

Cultural Memory through Tourism: An Ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg.

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between tourism imaginaries and cultural memory through historical sites such as Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. By analyzing how the museum acts as a tourist destination and an educational institution, this study explores how Colonial Williamsburg serves as a social structure for both concepts through ethnography. Additionally, this paper argues that institutions like Colonial Williamsburg actively shape the collective and cultural memory through tourism. This study highlights the importance of integrating memory studies and tourism imaginaries in understanding the role of historical tourism in preserving and conveying the past.

Author's Biographical Sketch

Joshua Jordan was born and raised (mostly) in New Mexico. He currently calls Virginia home with his wife Courtney and his two youngest daughters. He joined the Army in 2004 as a UH-60 Blackhawk Mechanic and is a Sergeant First Class at Ft. Eustis, Virginia. He has served in the past as a Crew Chief, Technical Inspector, Advance Individual Training Instructor, Training Developer, and Platoon Sergeant. His overseas tours include Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, and South Korea. He has been awarded numerous military awards including the Air Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Army Commendation Medal (6), Instructor Badge and Master Aviation Crewmember Badge. Joshua graduated from Ashford University in 2017 with a BA in Cultural Anthropology. In his off time, he enjoys spending time with his family, historical fencing, archery, and traveling to historical locations.

Dedication

Completing this was the final piece to dream of mine. I had to do it for my Mom, Grandma and Grandpa who taught me to be stubborn and never give up before they left this life too soon. I did it for my Wife who supported me and made me keep going when I wanted to quit. Finally, this is for my Children, so that they know with hard work, dedication, and some self-made luck, dreams come true.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

Walking down Duke of Gloucester Street on a warm spring Saturday the clopping of horses on the street mingles with the low murmur of the crowds. The small clusters of families mix with the groups of international students following their guides and hosts. People stop to have a picnic on the palace green, blankets and baskets set out as they enjoy the warm weather that has finally come to Williamsburg Virginia. The gardens are in full bloom amid the mid-18th century colonial homes. Standing side by side, it is indistinguishable which buildings are original or what was recreated during the early 1900s when the sleepy, forgotten town of Williamsburg began to transform into its present-day self. Taking a pleasant stroll past the historic buildings might catch a glimpse of the newborn lambs, or the oxen grazing in fields just behind the houses. Time seems to have blurred for a moment as the past seeps into the present at Colonial Williamsburg.

As if stepping through time, soldiers in red coats and tricorne hats march ahead of a crowd of spectators playing their fifes and drums. They head past the bastion and armory and continue down what locals refer to as DOG Street. They passed the reenactors, otherwise known as interpreters, wearing something out of another time. The soldiers do not stop their parade, passing the Raleigh Tavern, and continue to march and play their instruments as they march towards the old Virginia Capitol building. The crowd behind them seems out of time with the soldiers in their shorts and hoodies. The daily parade marks the end of the day for the world's largest living museum. It also

marks the end of a long day of visiting and walking through as many of the various trades, crafts, and shops throughout Colonial Williamsburg.



Figure 1. The Governor's Palace-

The Governor's Palace as seen from Duke of Gloucester Street. Photo by Joshua Jordan

Reflecting on the day over a drink at one of the local breweries in the Market Square with friends leads to discussing small details of what was seen and highlights of the day's visit. Apprentices would learn not only how to do their trades, but also how to run the business of that trade. Women could have been blacksmiths just as much as they

would have been anything else. The same streets that were walked today were also walked by George Washington as the colonies declared their independence and started a revolution. Being in the same place, the same buildings, the same rooms, where it started, brings history more to life. The idea of what Colonial Williamsburg was expected to be, and what the reality of what it was creates new ideas of what it will be next time.

Colonial Williamsburg is a place where the memory of the past is preserved as a tourist destination that solidifies in the memories of the day's visit.

