain.

The sights were forgottable, he showed a building which stands where once was a dancehall, then a building which stands where once was the cotton club, a

supermarket which sometimes sells food on discount price, another supermarket which is open all night, then a house which has a nice door. All this within a 200 meter circle. Most of the time was spent in a local African heritage club which gives place for an Obama collection. What we saw was not really special or interesting. On the other hand the guide was funny, enthusiastic and told interesting stories. Finally the gospel church occasion was fantastic, very nice people, beautiful songs, nice preaching, a real and not-to-miss experience.

This review features the most common method used by review writers in communicating their evaluation of the tour: narrative description of the tour itself. It is written in the past-tense, looking back at the tour, and is oriented around the reviewer's specific experiences and feelings about it. There is also a notable lack of credentialing found in this review. In this case the reviewer does not seem to be very impressed by the sights and sounds of the neighborhood, but was impressed by the unnamed tour guide's presentational style. This review does not follow a strict beginning-middle-end narrative in terms of the tour description, and it's hard to judge exactly what route this tour took. It seems to have included both a visit to New Canaan (on 116th Street) and to the site of the old Cotton Club, where a community center called the Minisink Townhouse is now located. This location is closer to the Schomberg Center, up around 136th St. and in my experience tours that visited New Canaan, which start at the HHT office (and which seems to be referenced here) do not make it that far uptown. By the same token, in 2014 there could very well have been an Obama collection displayed at the Schomberg, but tours that start there, in my experience, do not visit church services—although they do often visit the Minisink Townhouse.

The core component of this review is its narrative content. Narrative is the primary way the review writer shows his audience his knowledge of HHT services and his qualifications in terms of evaluation. In this case the omission of the tour guide's name represents a clear shift in authority over the control of this specific representation of Harlem, even though, for the reviewer, the tour guide was the most important factor in generating a positive review. Furthermore, narrative qualifications found in the review content—detailed information about the specifics of a walking tour—dovetail with the numeric qualifications (reviewer metrics)—to further increase the author's legitimacy and authority.

Travel Guide Style

The second example is provided by (28)Filiep V, Marke, Belgium, and is almost entirely written in the travel guide style, a rarity for a whole review. In terms of reviewer metrics this profile is essentially the complete opposite of reviewer pengemex, as each

represents the lowest number possible in each category. This is the only review they have contributed to TripAdvisor representing one city visited. It has been viewed approximately 100 times.

Reviewed June 26, 2014

[Harlem Heritage Tour](#) (4)

Booking Harlem Heritage Tour offers you the opportunity to visit a part of NYC which most probably [of] you would not visit independently, because of unjust reputation, because too far from downtown or simply because not a priority. Undeserved. Neil Shoemaker embodies a kind of positive energy which will instantly convince you. This is a walking multi media tour. He is a walking history book, a pastor, an actor but one who experienced history himself from the front seats, the change which Harlem went through last decades. He is the kid from around the block, constantly hailed by the Harlem residents. This is live information, very interactive, not a rehearsed show to entertain some tourist on a cruise ship. Neil constantly seeks parallels in other societies. His way of interaction with you personally will pull YOU in HIS story. Seek contact, interact yourself, it will offer you so much more. When you join this tour with an open mind, you'll feel a kind of chemistry which will make this visit to Harlem something unique, something you'll talk about with your friends. Highly recommended. We even took the time to share some beers with Neil and a part of the group. An experience. Good knowledge of English and an open mind is a must. In the picture, we are the couple to the right, from Belgium.

In this review the focus shifts from the writer himself, who only briefly makes an appearance in the review, to the reader. Filiep starts by addressing his audience's perceived apprehension or lack of interest in visiting Harlem. But, he continues, *you*—the potential tourist—will be 'convinced' otherwise if you take a tour with Neal Shoemaker. This review seems to take a more positive overall view of the tour than that provided by pengemex, but these reviewers each gave HHT the same rating (4/5 stars). Although there are large differences in terms of reviewer metrics, the fact that this is the only review that Filiep has ever contributed to the site tells the reader that the tour did leave a lasting impression on the writer. There are further similarities in that both Filiep and pengemex tend to emphasize the actions of the tour guide as the most memorable part of the tour.

Unlike pengemex, however, the reviewer here adopts an objective stance in his description of Neal: "He *is* a walking a history book...He *is* a the kid from around the block." In doing so Filiep positions the reader at the center of this account, and the objective descriptions provided here are meant to foster reader visualization. This style

of writing is the least common of the two main styles, and only one review (a rather long one) was written entirely in this style. Filiep's review comes close to being entirely written in the travel guide style, but it does include small elements of first person content and credentialing towards the end. One possible reason for this is the personal and individualized nature of review writing itself, with the expectation, as a reader when looking at a review, that it has been written by an actual person. Writing in the travel guide style seems to minimize that aspect of review writing.

Blended Writing Styles

The third example showing a blended writing style is provided by (39)roegall, from West Chester, Pennsylvania. The reviewer metrics here are much lower than those of pengemex but roegall is still, with 10,000 total readers spread over 10 total reviews, a reviewer of some influence.

10r/15h/38 cities/L3/Readers: 10,000, Reviewed February 15, 2014

[Awesome tours!](#) (5)

I was lucky enough to take the Friday night jazz tour and a Sunday gospel tour with the Harlem Heritage tour company. The jazz tour was awesome and very entertaining. Neal Shoemaker does an excellent job leading this tour using his iPad to play music and show videos that related to the history of Harlem. As part of the tour you get to eat at Sylvia's Restaurant, Harlem's famous soul food restaurant; great fried chicken, mac and cheese and collard greens. We ended the tour at a speakeasy, Bill's Place, featuring Bill Saxton and the All-Star Quartet. I highly recommend this tour if you are interested in learning first hand about the history of jazz in Harlem with Neal, a Harlem native who is very energetic, entertaining and knowledgeable.

On Sunday, I was treated to the Gospel tour with Harlem Heritage. As part of this tour, we went to the Canaan Baptist Church of Christ and experienced a Sunday service. Let me just say, the singing of the parishioners brought tears of joy to my eyes. It was a very moving service. We were also treated to a tour of the Apollo theatre. This was another awesome treat.

I highly recommend this tour company if you are ever in Harlem and want to learn about the history of this diverse community first hand from one of their own, Neal Shoemaker.

This review features one of the strongest examples of the blended writing style that is the most common way to compose a review. This particular review is also notable because it covers the experience of two tours, leaving the reader to think that this particular review writer had a fairly strong investment in visiting Harlem while in New York. Like the vast

majority of reviews in this sample—as with the previous two being analyzed—it is positive in both content and rating (5/5 stars).

This review is written in a blended style—meaning that the author shifts between the tone of the travel guide and tone of the travelogue throughout its content. Take this passage: “As part of the tour you get to eat at Sylvia's Restaurant, Harlem's famous soul food restaurant; great fried chicken, mac and cheese and collard greens. We ended the tour at a speakeasy, Bill's Place, featuring Bill Saxton and the All-Star Quartet.” In the first of these two sequential sentences in the review, the reviewer focuses on the reader, and in the second they shift the focus back to them and their experiences. The effect of this blended style is significant, as it creates a kind of conversational, or interactional, dynamic between the writer and reader that is distinctly lacking in either the travelogue or travel guide style. Even though Neal's presence is prominent throughout the review, he also takes a backseat to the imagined conversation between reader and writer that takes place in the review.

Blended style reviews typically include some small scale credentialing at the beginning of the review, some first person narrative content in the middle (travelogue), and some second person content towards the end (travel guide). In most cases the travelogue style is dominant and typically buttressed at each end with credentialing and travel guide writing. The fact that this kind of blended—or convergent—writing style is favored by reviewers is not surprising given its appearance on a digital platform such as TripAdvisor. Henry Jenkins has proposed, for example, that *all* digital technologies are composed of convergent media forms (2006). And this seems to be true regarding TripAdvisor as well, whether thinking about the convergence of literacy and digitality as represented by the actual typing of the review, or whether thinking about the convergence of literacy and orality seen in the conversational writing style favored by review writers. This is a significant development because this conversational style compounds the authority of the account itself because of how it connects the reader to both the writer *and* the subject matter, as opposed to just one of the two

Conclusions

In sum, this chapter has analyzed the most visible product of the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor, online reviews, and their two major sources—tour experiences and reviewer positionality. It has documented how authority over representations of Harlem shift from being controlled by tour guides during tour settings to being mostly controlled by former tour participants once tours end and they are free to submit their online evaluations. It first provided an ethnographic description of the world

of Harlem Heritage Tours, focusing on the three basic temporal phases—beginning, middle, and ending—of tour structure. I show here how, in working to suture tour participants into Harlem’s history and culture, they also act as gatekeepers and authority figures.

The chapter then discussed HHT’s TripAdvisor readership and the general impact of TripAdvisor reviews regarding the company, finding that, while not the only factor in someone’s decision to book with HHT, positive reviews are necessary for that to happen. Discussions of the positionality of the review writers themselves reveal a mostly white, middle aged crowd from Western countries. The chapter ends with extended analyses of reviewer credentialing and writing style. Credentialing is the more direct application of reviewer positionality in establishing authority over the written content of the review, where writing style—a mixture of travel guide and travelogue forms of travel writing—is more indicative of the general positionality of the West, and whiteness, regarding the blackness that is the implicit subject of any online review dealing with tourism in Harlem. In this case the reviews often feature a convergent form of travel writing by using both styles in the same review, creating a conversational tone that produces direct connections between the reader and the writer, as well as the reader and the subject matter.

The tours are designed to provide a sense of attachment and immersion for tour participants but are also designed to produce specific boundaries and terms of engagement for that immersion. In this sense the reviews may be viewed as a betrayal of those boundaries, as reviewer 292richard292 awkwardly states, “Because of [Neal’s] knowledge that he freely shared, I now feel like I now know enough to say I know Harlem a little also [sic].” To make an obvious point: it’s not ‘freely shared knowledge’. It’s been paid for, and there are certain expectations surrounding that payment, which are—unfairly or not—increasingly adjudicated on TripAdvisor. It’s also important to remember the fact that these boundaries are present because of the very existence and effectiveness of Harlem Heritage Tours in the first place. And as much as tourism in Harlem facilitates the crossing of racial boundaries and outsiders taking control of online representations of the community, it also represents a vital economic lifeline. Churches in Harlem, for example, increasingly rely on tourist visitors as a means to stay financially solvent. And culturally speaking, it provides a means through which Harlem continues to be visualized as a black space in the face of rapid gentrification and black displacement. To continue investigating this complexity, the next chapter moves to a consideration of what review writers communicate as valuable about their Harlem experience.

Chapter 5: Mapping the Sources of Racial Valuation

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the major tangible product of the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor: the production of reviews. This chapter focuses on a less tangible but still important product of this relationship: ideas of value associated with the experience of the tour. The first part of this chapter analyzes the specifics of what tour participants find valuable about taking a walking tour of Harlem and how they communicate this value on TripAdvisor. The chapter then discusses the content and impact of negative reviews as well as how Neal Shoemaker responds to them. In general writers of negative and positive reviews tend to discuss the same aspects of the tour.

Sources of value are then discussed in terms of how they overlap during the course of a tour, which is the main way that tours produce value for participants. The second major part of the chapter looks at the methods and strategies employed by tour guides to produce this value for tour participants. It concludes with a discussion of a self-guided tour to provide contrast between walking around Harlem with a guided tour group and without one. This chapter differs methodologically from the previous one by starting with discourse analysis to examine expressions of value in review content and working backwards to ethnographically identify the sources of those expressions.

Online reviews concerning the experience of racial difference are a major means by which the idea of race becomes a commodity within the global tourism industry (Jamerson, 2016). They are a mechanism through which discourses of racial difference shift from emphasizing persistent inequality and racism to emphasizing cultural uniqueness, diversity, and economic uplift (Werry, 2011). Harlem, for example, was not viewed as a tourist attraction between roughly 1930 and 1995 due to a reputation for poverty and violence (Hoffman, 2002). And conversations about how safe it is to visit Harlem are still easily found online. Reviewers posting for Harlem Heritage tours, however, rarely discuss safety in favor of narrative descriptions of a positive tour experience and a general sentiment of inclusion. One of the main reasons for Harlem Heritage Tours' success is the consistently high rate of positive reviews posted to TripAdvisor, and this is seen in the sample of reviews analyzed here, which are overwhelmingly positive. Both positive and negative reviews discuss the same activities, people, and community landmarks. There are two ways a reviewer communicates value in a review, the individual rating on a 1-5 star Likert scale, and the content of the review itself. Each of these sources of value communication are analyzed in turn.

As reviews are posted online, they convert individual tour experiences into depersonalized packets of digitized information—which are used to fuel interest in tourist

attractions (Jamerson, 2019). The second half of this chapter works backward from analyzing communications of value online to an analysis of the experiences they are derived from. I shift from the more generalized ethnographic voice found in the previous chapter to a more episodic ethnographic voice, honing in on certain instances from specific tours where value is produced, rather than discussing more generally the world of the tour. The main conceptual tool I use to describe how tours produce value for tour participants is the idea of bricolage—which shows how various cultural elements may be assembled in a specific way to create a distinct sense of reality (Levi-Strauss, 1963; Hebdige, 1979). In this case the reality portrayed is that Harlem has moved away from its darker and more dangerous iterations and more towards a direction of openness and prosperity, although still retaining the blackness that has made it so famous. The problem—as tour guides point out, but not reviewers—is that this prosperity represents a threat to that blackness.

Valuation on TripAdvisor: Ratings Analysis

Ratings Analysis

The attraction rating is a way for the reviewer to evaluate their experience in one fell swoop and helps the reader instantly understand the writer’s general feelings of the tour. For TripAdvisor the reviewer rating becomes a standard—and a generalizable figure—from which comparisons can be made between different attractions, and rankings systems devised (Jeacle and Carter, 2011). The ratings are important for the success of both HHT and TripAdvisor, as HHT relies on positive reviews for further business, while online reviews are the foundation—and remain a core component—of TripAdvisor’s online influence.

At the moment of writing (1-3-19: 12:50am) HHT has 762 available reviews online, of those, 83% (595) are five star, 11% of four star (81), while three- (19), two- (17) and one-star (19) reviews each constitute roughly 2%. When the current sample of 152 reviews (all reviews over 150 words) was collected in January 2018 there were 679 available reviews (I do not have the ratings distribution numbers for the whole group of reviews for this time but it is possible to calculate it). When I took an initial sample of 111 reviews on December 31, 2013 there were 443 total reviews available for review with a very similar distribution of review ratings. Below in Table 2 I provide a quick look at ratings distributions for the two data points (5 years between December 2013 and January 2019)

Table 2: Ratings Comparison

Reviews	5-Star	4-Star	3-Star	2-Star	1-Star
December 2013					
Total: 443	359 (81.0%)	52 (11.7%)	8 (1.8%)	11 (2.4%)	13 (2.9%)
Sample: 111 (25%)	85 (76%)	11 (10%)	3 (3%)	3 (3)	9 (8%)
January 2019					
Total: 762	595 (83%)	81 (11%)	19 (2%)	17 (2%)	19 (2%)
Sample: 152 (1-18) 679 total (22%)	112 (73%)	14 (9%)	7 (4%)	8 (5%)	11 (7%)

In the first column we can see changes in both the frequency of reviews appearing as well as the length of review compositions. The earliest written review (on both TripAdvisor and the sample) is from July, 2006 and from then to December 2013 443 total reviews appeared on the website, for an average of 59 reviews per year. Between December 2013 and January 2019 an additional 319 reviews appeared at an average rate of 64 reviews per year. But as the frequency of reviews concerning HHT appearing on TripAdvisor has slightly increased, their average length seems to be slightly decreasing based on the smaller proportion of reviews that are 150 words or longer. One possible reason that explains both of these findings may lie in the domestication of online reviews as a source for consumer information. As online reviews have become a more common source for consumer information, and as more people participate in their presumption, certain conventions regarding their production may solidify, i.e. how long they should be and which products are appropriate to review online, and some elements of this process may be observed in the above table (Baym, 2011; Vasquez, 2011).

In the case of ratings distributions perhaps the most notable findings include HHT's slightly higher proportion of positive reviews (4- and 5- star) now compared to 2013 (94% vs 92%). This may seem like a small difference but it is precisely these kinds of numbers that determine one's place on the all-important rankings system on TripAdvisor. Also, in each sample the number of negative reviews (3 stars or lower) is proportionately higher than those in the total number available for viewing. This finding remains in line with that of Vasquez (2011) who found that negative reviews tended to be longer than positive ones. In sum, throughout all of HHT's time being represented on

TripAdvisor, it has consistently seen more than 9 out of 10 reviews receive a positive rating, meaning that the company is generating significant value for tour participants.

Rating and Content

The other major way value is communicated by reviewers online is through review content. In general the content of the reviews tends to match up with the rating a reviewer has given. In other words, 5 star reviews tend to include more superlative language than 4 star reviews, and so on. There is also a clear delineation in content between 4 and 5 star reviews and those rated 3 or lower due to the presence of recommendations in the former two categories, and the lack thereof in reviews rated three stars or lower. No review in this sample with a 3 or lower rating is observed to directly recommend the HHT experience to readers, although recommendations are commonly found in the content of 4 and 5 star reviews. These recommendations typically come at the end of reviews and are often written in the travel guide style—including an “If you...” statement. For example, (87)Eigil H, from Odense, Denmark, ends their review by stating, “We can warmly recommend this great walking tour with Neil [sic] if you come to Harlem in New York! Don’t miss it! (9-24-2012).”

In most cases review content matches up with the given rating but there are instances of significant contrast between review content and review rating. Reviewer pengemex (see previous chapter) for example, gives the tour 4 stars but at various points in the review states that, “The sights were forgettable...what we saw was not really special or interesting (10-30-2014).” These lowlights, for the reviewer, were mitigated by the charisma of the tour guide, but this is still relatively strong negative language to be included in a positive review. Perhaps the most notable example of review content contrasting with reviewer rating is provided by (100) MJUtah, who enjoyed the walking portion of their gospel tour and gave a 5 star rating, but did not have the best experience in church:

“I respect the fact that the members of the church probably get sick of tourist [sic] every Sunday, but they do benefit from the added collection—and some of the visitors were very generous. The members of the church were not really friendly toward us, actually didn’t really make an effort to hide their disdain. But...it didn’t really detract from the experience for me. I learned a lot and enjoyed the community feeling that we felt in Harlem. No reservation from me in recommending the tour (3-12).”

This is the kind of language—here appearing in a 5 star review—that is usually only found in strictly negative reviews. This is a notable passage because the reviewer does not seem to care that their presence was unwelcome, and the fact that many of the visitors were so ‘generous’ justifies the presence of tourists whether or not the church community

feels uncomfortable. This is a clear example of how market dynamics come to structure the contours of racially based interactions in tourism.

But even though MJUtah displays some inconsistency between their tour rating and review content, the narrative they offer—and the features of the tour described in the review—are common to all reviews, negative and positive. Review writers tend to write about the same scenes and activities regardless of rating, with the major difference between the amount of appreciation they garner from the writer. This appreciation, in turn, is a function of both the positionality of the review writer as well as the specific circumstances of the tour they took, which always differ slightly—but sometimes differ greatly—from tour to tour. These *loci of value*, and the ways they are discussed in review content, are the subject of the next sections.

Valuation on TripAdvisor: Review Content

Loci of Value

Margaret Werry argues that for race to be seen as a valuable commodity rather than a social hindrance the terms around its discussion must shift from being associated with difference and denigration—for example racialized discourse around poverty and violence—to being associated with diversity and inclusion (2011). Tourism plays a major role in fostering this shift because of how the industry orients experiences of racial difference around what she calls *loci of value*, or cultural items and characteristics that are, “the property of specific subjects but widely available for empathic participation, and a space through which capital might flow on these currents of empathy (2011: 176).” In the case of Harlem, these *loci of value* all tend to be oriented around racial blackness, and take several different forms in an analysis of review content. Each review on TripAdvisor regarding HHT is an account of an experience rooted in purchasing power and many of the positive reviews evoke a feeling of ‘empathic participation’ that seems to be a goal for tour presentations. For example, in a glowing review from a return customer (having first visited in 2001, three years before TripAdvisor was founded), Sicilybound (Vienna) ends their review by stating:

Don’t compare these tours with ordinary bus or walking tours, they are incomparable in so far as they too will challenge your mind but far more they will touch your soul. A unique experience, not to be missed! (6-12-13)

The reviewer suggests that these tours contain something ‘different’ than a more generic experience offered by another company. The reason—for this reviewer and many others—is made clear in an earlier passage:

“Yes, there are lots of books on Harlem history with lots of more [sic.] facts than you will hear on this tour, but the essence of Harlem, its heartbeat and feelings cannot be experienced better but with Harlem Heritage Tours.

By now, Neal Shoemaker and his Team [sic.] have become a Harlem institution in their own right, and I think this is due to the dedication, professionalism and charisma of the frontman and of the other people, who work there (6-12-13)”

Static Loci of Value: Landmarks, Information, and Luminaries

Common loci of value in Harlem’s tourism industry include landmarks like churches and the Apollo Theater, information regarding Harlem’s past—particularly the Harlem Renaissance—and Harlem’s artistic legacy rooted in that period. Based on observations of more recent tours the Harlem real estate market is fast becoming a major locus of value in Harlem tourism. Not all tours provide access to these loci of value in the same way, nevertheless there are aspects of the tour experience that serve mostly as sources of value in and of themselves, existing independently of HHT. These include primarily famous landmarks and historical information—discussed through using the various historical eras described in Chapter 2—but also include information concerning the Harlem whereabouts of famous individuals associated with the community’s past.

Landmarks communicated as being valuable to reviewers include buildings such as theaters, churches, and residential structures like brownstone row houses and public housing towers. All tour guides, for example, make a point to stop in front of a church during a tour and discuss how they are important community institutions. Reviewers also express finding value in visiting the many statues, commemorative plaques, and public art that dot the area. These range from a monument to the World War I era all-black infantry unit known as the Harlem Hellfighters, to a mural concerning police brutality memorializing its victims while educating community residents on their legal rights. Informational value includes review content discussing positive connections to stories, clarifications, and contextualization related to the five historical-touristic eras discussed in Chapter 2 (Pre-black Harlem, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Harlem, Criminal Harlem, and Gentrified Harlem, respectively). Informational value is most directly related to the actions of the tour guide but is a distinct source of value because of how it is discussed by reviewers, and the fact that all tour guides cover much of the same basic information on any given tour—where differences lie in *how* this information is presented. Value in luminaries describes the way that reviewers discuss how tours provide access to the memories of famous individuals from Harlem’s past, once again linked by tour guides to one of the five historical eras. This source of value is dependent

on a combination of tour guide presentation and physical presence in specific places connected to famous people.