Preserving the past is a part of human nature. How we have marked historical sites to convey their importance to future generations has taken many forms. Museums, parks, and monuments are examples of how these locations are preserved and events remembered. Some are forgotten except for the occasional sign on the side of the road. Others, like Colonial Williamsburg, are huge endeavors that actively focus on tourism to draw in a crowd to share its story as a living museum.

Living museums act as a medium for telling stories, educating visitors, and creating an immersive environment of the past, bringing it to life. They use the social structures needed to create the tourism imaginary to entice visitors. Simultaneously they are the same social structures that are needed to pass on the cultural memory. Although these two concepts are apparently related, there has been little anthropological work that directly ties cultural or collective memory to tourism imaginary, as these concepts are studied in different anthropological circles. This project hopes to show these concepts not only belong together but should be studied further in the context of each other.

Preserving the past allows future generations to maintain a connection to their historical and cultural roots. Being able to maintain that connection helps to develop a

sense of belonging, develops cultural memory, and instills shared common values. Historical locations are enshrined in that history so that the event they represent is preserved. Museums, parks, and monuments are examples of how these locations are preserved for future use. The present day use may not always be the same as the initial use based on the changes in the culture and values of those responsible for their preservation.

At the time of its founding, Colonial Williamsburg excluded much of the historical narrative that involved social inequalities (Miller 2006; Greenspan 2009). This was also compounded by the Jim Crow era ideals of the early 20th century, much like nearby Jamestown (Reid 2022). The uncomfortable truths of the past were either not discussed or were overlooked by the ideals of the day. Instead, from the beginning, Colonial Williamsburg focused on building an image of what America was through its past to invoke a sense of patriotism and national heritage (Miller 2006; Greenspan 2009; Gable and Handler 1997). That is, what it was imagined as having been like was framed within the confines of an early 20th-century worldview.

How Colonial Williamsburg is reshaping the cultural memory of the past against the tourist imaginary, or what tourists expect when they visit, is the focus of this project. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation as a museum has made a commitment to addressing the inequalities of society that were previously ignored in favor of nationalistic rhetoric. The proof of this is in their actions of inclusion, and their mission statement "That the future may learn from the past." ("About Colonial Williamsburg Foundation" n.d.). Anthropologists have only recently recognized that the imaginaries of social structures, such as museums, play an important role in the development of

collective and cultural memories tied to the events being memorialized. To bridge the gap between them, this project aims to show the link between memory studies and tourism imaginaries needs to be held in the same conversation, especially when considering historical tourism.

Historical Beginnings

Since its inception, Colonial Williamsburg has functioned as a tourist destination where visitors are promised the experience of life in 18th-century America, prior to the Revolutionary War. To function as a successful tourist destination, Colonial Williamsburg has worked to create an image in the minds of Americans of an idyllic pre-Revolutionary town, filled with patriotism and promise. Yet that idyllic time was tumultuous in the creation of a new nation from rebel colonies. What we see today is a glimpse into the past as was later imagined by the influential founders of Colonial Williamsburg.

John D. Rockefeller and Rev W.A.R. Goodwin “dreamed of creating a wholly peaceful world that stressed the rights of the individual and the importance of representative government” (Greenspan 2009, 7). They served as the dreamer and the financier of the project to restore the historical portion of Williamsburg to create the cultural identity of the foundation of America. Goodwin wanted to help create a more homogeneous heritage, a cultural identity, of what it was to be an American.

Rev Goodwin’s desires set the foundation for the transformation of historic Williamsburg into the museum it is today. Historically, Williamsburg served as the second seat of power for the Virginia colony from 1699 until 1779 when it moved to

Richmond. The town remained quiet until the Civil War at the Battle of Williamsburg in 1862. By the 1920s, Williamsburg had failed to grow as much as other important cities in the revolution such as Boston or New York. Instead, “It possessed inadequate sewage and electricity, as well as large holes in some streets that made them impassable for automobiles” (Greenspan 2009, 6). Even so, Goodwin felt that with over eighty original buildings from the colonial era Williamsburg would be perfect for historical reconstruction and interpretation.