These static loci of value are generally known to tour participants before they visit Harlem, and are the primary reasons why they wanted to visit in the first place. The means by which visitors experience static loci of value, however, is determined by the actions of the tour guide and their presentational strategies, knowledge of the area, and relationships with the community. It is important for tour guides, then, to provide tour participants with something that adds to the experience of the static loci of value.

Reviewer (33) Rita M provides some context for this arrangement in a 5 star review where the tour guide's name is never mentioned:

“The knowledge and excitement of our tour guide was excellent. I enjoyed learning about the African American influence in Harlem and the contributions made by some of our great African American leaders. The restoration of the Harlem district is amazing...from the brownstones, to the projects, the view of central park, the Savoy, religious establishments, the arts, restaurants (Sylvia's and the Red Rooster owned by Marcus Samuelson), monuments, and more...ending at the famous Apollo Theater where you can go inside and rub the infamous log and pick up a souvenir from their gift shop (5-14).”

Although not specifically stating who the tour guide was or what they did, the reviewer prefaces their positive experience with Harlem's static loci of value—the main focus of these comments—with the role of the tour guide in facilitating that access. Many reviewers are quick to mention that the moving tourist bubbles created by HHT staff foster an environment conducive for this to occur. It seems that the most effective way to produce a feeling of value from tour participants is to blend access to—and information about—the various points of interest with community interaction and media enhancements. In the case of HHT this could mean anything from storytelling to videos played on an iPad to create a deeper sense of cultural immersion. According to reviewers, what seems to make HHT different from other tourism options in Harlem are the people who provide access to its loci of value, and the way they provide it. The most common source of value found in review content was that of tour guide—or host—and almost every single review analyzed here included at least some reference to their tour guide.

Dynamic Loci of Value: Host

The tour guide is the access point for tour participants to experience the community of Harlem, so it makes sense that the actions of and interactions with the HHT tour guides garner the most attention and appreciation from reviewers. Tour guides not only facilitate access to landmarks and information pertinent to gaining a deeper

understanding of Harlem through the tour, they also adopt distinct presentational styles based on their life histories that act as sources of value for tour participants. The most discussed guide—by far—is Neal, with Andy coming in a distant second place. There are no reviews mentioning Doris as a tour guide in my sample, although she has been named in one review, posted in January, 2018. The review itself is not even three sentences and less than 20 words total, but is posted by what would have been the most influential reviewer included in the sample, with a readership of over 800,000. I will first discuss what reviewers say about Neal and how he facilitates access to other sources of value but is also—individually speaking—a source of value for tour participants. Andy is usually mentioned as a source of value in review content but not to the extent—relatively speaking—that Neal is. In the one review that mentions Doris, she is the main source of value communicated by the reviewer.

Neal

Neal is named as the tour guide in 117 of the 152 reviews analyzed for this research (77%). In nearly all of these reviews he's mentioned directly as a source of value or of anti-value (in the case of negative reviews). In many of these, he is the most important aspect of value generation from the reviewer's perspective. In reviews these sentiments can be detected by the way Neal is discussed, and which parts of the review feature his presence, i.e. beginning, middle, or ending. For example, (92) jbo13 from Sydney—in a 4 star review—begins by stating:

“I did two tours with Neal- the first was a Civil Rights Tour and the second was the Gospel Tour on Mother's Day. Neal is a passionate individual who truly enjoys sharing his community with others...(5-12)”

This reviewer is among the most influential in the sample, with 213 contributions to TripAdvisor and a readership of 110,000. Neal is the focal point of the narrative from the opening remarks. The middle of the review contains some narrative description but the majority of the review itself concerns Neal's presentational style. It concludes with the following passage:

“If you like structure and a guide who answers every question you have in huge amounts of detail then this is probably not the tour for you, but if you enjoy local colour [sic.], passion, have a sense of spontaneity then you will really enjoy your time with Neal. I would recommend this to everyone (5-12).”

This passage is indicative of Neal's style as well as a common point of emphasis among negative and positive review writers. Here his presentational methods are not fully embraced—many reviewers like his style but others do not or communicate mixed feelings. In this case the reviewer hints through their credentialing they were initially

expecting a more informative guide, rather than a performative one. Still, Neal seems to have won them over with his charisma, and specifically for the way he prepped the reviewer for experiencing a gospel church service (discussed in the previous chapter). In this review Neal's presence is central to the reviewer's Harlem experience. In fact, the word 'Harlem' does not even appear in the entire review—which is a rarity based on my research.

In other reviews Neal is mentioned as a source of value, but is not as central to the communicated experience of the reviewer. Reviewer (49) Barbara L, from San Francisco, for example, mentions Neal positively—and often—in the review, but with a different purpose:

“[Beginning Statement] The Harlem Gospel Walking Tour was everything that was promised and more. The church service was inspiring from a faith perspective, music experience, and view into the black community...[two sentences of narration]...Neal, our tour guide, was greeted with enthusiasm by members of the community...[narrative sentence]...Neal was extremely knowledgeable about the history of the community and provided sound bytes [sic] through his Ipad and speaker...I was pleased to converse with Neal about anything from the architecture to Ralph Ellison's novel “Invisible Man”. This tour was one of the highlights of my trip to New York. I would recommend it to anyone visiting the Big Apple!(7-13).”

At first glance Neal's presence in this review may seem just as central to this reviewer's experience as the previous one. He certainly is the most central *person* in the review, but the reviewer also communicates that Neal is not what they found most interesting or valuable about the tour itself. In this case rather than being a source of value unto himself, Neal acts as an effective facilitator to some of the static loci of value common in Harlem tourism. The reviewer here seems to place a higher value on the way Neal facilitates access to the community, to information, and to landmarks regarding Harlem's cultural identity as a center of the black experience.

It must be noted, again, that Neal is a Harlem local and also a black man. And his presence as a black man leading groups of (usually) white people around Harlem—although not specifically mentioned by a single reviewer—is no doubt a source of value for tour participants. Indeed, for many reviewers Neal and the other guides' *locality* to Harlem—a discursive move that signals the racial identity of the tour guide without directly stating it—is a strong source of value to the overall experience of the tour. It adds legitimacy and the always hard-to-pin-down feeling of authenticity for review writers. For example (12) Brent S (white male, 50-70) concludes his review by stating:

“This was an authentic and heartfelt tour led by someone born and raised in a place he cares deeply about (10-15).”

Although the tour guide’s name is never specifically mentioned in this review the fact that this review is written about a cultural tourism company in Harlem operated by a local amounts to a declaration of the tour guide’s blackness. Even though it is not directly stated in this case, a review reader would only need to read one or two more reviews for this to become clear.

Andy

Although Andy is not a lifelong Harlemithe he has lived in the community since the 1950’s and because of that longevity is discussed by reviewers as a local. He appears in far fewer reviews than Neal—19 out of 152, or 12.5%—and is generally discussed as less central to the tour experience than Neal. He is discussed as a source of value in himself, but more frequently as a facilitator to static loci of value. One of the most common topics of conversation among reviewers concerning Andy’s identity is his age, which often appears in numerical form, and over the years—according to reviewers—has seemed inexact at times. For example three reviewers—posting TripAdvisor in a nineteen month period (between August 2012, November 2013, and March 2014)—identified him as 85 years old, and 2012 a newspaper article stated he was 84 (Dyer). His age is generally reported as increasing in more recent reviews, for example one posted in September 2016 stating his age as 88. Andy’s age is the most frequently discussed source of value for participants, and mostly because his energy and charisma during tours belies it. For example, (37)FLMomof3Melbourne_FL (white woman, aged 35-49), states in a 3 star review:

“Andy was full of information and took a lot of pride in Harlem. Me moved there about 50 years ago at the age of 36. Yes, he’s 86 but you’d never know that. He’s full of enthusiasm, trivia, and energy (3-14).”

This reviewer finds Andy to be the best part about their tour, which was largely underwhelming for them. Even though Andy was communicated as being a valuable part of the experience, his strategies and presentational style also contributed to the reviewer’s overall impression. This reviewer states that they were interested in more detailed information about Harlem’s history, but notice in the above quote that Andy is not given credit as being ‘knowledgeable’ but rather being ‘full of information’ about ‘trivia’. This reviewer was also disappointed that Andy did not use an iPad or play music:

“He focused mostly on the economic renaissance, along with some architectural stops, and a bit of music history. I was hoping he would have an Ipad (as other reviewers have raved about) to provide us with music and historical pictures to

help bring everything more to life. For instance he showed us where the Cotton Club used to be. I was expecting that he'd show up pictures on his iPad of the Cotton Club back in the 1920's with Duke Ellington playing music in the background (3-14).”

In the first sentence of this passage the reviewer points out what seems to be a common criticism of Andy's presentational choices: that he focuses too much on Harlem's gentrification at the expense of providing access to other loci of value. Neal even responded to one critical review by saying he would speak to Andy about it. On the one tour I took that was guided by Andy this seemed to be the case as well (and something I rather enjoyed). The reviewer also highlights a notable difference between Andy's and Neal's styles in that Andy (like Doris) does not use mobile technology to enhance the tourist experience, and relies more on stories, anecdotes, and direct observations during the walking portions of the tour. This means he relies more on the physical environment, especially the buildings of Harlem, to make his points. This is among the only reviews in the sample that mentions Andy's non-use of technology, and most reviewers tend to focus on what this reviewer initially focuses on: his energy despite advanced age. And unlike this reviewer, most find Andy's storytelling abilities to be a source of value for their experience.

Doris

This is the one review I've found on TripAdvisor that specifically mentions Doris as the tour guide under the review title: *Doris Gave a Major Tour*. The reviewer, *nycmom22*, as previously mentioned, has contributed over 1000 reviews to the website, with a readership of 805,000 people. Its brevity suggests the reviewer is relying on their positionality as an influential reviewer to make their point about the quality of the tour:

“She showed us so much in Harlem, Hamilton Hts., Sugar Hill. Homes. History, lore. Don't miss. Lasted three hours.”

The reviewer describes an upper Harlem tour that I have also taken with Doris, and it was one of the lengthiest tours I took. As the reviewer suggests, this tour covered more ground than any other tour I took. Although the remarks here are brief, they speak to Doris's presentational style—emphasizing historical detail combined with personal experience—and the environment of the upper Harlem tour, which features more residential architecture relative to other tours that stay farther south in Central Harlem.

I ended up taking more tours (3) with Doris than I did with Andy (1). And in both cases—as with Neal—the descriptions provided by reviewers regarding the presentational styles and strategies tend to be similar to each other and similar to what I observed during fieldwork. In other words, all three tour guides tend to be fairly

consistent in both their presentation of self, and in their presentations of Harlem during tours. And while the presentation of the tour as a source of value is inextricably linked to the tour guide's presence, there are distinct aspects of these presentations that stand out as sources of value in and of themselves. And as with the case of the tour guides, the presentation is a distinct source of value because of how it is directly discussed as such by reviewers, as well as how it facilitates access to other loci of value through the course of the tour.

Presentation

I focus on two distinct elements of the ways that tours are presented: the action of walking around the neighborhood, and Neal's use of digital technology in the field. As majella b (6), from Toowoomba, Australia, explains, "We continued on foot thru the streets of Harlem stopping at points of interest, during the tour Neal played blues music and showed us relevant clips from his iPad (11-6-13)." All tours feature a walking portion, and Neal does not lead a tour without a medium sized backpack with a speaker pocket toward the top, and a heavily armored iPad that is alternately in the backpack or his hands throughout the length of the walking segment.

Walking

One of the major sources of value communicated by reviewers is the walking aspect of the tour. This is especially the case in reviews that appear earlier in the sample, when the concept of a walking tour in Harlem was still discussed as being a more novel activity. In more recent reviews, for example, the walking portion of the tour is discussed almost as a matter of course: "We then walked in the steps of several prominent Civil Rights figures, tracing the path of Malcolm X after Lenox Avenue and standing in front of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s NYC headquarters (20. JLCIII2015, 3-14)." These comments mention walking as a means to access important information about luminaries pertinent to Harlem's past, but they do not mention the walking as a source of value in itself in the way that earlier reviews do. Take for example, how (150) stmer from San Francisco compares the value of a walking tour relative to that of a bus tour, which is still a popular way to visit Harlem as a tourist: "Taking a walking tour with Harlem Heritage Tours turned out to be just the ticket [to learning about the history of Harlem]. While a lot of tours just seem to bus people in and out, we felt like we were getting the real deal." In these comments we can detect perceptions of authenticity or "getting the real deal" generated from the act of walking itself.

Neal's Backpack

Many of the reviews featuring Neal as a source of value also discuss his use of mobile digital technology to enhance the tour experience. In my conversations with Neal

he has said this has been a goal of his even before the appropriate technology was available. He told me once about how, very early on in his business, he had attached a TV and DVD player to a hotel luggage cart and would wheel it around the neighborhood during tours to offer a multimedia experience in conjunction with the walking activities. In my first tour with Neal—which was before the iPad was widely available, he had an iPod that was attached to speakers and played audio files only. The iPad has since become a staple piece of equipment for Neal because of its dual audio-visual capabilities, and portability. We can even see in review content where the iPad was introduced to the tours, starting in the summer of 2012 (the first iPad was released on October 3, 2010), when reviewers move from discussing just the music that Neal plays to discussing music and videos, with a few direct references to the device, such as that provided by (79)James C, from Kelowna, Canada:

“It was wonderful in the way he [Neal] could integrate stories of his growing up in Harlem (even showing us his complex), the use of his iPad for audio and visual (clips of movies, political speeches, historical events), and individuals that he met on the street...we followed Neal like the Pied Piper with appropriate music blaring from his backpack (10-12).”

The reviewer here discusses several loci of value that were enhanced by the addition of digital technology to the tour experience. Incidentally, this is not the only time Neal is referred to as a ‘Pied Piper’ in review content, and is not the only time his music is described as “blaring” from those speakers. In my experience, it’s usually turned up loud enough to be heard a block away and make conversation difficult in a four or five yard radius. And it increases in volume by the time tours reach the 125th Street promenade (Maybe the 125th Street Cakewalk). This is a time during the tour when the group almost becomes an attraction in itself, generating consistent interaction from community members as tours move to conclude at the Apollo Theater. In addition to the host and presentation being identified as loci of value that are significant in themselves and because the way they facilitate access to other sources, we may also add community interactions to this list as well.

Community

One of the most important functions of the tour guide, for many reviewers, is to facilitate interactions with—and access to—members of the community that are not affiliated with HHT. While this is a significant source of value for tour participants, it is essentially a free service provided by community members during the tour experience.

This is the case especially in reviews that mention people dancing along to Neal’s music on the street and through the many spontaneous interactions that occur by virtue of each tour guides’ deep community involvement (all three would stop at least once during a tour while coming across someone they knew and introduce the group). This is not totally the case with church visits, where the church receives a fee included as part of the price of the tour and also profits from passing around collection plates on the crowded visitor balcony. But positive interactions with non-HHT affiliated community members, nevertheless, depend on certain levels of sometimes involuntary complicity—and expectations of behavior—in the tourist industry by those individuals (See Gotham, 2011).

Discussions of interactions with community members occur less frequently in review content than do those of host and presentation, but the way they are discussed qualifies them as dual sources of value—both a facilitating type and a kind of value in itself—in much the same way as *host* and *presentation*. Reviewers also tend to write about these instances in one of two ways, as either being facilitated by the tour guide or as being direct interactions between themselves and community members. Take for example these comments from (59) Glowskid (black, female, 15-30, 15,000 readers), who discusses how Neal facilitated community interaction:

“There is just something so nice about being shown a city by someone who is really connected to it; someone who shares more than what could be memorized or researched online. Several people on throughout the tour spoke to Neil [sic] by name, and we even ran into a few of his family members and childhood friends along the way (5-13).”

The reviewer here begins with very positive remarks about their perceptions of the authenticity and intimacy Neal provides during the tour experience. The next sentence describes why this is the case, and is oriented around interactions with community members. Contrast these remarks with the next review in the sample and posted in the same month, provided by (58) DoubleV15 (educator):

“Throughout the tour, I was engaged and truly inspired by so much of what in this welcoming, beautiful place. People on the streets were friendly and seemed as if they were somewhat proud to be a living part of Harlem (5-13)”

In these comments, much like the previous ones, the reviewer starts by discussing reasons why the tour was valuable to them, then moves to a sentence discussing why this is the case. In each case interactions with community members key the production of the valuable experience. But this reviewer, instead of identifying the tour guide as the middle-person in making this happen, discusses their direct contact—in rather vague language—with the community in their review content. It’s not clear what the reviewer

means by community members being, “somewhat proud to be a living part of Harlem”, but there are elements here of the tourist gaze (See Urry, 1990) as well as what Jackson (2001) calls the “terroristic...or museological gaze” under which tourists view all elements of the tourist experience—including interactions with community members—as objects of desire or attraction. The use of the term ‘somewhat’ denotes that the reviewer perhaps noticed some push-back from community members from their involuntary complicity in producing a valuable tourist experience.

It is the part of the tour guide’s job to avoid instances of this push-back as much as possible. One time on a tour with Doris in Sugar Hill, we witnessed what seemed to a couple arguing and throwing groceries at each other in the middle of the street. As soon as she saw it she ushered us to the far side of the street and quickened the pace of our walk. The difference between a positive and negative review may depend on the tour guide’s avoidance of such a situation. While the majority of HHT reviews are positive, a highly visible minority are negative. They discuss the same loci of value as review writers reporting positive experiences, but for a variety of reasons, they do not garner appreciation from the negative review writer. For them the experience is so bad they feel they should inform—or warn—other potential visitors to Harlem that HHT does not provide the valuable experience it advertises.

Negative Reviews and Responses

Negative reviews have a large impact on HHT’s business for two reasons. First, they influence the company’s position relative to other businesses on TripAdvisor’s ranking systems. Second, readers of reviews tend to view at least one negative review in addition to looking at some positive ones (Vasquez, 2011; Tussyadiah et. al, 2012). This means that the average negative review carries more weight, and is more visible, than the average positive review. TripAdvisor affords readers the ability to filter their review searches by individual rating, so it is easy for them to compare reviews of the same rating.

Negative reviews concerning Harlem Heritage Tours on TripAdvisor fall into one of two main categories. The first are those reviews posted by people that experienced poor communication and scheduling difficulties such that they never took a planned tour, or a tour was cancelled and they were not notified of it. One reviewer even posted a negative review to that effect, then came back on TripAdvisor and posted a positive review once they finally took a tour with HHT. The second group of negative reviews concerns bad experiences with tour itself. TripAdvisor has a function enabling tour operators to respond to any given review, and Neal tends to respond more often to negative reviews. This function does not seem to be a means for the operator and

reviewer to have a public dialogue online, as reviewers are not afforded the chance to respond in kind to the tour operator's response. Rather this seems to be a way for the tour operator to defend themselves to their potential customers, the readers of reviews. Below I provide an example of a complete negative review focusing on a bad tour experience as well as the complete response from Neal:

(22) Stu051 (no location, 1 review, >100 readers)

“Not a Good Tour” (1 star)

We did not enjoy this tour. We did the Harlem Gospel Tour and learned almost nothing about gospel music or Harlem. The office we started from was a bit of a mess with trash on the floors – our guide claimed it was because of a party the night before, but really it gave a bad impression and started everyone on a bad foot. There were several amazing photos of Harlem notables dotting the walls but there wasn't any information about them. The tour guide was friendly and energetic, but he seemed to have never given a tour before. There was no clear sequential history of the area – like A to B to C. Just a lot of random non-sequiturs that left you with more questions than answers. Part of the tour was spent at a church service with amazing gospel music—this was definitely a highlight, however the church is open to the public and you do not need a tour to attend so I'd recommend going on your own. All in all we were quite disheartened by the tour. Harlem has such an amazing history that needs to be told, yet this organization doesn't seem capable of delivering it without a major overhaul (2-15).

This review discusses attributes of the HHT experience that many people find valuable, although in strong tones of anti-value. The HHT office, usually an effective staging ground, is described as messy and not prepared to receive a tour group. The pictures on the walls are sometimes used by Neal on tours—for example on my first tour I carried a stack of them around Harlem—and are used by Neal as props during his opening presentation. They are not specifically meant to be museologically displayed, with an informational placard beside each one. This is not the only time a messy office has been mentioned by negative review writers. It's not clear whether the reviewer comments about 'no clear sequential history' are regarding the opening presentation or the following walking portion. The reviewer also does not find value in the enhanced access to New Canaan Baptist that HHT offers. The reviewer in this case found community interactions and the gospel service to be positive, but separates these experiences from those directly associated with HHT's services. They explicitly state their doubts about the tour guide's knowledge of the Harlem area. However, compared to the other negative reviews analyzed here, this one does not contain overly critical language and is rather measured in its critique. Based on their comments it seems they were expecting a more organized and

informationally structured experience. Therefore it makes some sense—given Neal’s established and consistent style—that this reviewer would not approve.

Neal’s responses to negative reviews tend to match the tone of the negative review. In this case a measured critique is given a thoughtful and at times conciliatory response:

My name is Neal Shoemaker and I’m the Owner of Harlem Heritage Tours and I would like to apologize to the reviewer for the tour she considered to be inadequate. Yes there was a party the night before in the office and it should have been maintained the following morning for arriving guests. This is usually not the case and typically all is well the morning after space rentals, again for this we apologize and we will make immediate adjustments.

If you read previous comments you will see that I make great efforts to showcase Harlem in its best light and many guests have considered our tour the highlight of their visits to New York City.

The words of the reviewer serve as inspiration to mount clearer cultural exhibitions on the walls, this will be done immediately. As for knowing nothing about Harlem, to this I take exception. Our guides have thoroughly studied and surveyed to the heritage of our home and I feel this was just an off day for the guide and for this again I humbly apologize.

The comments will make us better and I truly hope that one day we can make it up to the reviewer (2-16-15; one day after negative review was posted).

Neal begins this response with an admission that the office was indeed messy on the morning of the tour. Though not directly stated, the given reason is that the office itself is not used solely for staging tour activities, but rather a multi-use space that’s available to rent for private gatherings (this is a popular and lucrative form of income for many New York property owners because many city residents do not have enough space to host large groups for special events or occasions). He explains that this was an unusual occurrence, reiterates the apology, and states that the problem will be fixed. These comments seem to be largely directed to TripAdvisor readers, rather than writer of the review. In these situations Neal is able to use review content to reach into the world of TripAdvisor and include his voice in the tourist-dominated online setting. This might seem as if it is a source of increased digital agency for the tour guides and a way for Neal to continue asserting representative authority over online depictions of Harlem. On the other hand, tour operator responses may be just as likely viewed by review readers as ‘biased’ in the sense that they are not representative of tourist interests, rather those of the tour operator.