As the Rector for Bruton Parish Church during the early years of the 20th century, Goodwin oversaw the restoration of the church in 1905. From there he dreamt of rebuilding the rest of Williamsburg to how he envisioned its former glory. The decay of Williamsburg in the early 20th century did not match the importance of the historical role the city played in the creation of the United States. Reverend Goodwin saw this as an opportunity to help instill the ideal of Americanism and to preserve Williamsburg as a national shrine (Greenspan 2009; Gable and Handler 1997). By doing so he would create a place that focused on the historical narrative of the past that sought to bring together Americans in commonality.

Colonial Williamsburg has sought to influence the collective memory centered around the pre-revolution era that laid the foundation for America. Rev “Goodwin’s common background and united purpose of Americans” (Greenspan 2009) was the foundation of the social structure needed to create the collective memory of the past. Like all great undertakings though, he needed money to make this dream happen. His backing came by way of John D Rockefeller Jr. (Miller 2006; Gable and Handler 1997; Miller 2006). JDR Jr. would continue to support Colonial Williamsburg throughout his life.

Today, Colonial Williamsburg is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 educational institution. It is distinct in that it is the world's largest living History Museum, according to Colonial Williamsburg's website. They include 89 original buildings, more than 500 recreations and two art museums. This includes the recently verified original building for the Bree School that was moved from the William and Mary Campus to its current location.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation says they conduct “ongoing historical architectural and archaeological research that underpins all exhibitions and programs in the historical area in the art museums and online” (“Our Organization Colonial Williamsburg Foundation,” n.d.). To support that commitment, they run portions of the overall museum as a resort, with both modern and historical amenities. Some of the homes in Colonial Williamsburg are private residences which adds to the idea that it is a small town with a life of its own.



Figure2. Historical Garden

Garden exhibit that grows heirloom vegetables with historical methods. Photo by Joshua Jordan

This paper will focus on the ethnographic research conducted at Colonial Williamsburg during 2024. It will begin with a literature review highlighting key concepts essential to the research. A detailed methodology explanation will describe the research design. The ethnographic observations will highlight the lived experiences through participant observations and be balanced by interviews from tourists and insiders from Colonial Williamsburg. Finally, the last chapter will discuss the findings, explain limitations, and suggest further research.

Chapter II.

Literature Review

Little work has been done on the cross-section of memory studies and tourist imaginaries. However, institutions such as Colonial Williamsburg utilize tourist imaginaries to influence cultural memories surrounding the events, time, and ideas of the past. The relationship between the two fields of study promises to be an intriguing intersection of study.

Within memory studies, some scholars have debated whether historical sites are able to create a collective memory simply by being visited. One side says that memory is purely an individual experience. That memory cannot be passed onto others, however, memory and culture are ubiquitous concepts (Gable and Handler 2011). The other side says that the social structures put into place are reminders of the past that create the collectiveness that binds people together. Memory is shared by the preservation of those memorialized events that pass on cultural and social norms (J. Assman, 2008). Both have merits in their arguments and in some ways, both are correct, and both are wrong. A place does not become part of the cultural memory without it having a significant meaning to at least a small group of people. It becomes a social structure, such as a museum, by being needed to represent a part of the history or culture of those who deem it important.

History is not only about the main events that we commonly recognize. In this example, Williamsburg is known to have been one of the key locations of colonial America and where prominent Founding Fathers such as George Washington and

Thomas Jefferson came together. The contrast between the imaginary and the cultural memory is what can help shape the current understanding of the past using social structures in the present.

Key Terms

This project focuses on how the social structure of a museum uses the tourist imaginary to influence the collective and cultural memory. Collective memory and cultural memory are used almost interchangeably. Imaginaries, as utilized in tourism, is a unique concept that I plan to demonstrate that holds importance to cultural and collective memory.

In the anthropology of tourism, *imaginaries* are the theoretical concept of how a destination creates its own image (Salazar and Graburn 2016; Salazar 2012). Places that want tourists to come to visit must create an idea of what that place is in the minds of potential patrons. If they have an idea of what the place is going to be like already, their interest in the location has helped to create a start of an imaginary as a first-time visitor. After that, however, the imaginary starts to evolve and add in more concrete experiences along with the idea of what was expected. The tourist as a stakeholder does more than consume, they also serve as intermediaries by creating a demand for what they expect the imaginary to be (Salazar 2012; Zhou, Ap, and Yang 2023; Salazar and Graburn 2016). The tourist shapes the imaginary into a more complex idea as they demand more from the producer. Those who are first-time visitors will have a different imaginary than repeat visitors, they do not have the firsthand experience to add to the imaginary. The tourist as a consumer demands, for example, a more historically accurate experience of the past.

The producers, in this case, Colonial Williamsburg, are sometimes receptive to that demand and make changes accordingly.

Collective memory is a concept of a group's history based on general knowledge of the past. This includes ideas and memories shared from firsthand experiences, familial stories, memorials, and symbols of the past. It is not necessarily the direct memories of an individual but the creation of an idea of something based on experiences focused on it. It is used more as an umbrella term for various concepts of group memory. This is based on Halbwachs conceptualization of "collective memory" (1980). Halbwachs also distinguishes that collective memory is different from autobiographical memory (1980). Instead, it is how individuals remember an event from the recent past such as the Superbowl halftime show or the January 6 riot. Collectively, people know what happened through the media, even if they were not there themselves. The event becomes embedded into the social thought process to the point where if it comes into conversation a general recollection of the events is remembered together with others.

Cultural memory similarly is a concept of the past based on how society perceives and expresses its traditions and identity (J. Assman, 2008). It is how we view the past through the chosen relevance of the past to the present. It is a choice to remember certain events over others through symbology, memorialization, and preservation of the past to remember the identity of a culture. It is how a foundation is created to initiate other members into a culture. For example, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom and hope that represents the United States. These same symbols, however, may have different meanings to different people, and in different contexts. Patriotic symbols help bring a country together and create a shared identity such as flags. Symbols can also carry

a different meaning depending on how they are perceived. For example, the upside-down American flag has recently been taken over by the far right to represent their belief the nation is in distress.

For historical sites to successfully have repeat tourists they must create an idea of why that place is worth the multiple visits. The imaginary will shift as is expected when adding in the concrete experiences. Colonial Williamsburg promotes itself as being the past living in the present. As a living museum, the guides are reenactors trained in historical research on how 18th-century people lived in Williamsburg. It re-enforces the imagination of what the place is about, a looking glass into the early times of American history. Not only does the imaginary play a role but uses the same social structures in which collective memory is formed.

Cultural and Collective Memory

Learning about the past through significant historical icons, or in other terms social structures, contributes to the creation of cultural memory (Gable and Handler 2000). Enough work has shown that cultural memory and collective memory are important in the conveying of the past to the present through social structures such as museums and memorials (Gable and Handler 1997; Miller 2006; Greenspan 2009, A. Assmann 2008; J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Burns 2004; Chronis 2012; Confino 1997). It is those social structures that become the tools needed to create the imaginaries of the past that draw people to the museum.

The imaginary, as used by Colonial Williamsburg, is needed to further curate the story it is conveying to bring in the visitors. The imaginary is then shaped by the concrete

experiences presented in the educational formats that will create or contest the understanding of the past. The individual memory of the event for the visitor shapes their specific understanding. Collectively in a group, the memory is better understood, remembered, and becomes the cultural memories of the location.

Cultural memory and collective memory require social structures such as those created by Colonial Williamsburg or other historical sites. Social structures are how collective memory is passed from one generation to another (Hirst, Yamashiro, and Coman 2018; J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; A. Assmann 2008). Tourism at historical sites became an important conduit to the past to tell significant stories that are relevant to the present such as the foundation of a nation or major battle. The collective memory is shaped by the individual memory of the experiences. Individual experiences may also shape the imagination of location. For example, the expectations of visiting various theme parks with the same brand such as Busch Gardens or Disney.