In keeping with this perceived audience, the next comments in Neal's response reiterate the company's overall reputation on TripAdvisor, suggesting that the negative experience itself was an unusual occurrence. This implicitly suggests that positive reviews are more indicative of what actually happens on tours. He claims in the next comments that the reviewer has a point, and will make an effort to better highlight the historical photographs found in the office. Then he directly opposes the reviewer's viewpoint by disagreeing with statements regarding the tour guides' knowledge of and preparedness to conduct a tour of Harlem, although he does acknowledge the possibility that a guide could have an 'off' day. This is perhaps to avoid suggesting that the reviewer is lying, as he does in negative reviews that are less measured in their critique, or that discuss HHT in what Neal perceives to be an untruthful manner. (Also he knows the writer is female, and in another response has suggested he knows who actually writes reviews, unlike the general public.)

For some reasons that are stated—and probably some that are unstated in the review—Stu051 did not feel as if they were able to access the static loci of value commonly found in Harlem tourism through tour participation. For the reviewer, the community remains an attraction and a worthwhile place to take a walking tour, and suggests the fault lies with the company itself. Perhaps this is why Neal responded to this specific review. He walks a fine line in his response because he must convince TripAdvisor readers that the negative review (and the customer that it represents) simultaneously matters—and does not matter—when evaluating HHT ahead of a potential tour booking.

Relationships between value types:

The strategies, styles, and personalities that HHT uses to provide an immersive Harlem experience works for the vast majority of reviewers, but not for all. When they do work, it is not typically the result of *just* the actions of the tour guide, or *just* the action of walking, or listening to music, or interacting with locals. It is the combination of all of these sources of value, in conjunction with being in the physical proximity of famous building and the sites of historical events. During the tour experience loci of value are often occurring simultaneously. This constant overlapping of different sources of value creates the sense of immersion that HHT offers and that tour participants seek, and it is all orchestrated by the HHT guides. They use their knowledge of history and of current community issues to craft optimistic and inclusive tours presenting Harlem as black, vibrant, and as an essential part of the cultural fabric of both New York City, and of global blackness. I conclude the content analysis of TripAdvisor reviews in this chapter by providing another complete—and rather lengthy—review. This positive review describes both the simultaneity of experiencing multiple loci of value and the way that simultaneity creates a positive—and valuable—experience for the reviewer:

(40) ahala_rome (w, m, 35-49, Zurich)

5r/15h/5 cities/ 5000 readers, 1-14

Stunning, revelatory, magical, the real Harlem. Wonderful.

This was a magical five hour long tour that gave far more than I had anticipated from the listing. The Harlem Heritage Tour leader, Neal was bouncing with energy and enthusiasm which he carried off for hours of atmospheric music, dance, food and history. The first part of the tour, two hours, is on foot, was accompanied by the boombox in Neal's backpack and his iPad for video; everywhere we stopped for a brief history lesson, the music was turned up for the street to share in, we watched video on screen, Neal sang to the music and everyone on the streets of Harlem danced! It was amazing to hear him recount Marcus Garvey's story at a place he'd given a speech then see him speak and then see and hear Billie Holiday sing the lyrics he spoke, and have our tour guide join in and rap to the music, whilst the local ladies with their shopping bags danced in the streets. It was one magical moment to the next, and the tour was real personal - not only was there time to discuss the black American experience with the tour guide, but that was much of the point - in this tour with limited attendees, everyone was encouraged to share their experiences and discuss what it meant; Neal varied the route at a couple of points in response for example to show me the areas where Irish immigrants had lived. One gets the full vibrant history of Harlem in two or more hours, always accompanied by wonderful music. Then on to a great restaurant where we had our choice of southern home made food (included in the fee, but don't forget to tip your waitress!) and afterwards to this tiny amazing little jazz club, unlicensed but someone kindly nipped out to get me a couple of beers, and many brought their own wine or whiskey. The tour members were perhaps one quarter of the small audience but it was such an intimate place that it felt like a family gathering; I stayed for two hours of non stop unbelievable music by masters of Jazz, up close and personal. I think I floated home, such a wonderful experience this had been. I was staying in Harlem for a couple of weeks and the tour was right at the start of my visit. I really felt from that day that Harlem was home, and wandered the streets in the following days recollecting the tour and feeling really comfortable. Great place, amazing tour! (1-22-2014)

This reviewer enjoyed an overall positive experience due to the various ways loci of value were simultaneously presented to them. These include descriptions of important information, historical sites, and landmarks being presented in conjunction with music, videos, stories, community interactions, and tour guide charisma. They produce for the reviewer a series of “magical moments” and the sensation that Harlem “was home” for

them during their time in New York. It is ultimately the combination of these various loci of value, and the way they are put together by the tour guide in a kind of *bricolage*, that produces a valuable experience for the tour participant.

Ethnography: Using Bricolage to Produce Value

As discussed in Chapter 3, *bricolage* involves the strategic rearrangement of elements of a given cultural set to create a distinct or unique sense of reality for an audience. I suggest in that chapter that this is how HHT's guides create sensations of value for their customers. In this case the elements of the cultural set at hand include those associated with Harlem's blackness, and to a lesser extent the positionality of the tour participant. Notice in the above review, for example, the discussion of tour participants being "encouraged to share their experiences and discuss what it meant". In smaller groups tour guides were able to engage with each individual participant but in larger groups—which were always composed of smaller already established groups like family or school groups—tour guides would focus attention on one or two members of each smaller group (whoever seemed to be the most engaged in the tour). I observed many instances of touristic bricolage performed by HHT guides, who may rightfully be called *bricoleurs* for their efforts. This is the primary mechanism through which touristic presentations of Harlem's people, culture, and geography come to hold value in the minds of tour participants through the tour experience.

To illustrate how this works I provide detailed descriptions of four instances of touristic bricolage performed by HHT guides, two from Neal and one each from Doris and Andy. Examples of touristic bricolage may be found throughout the different temporal phases of the tour but the distinct styles of each tour guide means that presentational strategies differ from guide to guide. In other words, each guide is a unique kind of *bricoleur*.

Across 110th Street with Neal

I've previously mentioned (Chapter 2) that one time during a Church service Wyatt T. Walker Jr. gave a performance for the congregation and visitors at New Canaan Baptist. Not only is he an impressive performer, he also has a direct connection through his father to Martin Luther King Jr. Neal emphasized this connection during his opening presentation at the HHT office. As we were leaving church Walker Jr. himself came outside to greet Neal and our group—which included a group of around 20 Danish high school students. Neal formally introduced him to us as the best musician in Harlem, while Walker Jr., in turn, called Neal the best tour guide in Harlem. He thanked us for coming to visit church and hoped that we enjoyed our tour with Neal. As Walker Jr.

turned to greet other folks, Neal used the chance to reiterate his theme concerning Harlem churches: they are about more than music. They are responsible for keeping the community together and have played a significant role in the local Civil Rights Movement. After this we walked a block east on 116th Street where Neal stopped us again in a quiet and shaded corner. Neal began discussing Harlem's image as a dangerous place, starting with how the current president talks about urban black communities: "This is what Trump means when he talks about the inner city...when you see the phrase inner-city...when you watch movies like *American Gangster* or *New Jack City*...this is what they're talking about. This is where we are." He then pivoted to discussing how these images of Harlem are not truthful. He continued, "You hear, for example, that black kids don't play hockey...well look over there." He suddenly drew our attention to a black boy and his mother, the boy was carrying a large athletics bag with a hockey stick poking out if it.

He said the media is responsible for perpetuating negative stereotypes of Harlem, and we walked back west on 116th St. stopping on the concrete median in the middle of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. He said for a long time the rule for New Yorkers was not to go above 110th Street, and as he said this he cued up Bobby Womack's "Across 110th Street", which describes the segregation and stereotypes Neal had us consider. From our position in the middle of the wide avenue we had clear vantage points to the north and south. To the North stretched Harlem, with its wide tree line avenues and shorter, older, brick buildings. To the South, beyond Central Park, we could clearly see the glittering mid-town skyline, getting ever taller and more crowded by the year. Neal sang along with the music as we lingered in the median:

Been down so long, getting up didn't cross my mind

I knew there was a better way of life that I was just trying to find

You don't know what you'll do until you're put under pressure

Across 110th Street is a hell of a tester

As the song plays a few of the Danish students started to dance to the tune. It seemed as though, even at this relatively early moment in the tour, Neal's strategies of bricolage were producing an immersive and enjoyable experience for them. We listened to around half of the song before Neal turned down the volume. We were about to move into the courtyard of the Martin Luther King Jr. public housing towers. Echoing the sentiments of the song, he said that for a long time this was a place you didn't want to be, or would never think about visiting for fun or educational reasons. For a few moments the tone of the tour—dictated by Neal—turned more serious, but just as that began to settle Neal changed the beat again, telling us that now things have changed, and Harlem

is a safer, and more welcoming, community. A few seconds later were in the in the courtyard of the MLK housing towers, playing an imaginary game of basketball, with imaginary Harlem basketball names.

These moments all seem to blend into each other during the tour experience and for the tour participant it is quite a lot to process, especially if the weather is nice and the sidewalks are busy. But they also all fit together with the overall theme of the tour itself: Gospel Experience and Civil Rights Walking Tour. At various moments, some pre-determined by Neal—such as probably the case with meeting Rev. Walker Jr.—and some not—such as the case with the boy carrying the hockey stick—he has a set of cultural elements, or a “closed...universe of instruments” as Levi-Strauss (1964) would put it, from which to craft the tour presentation. In this case that universe of instruments includes personalities, information, landmarks, stories and music, all geared towards presenting Harlem’s religious and Civil Rights heritage to tour participants. For example, in the instance where we linger in the median of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, Neal is able to evoke New York’s history of racial segregation through a combination of Bobby Womack’s famous song and the physical sightlines of that specific place. He provides a direct connection for tour participants to Martin Luther King’s legacy because of the information he provides and the people he provides access to.

On a separate occasion at New Canaan—as we were leaving the visitor’s balcony—Neal motioned urgently and quietly for us to follow him through another upstairs door and not down the steps to the lobby area. The service was still going on so he couldn’t speak and had to wait until everyone in the HHT tour was out of the aisle and up the steps of the balcony seating area before we could go through. We entered a hallway appearing to double as a kind of exhibit for the church’s history, with framed newspaper articles, and pictures of church luminaries on the wall. A wooden pulpit encased in glass stood right beyond the door from which Dr. King gave a sermon and officially installed his lieutenant Wyatt T. Walker as pastor of the church. It is marked by a simple brass plate that says, “The Pulpit” on the front. Neal gave the same basic talk here about the importance of the black church as he did just after our short meeting with Walker Jr. In other words, Neal does not use the same cultural elements each time, or in the same order, for a given tour. But the effect for tour participants is generally similar from tour to tour, as described by review writers and found within these two instances of bricolage involving Civil Rights history. This could explain, for example, how a tour guide might have an ‘off’ day, if certain planned activities do not work out, or if expected ‘unplanned’ moments never materialize.

Reviewer clock60

I include the following brief instance because it contains a clear example of Neal using tour participant positionality as a tool to produce economic exchange, leading to

what Margaret Werry describes as “capital flowing on the currents of empathy”. These are key aspects to the successful mobilization of loci value during the tour experience. Also, of all the reviews included in my sample, I have direct knowledge of only this one, because it was a tour I also participated in and remember this individual. Reviewer clock60, from Sydney, in a 5 star review of their Harlem Gospel/Civil Rights Walking tour writes that:

“Our group comprised a couple from Texas, some germans, some brits, and a young bloke from Virginia (9-13).”

This was one of the first tours I took with HHT and I remember clock60 because we chatted throughout the course of the tour. It was this Australian’s first time visiting New York, and he had planned all along to visit Harlem because of his interest in jazz and soul music. He was also looking forward to seeing many of the places he had seen in movies and TV relating to the Civil Rights era. He was not only interactional with me but with Neal as well, and would ask Neal more specific questions as we walked from stop to stop. As we were walking down 125th Street towards the end of the tour, Neal suddenly stopped by a street vendor selling framed pictures. He singled out a copy of the famous photograph from the 1968 Olympics where winner Tommie Smith and third place finisher John Carlos (a Harlem native) gave the Black Power salute during the medal ceremony of the 200 meter dash.

As Neal considered the photograph he also told the group its story and how it relates to both Harlem and Australia. The silver medalist, he explained, was white Australian Peter Norman, who stood in solidarity with his fellow medal winners on the podium. Norman was punished for this, Neal said, and paid a serious price. Upon his return to Australia he was largely ostracized for his actions. But here in Harlem—as evidence by how popular this image is—his actions have not been forgotten, and in fact have been immortalized in Harlem lore. Neal then gave the vendor some money for the framed image, and proceeded to hand it to clock60 as a gift. This action draws complete a small historical circle linking Harlem and Australia that places the tour participant in the center and represents monetary transaction between several parties: tourist, tour guide, and local vendor.

Although the Neal paid the vendor himself, the purchase is also symbolic of the economic role that tourism plays in the community—and the money for it was most likely sourced from Neal’s tourism business income. Clock60, despite not mentioning this gift in his review, goes on to write a very positive one for the company. This entire sequence demonstrates how capital may flow, as Werry (2011) suggests, on the currents of empathy. This episode may also indicate some of the ways that Neal compensates community members through tourism monies. Just as Neal needs to produce value for tour participants through gestures both large and small, he needs to do the same with

community members too. Every time I spoke with Neal outside of the moving tourist bubble he mentioned his efforts at using tourism to benefit the community.

Behind the Apollo with Doris

I took three tours with Doris and two of them ended in similar fashion. These instances speak to her specific presentational style as well the strategic use of a somewhat surprising piece of Harlem's geography. Doris does not seem to have quite the same access to the interior of the Apollo Theater that Neal does (I never found out how he is able to get his groups inside the theater). She compensates for this by bringing tours to a part of the theater that is rarely visited by tour groups (HHT or others): it's back entrance on 126th Street, featuring a non-descript brick wall, a large loading dock, and a locked metal door.

The scene here is quiet and shaded, the street is narrow and was under construction when we visited, which made it seem even smaller. The north side of the street faces a school yard and both times we visited it was full of smaller children playing different games. The location is adjacent to the hustle and bustle of 125th Street but the buildings block most of that noise and the street itself did not have a lot of traffic, so most of the sounds came from the activity on the school yard. Doris lead us here after walking down 125th Street, where we briefly stopped under the Apollo Marquee to hear some history of the building itself. We then stopped briefly in a soul food restaurant—Manna's Buffet—to learn about Harlem's well-known cuisine before walking back towards the Apollo on 126th Street and stopping at the back entrance. This was where, Doris explains, performers would go in before the show. Sometimes, she said, a star would come out afterwards. She told us that when she was growing up she liked to leave shows at the Apollo as soon as they were done so that she could come around to this spot to stake out a place to watch them leave. Throughout the tour she intersperses her memories of living in Harlem with those aspects of Harlem's history that outsiders are likely to be familiar with before visiting the neighborhood. For example, on all three tours she mentioned that Motown—made famous partially through the influence of the Apollo Theater—helped the community get through the hard times of the 60's and 70's. She provides a bird's eye view of Harlem's past, at the same time she grounds it in her lived experiences in the community.

Like Neal, Doris pulls from a specific set of cultural elements to produce value for tour participants in these moments. But as the above examples show they mobilize these elements in different ways to accomplish the task. While Neal may be able to get tourists on the Apollo stage and play Jame's Brown's "I Feel Good" as groups walk in, Doris actually saw Brown perform that song on that stage. So at the same time tour guides are pulling from a similar set of cultural elements to produce value for tour participants, they

also play to their strengths as presenters and draw on very different lived experiences to do so.

Soul Food at Red Lobster with Andy

One time Andy went to dinner with Neal at the grand opening of Harlem's first Red Lobster. This instance is discussed in conjunction with a very long negative review posted by (34) BrianLBrown, from Washington DC. He is a self-identified educator who teaches "an honors level high school history course". He did not have kind things to say about Andy's presentational style:

"I went with Andy's group. Our first stop, and I kid you not, was the Red Lobster [on 125th Street]. As he was talking about the Red Lobster, he actually asked the kids to make sure they paid attention. I thought he was putting us on and gave the chaperone a look like, "Is this guy for real?" I waited for a punchline, but the conclusion was that he tried the shrimp and they were delicious. Needless to say, this is not the kind of knowledge I wanted bestowed upon my students (5-14)."

Red Lobster represents another corporate addition to an already gentrified 125th Street corridor and is located in a prime position for foot traffic about a block from the Apollo Theater. This reviewer did not find value in Andy's discussion of its significance. And, based on my observations of how Andy talks about it they failed to understand Andy's motivation for starting the tour with an example of the gentrification of Harlem. They seem to miss, in fact, that this was probably the whole point Andy was trying to make.

Andy's presentational style is based on stories punctuated with jokes, and his story regarding the Red Lobster was one of his longest and most involved. But the version I heard did have a point, and did have a punchline or two. In my case he presented this story at the end of the tour, which no doubt helped our group contextualize his main points. As we were getting close to the Apollo Theater for the tour conclusion we stopped in front of the Red Lobster and Andy said this was the first one to open in Harlem. When it did there was a grand opening and the owners invited prominent business people—Neal included—to attend. Neal asked Andy to accompany him and at first Andy was not too excited about the prospect because he finds the food at Red Lobster to be "tasteless". But he went anyway and found the place to be quite posh as far as Red Lobsters go, primarily because the hosting station is on the ground level and when tables are ready customers take an elevator to the dining level. Andy and Neal had a black waitress ("You'll know why that's important in a minute", he said). He said that when the server came to take their order the first thing he did was tell her that he never really cared for the food at Red Lobster and wanted to know if they had anything he might like. She said, "Not tonight mister, we have soul food tonight..." Andy swears that it was one of the best meals he's ever had. He said he wouldn't have been able to

get away with his immediate criticisms with a white server. He explains jokingly that a white server would have dismissed him as being “uppity” with his critique.

Andy combines his memories as a tour guide, his passion for educating outsiders about gentrification, his storytelling abilities, and humor to produce touristic bricolage in this moment. While doing so he makes two rather profound points regarding Harlem’s gentrification and race relations more generally that can only come from an ‘insider’s’ perspective. The first is that there is resistance to gentrification in sometimes unseen places, for example the exchange between Andy and the black waitress. The second is that casual racism, despite the welcoming and feel-good nature of most Harlem tours, still exists, and still affects Harlem locals—evidenced by the comment about the importance of their server’s racial identity. Andy is able to make these points partially because of his easy-going and humorous presentational style, which he shares with Neal. But they are also a reflection of a more thoughtful and critical side to his style as well. It’s impossible to know exactly what Andy said to the negative reviewer’s group, but based on the research here it is probably accurate to say his story did not deviate very much from the one I was presented with. But as reviewer BrianLBrown and others have expressed on TripAdvisor, this is not the kind of presentation they want to see.

This instance speaks to a disconnection between touristic expectations of a Harlem experience and tour guide expectations concerning what tourists should learn or know about Harlem when they visit. All three tour guides must navigate this division in a way that pleases customers but also does proper justice, in their view, to presentations of Harlem’s past and present. Conversely, tour participants must negotiate this division successfully on their own terms in order to come away with a positive experience. Ultimately HHT’s tour guides are the major drivers in the production of value for both tour participants and the company itself, a fact reflected by the tour guide’s position of centrality to the tour experience as well as in review content. This was especially evident to me when one Saturday a tour was abruptly cancelled, and I was left to tour Harlem by myself. I found I could visit many of the places a tour does, but the effects of doing so were far different from being part of a guided group.

Self-Guided Tour of Harlem

As I was waiting for a Harlem Renaissance Tour to start at the Schomburg Center I got a call from Neal saying that I was the only person who had signed up for the tour. Neal was also dealing with an outside situation and asked to cancel the tour and give me a full refund, saying that the next day’s scheduled Gospel Church Tour would go on as

planned. This was towards the end of a week of fieldwork in New York taking tours on a daily basis with HHT. I had not initially planned to take a self-guided tour but this presented a good opportunity to do so. In the next three hours I found that—while lacking in the specific contexts and instances of bricolage that tour guides provide—the self-guided tour entailed higher levels of interaction with community members. I was thus able to get perhaps a more intimate look at daily life in the community, but at the expense of being immersed in history, art, and stories as is the case with tour participation.

I was already at the Schomburg Center so I visited areas of the building I had not visited before, including the newer gift shop and the downstairs research area. I had to check my bag to gain access to this area, where a few people (all black, looking like graduate students) were poring over one text or another. The collections available for public use included the complete Herskovits collection and numerous anthologies concerning everything from African American literature to song and dance. I performed a very brief and unsuccessful search for any information regarding outsider slumming narratives from Harlem's Renaissance period. I moved from the Schomburg across the street to the Harlem Hospital to visit an art gallery I'd visited earlier in the week on a tour with Doris. The gallery features art deco-style murals from the 1930's that used to adorn the exterior of the hospital. They had recently been restored and were available for public viewing. I had to talk to the security guard at the hospital to gain access to the gallery. Right away I noticed a pattern of more interaction with community members than on a normal tour, as this interaction in particular was handled by Doris earlier. This particular interaction involved me negotiating access to a tourist site on my own, which is part of the service tour participants pay for when booking for with HHT. I also did not have as much constant contextual information being provided throughout my self-guided tour, which is another large part of HHT's services. At the same time, I interacted more with community members and was able to hear conversations and observe small moments—there was no tour group to interact with.

From the hospital I worked my way up to 143rd Street, stopping at the sites of famous Renaissance Era jazz clubs the Savoy Ballroom—which has a commemorative plaque marking the site—and the Cotton Club—which does not. As I started heading south again I passed by Abyssinian Baptist Church on 136th Street. I saw an open door, and beyond that what seemed to be a series of placards set up in a hallway as an exhibit of some kind. I made my way towards the open door to inquire about a quick visit but before I could take another step towards the church a woman behind a desk just inside the door said very abruptly, "It's closed." I said thanks and continued on my way.

My destination was ultimately, like most HHT offerings, the Apollo Theater, and along the way I passed many places familiar to me from previous tours, but the difference

between my solitary walking and my walking in a moving tourist bubble was palpable. I saw the community, not the bubble. I walked past a coffee shop where a black man and two black women are having an animated conversation about the brutalities of slavery and its historical legacy. I briefly stopped to observe a black woman taking a picture of her child in front a mural dedicated to the Black Lives Matter movement, a place where tours also stop (and where pictures are taken). I heard three black men discussing a real estate deal in front of a restored brownstone. They greeted me as I walked by. As I walked south on Lenox Boulevard a guy riding a motorcycle suddenly popped a wheelie and rode it for at least two blocks. I stopped to watch some pickup basketball games on the courts in front of the St. Nicholas housing towers for a few minutes, something a tour group would perhaps not have been welcome to do. A few feet away someone lit up a joint. On 126th Street, directly behind the Apollo Theater, I saw a woman pushing her daughter down the street in a stroller. I heard her ask her daughter what she wanted to do later that afternoon, but they were too far down the street for me to hear a response. All of these details and moments would not be visible—or audible—to me if I was part of a tour at the time.

I was originally planning to end the self-guided tour under the marquee of the Apollo Theater and observe tourist activity there, but as I was approaching two groups directly across 125th Street from the theater caught my attention. Both groups were distinctly dressed in quasi-military/medieval garb, reminiscent of Black Panther fashion. They were positioned very close to each other but wore different colors. One group, identified as ISUPK, wore black and silver. The other group, identified as Sons of Isreal, wore forest green and gold. There were maybe 10 people in each group, and both groups had microphones hooked up to speakers. They were preaching black separatism, Afro-centric critical history, anti-Americanism, and what could best be characterized as extreme hostility towards white people. Here are some excerpts:

“The white man says we [blacks] are lazy...but it is he who is lazy... WE BUILT THIS CITY!... We cannot accept any gifts from this place [America].”

“WE [referring to all racial minorities] KEEP THESE OTHER NATIONS RICH!”

“The Bible is the greatest book that has ever been written...and the ONLY people that matter in it...the only people that Christ professes love to...are the darker peoples of the world...The white man is the devil. Know your history. Jesus was black.”

“America is going down.”

“The white man is the leader of enemy nations...Don’t chill with them...they are not your friend. They are not welcome in our community, we will chase his behind out of it.”

“Kill white people.”

As I stood there taking notes and observing the scene I was being observed myself. I was the only white person in the immediate vicinity, and my presence was not exactly welcomed, though it was tolerated. The younger men in the ISUPK faction gave me plenty of long, cold stares. The Sons of Isreal actually welcomed me to join their audience and didn’t seem to mind me being there as much as the ISUPK did. There was a sizable audience of locals listening to both sets of speakers, and at one point the ISUPK was challenged by a local for its Afro-centric views on Christianity, leading to a public debate about whether God and Jesus love everyone, or just racial minorities. As I was leaving Harlem that afternoon I came across a book vendor with a book that seemed to contain similar messages, *We the Black Jews Vols.: I & II*, by Yosef A.A. ben-Jochanon (1983), to what I just heard across from the Apollo. I asked the vendor if the book was related in any way to the groups down the street. It was, and the book vendor smiled, “You mean the Black Jews? Ha ha...those guys are crazy.”

I’m not sure what the HHT staff would have done with a tour group in that situation. The radical black groups were positioned directly across the street from where a tour would have been ending that afternoon if it had gone on as planned. They would have been hard to simply avoid. It seems like the kind of situation that might provoke feelings of discomfort and maybe even fear for members of a tour group, or something that parents, white, black, or otherwise, might not want their children to see. They might be dismissed by HHT staff as a vocal, but small part of the Harlem community. But either way, the presence of these groups would undoubtedly strain—or perhaps even rupture—the carefully crafted moving tourist bubble responsible for value production that tour guides work to maintain.

Conclusions

This chapter set out to understand how the relationship between Harlem and TripAdvisor produces value regarding the experience of racial difference in touristic settings. The first half of the chapter looked at how the reviews themselves compose a valuating discourse about the community of Harlem and the blackness it represents. The second half was more concerned with the origins of that discourse. Value is produced by reviewers online in terms of ratings and review content. Analysis of this content reveals that tour participants find value in experiencing the simultaneity of overlapping static

(landmarks and information) and dynamic (host, presentation, community) loci of value. Overall more than 9 out of every 10 reviews are positive but the small number of negative reviews have increased influence due their higher visibility among readers and digital ‘weight’ in terms of determining attraction rankings online. Neal must walk a fine line in his responses to negative reviews between showing that their content does matter to a point, but not to the point that they should dissuade people from booking with HHT.

Ultimately, various types of value—economic, emotional, and intellectual—are produced for tour participants through the actions of the tour guide and the way they mobilize various loci of value through strategies of bricolage to create an immersive experience. Harlem Heritage Tours is one of the most successful cultural tourism companies operating in the neighborhood and one of the reasons is that it is perhaps the only one to have exclusively Harlem locals give tours. It is also one of the only ones, according to Neal, that incorporates mobile digital technologies into the tour experience. The types of value produced for tour participants—economic, intellectual and emotional—are all geared towards experiencing loci of value related to blackness in various ways. This is how ideas of racial difference become defined by market principles—or how it becomes commodified—under global capitalism. The image of blackness depicted in these reviews is one that reflects the production of different types of value through the ways tour participants experience it. Therefore blackness on TripAdvisor becomes defined through this valuating discourse.

The centrality of the tour guides in review content is a clue to their role in producing value for tour participants. They are needed to add something personal to the experience of static loci of value that are already known to tourists before visiting. Static loci of value are the initial reason for wanting to visit Harlem, but leaving Harlem with a positive impression largely seems to be dependent on the actions of the tour guide. And while tour participants may have an idea of ‘Harlem’ in their minds before visiting, review writers on TripAdvisor often claim to have an even clearer understanding of the community after taking a tour. The fact that these valuating narratives about experiencing racial difference appear in the form of online travel writing adds to their legitimacy in claiming that this is a proper way to manage racial difference and inequality, even though they represent an inherently biased viewpoint.

I ended this chapter with an extended description of my self-guided tour because of how it contrasted in so many ways with taking a guided tour of the same area. I found it to be a valuable experience both as a research activity and for the different—more intimate—view of the community I was able to see. But at the same time my positionality—both my research and educational background as well as taking several tours prior to this moment—allowed me to concentrate on the smaller moments because I was already somewhat immersed in the larger cultural environment. In other words, my

perceptions of Harlem during a self-guided tour are going to be much different from those of clock60 the Australian I discussed earlier in the chapter, had he done the same.

The second reason I include an extended discussion of the self-guided tour is because of the visibility of racially based resentment in the community at the end of the tour. The very public display of anger and frustration I witnessed across the street from the Apollo does not fit with the image of Harlem crafted by HHT staff during tours. Tour guides will mention current patterns of inequality but rarely discuss the specific reasons for this unless in historical terms. As this chapter shows, tour presentations that focus on inequality rather than inclusivity perhaps have a higher potential to generate negative reviews. For their part, reviewers seem to revel in the access to blackness granted by tour participation, but do not discuss the underlying conditions of oppression that have contributed to Harlem being known as an epicenter of the black experience. It is not a coincidence, in this sense, that Harlem first garnered this reputation in part because of earlier generations of white tourists visiting the area, and the stories they told about their visits (Dowling, 2007).

Racial commodification depends on a valuating discourse regarding the experience of racial otherness as well as a distributive mechanism to spread that discourse. The Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship produces both of these elements. It is also dependent on—and situated within—current means of articulating race as a social construction. And today the notion of racial difference is often trivialized through colorblind rhetoric. In this case, for the idea of race to be more thoroughly commodified—to be more completely rendered into an economic asset—it needs to be distanced from its undesirable qualities and attached to desirable ones (Werry, 2011). The next chapter discusses the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship as one that produces a discourse concerned with providing a value-oriented definition of racial difference and guidelines for action based on that definition. Rather than focus on what reviewers talk about, as is the case with this chapter, the next chapter discusses what is *not* mentioned by reviewers but is discussed by tour guides as part of the tour experience.

Chapter 6: Racial Discourse in the Harlem-TripAdvisor Relationship

Introduction

This chapter understands the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship as producing an informal discourse on race relations. In doing so, it highlights a disconnection between what reviewers write about on TripAdvisor concerning the idea of racial difference and how the idea of racial difference is presented during tours. The main feature of this disconnect is that review content focuses on aspects of Harlem's blackness while discussions of the racial oppression that affects black Harlemites—and that has historically played a role in Harlem's reputation as a black space—are rarely offered. This would seem to be a variant of color-blind racism (See Bonilla-Silva, 2001) but the fact that blackness is so visible—and positively discussed—in review content means analysis of color-blindness in this case needs to be more finely calibrated to fit this context.

In a special issue of *Sociological Perspectives* devoted to expanding and refining research on color-blind racism, Ashley Doane argues that research on color-blindness has developed three main limitations (2017). The first is "...a proliferation of mechanistic applications of color-blindness and of Bonilla-Silva's framework where the primary focus of the research is to identify the existence of color-blindness and/or specific frames in a new context (Doane, 2017: 976)." The second is that the term 'color-blindness', "can...be misleading. Color-blind racial ideology is *not* about "not seeing race" (i.e. being "blind to color"), but the denial and downplaying of racial inequality and racist practices (Doane, 2017:976)." The third limitation of contemporary color-blind research is for Doane the most troublesome:

“[Too] many analyses and commentaries tend to treat racial ideologies [such as color-blindness] as a social phenomenon *sui generis*—which leads to a focus on the nature of racial ideologies themselves at the expense of the social structures and institutional practices in which they are embedded (Burke, 2016). The danger here is that the *idea* of race and the existence of racist attitudes are viewed as the “causes” of racial oppression and racial inequality rather than as related (or even derived) phenomena (2017, 976).”

In other words, Doane argues that too much of the research on racial colorblindness focuses on how it is communicated and produced, rather than why it is communicated and produced. Furthermore, he argues that colorblindness should be thought of as a flexible ideology—one that bends and reshapes itself in accordance with a given cultural context for the purposes of maintaining white supremacy. The findings presented here are clearly an example of color-blindness, but the vast majority of online reviews do not contain language, for example, that can be easily coded into one of Bonilla-Silva’s original four frames of color-blind racism.

This chapter heeds Doane’s call for a more flexible understanding of the “why” of color-blindness and also draws from other ideas from that special issue in *Sociological Perspectives*. This includes Jayakumar and Adamian’s (2016, 2017) analysis of a fifth frame of color-blindness—the disconnected power-analysis frame—in conjunction with the phenomenon of white fragility. I find additional insights from Smith and Mayorga-Gallo’s (2017) discussion of diversity ideology—particularly the notion of diversity as commodity—as dovetailing with color-blind ideology.

Jayakumar and Adamian (2017) argue that white students in predominantly black colleges develop a distinct frame of color-blindness to help them cope with what Di Angelo (2011) calls white fragility in a minority white social environment. Di Angelo defines white fragility as, “a state in which even a minimal amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (2011: 54).” In a social environment where immediate exits or argumentation might not work to assuage sensations of white fragility, such as on an HBCU campus or—in this case— a walking tour in Central Harlem, whites will develop what Jayakumar and Ademian call a disconnected power-analysis frame of colorblindness. For the authors this frame:

“...allowed white students who were relatively informed about racial inequality to more comfortably engage with, fit into, and benefit from the predominantly black and more racially progressive environment in which their racial identity and privilege were more salient and more vulnerable to being challenged. Operating from this fifth frame facilitated refuge from white guilt, shame, and

fragility...[W]hen knowledge of racism and critically reflecting on whiteness did lead to dissonance, participants resolved discomfort of white fragility and potential loss of status among black peers by disassociating themselves and their actions from their theoretical understandings (2017: 931)

I quote the authors at length because this description encapsulates the kind of disconnection I observe between tour participation and online review content. But the research environments are different and in the case of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship we also need to consider the economic and social dynamics of tourism in the community as well as the role TripAdvisor's organizational structure plays in creating it. In this sense the notion of diversity ideology may be useful in understanding the role of racial valuation as it contributes in a paradoxical way to the phenomenon of color-blindness (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo, 2017; Embrick 2011). In other words, diversity ideology—through its emphasis on racial valuation—reinforces the central tenets of colorblindness by paradoxically arguing that racial identity itself is a benefit to society. Perceptions of race as benefitting society leave no room for interpretations of race that take into account the continuing persistence of racial inequality and hierarchy.

As the United States has grown more race conscious since the 1990s, Smith and Mayorga-Gallo argue there is an imperative to address racial ideologies that have moved away from color-blindness, such diversity ideology (2017). They define diversity ideology as, “a means by which whites are able to maintain dominance in multiracial spaces (2017: 890).” For the authors there are strong links between diversity ideology and color-blindness; as diversity ideology, “is often sutured with the frames of colorblind racism, allow[ing] individuals who live in a multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural society to reconcile the American creed of egalitarianism with ongoing and persistent inequality (2017: 890).” But even though there are strong parallels between notions of diversity and color-blindness as drivers of persistent racial hierarchy, there are important differences:

“Unlike color-blind racism...diversity ideology centers an appreciation and lauding of racial difference. In the face of dynamic demographics changes—shifts that may make whites a numerical minority [in the United States]—diversity ideology is, in part, a co-optation of calls for race consciousness that challenge color-blindness. Essentially, diversity ideology highlights race (and other axes of difference) to achieve colorblind ideals (2017: 890).”

Smith and Mayorga-Gallo identify four tenets of diversity ideology. Each of these may be applied in some way to the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship. The first is *diversity as acceptance*, “which is framed as celebration of differences...[that] equates the presence of various kinds of people as a sign of deep inclusion and integration despite ongoing and underlying structural inequalities (2017:895).” This tenet may be applied to the tourism

industry in general, but in this specific case the frame itself originates with the tour guides (especially Neal) and is even more seized upon by review writers. The second tenet described by Smith and Mayorga-Gallo (2017) is that of *diversity as commodity*, which is perhaps the most relevant in terms of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship. In this relationship the idea of racial difference itself, rather than something to be ignored or dismissed, becomes something worth spending money to experience. Smith and Mayorga-Gallo take an even more expansive view:

“The commodification of *the otherness* of racial-ethnic minorities by whites is the second tenet of diversity ideology. By commodification, we mean that nonwhites are treated as objects rather than people and are used by whites as objects that serve to benefit, entertain, or color the lives of whites. Diversity ideology allows whites to be lauded as antiracist for appreciating the different perspectives of people of color without considering the underlying structure that leads them to have these “different” perspectives and experiences than whites (2017: 897).”

Review writers for HHT seem to specialize in this frame, as this chapter will show, by signaling the spectacle of Harlem’s blackness rather than the reasons for its occurrence and shape. The last two tenets of diversity ideology include *diversity as intent* and *diversity as liability*. *Diversity as intent* is briefly defined as “requir[ing] whites to only have intentions of being inclusive (Smith and Mayorga-Gallo, 2017:900) and *diversity as liability* is briefly defined as the way whites discuss and craft policy responses to the perceived shortcomings of racial-ethnic diversity. These are more related to contextual aspects of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship, with *intent* more related to the conventions and norms of the tourism industry, and *liability* relevant to the gentrification of Harlem and the means by which it has become a ‘safer’ neighborhood. Taken together, these concepts form a set from which to analyze the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship as producing a discourse concerning racial inequality.

Chapter Roadmap

This chapter first presents ethnographic observations of how racial inequality is framed in tour presentations. As stated in the previous chapter, tour guides need to be judicious in their presentation of this topic because 1) it is important in providing an accurate portrayal of Harlem and 2) an overemphasis on racial inequality has increased potential to result in a negative experience for the white tour participant due to white fragility regarding racial confrontation. I describe three strategies commonly used by tour guides to frame presentations of racial inequality without making the tour seem completely about this social problem. The first is stories of oppression, either framed as personal experiences or as context to better understand Harlem’s loci of value. This strategy is geared towards addressing racial inequality at the individual perspective. The second strategy is discussions of negative racial representation, for which racial

stereotypes and racist portrayals of Harlem are often blamed on a disembodied notion of ‘the media’. This strategy is geared towards addressing racial inequality from a cultural perspective.

The third strategy concerns presentations of gentrification. This strategy addresses racial inequality concurrently from community and structural perspectives. All tour guides address gentrification in some way. In general there seems to be a strong ambivalence regarding its effects on the community. On one hand, Harlem is safer now than it was 30 years ago, and tour guides express genuine happiness over that development. On the other hand, as all tour guides also point out, gentrification represents an existential threat to the blackness that has made Harlem famous all over the world. It’s becoming harder, they say, for the people who endured hard times in the past to afford to live in Harlem today. As Doris is fond of saying, for example, “We couldn’t afford to die here...now we can’t afford to live here.” Based on this research it seems clear that tour guides are careful to include discussions of racial inequality during tour presentations and seem committed to an anti-racist messaging regarding race relations more generally during tours. But the centrality of these messages during tour presentations may vary based on the demographic composition of the tour group.

The middle section of this chapter focuses on my interactions with tour participants and conversations with them about why they wanted to visit Harlem—with responses being analyzed as reasons for wanting to experience blackness. These interactions come from both informal moments during tours and as part of the post-tour questionnaires, which usually featured short follow-up conversations with respondents. One of the major methodological differences between this study and many other studies of color-blindness is that I do not explicitly ask respondents their thoughts on racial inequality in general, rather more touristic—and purposefully color-blind—questions about their interest in wanted to specifically visit Harlem. I did this for two reasons. The first was not wanting to ‘rock the boat’ or be disruptive in any way while being a part of the tour presentation, as this would potentially interfere with HHT’s business. The second is that the question, “Why did you want to visit Harlem?” is also one of the questions that many TripAdvisor reviewers answer in the course of their online evaluations without directly stating the fact. This color-blind manner of questioning, then, also fits into the observed conventions of online review writing. Part of the analysis here concerns a tour participant’s willingness to bring up the idea of race without being directly prompted to do so.

The last sections of this chapter move back to TripAdvisor to understand the other side of this disconnect. Despite tour guides’ attempts to infuse tour presentations of Harlem with educational elements concerning racial inequality, they are very rarely reflected on TripAdvisor reviews. One reason for this may be the effectiveness of tour guide strategies in preventing white fragility from being triggered. These sections first

place the focus on how reviewers discuss blackness without speaking about underlying racial oppression. The focus then shifts to topics concerning racial inequality that are discussed or invoked by reviewers on an infrequent basis. These include mentions of Civil Rights, perceptions of safety, changing stereotypes, mentions of gentrification, and use of the words ‘black’, ‘race’ or ‘racism’ (which only happens once).

Visibility of Racial Inequality on Tours

Stories of Oppression: Personal and Contextual

All tour guides present narratives of racial oppression at various points during the course of a tour. Stories of oppression tend to be oriented from one of two perspectives: as either being reflected in the tour guide’s life experiences or as a framing device to understand aspects of Harlem’s culture, people, and history. Their prevalence in a tour may depend in part on the racial composition of the tour group, with multi-racial or majority-minority tours seeing more of these than majority white tours. In the spirit of this chapter, this discussion begins with a more exceptional example—discussing a presenter that is not a part of HHT and a tour that began, rather than ended, at the Apollo Theater.

Billy Mitchell and the Apollo

One of HHT’s offerings is a tour called the “Apollo Experience/Harlem Walking Tour”. These tours begin at the theater and include a presentation by Billy Mitchell, aka, ‘Mr. Apollo’. Today his title is the Apollo Theater’s official historian but over the course of a career spent at the theater since 1965 has held, according to him, just about every position one could hold. These presentations are not just given to HHT tour participants, and the crowd is often composed of other walking tour groups and people just there for the Apollo Experience.

I got a call from Neal telling me to meet the group at the Apollo, where we would link up with Doris for the post-Apollo walking tour. I arrived a bit early and was greeted by Billy in the theater lobby, directed inside the theater, and told to make myself comfortable while other people arrived. As other tourists started to come in I heard many of the same remarks as I had on earlier tours concerning the size of the space. “It seems much smaller than it does on TV.”, or “It’s tiny.” By 1pm a large group has gathered in the theater, with many family groups. The young people are glued to screens, the older folks are looking around the theater. I notice a large group of African American tourists wearing matching blue T-shirts. As I later find out they are all part of an extended family with members hailing from Miami, Washington D.C., Maryland, Delaware, Atlanta, and Greece. There’s another large extended family group from Michigan who Billy seems to

know personally, they are mixed race, white and black. There are also a number of smaller, white, family groups, including one from Austria.

The presentation involves three main parts, group introductions, Billy's monologue, and a group re-creation of the Apollo Theater's famous Amateur Night. Billy acts as the MC throughout the presentation. The first and third parts are meant to make people feel comfortable in the space. Billy is shorter, with a shaved head and rimless glasses. He's wearing a black Apollo T-Shirt and jeans, with black sneakers. He has training in acting and was able to consistently produce laughs for his audience during the introductions and mock amateur night competition. He effectively maintained audience attentions for over an hour. At one point during introductions he addresses a blind man, part of the larger black family with, "It's good to see you." The blind man responds, "It's good to see you too." The theater becomes very loud with laughter. This is a skillful move on Billy's part because he sets up the audience member to receive the reward for the joke. The third part of the presentation includes audience participation by way of onstage performance, this part both helps to further immerse the participants into the Apollo experience as well as end the presentation on a light note. The middle part of the presentation, however, includes a very personal description by Billy of the hardships he faced growing up. This part of the presentation, along with the following tour led by Doris—where not coincidentally I was the only white male participant—contained some of the most visceral descriptions of racial oppression I heard during any of the official HHT activities in which I participated.

After group introductions Billy starts his monologue with background about himself, rather than the Apollo Theater. He prefaces his remarks with comments about how difficult it can be to confront a traumatic past:

"I'm here to share things with you that you don't know. This is the difference between history and the truth. These are not the same things. Today we are talking about truths...The truth can be painful and embarrassing. It can make you angry. But that's what we're doing here today."

He begins by discussing his childhood, where he grew up in abject poverty. His family didn't have enough money for shoes, or new clothes, or even soap on a regular basis, so he eventually became known as a 'smelly kid' at school and was constantly ridiculed for it. He describes a tiny, tenement-like apartment where he rinsed off in a metal washtub—and there were two communal toilets for the whole floor to share. His father was out of the picture—alluded to at one point as a heavy drinker—and for brief periods he had been placed in foster care. One day his mom sent him to a cousin's house to borrow some money, this cousin wasn't home, but lived across the street from the Apollo. As he was waiting for his cousin to arrive a white man came out of the Apollo and approached him. He asked Billy if he was interested in making some money. The man was the owner of

the theater and was in the middle of producing one of the first runs of the Motown Review. They were busy and needed someone to run errands for food, coffee, clothing, etc. Billy was initially suspicious of the offer but agreed to do it. He ended up backstage at the Apollo, where performers like Smokey Robinson, The Temptations, the Four Tops, and a young Stevie Wonder were milling around. He came home that day with 167 dollars. His mom was initially mad that he had so much money: only by getting into trouble could a kid like this make so much money in one day. When he explained what had happened she replied: “So when are you going back?”

This humorous note punctuates a very personal story from Billy about his experiences with poverty and racism growing up. From there his monologue focuses on his experiences at the Apollo, with numerous stories about the famous people he has developed relationships with over the years. These include James Brown and Marvin Gaye, who together helped pay for his college education. And Denzel Washington and Tracey Morgan, who he met through his acting career when he was younger. At one point he mentions getting a call from the Secret Service and being rushed to the theater to give a tour to Michelle Obama and her daughters. His story is very much one of social climbing and overcoming long odds to become successful. But at the same time he emphasizes his personal success, he also, throughout his presentation, emphasizes how surreal and serendipitous the whole situation was. He describes his success as being in spite of the social constraints of his racial and economic status, not as being tempered by them. His tone of disbelief in describing how he’s been able to be friends with so many black entertainment legends belies a belief that he may be one of the lucky ones. In other words, the narrative of oppression he presents includes a realization that his personal experiences have been directly influenced by racial oppression at the societal level.