Colonial Williamsburg invokes ideas of the past through the reenactors and horse-drawn buggies. It has the sounds of a fife and drum band marching down the street in their red coats as you stroll through the streets amongst the reconstructed Williamsburg. These practices were intentionally marketed from the beginning of the museum's time (Gable and Handler 1997; Miller 2006). The creation of an ideal setting in place and time to romanticize the past is like other imaginaries of visiting a tourist destination such as Gettysburg, Hawaii, or Portugal de Pequenitos (Salazar and Graburn 2016; Gable and Handler 1997; Chronis 2012). Colonial Williamsburg's imaginary is shaped to demonstrate the past in a way that is palatable to the public. It is a presentation of the past for the visitor who may or may not have the historical knowledge to have a sufficient or

accurate context for what they are experiencing. Looking at the past through the lens of the present can present a challenge in ethics or understanding of modern times. The present sometimes is reflected in the past with issues that are relative to both timelines, though they are seen in vastly different lights. Understanding the past helps to understand these issues in the present.

Colonial Williamsburg as a museum contends with the reality of the past it is trying to recreate, as well as the historical narrative from when it was founded. These imaginaries clash with the visitors' expectations of what their experiences will be. The cross-section of the visitor's imaginary and the imaginary presented by Colonial Williamsburg "become objectified in the imaginary of the park" (Salazar and Graburn 2016). Here referring to Portugal de Pequenitos by Paula Moto Santos but can be applied to Colonial Williamsburg, "as the concrete and lived experience by visitors of material worlds that are representational systems" (Salazar and Graburn 2016). The imaginary becomes the lived experience of the historical narrative as represented by the museum. In that sense, Colonial Williamsburg is the social structure for remembering important aspects of colonial America and Virginia; it becomes the cultural memory when both concepts are taken into consideration.

Contrary to this argument, Gable and Handler (2000) did not believe that Colonial Williamsburg creates a collective memory. They claimed that memory is solely an individualized creation based on the experiences, knowledge, and biases of visitors (Gable and Handler 2000). The museum does not confer an automatic memory of the history of its space. The museum is not a time machine, but a representation of the past based on evidence gathered through archeology and historical studies.

The collective memory is created with the patchworked assembly of memories from individuals in a group. They are passed on through social structures that link us to the past, sometimes as pictures, mementos, or museums. It is a combination of several social structures that tell the story and shape the recollection of the past. Individual memory is only one of the structures that are incorporated into the creation of collective and cultural memory.

The individual memory is thought to be flawed, incomplete, and only when combined with others is the holistic memory brought into fruition (J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; A. Assmann 2008; Halbwachs 1980). The collective memory, and subsequently the cultural memory, is a combination of iconography, individual memory, and collective storytelling of those shared experiences. Where cultural memory and collective memory diverge is the difference between a macro and micro experience (Hirst, Yamashiro, and Coman 2018) or the distance from the social structure to the individual's own memory (J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995). From a macro experience, a top-down approach in psychology is used to explore the retention of memory, historical or not through social representations theory. This theory uses "the collection of values, ideas, metaphors, beliefs, and practice shared among members of a group or community" (Hirst, Yamashiro, and Coman 2018, 439). The "microlevel psychological process can lead to global macrolevel social outcomes" through the cultural attractor theory at a local level (Hirst, Yamashiro, and Coman 2018, 443). This means the small things add up to the bigger picture, such as remembering on a personal level where someone was during a memorial event like 9/11.

Once the memory becomes objectified, for example through memorials or ceremonies, it becomes a part of the cultural memory. Through using historical narratives and social structures, the gap between collective memory and the group memory of a shared experience, closes to the cultural memory. The memory of the larger group such as a nation, is shared in social structure to transmit its values and beliefs. In the case of Colonial Williamsburg, the individual memory of a visit is the microlevel process that has a macrolevel or national cultural memory effect.