Billy transitions from his life story to a history of the building itself, which began life as a segregated burlesque house called Hertic and Seamons and did not open as the Apollo until 1934. He moves from there to the final portion of the presentation involving audience participation. We’re treated to impromptu performances—mostly song and dance—from some of the audience members. The audience rules were to cheer for everyone, except if they did not rub the Tree of Hope before beginning their performance. Then they were to be booed. We practiced booing several times.

All of the performances went off without a hitch in this regard, and the entire group was then invited onto the stage for pictures and to get a look at a wall backstage that has been signed by many former Apollo performers. These moments represent the conclusion of the “Apollo Experience” part of this tour and Doris was waiting for HHT customers in the back of the theater as this ended. This very small group consisted of Doris, two African-American female friends, a woman of Indian descent from London

and myself. Our destination was Upper Harlem, some thirty blocks north, and we took the subway to get there.

Doris and Emmett Till

We spent most of our time walking around the Sugar Hill and Hamilton Heights areas of Upper Harlem. Manhattan Island is so narrow here that in many places one can see east across the Harlem River to the Bronx and Yankee Stadium at the same time having clear views west across the Hudson River to New Jersey. We visited mostly residential buildings where many famous black Harlemites once lived and, in general, the tour was like most others I'd taken. But as the only white male involved in the tour the racial and gendered dynamics of the group here were very different from any other tour I was a part of. It also helped that I had already established a good rapport with Doris at that point. There was much more informal conversation between tour group members and it was clear that one of the two African American tour participants was very knowledgeable regarding black history. All of this made for a tour experience that seemed at once more intimate as well as more open to confronting the influence of racism in both Harlem and within the black community at large.

Perhaps the most salient example of this confrontation occurred near the conclusion of the tour as we were approaching the Schomburg Center, where the tour would end. At this point we had already spent over an hour in the Apollo Theater and two hours walking around Upper Harlem, making this one of the longest tours I took as part of this research. The other tour participants even became slightly agitated. As we were approaching the Schomburg, while we were still walking, Doris took the opportunity to discuss the significance of the Schomburg Center as an important archive of black history, once again focusing on the need for blacks, "to have a history".

To illustrate her point, she told a story about how Emmet Till's mother—Mamie Till Mobley—came to the Center to give testimony regarding her son's death for its Emmet Till Project. The detail which she provided, Doris said, made your skin crawl, "His mom was very worried that he'd been castrated...but they removed his eyeballs, skin..." She went on, including more graphic details about the lynching. She said it was one of the worst she'd ever heard of. One of the African American women chimed in, "...and all because he whistled at a white woman." The woman from London had not heard of Emmet Till or his murder but was quickly caught to speed by Doris and the other group members. The conversation, steered by one of the African-American tour participants, went from there to how effective the newly opened 'museum about lynching' [reference to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama] had been. There was no formal end to the conversation, just a few moments of

quiet contemplation before we passed another place of interest—a Popeye’s chicken franchise sitting on the old site of a jazz club called the Big Apple—from which New York’s most famous nickname is derived.

Despite the painful memories being revisited in this moment, the entire conversation happened almost as an aside. As I just mentioned, we were walking at the time and had not stopped to huddle around and hear a story. As soon as it began it ended, as part of the organic flow of conversation amongst the group. This was the only time I witnessed a conversation dealing so explicitly and graphically with racial oppression during a tour with HHT.

There is no need to protect white fragility if there are no white people on the tour. I may have had something of a racial pass in this regard because of my known status as a researcher and as a frequent taker of tours (At one point during this tour Doris asked me which route we should take to get back to the Schomburg Center). However, the conversation may have gone to an even deeper level on the topic of racial oppression if I had not been present. Regardless, these kinds of details did not come up in most tour presentations in which I participated.

Andy, Columbia, and the Cotton Club

Based on my observations of online reviews, Andy seems to be the most outspoken guide regarding confrontations with racial oppression working for HHT. During the one tour I took with him this was not as readily apparent, aside from his focus on gentrification, which he spent a lot of time discussing during the tour (to be discussed in more detail later). Andy also seems to be more likely than other guides to attach the word ‘racist’ to explanations of Harlem’s past and culture. For example, when we visited the sites of the old Cotton Club and Savoy Ballroom, Andy described the former as a “racist establishment...[where] blacks could enter only doing one of four things: porter, janitor, musician, or entertainer in some way.” It was very popular with Europeans at the time, he says. He spent much more time discussing the Savoy Ballroom, which unlike the Cotton Club was integrated. He also shared some information about his personal experiences with racial discrimination. This specifically relates to his time at Columbia University, where he studied English Literature and Theater. All of the theater and acting clubs at the school, he said, wouldn’t allow him to join. So he started one of his own.

Andy uses racial oppression as a framing device for some, but not the majority, of the loci of value associated with tourism in Harlem. Once again, the group composition may have also been a factor in how racial oppression was framed. For example our group was very small and included a couple from Brazil, one of which was a graduate

student studying how poor women were being used as drug mules. She had done research in favelas and was familiar with tourism in those areas, for example, and also had an interest in the problems of racial inequality facing contemporary Harlem. Racially based social divisions are a major factor in understanding Harlem's history, culture, and people. Although Andy does explicitly discuss this in some contexts, it was somewhat minimized during his tour presentation. This is even more the case with Neal, who is also more likely to give tours to larger groups of white people. While Doris and Andy (and Billy) seem to rely on white-friendly versions of Afro-centric ideology to present Harlem to tourists, Neal seems much more grounded in an approach based on diversity ideology, although it's not clear that he subscribes to it personally.

Neal and Diversity Ideology

Neal uses the first frame of diversity ideology, *diversity as acceptance*, as a way to produce value for tour participants. Its strategic use softens the blow of racial confrontation for white visitors, allowing them to be more relaxed and feel welcomed in the community. This often starts during the opening presentations when Neal brings the group together for introductions and his opening monologue.

For example on a Gospel/Civil Rights tour that included almost 20 Danish high school students, an Australian family of four, and two couples from Israel, Neal began his speech by discussing how blacks in the early 20th century were living in slave-like conditions in the US South. This made many decide to migrate north to the great industrial cities where there was supposedly more freedom. But when they arrived they found conditions were almost as bad as those they had left behind. He specifically mentions drug use and police brutality as major contributors to those conditions, but not, for example, overt racism (i.e. hate crimes), job discrimination, or housing segregation. He continued by discussing churches as major contributors to the Civil Rights Movement before pivoting to a discussion of President Trump. At this point it was clear he was tailoring his comments to a mostly non-American audience:

“Trump is not the best representation of America, and he also presents a bad representation of African Americans.”

In these short comments Neal criticizes Trump on two levels while simultaneously drawing blackness close to American-ness (and Harlem-ness). In doing so, Neal distances his audience from the racism Trump symbolizes in this moment, which by proxy is un-American, and unacceptable. He continues, “But that's ok, because today we have a beautiful mosaic of people in this room.” And as we're standing up to leave the HHT office and walk to New Canaan Baptist he adds one more point:

“If not for the involvement of young white kids [he says as he puts on his backpack] the Civil Rights Movement doesn’t happen.”

During the opening presentation of another Civil Rights/Gospel Tour Neal spoke more specifically about Malcolm X, who in Harlem during the 1960’s was saying things like, “The white man is the devil. But in the South white kids and black kids are getting together to desegregate interstate transportation [reference to Freedom Riders].” He then pulls two white teenagers to their feet, locks arms with them, and briefly mimics the *We Shall Overcome* swaying march. “These kids, black and white,” he says, “were beat up...and worse, for their actions.” As for Malcolm X’s hostility toward whiteness, Neal remarks: “These for us are scary words. But for Malcolm X this was the truth.”

These comments are solidly within the *diversity as acceptance* frame of diversity ideology, however with some added depth and slight Afro-centric framing. Neal uses them to help suture tour participants into the Harlem experience while also creating a distance between *bad* whiteness, symbolized by President Trump, and *good* whiteness, symbolized by the tour participant. Notably, the remarks about Malcolm X do not go so far as to identify him—in a similar light as Trump—as being associated with a ‘bad’ form of blackness. For Neal there doesn’t seem to be a version of that emanating from blacks themselves—and it is framed as a media construction.

The comment about the necessity of white support in the Civil Rights Movement make it seem as if young white kids—and general whiteness by proxy—had nothing to do with the overt racism of the Jim Crow era. This move historically compartmentalizes problems of racism and creates distance between tour participants and conceptions of whiteness as an inherently racist identity. This distance, according to Smith and Mayorga-Gallo (2017) is what allows whites to benefit from brushes with racial difference. Taken together these moments in the opening presentation prepare tour participants to think of themselves as ‘exceptional whites’ (Mayorga-Gallo, 2017) in terms of their openness to understanding racial difference and Harlem’s role in understanding it. In effect, Neal’s strategic use of diversity ideology simultaneously distances these specific white people from undesirable versions of whiteness, celebrates multiple forms of understanding black identity, and helps produce the group solidarity needed for the moving tourist bubble. All of this, in turn, leads to positive online reviews.

Neal’s Life Experiences

I’ve been able to piece together a short narrative of Neal’s family history and his start in the tourism industry based on my fieldnotes from different tours. This narrative was never presented in its entirety on a single tour but each tour I took with him contained some of this information. The entire story is one that Neal uses in tours to contextualize

racial oppression on a personal level—but is always presented as just bits and pieces on a given tour—and in a humorous and lighthearted manner. This is a brief summary, and this information was never presented in a straightforward way, as Neal takes many verbal twists and turns as part of his presentational style.

Parents

During one opening monologue at the HHT office Neal used his parent's stories' to show how he came to be a Harlemiter but the example also describes how Harlem became a black community based on both pull and push factors. Pull factors refer to the reasons New York and other northern cities became attractive for black southerners because of job availability and perceived lower levels of racism. Push factors refer to the reasons black southerners wanted to leave the south, including de jure segregation, racial terrorism, and the semi-slave like life of the sharecropper. His mother was briefly described as being from Pensacola and had moved to Harlem to find work. His father, on the other hand, was from South Carolina and had begun dating a white woman. His mother (Neal's grandmother) made him move to Harlem, for fear of being lynched.

Childhood

On the subject of childhood, where he was raised in the MLK public housing towers, he once said, "There was no bedbug 'epidemic'[air-quotes]...when I was growing up near here...they were just THERE!". This is at once a funny joke, an explication of poverty, and a means of distancing the present circumstances from those hard times. Like Billy Mitchell, Neal's personal experiences with racial oppression and as an upward social climber serve sometimes as a marker for how he represents a fortunate Harlemiter. They also serve as a proxy for framing Harlem's newfound prosperity as generally a positive development for the community. This kind of framing situates tour participants as agents in that prosperity at the same time it deflects attention from the negative effects of gentrification.

Education

At other times, like Andy, Neal uses personal experiences to highlight dynamics of racial inequality during tour presentations. This is common, for example, when Neal's discusses the significance of Adam Clayton Powell Jr.'s links to Harlem as well as his legislative legacy representing Harlem in Congress. This particular moment occurred towards the end of tours in conjunction with arriving at African Square on 125th Street directly in front of the Adam Clayton Powell Federal Office Building (one of the tallest in Harlem), and in the shadow of a statue of the man himself.

Neal pulled up a video clip of Powell Jr.'s famous, "It's in your hand!" speech and then discussed how he worked to desegregate the education system and provide more

educational opportunity to poor blacks. He talked about how he was very light skinned and married a dark skinned woman in part to show greater solidarity with the black community. Neal asks rhetorically, “Why is all of this important?” He then directs our attention to a public housing tower visible to the south. “I had a girlfriend in that building who had a very tricky mom.” He said she made him take a test in order to be able to visit date her daughter—a high school equivalency test. He passed, and his girlfriend’s mom eventually helped him get into college, “As far away from her daughter as possible [he laughs]...but at the time there were still lots of bullets flying around the neighborhood. School was still safe.” Neal explains that this all was possible, especially his college education, through Adam Clayton Powell Jr’s legislative efforts.

How Neal Became a Tour Guide

I’ve heard Neal give a detailed description of how he came to be a tour guide twice, and each time the narrative was essentially the same. The first time occurred during a post-tour conversation we had at a Starbuck on 125th Street and the second time was when a tour participant asked him during the opening presentation of a Civil Rights/Gospel Tour. The major difference in these accounts were the setting and the audience. The first time he presented it to me in a very straightforward way, and in a semi-professional tone per the general manner of our conversation. The second time he was in full tour guide mode, and notably inserted jokes about racial discomfort and tourist behavior into the narrative:

“I was standing across the street here [gesturing outside the window] on the mosque’s corner. I’d been playing basketball and was about to meet some friends for food. I saw a group of about 12 people sort of checking out the mosque. I approached them and they kind of freaked out [here Neal did an exaggerated “hands up” gesture]...I was like ‘I mean you no harm.’ They asked if I knew what the building was, and I told them this used to be Malcolm X’s mosque. And they thought that was great and started asking more questions which I was able to mostly answer. By this point my friends had caught up to me and were trying to get me to leave so we could eat. But the Turkish tourists say they want to come and eat *with us*. Neal’s friends do not want to do this but Neal says “What’s the harm? Especially if they pay??” The group from Turkey did indeed pay to eat with them, at Sylvia’s now, instead of a cheaper place [Neal’s decision]. I lead the whole group there and along the way answered questions about the neighborhood and pointed out famous spots [monologue paraphrased from fieldnotes].”

After finishing lunch—and in addition to paying for lunch for Neal and his friends—each of the Turkish tourists gave Neal ten dollars. As he is recounting this windfall, Neal does a humorous impression of how each of the Turks produced the cash, involving a frantic check of all areas of the body, and joking about how money was coming out of, “socks, waistbands, hats, and sleeves”.

Neal says, “Wow...I just made 120 dollars just walking around...how can I set it up so I can do that again?” At the time, there were no walking tours Harlem.

The two moments to take note of in this account are Neal’s descriptions of his opening and closing moments with what turn out to be his first customers. Neal frames the group from Turkey as being fearful in their initial encounter, and jokes about how that fear was always present through the encounter—evidenced by the hidden money. The middle of the narrative describes how Neal was able to produce value in the experience of racial difference for community outsiders. It is not uncommon for travelers to hide money and many travel guides encourage travelers to do the same. The reason for this is that tourists stand out—more than locals—as targets for theft because of their obvious outsider status and the assumptions of wealth associated with that status. But in these contexts, and as Neal tells it as a black man himself, the specter of ‘dangerous’ blackness is unfortunately present in the minds of many potential visitors to Harlem. The reasons for that, according to Neal, are due to negative representations of Harlem’s blackness in the media industries.

Discussions of Racial Representation

All of the tour guides engage with examples of racial representation: art, literature, film, television, etc. as part of the tour experience. The primary difference is that Neal focuses more on racial representation coming from outside of blackness, or not created by black people; where Doris and Andy focus on black-centric aesthetics, or representations of blackness coming from within. Neal is more much more likely to engage with what he calls, “mainstream media” in order to draw connections—or highlight disconnections—between what tour participants may have heard about Harlem before visiting with Harlem as it is today. Doris and Andy’s emphasis seems to be on educating tour participants about Harlem’s influential role in developing black aesthetic traditions. This may be partly due to the nature of the tours that each guide leads, with Neal more like to take the lead on the Gospel/Civil Rights Tour and Doris and Andy more likely to take on General History Tours or Harlem Renaissance Tours. But this is also due to each tour guide’s different approach to confronting racial inequality on tours.

Doris, Andy, and Black Aesthetics

One the one tour I took with Andy, he utilized discussions of black aesthetics to a lesser degree than Doris, as his style tended to emphasize political and structural themes. At one point during our tour he characterized the New York Post (owned by Rupert Murdoch) as a racist publication read by Wall Street types for fun on their way to work. One of the first places we visited on our tour was the site where Marcus Garvey gave his

first public address. Andy spent a lot of time talking about Garvey's life and work, including the print shop where he made and distributed the newspaper *Negro World*. Andy also spent a lot of time talking about Malcolm X. He talked mostly about black aesthetics at relevant sites such as the where old jazz clubs (like the Savoy and Cotton Club) used to be as well as the Apollo Theater.

Doris spends more time discussing black aesthetics, focusing not just on Harlem's musical heritage but also its literary, artistic, and theatrical heritage. She also ties in discussions of black aesthetics with underlying conditions of racial inequality. For example she is fond of explaining the reasons and purpose for the Afrocentric American flag commonly seen in Harlem, with the same design as the American flag but—instead of red, white, and blue—colored green (symbolizing African land), black (symbolizing African skin) and red (symbolizing African blood). In another instance she ties the art exhibit at Harlem Hospital to the push-pull factors that lead to Harlem becoming a black space. She also shows how the exhibit itself tells a story of black hardship. She discusses how Motown helped the community get through the hard times of the 1960s and 1970s. But she did not at anytime, for example, discuss racial representation generated by Harlem outsiders or racial outsiders.

Neal, Pop-culture, and 1925 Graham Court

Doris and Andy's styles of discussing mass media stand in stark contrast to Neal's approach. Neal mentions pop-culture and outsider interpretations of Harlem quite frequently during tours. Most of this is used as a critique of negative representations of Harlem associated with the historical era I've previously identified as Criminal Harlem. In discussing negative media representations, Neal uses one building in particular, 1925 Graham Court, as a primary foundation for his critiques.

Neal stopped in front of this building on all of the tours I took with him. It is an effective prop in explaining Harlem's history because it was built by the Waldorf-Astoria family between 1899 and 1901. The building's history is a microcosm, in many ways, of the history of the community itself. The building was originally built as luxury apartments for rich whites wanting to move away from the congested lower Manhattan area, but as Harlem became blacker—and poorer—it came to be more associated with drug use, crime, and the ghetto. This image, Neal explains, was immortalized in the film *New Jack City*, where Wesley Snipes' drug lord character turns the building—named "The Carter" in the film—into New York's most notorious crack-house. Neal brings

tours to spots on the sidewalk where scenes from the movie were filmed. On one tour during a presentation here he draws our attention to a black man in a nice suit walking out of the building, “Does he look like a gangster to you?”

Neal also frequently mentions the film *American Gangster* perpetuating the image of Harlem as a violent and dangerous place. It seems that, overall, one of Neal’s major goals in tour presentations is dismantling the outsider produced negative racial stereotypes surrounding those of Criminal Harlem. For Doris and Andy, this era of Harlem’s history was real, and dangerous, but they both stress that this era was not self-induced by Harlem’s black residents. Doris once discussed how no government between Johnson’s and Clinton’s did anything to help the community when it needed help the most. She mentioned men coming from war (in Korea and Vietnam) and combinations of PTSD and heroine addictions—not being prepared for civilian life, and then not being able to find jobs on top of that. These problems were then compounded in the 1980’s by the emergence of widespread crack use and the the AIDS epidemic. Each of these strategies, however, distances white tour participants from feeling responsible for any of it, with Neal citing ‘mainstream media’ as the cause of negative racial representation while Doris and Andy cite historical circumstance. One of the most pressing issues of racial inequality facing Harlemites today is economic pressure associated with gentrification, and evidence of gentrification is abundantly clear while walking around the neighborhood. Each tour guide addresses it in different ways. Due to its visibility and importance to the lives of community members, presentation of gentrification are one of the main ways tour guides confront issues of racial inequality during tours.

Presentations of Gentrification

Presentations of gentrification might seem rather specific compared to the other two strategies employed by tour guides to confront racial inequality—namely stories of oppression and discussions of racial representation—but introducing the phenomenon to tour participants is probably the single most direct way that tour guides do so. As mentioned before it is discussed in largely ambivalent terms. Gentrified Harlem is a safer neighborhood compared to 30 years ago, but as a result Harlem is less black than it has been in 100 years. Gentrification is framed outside of HHT as both a new *renaissance* and as the end, or death, of black Harlem (Jackson, 2001; Maurrasse, 2006). Many locally based African-American individuals and organizations played key roles in establishing current patterns of gentrification in the community, and many of the incoming gentrifiers are black themselves. But the primary agents of gentrification in Harlem’s case stem from a combination of corporate infiltration of the 125th Street

business corridor (Chinyelu, 1999) and sharply increasing real estate prices as a result of white New Yorkers relocating to Harlem from other parts of Manhattan in order to escape the even higher costs of living found south of Central Park (Maurrasse, 2006). The role tourism plays here is no less complicated. On one hand, tourism celebrating Harlem's black heritage is a way to maintain black claims to the area. On the other hand, it may also be interpreted as an agent of gentrification because of the way it produces experientially based value regarding the community, which can then be translated to higher property values.

In the 5 years since I've been visiting the community as part of this research I've noticed visible changes in the community as a result of gentrification. On recent trips I've noticed fewer empty buildings—and more gleamingly restored ones, fewer black residents hanging out on front stoops—and more whites in suits hurrying in and out. This is all described as a major challenge facing Harlem residents by tour guides, and on tours we see actual examples of it. But it is rarely discussed in review content.

Neal and Gentrification

Neal seems to spend less time discussing gentrification now on tours than he did when I first started this research. For example on the first tour I ever took with Neal in 2014 he stopped our group in front of an empty and abandoned building near Abyssinian Baptist. It was fenced off with a sign in the front reading Abyssinnian Baptist Corporation, which is a privately owned real-estate enterprise affiliated with Harlem's most well-known church. The building was due to be torn down and replaced with new apartments. Neal explained that this was an example of how Harlem was changing with gentrification. This development constituted economic stimulation for the community and local job creation. However, it was not likely that a long-time community member would ever reside in one of the new units. On the same tour, two blocks past that spot, Neal stopped us in front of two nearly identical brick apartment buildings, three floors each. The building on the right, Neal said, was occupied by families living in city-subsidized, and rent-controlled apartments. They paid five hundred dollars a month to live there. The building on the left, Neal explained, had just been sold to private developers and was being converted to luxury condominiums that would cost over five hundred thousand dollars. With that much money to be made, Neal continued, "How long do you think the families in the building on the right will be allowed to live here?" As the tour concluded Neal returned again to this theme, directly comparing gentrification to a new civil rights issue facing Harlem residents.

Neal is not able to present gentrification on tours in this manner anymore. Abandoned buildings in heart of Central Harlem—where most tours take place—are increasingly few and far between. Now the discussion hinges more on newly restored buildings' value on the real estate market. He has accordingly adjusted his strategies, for

example discussing gentrification through the lens of community relationships in public housing courtyards. But often Neal doesn't need to bring it up directly, as elements of gentrification would just seem to become visible during the course of the tour presentation.

One example of how gentrification would be apparent was during discussions of stoop culture—which all tour guides engaged in. These discussions would normally occur as we were walking down a tree lined side street populated by large brownstone houses. On several occasions as tour guides were discussing the significance of the 'stoop' to community relations white people would emerge from a nearby front door. I do not remember one time seeing a black person hanging out in front of a brownstone. One time Neal was in the middle of a detailed story in front of a row of brownstones about how Harlem became black, when many of these brownstones became multigenerational homes for new arrived African-Americans. At one point he asked us to imagine a multiple generation black family—aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc. living in the brownstone directly behind us to illustrate his point. As he said this two well-dressed white men emerge from the building. Neal made a joke as it happened, "...well in my head those guys are black and originally from South Carolina." Almost the exact same thing had happened the previous day on a tour with Doris, except that time white occupants came out of a brownstone she had identified as former home of Booker T. Washington's grandson.

Neal is asked about gentrification on tours and tends to give a similar response. He says it's not worth it if Harlemites are pushed out of the community. He says that one of the ways to solve the problem is to use the community's newfound prosperity to improve the local education system, giving Harlem's black youth a chance to eventually be able to afford to live here. I have also heard him use the phrase, "use it or lose it" referring to how the community should respond to gentrification. For example he told a story about getting together with a friend for breakfast. Neal wanted his friend to pick the place, and his friend said, "Let's go to Whole Foods!" Neal said, "Nah man, let's go to a black place instead." His friend responds, "But Whole Foods is good too...good food, and it's cheap." According to Neal, the Harlem Whole Foods lowered their prices for this particular store so it would be accessible for low-income residents to shop there.

Neal paints a picture of corporate benevolence at odds with more critical or Afro-centric interpretations of the influence of gentrification in Harlem (Jackson 2001; Chinyelu, 1999). And this incident in particular—when considered alongside some of his other comments regarding gentrification—speaks to a strong ambivalence regarding these developments. This story also acts as a strategy for making tourists feel welcome in the community. Like the tour participant, Whole Foods is here portrayed as an agent of

whiteness—being directly contrasted in the story to a ‘black place’—that is embraced by black community members.

Doris: Real estate as a locus of value

Doris seems to have a deep knowledge of the architectural history of Harlem, being especially adept at identifying buildings and their links to famous Harlem personalities. She uses this knowledge to discuss gentrification in terms of Harlem’s booming real estate market. Doris does not present opinions regarding gentrification to the extent that Neal and Andy do—although one time she did comment that Brooklyn may now be considered the heart of black New York—rather she seems to let the facts speak for themselves, and for tour participants to make their own conclusions regarding gentrification.

She discusses gentrification as a ‘new renaissance’ where one of the results is a ‘dwindling’ of the black population in the community, with many folks moving back south to North Carolina, and more specifically Stone Mountain, Georgia. These discussions typically occur as we walk down side streets lined with brownstone row-houses, as these are the most desirable residences in the area. They usually involve a story about how little the property used to be valued—at one point the City of New York was selling properties in the community for as little as one dollar—and how expensive it is now, with restored brownstones near the 125th Street corridor costing well over one million dollars. She also talked about how churches are cashing in on Harlem’s gentrification by selling rights to airspace over existing structures to real estate developers. Doris explained how this works as we were standing in front of one such church. The original building had been torn down and a taller one built in its place. The bottom few floors remained church property, with another four levels of apartments located above. This is a practice in Harlem going back at least as far as 2005 (Wapshott, 2005) and this was the first time I’d heard about it on a tour.

In other words, Doris does not come out and directly say that gentrification is a threat to Harlem’s blackness like Neal and Andy do. Rather, she first mentions how the black population is decreasing in Harlem, then shows the tour group a brownstone that has recently sold for 1.5 million dollars. The connection between gentrification and racial inequality is made obvious without obviously talking about it. And it seems many tour participants come to Harlem with prior understandings of the dynamics of gentrification. In my experience taking tours with HHT questions regarding gentrification’s impact on Harlem are some of the most frequently asked.

Andy and Gentrification

The tour guide most willing to talk about gentrification is Andy. In fact on the one tour I took with him this was the most frequently discussed topic. I've already discussed several instances of this so I will describe a more substantive conversation that took place during our tour where he presented three broad perspectives concerning gentrification's impact in Harlem, and why it is happening. One feature of gentrification he discussed at length was how it was changing the class structure of the neighborhood in addition to its racial composition (something Neal brought up with me in private conversation but not on a tour). He discussed how Harlem was becoming more integrated in terms of class, with many middle- and upper-class blacks occupying the same space as poor or working class blacks. He contrasted this with many other inner-city areas in the United States, which have a less integrated class structure and mostly consist of low income households. He presented three distinct 'angles' (his word) regarding gentrification in Harlem [all paraphrased from fieldnotes]. The first is historical:

Gentrification is the opposite of what happened in the early 20th century [when Harlem became black]. Way back in the day...whites lived in the central city and blacks lived on the outskirts, but as whites moved out to the suburbs, central city areas became more black...now...white people are wanting to move back to central city areas while many middle class blacks have fled Harlem for the suburbs because of high property prices.

The second is community based:

Gentrification means that the children of most of the African Americans living in Harlem today won't be able to afford it when they are adults...but...today Harlem is as safe as Mid-Town.

The third is economic:

Harlem is 15 minutes from Times Square and 35 from Wall Street. This is valuable land because of how close it is to some of the most valuable real estate in the world.

I asked Andy if he had ever had gentrifiers on a tour. He said he had and that he welcomed their presence because it was important for them to 'know' the community they live in. He said he wished more African-Americans would take the tours. For Andy, it seems the whiteness of the typical tour group may mirror the growing whiteness of a typical Harlem street. He is the only tour guide to discuss gentrification in such a multi-faceted way. He is the only one to comment on the larger political-economic forces external to Harlem that have led to widespread gentrification and the ways it poses a

direct threat to Harlem's blackness. Perhaps it is for these reasons that reviewer Cap26, in a 3 star review, commented:

Our guide was a personable and sprightly 84 year old who loved Harlem with a passion but we were taken down a few streets and given accounts of how the area was becoming gentrified and too pricey for locals to stay. The ways in which Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and other significant political and social figures had impacted and shaped Harlem was overlooked, something I was expecting as part of the exploration of the streets and local community.

The reviewer's comments suggest that confronting contemporary issues of racial oppression are less desirable, or valuable than being presented with historical context regarding that oppression. This is a common pattern in review content, and I observed similar sentiments in my conversations with tour participants regarding their reasons for wanting to visit Harlem.

Why do tourists want to visit Harlem?

Conversations with tour participants

Most of my conversations with tour participants regarding their reasons for wanting to visit Harlem—and all of the written answers provided by respondents in the questionnaire—are heavily coded with diversity ideology, particularly the first two frames, *diversity as acceptance* and *diversity as commodity*. I've already mentioned the Australian who wanted to visit Harlem, "to see places that I've seen in movies and TV". In a similar light a tour participant from France (white male) expressed a desire to see actual places that had influenced the development of jazz and soul music, two of his favorite musical genres. These desires seem to combine the first two frames of diversity ideology because they signal a desire to experience racial difference (*diversity as acceptance*) as a means to enhance their appreciation for selected elements of black aesthetic traditions (*diversity as commodity*).

In general my conversations with tour participants were conducted in a color-blind manner but there were occasion when the subjects of touristic discomfort and community perceptions of tourists did arise. For example, I had a short conversation with a woman from Australia on a Sunday morning before the official tour started and we

discussed the idea that tourists might be intruding on church services. She expressed some discomfort about the idea—the thought had crossed her mind—but had rationalized it by pointing out that churches had the right to refuse tourists if they wanted to—if it was *really* too much of an intrusion.

Another time on a tour with Andy our group stopped in front of an open hair salon, where he explained the importance of such establishments to the black community. There were people in the salon giving us dirty looks through the window and it was clear they didn't appreciate being objects of a walking tour in that moment. We took a break later in the tour and I brought it up to the Brazilian tour participant who was familiar with favela tourism. She said she had seen the looks too—acknowledging the discomfort—but then pivoted to how favela tourism objectifies poverty for tour participants and how favela residents are resentful of it—thereby distancing herself from the previous encounter. These actions and comments seem to be consistent with how Jayakumar and Adamian define as *disconnected power-analysis* frame of color-blindness (2017).

Questionnaire Responses

Written answers to the question “For what reasons did you want to visit Harlem?” tended to be briefer than descriptions of online searches or reasons for taking a tour of Harlem specifically with HHT. Most written answers (6 out of 10) to this question consisted of expressed desires for access to common loci of value found in Harlem tourism: music, history, culture, and art. Only one of these respondents mentioned ‘black’ history and culture specifically. Other respondents express desires for community immersion. For example one respondent from Canberra writes that they wanted to visit Harlem because it was ‘more authentic’ and ‘less touristy’—presumably than more tourist heavy areas of the city such as Times Square or the Freedom Tower. This respondent (unlike any others) also mentions a walking tour as a chance to “give back to the community”. The notion that tour participants are ‘giving back’ is an important justification for tourist development in general in underprivileged communities. This instance also shows how experiences with racial difference come are expressed in economic terminology. One respondent from London mentioned attending a funeral service at Abyssinian Baptist and becoming interested in taking a tour based on that experience, with the timing of her trip working out to take an additional tour in Harlem to “have a more in-depth, insider’s view of the neighborhood.” Other respondents in short follow up conversations mentioned desires to experience an authentic, or insider’s, experience. One African American respondent simply wrote, “Harlem has always been an interest of mine. I love all the stories I hear.”

The vagueness of these responses may be due partially to the research setting and partially due to external conventions regarding discussions of race in public with strangers. Either way, the important part to note is that they *are* vague, standing in some contrast to the more detailed responses—though still imprecise answers—I received for other questions. For example, one female respondent from the Netherlands, in explaining why she wanted to visit Harlem, wrote, “I love music.” For the question about taking a tour with HHT she wrote, “For me the combination of music, history, and society is very interesting.” In general these patterns of expression, both in questionnaires and in conversations with tour participants, seem to mirror patterns of expression found on TripAdvisor regarding the HHT experience.

In sum, my ethnographic observations of HHT show how ideas of race and racial inequality are made visible during tour presentations but not made the focal point of the tour itself. This seems to be a strategy for producing touristic value for tour participants that guides may not subscribe to personally. But it is one they engage in nonetheless due to conventions in the tourism industry, and those associated with whiteness more generally. Based on my conversations with tour participants it seems the disconnection between Harlem’s blackness and underlying conditions of racial oppression starts to happen as soon as tour experiences are communicated to an outside party. The next step in understanding the racial discourse produced by the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship is to hear what reviewers have to say about race and racial inequality. This research shows that despite the visibility of race during tours, ideas of race and racial difference are far less commonly mentioned by tour participants and online reviewers—regardless of their racial identity.

Racism on TripAdvisor

For the most part review content on TripAdvisor contains language steeped in milder versions of color-blindness and especially diversity ideology. There are some reviews however, both positive and negative, that contain racist language and terminology. For example the word “projects” is used to public housing in review content on several occasions. Neal himself uses the word but always referencing its externality to Harlem, “This is what the media call ‘the projects.’” One reviewer, the previously discussed MJUtah (see Chapter 5) writes, for example, that, “Neil grew up in the projects of Harlem (oops...the developments).” This is the only review that features a written self-correction of this nature and might be interpreted as the writer signaling to the reader an acceptable way to describe Harlem’s public housing online. Only one review contains what can be considered truly color-blind racism, as described by Bonilla-Silva (2006). It comes in a negative review from leonbc, from New York:

Despite him saying hi to everyone in the street and referring to them as family, I did not feel that other from Neal, this sense of community. I saw a few old

women who seemed drunk and possibly available for personal services, quite a lot of neglected buildings and a lot of nickel and dime stores, a lot of kids dressed in hip-hop/gangsta apparel (who I didn't necessarily feel safe near) and many, many barber shops. That is not intended as a critique of Harlem, because I wanted to go there and soak it up for myself. I just regret paying a guy to lie to me and tell me everyone muddles together and live as a happy community because I did not sense that.

These comments were included as part of a 1500 word negative review, by far the longest review in the sample. The comments stand out from those made in other negative reviews not just because of their racist content but also for their critical nature towards the community itself, similar to what Bonilla-Silva calls *cultural racism*. But notice how the reviewer ends these comments by backtracking on their previous criticisms and putting most of the blame on the tour guide. Neal wrote a long and detailed response to this review defending the community from inaccurate statements and clarifying the use of kinship terminology as Harlem vernacular. He did not respond to the comments about women being "drunk and possibly available for personal services" and never accused any part of the review as being explicitly racist.

Blackness versus Race in Online Reviews

Leonbc is one of the only reviewers who take issue with Harlem's blackness during the course of a written review. Most reviewers, however, seem to revel in it. The problem is that certain aspects of blackness seem to be valued more than others. To provide context for this phenomenon, I show a full review then explain how it revolves around themes of cultural blackness and how those are separated from explicit mentions of racial difference in the course of a review.

(43) Cathleen A, Honolulu (5 stars)

Harlem Experience

My friends and I are still talking about how wonderful this tour was. We enjoyed the walk through Harlem with Neal who wanted all of us to get the feeling of Harlem with the music as we walked with him. He was so informative and trying to get us all to visualize all that happened in its history.

We were enthralled with the Canon Church [New Canaan Baptist]. They were so involved with their community and their project when we were there was to raise money for the poor so that they could give them a Turkey for Thanksgiving.

The music at the church was fantastic. We had never been to a gospel church, so, it was very exciting for us to experience.

We felt like we truly got more than our money's worth because we were probably with this tour for about 5 hours. We felt that Neal and his group really didn't do this tour for money but to give the public a history to present of Harlem. Where can you find a tour for \$39 and spend 5 hours on a tour? It was a great Harlem Experience.

Neal and Andy were great and the tour at the Apollo Theatre with Billy was very informative too.

We'd recommend this tour if you want to get a great Harlem Experience (11-20-13).

This reviewer enjoyed their experience with blackness and uses different code words to discuss it. This is a common strategy for reviewers to discuss blackness without directly saying so. The most prominent word, in this case as with all other reviews, is the word "Harlem". Other words and phrases coded for blackness include, "gospel church", "community", and "Apollo Theater". The word 'community' is coded here as a discussion of blackness because the community referred to here is New Canaan Baptist's congregation and all observed church members were African-American. Other words coded for blackness include 'soul food', 'jazz', and the names of famous African American individuals and Harlem buildings. There is not much variation in the elements of blackness being discussed in review content, but reviewers use these elements in different ways to engage with potential readers.

This is bricolage in action, but using fewer elements of the available cultural set than those utilized by tour guides. This review is also notable for the way it discusses the economic value of the Harlem experience. The reviewer's comments regarding perceptions of economic value related to tour costs show how experiences with racial difference come to be expressed in market terms. The reviewer then goes further and suggests that perhaps HHT does not even offer tours for financial reasons, rather to "give the public a history to present of Harlem". This comment downplays the importance of HHT as source of income for tour guides at the same time it suggests that outsiders are somehow entitled to learn about Harlem's history through a walking tour. This review is typical of many reviews in that it contains language coded as pertaining to blackness, yet none coded as pertaining to the idea of race or racial inequality.

Mentions of Race and Racial Inequality

I coded language pertaining to race and racial inequality as different categories, including mentions of racial identities, and the use of words like, "black", "African-American", "diversity" and "race" to describe them. Discussions of racial inequality include specific mentions of "Civil Rights" because of the way the concept is tied to

racial oppression and struggle. They also include loci of value such as ‘safety’ and ‘changing stereotypes’ because of how they are tied to the experience of racial difference in Harlem tourism. A further category coded as pertaining to racial inequality includes any discussion of gentrification or mention of the term by review writers. Gentrification was identified as a threat to Harlem’s blackness by every tour guide. A final category for identifying mentions of racial inequality in review content includes review content that seems to hint at the idea of race or racial inequality without actually saying so, coded as ‘uncertain phrases’.

Racial Identity

Discussions of racial identity, like the rest of the categories described above, happen infrequently in review content. And they are most often invoked as descriptive adjectives for added detail in review content. This most applies to the designations ‘black’ and ‘African-American’. For example (12) Brent S, a white man from Burlington, VT, explains that, “We had a great experience in Harlem... learning about the different ethnic groups that have lived in Harlem and their places of worship as we walked the wide streets named after several African-American leaders and learned about the history of this area from the 1600’s to the present (10-15).” Here Brent S uses a racial designator to describe the spatiality of their Harlem experience. The mention of ‘learning about different ethnic groups’ is most likely a reference to various European immigrant groups who lived in the area during pre-black Harlem. This is because HHT guides tend to focus on the history of Euro-American settlement in the area to create more personal connections between white tour participants and the community of Harlem. Indeed, Harlem’s history from “the 1600’s to the present” is mostly a white one. In these comments the idea of race—and its link to black Harlem—is secondary to the spatial description as well as the history of whiteness in Harlem.

In other reviews the idea of race is more central, particularly in reviews that discuss HHT’s expertise in providing access to the ‘African-American experience’. For example (3) NJWTravels, from Boston, ends their review—which is heavy on credentialing, thus lacking in specific narrative detail—with these words: “Neal is very passionate about his HARLEM and was to provide a comprehensive account of the African American experience in a 3 hour walking and multimedia tour.” In these comments the reviewer emphasizes Neal’s connection to blackness as central to the tour experience. Many other reviewers share similar sentiments as NJWTravels regarding Neal’s skill in this regard, but it’s often described in more color-blind terms—such as in the review by Cathleen A—as Neal being skilled in providing access to an ‘insider’s experience’, a ‘cultural’ or ‘educational’ experience, or more specifically a ‘Harlem’ experience. All of these may be partially accurate, but none of these are directly attached

to the ways that racial hierarchy is structured as much as the phrase ‘African American experience’, which inherently implies historical struggle.

Other words denoting the idea of race include direct designators such as ‘white’ and ‘black’. These appear even fewer times than the phrase ‘African-American’. When the term ‘white’ is used it is primarily in the course of reviewer credentialing. ‘Black’ seems to be interchangeable with use of the term “African-American” in review content. The words that appear least of all include ‘race’ and ‘racism’, the former makes two appearances over the course of 152 reviews, the latter makes only one, provided in a review by (129)Kay09, from Ireland:

I had the good luck to join the walking tour of Harlem in the week before the historical election of the first afroamerican of the USA, Barack Obama. Before we started, Neal, our learned tour guide, explained to that this was a truly momentous occasion for their community in the same way that the election of JFK had been for my ancestors, the Irish immigrants living in the US. The walking tour truly opened up for me the past history and struggle of this community, the continuous link with the present and the hope for a better future. We visited sites of importance, from the mosque where Malcolm X preached to the Baptist churches that spread the teachings of Martin Luther King. The events of the 1960’s civil rights movement against racist segregation and for equal rights, came to life as Neil eloquently retold the story in this colourful setting (11-08).

This is the only mention of the word ‘racist’ in the entire sample of reviews analyzed for this research. It is also the only one to specifically link Harlem’s identity to racial oppression through the use of the word ‘struggle’. We can see in these comments how Neal creates connections between reviewer positionality and the community by making connections between Obama’s election as an African-American and Kennedy’s election as an Irish Catholic. The timing of Obama’s election and the appearance of the only observed review that includes direct discussions of racial oppression should not be understated, as this event marked a high point in terms of the visibility and celebration of racial difference in recent American history. But notice now the reviewer still engages in the historical compartmentalization of racial oppression by placing racism in a past era, “the 1960’s era civil rights movement” and not being attached to current patterns of racial oppression influencing Harlem such as gentrification. In fact, they do address gentrification later in the review but not to the critical extent as their comments regarding the civil rights movement. Historical compartmentalization of racial oppression—particularly in regard to the Civil Rights movement—seems to be a strategy used by both tour guides and reviewers as a means to distance ‘good’ whiteness from its ‘bad’ versions.

Civil Rights

The main feature of review content concerning civil rights is that the topic is located as being in the past and not framed as a continuing problem for Harlem residents. Neal has framed both gentrification and educational inequality as being ‘new’ civil rights issues concerning the community. He has discussed people like Geoffrey Canada—an educator and activist working to increase high school and college graduation rates for students in Harlem—as new civil rights leaders in the community. But time and again the phrase ‘civil rights’ is attached to the word ‘history’ in review content. I code mentions of Civil Rights as pertaining to racial inequality because the phrase conjures up the notion of ‘struggle’ in the imagination. Discussed in the context of Harlem tourism, the notion of racial inequality being directly connected to barriers from civil rights is inherent. Many of the non-entertainment personalities mentioned by reviewers are those of civil rights leaders from the 1960’s. Even though tour guides mention the Civil Rights era during all tours, it only tends to come up in review content when the tour’s focus was Civil Rights itself. Most of these tours are in conjunction with the Sunday Gospel Experience, and reviewers tend to focus on one part over the other, even though Neal goes to great lengths to explain the connection between Harlem’s churches and their role in protecting community residents’ civil rights. Mentions of the phrase ‘civil rights’ in review content tend to be in passing, but one reviewer— (127) 11417 (no location given) offers some more detailed thoughts:

I knew very little previous to the tour about how many people were extremely influential in the civil rights movement in New York, and beyond limited knowledge about Malcolm X and his involvement, very little is taught in the history books about the men and women who dedicated their lives to the battle for civil rights. I appreciated the way that Neal outlined the lives of so many who played a monumental role in this, and showed us the very places that they spoke, marched, and organized in order to take strides toward attaining the quality they were seeking (1-09).

Here the reviewer acknowledges a lack of knowledge about Harlem’s role in the civil rights movement and cites contemporary sites of representation—history books—as the reason for that. In doing so the reviewer still places civil rights in the past but leaves open a link between the past and current patterns of inequality regarding racial representation. Once again, we can also see in these comments how tour guides facilitate access to the kind of intellectual growth—*diversity as commodity*—described by the reviewer. It is also notable that the timing of this review is very similar to the timing of Kay09’s review—happening at the dawn of the Obama presidency. I move now to another example of historical compartmentalization in review content in discussions of gentrification. But rather than being ‘stuck’ in the past, as civil rights seem to be—discussions of gentrification are more likely to be disconnected from it.

Gentrification

Discussions of gentrification occur in much the same pattern as those regarding civil rights. It is mostly mentioned in passing with some reviewers going to more detailed accounts. Typically the word ‘gentrification’ is used and most often brought up as a something that tour guides discuss. For example, (123)cbeare975, from Los Angeles, writes that, “Neal spoke very objectively about the advantages and disadvantages of gentrification happening in Harlem today and about his hopes for Harlem’s future (8-09).” But sometimes reviewers are even more opaque, for example (43)Dee C from Westport, NY, who writes:

Older buildings are being preserved and restored. Most buildings are only three or four stories. Tree-lined streets had beautiful brownstone houses. Andy spoke of how the neighborhoods had and were changing in the value of the houses and changes in the population.

This passage describes gentrification in a descriptive and factual way without a critical edge and without using the word ‘gentrification’ (it is not coded as an uncertain phrase because of the level of detail present, see below). In general reviewers follow the lead of tour guides and adopt a rather ambivalent stance toward gentrification, including (108)TheGinGenie, who describes an unusual stop on their tour:

Next we strolled up St. Nicholas Ave. towards 8th Ave, with Neal saying hi to pretty much every passing person on the street. I wanted to know what he thought about all the new Starbucks and Best Yet [sic.] stores that seemed to be gentrification of Harlem [sic.]. So, without hesitation, we were marched into both chain establishments, while Neal explained that although he did feel a sense of guilt for frequenting these places when smaller, independent businesses were struggling to survive, it was such a move forward from the Harlem of 10-20 years ago. Ultimately, through his tours and events, he wanted to make both locals and visitors appreciate and to utilize what Harlem already has to offer. Use it or lose it.

This passage is reflective of the way Neal presents gentrification on tours. Most of this passage is descriptive and detailed, except the comments about today’s gentrification being, “such a move forward from the Harlem of 10-20 years ago.” It’s not clear what the reviewer means by this but it is clear that these comments are supposed to make sense to the reader. There is an assumption embedded in these comments that Harlem used to be a ‘bad’ place, and that gentrification has helped to fix that problem. In what kind of scenario does full scale corporate takeover of a neighborhood full of independently owned businesses represent an improvement? The reviewer also sheds light on who the newer, safer, version of Harlem is really for. Is it for locals, or is it for visitors? All tour

guides, for their part, conclude that gentrification in Harlem is not worth it if the community cannot stay black. While many reviewers do not make this connection, the notion of safety in Harlem—and the idea that today’s Harlem is a ‘safe’ place—is directly tied to processes of gentrification, i.e. making the community more fit for whiteness. When reviewers mention safety in the course of the review, it is often tied to discussions of preconceived ‘stereotypes’ regarding Harlem, and how tours changed them.

Declarations of Safety and Stereotype Dismantling

A small group of reviewers discuss the idea of safety during the tour as well as how tour participation helped to change negative stereotypes regarding Harlem. These are generally discussed as sources of value in review content and but here they are coded as pertaining to racial oppression because of how they are tied to damaging stereotypes regarding Harlem—and blackness in general—as violent and dangerous. Reviewer dpw369 describes the links between the two. The opening comments of this review describe feelings of distrust and anxiety in the moments just before the tour participant arrives in Harlem and how those feelings changed once they got there:

I have to say I was a bit apprehensive whilst I was on the subway to Harlem. The area has a reputation of being dangerous, but after a few minutes of being there I realized it was safe. ...

The review concludes with further commentary on how the community is safe for tourists:

Before I went on the tour I thought I would be taking a tour of a run down area that would be like a slum. This couldn’t be further from the truth, Harlem is an up and coming area which is safe to walk around (9-16-15).

Here the reviewer begins and ends their review with declarations about the neighborhood’s safety for potential visitors. Like the tour guides, they reference gentrification as the reason for increased levels of safety. The vague use of the word ‘reputation’ distances this former image of Harlem from the racism that produced it. Similarly, (61) KarenTriggs declares safety while hearkening back to the era of criminal Harlem through a description of a specific—and previously discussed—tour moment:

And let the uncertain be assured, it was as safe as houses, not so much mean streets as main streets. There may be irony in this – standing on 116th Street Neal played us some of Bobby Womack’s 1973 soul hit Across 110th Street, explaining that in the bad old days 110 was the crime line no-one dared breach.

These remarks are descriptive of actual events that happen on tours (see previous chapter). Notice how the reviewer re-frames—rearranges—Neal’s moment of bricolage as an example of how Harlem is now safe for *visitors* to experience. During tours Neal very much frames issues of safety as primarily concerning community members—as does Bobby Womack. When reviewers discuss issues of safety and stereotypes it is an effort on their part to show how accepting they are of cultural diversity and shows a willingness on their part to communicate how the tour experience ‘changed their minds’ in some way regarding their perceptions of Harlem. This is perhaps why a reviewer would bring up issues of safety in the first place. It also reflects an assumption on the reviewer’s part that many potential tourists might have negative perceptions of Harlem as well. Thus, according to reviewers, one way to achieve the status of ‘good’ whiteness is to participate in a tour (like them). Changing negative stereotypes is a stated goal of HHT from both my conversations with Neal and as stated on the company website, which is a major factor in determining decisions to book with HHT. These comments also represent fairly direct—as far as review content goes—engagements with the consequences of racial difference. The idea itself though, is still largely invisible in review content.

Uncertain Phrases

One of the more abstract manifestations of the invisibility of race in review content comes during moments when reviewers seem to be thinking about racial inequality during the course of a review, but seem to use coded and vague language to discuss it. These ‘uncertain’ phrases offer a clue as to how the writer considers racial inequality in Harlem versus how they communicate those considerations to TripAdvisor readers. One of the most common and obvious variations of this phenomenon concerns strategic use of the word ‘changes’ during what is clearly a reference to Harlem’s gentrification. Perhaps the best example of this is provided by (60)MCB73, from West Brattleboro, VT, who includes vague use of the word ‘changes’ then some especially reflective comments regarding their positionality and racial difference:

[Neal] really conveys a deep essence of the history and how all of that is still alive and well, even though the decades have passed and brought changes. The trip past the new Children’s center was very moving also. He said we (a prep group of prep school students and English teacher—many races/ethnicities in our group) probably would not understand the significance of an elaborate new center for kids being built on the grounds of the projects. He’s right, we may not grasp the wholeness of what it means since we come from different communities, but as compassionate fellow-humans, we can share in the joy and the hope. I would absolutely recommend his tour guiding service to anyone (5-13).

The opening comments here contain a vague discussion of Harlem’s historical change and is likely to be a reference to Harlem’s shifts from the Renaissance period to the

‘hard’ times of the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s and through to gentrification. The Renaissance in this case may be framed as a kind of ‘good’ blackness—associated with art, literature, and enthusiastic white patronage. The following periods each represent threats to that heritage—with ‘bad’ blackness, in the case of criminal Harlem, and increasing whiteness in the case of gentrified Harlem. This is due to the reviewer saying that Harlem’s presumably black history ‘is still alive and well’ despite ‘changes’ in the neighborhood.

The rest of these comments provide insight—unlike in most reviews—as to the reviewer’s reflexivity regarding their Harlem experience. Where most reviewers discuss how ‘close’ they feel to Harlem upon completing a tour; this reviewer is one of the only ones to discuss the inherent distance that exists between tour participants and the community. All reviews, for that matter, are a reflection of two kinds of distance from racial confrontation regarding their content—distance deriving from *being a tourist*, and distance deriving from the act of digitizing that experience in an online review. This reviewer, a self-identified educator, is one of few reviewers to acknowledge its presence (at least in the case of the former kind). At the same time, however, they attempt to minimize it, as represented in their closing comments where they state that, “as compassionate fellow humans, we can share in the joy and the hope.”

Conclusion

This chapter set out to show how the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship produces a discourse concerning racial inequality. Tour guides use different strategies to confront racial inequality. These include stories of oppression, discussions of negative racial representation, and presentations of gentrification. Although racial inequality is never the focal point of a given tour, tour guides use these strategies to make racial inequality visible to tour participants during tour presentations. The demographic composition of the tour group may influence the centrality of these messages on a given tour. Doris and Andy tend to stick to white-friendly versions of Afrocentricity in their explanations of Harlem during tours—a view that centers the black experience in tour presentations while leaving the role of racial oppression just under the surface—visible if one is paying attention. Neal, on the other hand, seems to purposefully use tenets of diversity ideology achieve a similar affect. In each case tour guides bring out the salience of racial inequality in multiple ways. They also, however, need to manufacture some distance between tour participants and realities of racial inequality—police brutality, residential

displacement, and lack of local access to quality education and employment, to name some—faced by Harlem residents in order to create the imagined intimacy with Harlem that tour participants seek. In this way racial inequality is made visible during tours, but tour participants are largely excused from it themselves—leading to its relative invisibility on TripAdvisor. In fact, their actions as tour participants are recognized by tour guides as being an example of ‘good’ race relations.

Both review content as well as my conversations with tour participants reflect this distance, showing how tour guides are successful in manufacturing it, but they also demonstrate the tour participant’s willingness to be excused from it. All they need is permission to be excused from an insider, which tour guides seem to be obligated to provide in order to ensure happy tour participants, and positive reviews. Both reviewers and tour participants create far more distance between race and blackness, for example, than do tour guides. *All* of the loci of value associated with HHT tours are directly influenced in some way by systems of racial hierarchy, but in review content those connections are rarely made. This is partly the result of historical compartmentalization regarding the significance of racial inequality in contemporary Harlem. When the notion of racial inequality *is* brought up by reviewers it is typically discussed as belonging in the past, and not so much a part of Harlem’s present. This is evident in discussions about Harlem’s gentrification, where the prosperity associated with it may as well be a stand-in for beliefs in the forward progression of amicable race relations.

It is clear from this chapter, then, that one of the reasons *why* the racialized discourse here contains a combination of diversity ideology and color-blind ideology is the imperative to make the race concept profitable in touristic settings. When the race concept becomes marketized it becomes defined by how much money it can make—or lose—in a given economic situation. In Harlem’s case, profit is being generated from its associations with blackness at the same time profit is being generated from gentrification—which is an existential threat to that blackness. In order for blackness to remain associated with Harlem, it must be rendered as a source of value—the Apollo! Jazz! Civil Rights triumphs!—and not as a liability—residents who can’t pay higher rents. This is where tourism and tour participants play an important role in Harlem’s continued gentrification. The presence of each in Harlem signals to outsiders that Harlem is now ‘safe’ for whiteness. It seems as though tourism is quite successful at preserving Harlem’s symbolic legacy as a center of the black experience at the same time it is contributes to current patterns of black displacement.

This chapter shows how the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship produces a discourse concerning racial inequality. In the process it has also shown how this discourse is not just *about* racial inequality, but actively helps to maintain the established structure of racial hierarchy. This is due to the nature of the discourse itself, which

results in a scenario by which the visibility of racial inequality during tours is made largely invisible on TripAdvisor. This discourse relies on colorblindness combined with diversity ideology to celebrate racial difference and frame experiences with it as a new economic frontier. It celebrates actions and behaviors associated with the continued marketization of the race concept in the global market.

Conclusion: Summary and Ramifications

This research has set out to articulate a relationship between the physical community of Harlem and the digital community of TripAdvisor. This concluding chapter includes three main sections, followed by a series of final thoughts, and an epilogue. The first section provides a summary of the research, including the theoretical framework, contextual framework, methodological framework, and each set of findings. The second section provides a consolidation of the digitally based research method by providing one review and analyzing it from each of the three perspectives developed for this research. The third section is in some ways an analog to the preceding section concerning TripAdvisor reviews—a way to consolidate the ethnographic part of the research method. It concerns my interactions with Neal over the course of five years trying to establish a relationship while only intermittently being able to visit Harlem and having minimal digital interactions. Like general perceptions of the role of tourism in Harlem, Neal responded to both my research and me with notable ambivalence

throughout those five years. He never did, for example, consent to do a formal interview. But was usually happy to talk to me and gave me permission to observe as many tours as I wanted (I paid) and conduct research activities with tour participants in immediate post-tour environments.

My final thoughts return to the main finding—the notion that the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship creates a discursive disconnection between themes of black triumph and oppression—and discusses further ramifications. These include the shifting sands of the idea of ‘safety’ as it is presented on the streets and as it is presented in cyberspace. In the former, safety refers to that of community residents, while in the latter it is typically discussed from an outsider’s point of view. This ultimately ends in a situation where Harlem is symbolically black, but ‘for’ whites. Finally, this finding is significant evidence that the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship is a major agent of racial commodification in an information based—and increasingly digitized—global market. In the epilogue, I attempt to write a review of Harlem Heritage Tours (HHT) that benefits the company but does not trivialize racial inequality.

Summary Analysis

Theory

This research is grounded in a theoretical framework conceptualizing both tourism and digital technologies as economic arenas where racial categories are formed and racial hierarchies maintained (Omi and Winant, 2015). TripAdvisor sits firmly in the middle as part of each and a mediator between both (Jamerson, 2016b). These economic arenas manage race through methods of incorporation—where the notion of racial difference is folded into the fabric of market logic—and suppression—where the notion of racial difference is marked as dangerous, and not fit for ‘civil’ society (Goldberg, 2009). Tourism and digital technologies help to structure racial inequality through both paths. It may seem as if, in the case of TripAdvisor, strategies of incorporation may be the more pertinent site of analysis. But as this research shows, TripAdvisor utilizes both strategies to produce a commodified vision of racial difference. In effect, TripAdvisor becomes a filter for the incorporation of racial difference into the global marketplace. This is because it discursively suppresses the underlying conditions, practices, motivations—and responses—resulting from racial oppression and white supremacy by racially marginalized groups. It leaves behind a sanitized yet incomplete picture of race as a social construction. This picture has just enough positive details to create touristic desire, and just enough danger and edge to create a sense of adventure in the experience of racial difference.

Context

Harlem presents an ideal site to examine TripAdvisor's role as a major mediator between tourism and digital technologies. Central Harlem is still majority African-American, but is less so now than it has been since before the first Renaissance in the 1920's. It is both a powerful symbol of global blackness and a threatened black community with a very ambivalent attitude toward tourism—and where guided walking tours are big business (Jackson, 2001). Tourism has a prominent but sporadic role in Harlem's history, where outsider visits to the community were very popular during the 1920's (Dowling, 2007), and not again until the mid-1990's, particularly for white outsiders (Hoffman, 2001; Chinyelu, 1999). During the years in between Harlem, was known as a place hostile to whites, and, as tour guides now point out, dangerous for local African-Americans.

Tourism development was an important strategy in Harlem's current 'rebirth,' characterized by widespread gentrification. Neal Shoemaker's company, Harlem Heritage Tours, has been operating walking tours in the community since 1998, making it one of the first to offer such tours in the area. Neal's tours have remained popular for visitors based on their reputation on TripAdvisor. Based on this research, Harlem Heritage Tours have maintained positive relationships with the community as well. This allows them to offer tour participants access to certain sites in order to provide an 'immersive' Harlem experience. Previous literature suggests that Harlemites are strongly ambivalent about the realities of tourism in their community (Jackson, 2001; Maurrasse, 2006). On one hand, tourism is a source of income and a way to maintain claims to the area as black in the face of increasing gentrification. On the other hand, cultural tourism lends itself to white voyeurism and community members feeling as if they are on display in a museum. This research suggests, for example, that black community members act—willingly or not—as sources of value for tour participants and online review writers.

This tension is perhaps best exemplified by the predicament of Harlem's churches. They have embraced tourism as a needed source of income; but only because they are suffering from membership declines due to gentrification. It's safe to assume that if New Canaan Baptist had enough tithing paying black members to fill its upper balcony, it wouldn't be filled with tourists every Sunday. Thus, cultural tourism can be read as a form of resistance to gentrification at the same time that it is an agent of it. It helps to keep Harlem symbolically black, but this blackness is wrapped inside a stylistic, idealistic—and digitized—depiction of racial 'diversity' which is needed to produce value for tourists—and for local properties. As this research suggests, this is despite tour guides' attempts to infuse tour presentations with more critical—and harder to confront—issues of racial oppression and Harlem's future as a black community. The first three chapters of the study concern theoretical backgrounds of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship, contextual backgrounds of the relationship, and the methodological approach to analyzing the relationship, respectively. The next three chapters present

research findings oriented around three identified ‘products’ of the Harlem TripAdvisor relationship. In order of analysis, these include the production of online traveler’s tales, the production of a valuating discourse regarding experiences with racial difference, and the production of a racialized discourse that is anti-racist at the same time it contributes to persistent racial inequality. Each of these discursive ‘products’ are crucial ingredients to how the idea of race itself is commodified in the global market. TripAdvisor, in turn, becomes one of the primary amplifiers of this depiction as tourists write and read reviews.

Methods

In order to articulate this physical-digital relationship, this research combines discourse analysis of TripAdvisor reviews of the highest rated tour company operating in Harlem with ethnographic participant-observations of those tours. It also utilizes techniques designed to bridge methodological gaps between these two main approaches, such as tour participant questionnaires and a self-guided tour. The main methodological challenge in this research is designing ways to integrate the online social flows represented by TripAdvisor reviews and the offline social flows represented in the tour experience. I approach this issue by using the same sets of data to conduct three distinct but interrelated analyses. The first analysis concerns the most tangible product of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship: online travel writing. The second analysis concerns the production of a valuating discourse regarding tourist experiences with Harlem’s blackness. The third analysis understands the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship as producing an ‘in/visible’ discourse regarding contemporary race relations and persistent racial inequality.

Findings

Overview

I find that the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship contains a layered discursive structure, with each successive layer—travel writing, valuation, racialization—having decreased visibility relative to each other. In other words, the most obvious part of this relationship are the online reviews themselves—which represent personal accounts of the tour experience by ‘real’ tourists. In this sense—based in the logic of travel writing—reviewers are perceived to be producing an ‘authentic’ account of what many reviewers describe as an ‘authentic’ encounter with Harlem’s blackness.

The next most visible discursive product of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship is the language of the reviews themselves, which in this case tend to glorify experiences with Harlem’s blackness. This glorification is the result of the ways tour guides create

sensations of value during tour presentations and how they decrease social distance between the tour participant and the community during the tour experience. The least visible discursive product of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship is the way it represents an informal commentary on contemporary race relations in neoliberal urban settings. Although tour guides celebrate Harlem's blackness, they also do not hesitate from referencing the racial oppression so crucial for understanding the realities of black Harlem. These aspects of tour presentations, however, are not translated into online reviews by review writers. This is—ironically—due to strategies deployed by tour guides—oriented around diversity ideology (Embrick, 2011; Jayakumar and Adamian, 2017) and 'white-friendly' Afrocentrism—to avoid triggering 'white fragility' (DiAngelo, 2018) and to make visitors feel welcome in the community.

Therefore, the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship produces—in cyberspace—an image of racial difference in the online tourism domain where symbols of 'positive' blackness are highly visible at the same time symbols of 'negative' racial hierarchy are highly invisible. On the sidewalks—in a mirror development—the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship can be observed in the ways tour guides discuss these negative symbols in veiled or coded ways while highlighting the positive ones. It can be observed, on any given Sunday, on the crowded visitor's balcony of New Canaan Baptist Church. And perhaps most importantly, it may be seen in the rising real-estate prices grounded in Harlem's newest image of an up-and-coming—yet culturally rich—place to live in New York.

Production of Traveler's Tales

TripAdvisor reviews are found to be a newer—convergent form—of travel writing that increases the strength of the claims made by the writer regarding their Harlem experience relative to earlier types. They tend to be written in a conversational style that combines the individually based authority associated with the travelogue, the editorial authority of the travel guide, and the digital authority of TripAdvisor's organizational structure. They are based on tour experiences designed to create closeness, intimacy, immersion, and inclusion—new loci of value in accordance with diversity ideology (Mayorga-Gallo, 2017). HHT guides are observed to be skilled at creating conditions for these to be achieved, as evidenced by the preponderance of positive reviews regarding their services.

The main finding regarding the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship and the production of online travel writing is that authority over representations of Harlem shift from tour guides to tour participants as tours end and participants go on to write reviews. The irony is that the tour guide's effectiveness in creating sensations of immersion leads to exclamations by review writers that Harlem is now a 'known' place to them because of the temporary pass to blackness afforded by the tour. This lends their touristic

representations increased discursive weight toward more general definitions of racial difference. The idea of race as a commodity, in other words, becomes a more visible part of the way race is defined in digital environments.

Valuating Discourse

The most significant element in online reviews of Harlem Heritage Tours found on TripAdvisor is language concerning notions of value derived from the tour experience. Tourists decide to visit Harlem for specific but varying reasons, but decide to take tours with HHT based on its online presence and reputation. Tour participants come to Harlem having prior expectations for tour services and preconceived notions regarding Harlem's blackness. Based on discourse analysis of review content, tour guides are largely effective at negotiating these expectations and preconceived notions. More importantly, they are effective at adding 'new' value to already 'known' loci of value. This is evident in the way that Neal, for example, provides special access to the Apollo Theater for tour participants; or in the way he uses bricolage to rearrange sights, sounds, and information so that tour participants understand Harlem in a 'new' way.

Tour guides manufacture this 'new' value through strategies of bricolage by rearranging elements of Harlem's blackness, history, and people in strategic ways to produce emotional, intellectual, and economic value for tour participants. While In the case of Harlem Heritage Tours, these strategies are necessary to the successful operation of a tour company offering access to racial difference. But they also act to distance the idea of race itself from its function as a social construction dedicated to maintaining a specific set of power relationships based on phenotype. Werry argues that the organization of racial difference around touristic loci of value essentially creates a new definition of racial difference as pure market commodity concurrently serving as a potent political anesthetic (2011). Removing the power relationships inherent in the structure of racial inequality allows both to take place. The vast majority of review content concerns positive experiences with Harlem's racially black loci of value.

Racialized Discourse

Based on this research, tourism seems to be a way for Harlem to remain symbolically black at the same time it contributes to the community's transformation into a physically whiter space. One of the main reasons for this includes the way that tourism distances themes of cultural, arts based, and triumphant blackness from historical and current manifestations of racial oppression. Recognition of racial oppression is necessary for understanding the significance of black culture, art, and triumph. Therefore, understanding the link between oppression and triumph is a necessary component of any representation of Harlem seeking to portray it as a community of people, and not as an object of touristic desire. Tour guides, with very few but notable exceptions, tend to

make these connections, but often in veiled or coded ways—such as ‘white-friendly’ Afrocentrism or through invocations of diversity ideology. This is likely due to the need to avoid triggering white fragility and the imperative to make visitors feel ‘welcome’ in the community during tours. These strategies are both necessary, in turn, for the production of positive online reviews.

Where tour guides do make significant connections between themes of black oppression and triumph, reviewers are significantly more likely to focus on the latter at the expense of the former. Part of the reason for this might be the tour guides’ collective effectiveness at presenting tour participants with the significance of racial oppression at the same time participants are individually excused from it—another strategy in producing value for tour participants. Another part may lie in the positionality of the reviewers themselves, who are likely to be socialized into speaking about issues of race in public settings—digitized or not—in color-blind tones. They are also more likely to be concerned *as tourists* with getting ‘closer’ to Harlem, than with creating more distance between themselves and the community, and assume that potential review readers feel the same way. For this to happen, confrontations with racial inequality must be removed from the equation.

The next two sections condense and reflect, respectively, on the two broad methodological approaches used in this research: discourse analysis and ethnography. The first section presents a “Layered Discursive Analysis”; showing one complete review and then analyzing it from each of the three perspectives developed in this research. I then discuss my evolving relationship with Neal Shoemaker over the course of five years of infrequent trips to Harlem for fieldwork. This section both comments on earlier discussions of reflexivity and speaks to the blurred boundaries between tourist and ethnographer when cultural tourism constitutes ‘the field’.

Layered Discursive Analysis

This review was chosen for its subject matter—Gospel Tours are the most popular HHT offering—the online influence of the reviewer, and the detailed demographic information provided by the reviewer. It is likely to have been read more than the average HHT review due to these factors.

(18) Ronni68 (white, female, 35-49, Canberra)

252r/75h/ 58 cities/ L6/ Readers: 135,000

May 5, 2015

[So informative](#) (5)

Wow! Harlem is awesome! I loved it. I loved the tour. I loved the tour guide, and so did half of the neighbourhood it seemed! It seemed like every person we walked past knew our guide and commented that we were with 'a great historian'. Boy could he talk, and sometimes it was hard keeping up with his stories as he weaved in and out of current day and historical events. We were never bored! We took in a church service which catered for us as visitors very well. There are rules that you will be notified of, dress nicely, don't lean on the walls etc, and you will actually be acknowledged towards the end of the 'public' part of the service, after which you leave and the service continues for the local congregation. Coming from a Catholic background (this was a Baptist service), it was wonderful seeing the joy that people take from their faith, it truly was a celebration of song and emotion. Don't fear Harlem either, it is very safe and stunning!

Review as Traveler's Tale

This reviewer has contributed 252 reviews to TripAdvisor and has a readership of over 100,000, meaning that their opinions on the website carry significant discursive weight. This review seems to be based on a Sunday morning Gospel/Civil Rights Tour. This means that Neal probably gave the opening presentation at the HHT office and led the group to New Canaan from there. It's not exactly clear who led the walking portion of the tour—it could be Neal or Andy—but based on the comments about how “every person we walked past knew our guide” Neal is the most likely candidate. There is hardly any narrative discussion of the walking portion of the tour or the tour's final act at the Apollo Theater. Most of this review's content is geared towards their experience earlier in the tour while in church. This is likely due to the positionality of the reviewer, who in their credentialing mentions a Catholic background—thus disclosing religiosity as a significant part of their identity. The reviewer is also likely to have received more detailed information during the tour regarding settlement of Catholic immigrants—Irish and Italians—as a result (if they shared this information with their tour guide).

The credentialing presented by the reviewer towards its conclusion helps the reader understand why this review is focused so explicitly on the church service. The reviewer's discussion of their own religiosity 'gives' them authority to discuss the church service as a valuable and authentic experience. The review is written in a blended style with travel guide phrasing, “Wow! Harlem is Awesome!” and “Harlem is safe and stunning” coming at the beginning and end of the review. Travelogue style narrative content fills the middle portions. But even the narrative content in the middle is peppered with conversational phrases such as “Boy could he talk” and “We were never bored!” The fact that the tour guide's name is never mentioned in the review is indicative of the

shift in discursive authority over representations of Harlem as tours end and tour participants go online to write reviews. In this case, the tour guide is given credit for facilitating access to loci of value at the beginning of the review, but by the end the reviewer has positioned themselves as the expert voice regarding the tour experience.

Review as Valuating Discourse

This review received a five star rating, meaning the reviewer had a very favorable overall opinion of their Harlem experience. This is reinforced at the beginning of the review with content related to the walking portion of the tour leading with a series of superlative statements directed outwards to the reading audience “Wow! Harlem is awesome! I loved it! I loved the tour!” The reviewer then specifically discusses how tour guides use bricolage to facilitate access to information through their community relationships, with locals telling tour participants they were “with a great historian”. And bricolage is especially reflected in how the reviewer describes the ways in which the tour guide’s presentational style facilitated access to information, “Boy could he talk, and sometimes it was hard keeping up with his stories as he weaved in and out of current day and historical events. We were never bored!” It seems here that the reviewer, at least during the walking portion, was much more engaged with the tour guide and their presentational style than with the physical environment of Harlem, with no discussions of famous landmarks or community geography until the very end, “Harlem is safe and stunning!”

The second half of this review discusses direct interactions with community members at church. During most of their time at church tour groups are not accompanied by Neal, who leads groups in, then leaves and comes back when it’s time for the walking portion of the tour. The reviewer finds significant value in these experiences, notably in how the church manages tourist visitors with certain rules for behavior while present—acknowledging the inherent distance between tourists and church members. The positive nature of these comments stand in contrast to those made by some reviewers, who describe such rules in negative terms. The reviewer also finds value in how the church officially recognizes visitors, by having all stand on the balcony and be greeted by the congregation below. For the reviewer this is a sincere moment of inclusivity by the church community. The entire experience, for the reviewer, was an emotionally uplifting one, “It was wonderful seeing the joy that people take from their faith, it truly was a celebration of song and emotion.” Based on the analysis developed here, the reviewer finds high levels of intellectual and emotional value in their experience with Harlem’s blackness.

Review as Racialized Discourse

This review is largely couched in diversity ideology, especially the frame *diversity as commodity*. This is evidenced by the way she identifies the types of values she feels—emotional and intellectual—and through the way she describes her experience—notably how she felt ‘included’ as part of the church service. This review, however, is largely devoid of any language pertaining to race, or even to Harlem’s blackness for that matter. Typically used markers such as “Gospel” “jazz” and the names of famous black Harlemites and Harlem landmarks do not appear in this review. In fact, the only word coded as directly pertaining to blackness appearing here is the word “Harlem” itself. It appears at the very beginning and at the very end.

Most of this review engages in the language of racial in/visibility. It clearly describes an experience with racial difference without making many direct links to markers of race or blackness—until the very end of the review with comments regarding safety in Harlem: “Don’t fear Harlem either. It is very safe and stunning.” In these brief comments the reviewer says much about their racial positionality and about the ‘threat of race’ (see Goldberg, 2009) as part of the tour experience. These comments ‘out’ the reviewer as having preconceived stereotypes regarding the community as well as make it obvious they believe many readers and potential visitors to Harlem feel the same way. Like all tourist comments regarding safety in Harlem observed here, these are geared towards tour participant safety, and not that of community members. This declaration of safety also includes the only mention in this review to the aesthetic qualities of Harlem’s physical environment—which may be read in this case as a link between safety in Harlem and gentrification. In sum, the reviewer has perhaps had a more valuable experience *because* these preconceived notions were present—and somehow ‘resolved’ through the tour experience. In their previous comments we can see how confrontations with racial inequality are removed from descriptions of the tour experience, allowing this resolution to take place. The reviewer has been able to experience—and profit from—blackness without having to take on any responsibility for the racism that informs it.

Neal and I’s Relationship

The first two times I visited Harlem and took tours with HHT were part of my master’s research, which focused mostly on the production of value in TripAdvisor content. I was only taking tours to get some deeper context for a discourse analysis that was rather narrow in scope. On each of these occasions, I introduced myself to Neal and identified myself as a researcher. These first couple of times I do not think he understood the full meaning of a white graduate student from southwest Virginia expressing interest his company as a subject of research. I believe he initially thought I was taking tours to learn more about Harlem, not about tourism in Harlem. This perception began to change as I started coming back in subsequent years as part of my dissertation research. “Hey,”

He would say, “Jamerson....from Virginia....you’ve taken these tours before.” I would again identify myself as a researcher and one day he agreed to sit down with me after a tour to talk about my project and how he would be involved.

This first conversation took place at a Starbuck’s on 125th Street right after the large tour with the group of Danish students concluded at the Apollo Theater. We talked for about an hour, and he seemed interested in my work and how it could possibly benefit his business. We exchanged email addresses—a symbolic formality because we already had each other’s contact information—and he said he looked forward to seeing me again. My final impression of that conversation was that Neal was interested to the point of being enthusiastic about his involvement in the project. On my drive home, however, things began to change. I had accidentally given him an incorrect credit card number over the phone when I booked the tour earlier the previous week. As I was driving through Harrisburg on my way back to Blacksburg I started receiving angry text messages from him—I could only glance at that point. I pulled over as soon as I could to read them. He thought he’d been duped, and was trying to get his money back. I called him immediately to resolve the situation but the first moments of the conversation were especially heated. Not only had I not paid, I had sat down with him and had gotten him to speak candidly about his business. This was a higher level of betrayal. I eventually was able to explain myself in a satisfactory way, and he ended up apologizing for overreacting. He may have, but I can understand why he did.

My relationship with Neal, like tourism in Harlem more generally, was an ambivalent one. He was usually very accommodating in terms allowing me to go on as many tours as I wanted (provided I pay). And he agreed to let me pass out questionnaires and speak to tourist participants about their online research habits and reasons for wanting to visit Harlem. I was able to speak with Neal privately on several occasions—some more formally arranged than others—but at the same time he never agreed to sign a consent form to do a formal interview. On some occasions he seemed very interested in working closely with me on this project, for example asking for earlier work and showing interest in the theoretical aspects of the work. But on other occasions he told me he was uncomfortable with the idea, and didn’t know if it would be in his or his company’s best interest to grant me the access I requested. For example, one day he said he would show me how he accesses and uses TripAdvisor, and said he would show me a message board for tour operators concerning TripAdvisor’s policies. Then the next day he said he would not be able to help, and even suggested he might have his lawyer look over the consent form and in turn draft some kind of document for me to sign regarding the research. In some ways the consent form was a major red flag for Neal. This may be because it suddenly institutionalized our interactions, making further interactions seem more ‘official’. On tours Neal would address me, and other participants, by our last names, but in our private conversations it was always, “Mr. Jamerson”. I read this not so much as a

gesture of respect towards me on his part but his way of showing me how I should address and approach him. He made sure to set the terms of our relationship in different ways. In sum, Neal provided insider access to the world of Harlem Heritage Tours—more than what a tour participant would get—but not to the world of Neal Shoemaker’s Harlem. There were moments, however, when that line seemed to blur.

One weekend I traveled to New York, having arranged to take two tours over a long weekend, and he informed me after I arrived that I would not be able to take tours that weekend. He did, however, schedule a meeting with me where I showed him copies of my master’s research as well as publications (I had emailed these to him and he said he had never received them.) We had that meeting at the HHT office while Neal had rented out the space to a local African American family celebrating a young girl’s birthday. They had a catered soul food lunch and Neal invited me inside to help myself. We each got plates and returned to the sidewalk, where Neal set up a small table and two folding chairs from the HHT office. We sat, ate, and discussed my research plans and intentions with the work. Inside the office hip-hop music was loud and around ten kids were dancing to it. Most of the parents and adult family were mingling outside on the sidewalk.

During our conversation Neal told me about his vision for HHT—a combination of cultural outreach to visitors and as a means for tourism to help enrich the community. He explained that he helped convince leadership at New Canaan Baptist to open up for tourists because of its economic impact. The church building itself is a converted 1930’s theater and is in constant need of repair, and tourism helps pay for that. He gestured to the current gathering at the HHT office and explained that when these events take place it is a way for the community to celebrate itself and its heritage. The office, he hoped, provided a space for the community to engage in this. He also spoke about the external pressures he was facing from larger corporate actors with interest in his enterprise. He asked me several times whether I worked for—or was affiliated with—TripAdvisor in any way. He liked the idea of the exposure my research would bring to his business, but was always wary, I think, of how I intended to interpret it.

During my weeklong stay in Harlem, Neal and the other tour guides got more comfortable with my presence. Doris, during the last tour I took with her, even asked my advice on the route we should take to get the Schomburg Center. On the last tour I took with Neal I served as his de facto assistant when a passerby—a local African-American woman—stopped and watched Neal talk about Harlem’s resurgence as a place known for high fashion and led the group into a locally owned boutique specializing in high end ‘urban’ fashion (Dapper Dan’s Haberdashery). As the group was walking in the woman asked me if this was a tour, and if so, would she be able to take one sometime. We had a brief exchange where she said that she lived here but did not know what all these places

‘were about’ and that she liked the way Neal was discussing Harlem to the tour group. Neal was already in the store with the group giving another presentation so I invited her to come in and join us. When Neal had a moment I introduced them, but Neal didn’t have time to talk to her, so I volunteered with Neal’s approval to give her HHT’s contact information and told her how she could book a tour online. Neal recognized me as a frequent taker of tours before he understood my role as researcher on the tours. Once he did our relationship changed. He granted more access to how he operates HHT than a typical tour participant would get, yet created distance in other ways, such as not consenting to be interviewed.

Final Thoughts

The Two Harlem Renaissances

Harlem today is described by tour guides as being in the middle of a rebirth where the community is more prosperous, safer, and more integrated with the rest of New York as a result. But as they also point out, the consequences of this prosperity and safety include higher living expenses for long time Harlem residents, but which are still comparatively cheaper than other parts of the city. This seems to be a different kind of rebirth than the earlier Renaissance period in Harlem 100 years ago. Demographically speaking, the first Harlem Renaissance occurred as Harlem was beginning its time as a black community. There were still many white owned business and residents in the area, and in fact Harlem’s fame at this time—and the current legacy of this historical period—was the result of white interest in the community generated by gatekeepers like Carl Van Vechten. Today white interest in Harlem has never been higher, but rather than focusing on Harlem’s new dynamic of blackness, as was the case 100 years ago, white interest is now focused on making Harlem white again.

Current patterns of gentrification in Harlem are almost an exact mirror image of classic patterns of ‘white flight’. Poor blacks are the first to be priced out, with whites moving in next to middle and upper class blacks (whose populations have also increased in Harlem). Property prices continue to rise, particularly with Central Harlem brownstones, and even successful local black business owners and churches have a hard time staying financially solvent, paving the way for more white encroachment. This goes beyond tourism, but in this situation cultural tourism works in many ways as an exploratory force in helping whiteness further penetrate the community. In this sense, the tours are the new jazz clubs, where racial boundaries are relaxed, confrontation is minimized, and everyone is dancing to the music. TripAdvisor, then, may be read as a

Van Vechten-esque entity responsible for bringing this vision of racial amicability to a broad outside audience. As Chinyelu (1999) might suggest, the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship acts as a kind of Trojan Horse because it's exterior glorifies blackness at the same time it contains a colonizing and oppressive cultural force. It is welcomed by some in the community, but may help in bringing about its undoing as a black space.

On Safety and Hiding

Review content seems to participate in 'prepping' Harlem to be seen—and ultimately occupied—as a white space. This can be seen generally in the way that reviewers find value in experiencing specifically arranged elements of Harlem's blackness during the tour experience through bricolage and the ways that tour guides use evasive strategies when dealing with issues of racial inequality during tour presentations. Discussions of value regarding Harlem found on TripAdvisor do not give many outward appearances that Harlem is being made white again—as they tend to be explicitly about Harlem's blackness. The threat of whiteness is hidden beneath a celebration of blackness.

But there are moments when reviewers directly envision Harlem as 'for whites'. Although it is not discussed often as a source of value, the idea of safety as communicated by reviewers is always in reference to the safety of the reviewer. This infrequently mentioned source of value represents one of the largest contrasts between review content and the tour experience. While safety is rarely discussed by reviewers—and is always discussed in reference to themselves—it is frequently discussed by tour guides—and is always discussed in reference to *themselves*. These discussions on tours typically refer to the era of Criminal Harlem and how it was a dangerous place to live during the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's. I did, however, notice that door security at New Canaan Baptist became tighter on tours taking place after the 2015 Charleston church shooting—indication of a more direct and violent threat of whiteness.

Discussions of safety from a tour guide's perspective may also refer to the ongoing forces of gentrification. During previous decades, according to tour guides, the safety of black bodies was Harlem's main concern, their presence in Harlem almost taken for granted by both insiders and outsiders alike. Now it is the safety of Harlem's blackness that is at risk—and the very presence of black bodies in the community is at stake. Reviewers hide this reality by directing reader attention—and digital traffic—to celebrations of Harlem's legacy of blackness. The valuating discourse present in reviews both highlights certain aspects of Harlem's blackness—those associated with black triumph and achievement—while hiding others—those associated with displacement as a result of systemic racism. The end result is a digital image of Harlem presented as a 'safe

space' for whiteness, and through this process the idea of race itself becomes simultaneously visible and invisible

Racial Commodification and In/Visibility

The tension between the visibility and invisibility of race on both TripAdvisor and during tour presentations is the key mechanism in the larger process of racial commodification with which this study is concerned. Race needs to be visible in order to be consumed. Indeed, one of the race concept's distinguishing features throughout its history has been its visibility: sweeping judgements and values based on cosmetic physical differences. It needs to 'be there' in the sense that it needs to be a real and tangible *product* in capitalist markets. But the realities of its imposition and hierarchical structure now need to be hidden—due to colorblind social norms—in order for successful economic exploitation to occur.

It is obvious that TripAdvisor reviews are directly influenced by the tour experience, but from this perspective, TripAdvisor's influence on HHT becomes more apparent. Racial discourse is embedded in tour participation but hidden, and this is the influence of review writing in several ways. From a travel writing perspective, the shift in representational authority from tour guide to reviewer applies not just to abstract 'ideas' of Harlem, but also signals reviewer authority over Harlem Heritage Tours itself. The reviewer—and TripAdvisor—not only assumes authority over representations of Harlem, but also over the people who provided the source experience. This creates a discursive—and repetitious—feedback loop, where review writers influence tour presentations, which then become the basis of new online reviews.

In addition to discursive authority the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship also produces economic and cultural authority for TripAdvisor and its user base over the producers of the tour as well as greater Harlem. As tour participants write reviews they also lean on their own positionality in establishing authority as well. Neal pays very close attention to reviews, and has stated in both online responses and in conversations with me that they influence his presentational strategies. One result of TripAdvisor's influence on HHT is the continued use and refinement of bricolage as a way to create sensations of immersion and perceptions of 'insider' access for tour participants. Another result of TripAdvisor's influence seems to be Neal's strategic use of diversity ideology as a means to create value for tour participants. These are each means through which race is presented as *in/visible*, and easier to package as a tourist attraction and commodity.

The Tipping Point

At what point will Harlem be unrecognizable as a black community to tour participants and only recognizable as a community that used to be black? How much longer can a local tour operator such as Neal continue to run a small scale business such as HHT? The HHT office is located in a small pocket of non-gentrified Harlem, but there are luxury condos less than two blocks away. Harlem's legacy as a center of the black experience is strong and will persist. And it will become more museological over time as the community itself continues to become whiter. However, Central Harlem's strong associations with blackness and a still majority African-American population each provide some insulation against a complete transformation of this nature—as seen, for example, in Washington DC's U Street Corridor (Summers, 2019) or Philadelphia's Old Seventh Ward (The Ward Website). Each of these communities have demographically shifted from black to white to such an extent that there are no black people around—to either give tours or provide contemporary context about the community's black heritage. These communities are now so white, in other words, that it's hard to imagine them as formerly black spaces. One can, however, take a walking tour focusing on African-American heritage in each of these neighborhoods, the latter being where W.E.B Du Bois conducted research that ended up becoming *The Philadelphia Negro*—a foundational work of race studies as well as modern sociological thought. This is possible, in each case, by downloading a smartphone application with geolocation software tagged to relevant information regarding this history. The tour guides here are positioned inside the digital realm.

Epilogue

In the epilogue to my master's thesis I highlighted a TripAdvisor review that was probably written by Margaret Werry—author of 2011's *The Tourist State*—concerning Mohio Tours, based in Auckland. This cultural tourism company was similar in many ways to HHT in that they feature local Maori residents providing tour groups an immersive experience with Auckland's indigenous heritage (It is now listed as 'closed' on TripAdvisor). It was also a subject of her ethnographic analysis concerning the role of tourism in New Zealand state-making. The review was heavy on a veiled sort of credentialing "I happen to know quite a bit about Auckland's Maori heritage..." and was written in a very conversational tone. I remember being critical of her review in my defense of that work, pointing out that her review seemed to be an example of the type of valuating discourse she spent so much time deconstructing and criticizing in her book. But the task of writing an online review concerning an experience that *does not* contribute to—or is inherently a part of—a racially valuating discourse is easier said than done.

What would such a review of Harlem Heritage Tours, for example, look like? What would *my* review look like? Any review, for example, would need to be written

within the established conventions of review writing mapped out in this research. This is for the sake of the reader as well as HHT's online reputation. I did not want to 'rock the boat' during tours by asking participants directly about their feelings and attitudes of racial difference, and I do not want to do that on TripAdvisor. The first few times I imagined my review of HHT it sounded like it could fit somewhere in my dissertation as a kind of proscriptive list for potential visitors—Do's and Don'ts for both behavior on the tour and how one should represent Harlem on TripAdvisor. But that approach would centralize my presence—and authority—too much in the review. I want the focus to be on the people involved with producing the Harlem experience for tourists—guides and community members. As such, I adopt a travel-guide style when possible, but it is hard not to center oneself when trying to express sincere gratitude—which is not often done in review content. I do not identify myself as a researcher—or, like Werry, come close to doing so—because it could potentially lead to perceptions that my review is 'biased' in the sense that it is not provided by a 'real' tourist. I also want to minimize the distance between racial visibility and invisibility—which by proxy creates distance between my social location and Harlem's—through my review content while adhering to online review writing conventions. I mention both my whiteness as well as Harlem's blackness and explicitly describe significant distance—and power imbalance—between these positions. Above all I want to credit the people responsible for the experience. This means including sincere expressions of gratitude to HHT staff and the greater black community of Central Harlem. I want this review to benefit HHT. These all represent, on varying levels, conflicting aims. The following is a review that still sells Harlem to outsiders as an attraction by virtue of its valuating language and its location on TripAdvisor. I—the writer of this review—emerge from this picture as the most authoritative figure. This shows how powerful the organizational structure of the Harlem-TripAdvisor relationship is in terms of how it helps to enable racial commodification.

NYH0kie123, Blacksburg, VA.

"Thank you Harlem Heritage Tours" (5 Stars)

I have taken several tours with Harlem Heritage because I like learning about African-American history and culture and how that affects my life (and I have family in New York so I make semi-frequent trips there). There is no better place than Harlem to do this, and no better group to learn from than Harlem Heritage Tours. I've had the privilege of taking tours with Neal, Doris, and Andy, and they each have different but entertaining styles. All of them are extremely knowledgeable about Harlem's history and the current challenges and issues facing Harlem's African-American community, especially gentrification. More

importantly, all of the tour guides are Harlem locals and all of them have good relationships with the community, so you know you're not imposing on the community too much by booking with them.

I want to sincerely thank Neal, Doris, and Andy for showing me around Harlem. You each used your life stories to inform my understanding of Harlem's black heritage, and I recognize that this is not always an easy or comfortable thing to do. It's worth more than the price of admission as far as I'm concerned. I also want to thank the community of Harlem for being so welcoming during my visits—this includes the congregation at New Canaan Baptist Church and anyone who smiled, said hello, or danced to the music during my guided walks. You don't need to be so friendly to white tourists like me—I'm sure we're often annoying—or worse—but you are anyway. Visit Harlem and book with Harlem Heritage Tours. I recommend both.

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