Tourism Imaginary

The imaginary can be based on more than the advertisement of the location. Indeed, it can also be a result of pop culture or even the cultural memory itself (Frost and Frost 2021). In part, it is the marketing of the location, such as a walk into the past. Imagining is also very much an individual action. Where “economy and politics provide triggering mechanisms” that create the marketing and “sociocultural production of imaginaries” (Salazar 2012). The idea of the place and the scene it depicts to entice you to come is important in the decision-making process of going. What people want to see is what they will imagine to be there. What they see as triggering mechanisms can be from pop culture to social movements. Salazar defines imaginaries “... as socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people’s personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices.” (Salazar 2012) The imagining of a place is directed to the masses by the location as it both creates its idea and is a result of the idea of what it is.

In the case of Colonial Williamsburg, from the beginning Rev. W.A.R. Goodwin and John D. Rockefeller wanted to present an idyllic history that “stressed the rights of the individual and the importance of representative government” (Greenspan 2020, 23). It is evident that dream has been carried forward and can be seen in Colonial Williamsburg’s mission statement on their website “That the future may learn from the past” (“About Colonial Williamsburg Foundation” 2024).

Bringing the past to life has been a hallmark of Colonial Williamsburg’s imaginary as a living history museum. It is filled with experiences unlike many other museums, such as the craftsmen of various trades like the blacksmith. Visitors will see restored and original 18th-century buildings, horse-drawn carriages, and interpreters in historical dress. To some, Colonial Williamsburg presents more of a theme park than a museum because of these unique attractions and prices to match (Gable and Handler 1997). Critically it is seen as a “Disneyfication of the past” and too clean and pristine to truly represent the past (Greenspan 2020). These ideas affect the imaginaries of Colonial Williamsburg as a theme park more than a museum to some visitors. Especially when given the close distance to actual theme parks like Busch Gardens and Water Country USA. Visitors can spend a day at one and then explore the past the next day.

The romanticism of the past influences imaginary as it is shaped by the stories of history such as the role movies play in the idea of the time in question such as *The Patriot* (2000) or Colonial Williamsburg's own film *Williamsburg: The Story of a Patriot* (1957) (Frost and Frost 2021; Salazar 2012). As more evidence comes to light, the narrative changes on the past. The romanticized stories of key leaders such as George Washington

or Thomas Jefferson also shape the imaginary of not only who they were but also how they affected the historical narrative.

When considering the histories of those underrepresented, such as the enslaved, the dialogue changes. Colonial Williamsburg and Virginia's history with slavery becomes mired in the present day through remnants of Civil War era ideals. This palimpsestic dynamic can become problematized when the consumer of the imaginary demand calls for the inclusion of marginalized communities. An example of how such challenges have not always been handled well was the slave auction held at Colonial Williamsburg in 1994 with an audience of over 2000 people (McConachie 1998). This event was heavily criticized and protested by students and activists.

Even in the spirit of education and historical accuracy, this type of reenactment should have been reconsidered. Slavery is a human rights violation even if it is now a part of the imaginary of the past. Better options for telling the past in a meaningful way are being developed. The reenactment event, now at a minimum, has become a part of the collective memory that also has played into civil rights discussion by the NCAA which opposed the auction (McConachie 1998). As seen at Gettysburg with some Southern visitors suggesting the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum is misrepresenting the plight of the Confederate soldiers (Chronis 2012), the biases of those who come to see such locations and events will shape their tourist imaginary. If the imaginary is misconstrued through such biases, it undermines the efforts to create a cultural memory that allows for education and recognition of the past to learn from it. However, some parts, such as the slave auction recreation, should not be recreated in its entirety.

Some tourists historically would see Colonial Williamsburg as a Disneyfication of the past (Gable and Handler 1997). For those, it is just a theme park of the colonial past that shows a very sanitized history. Similarly, as has happened in other parts of the Historical Triangle like Jamestown, the past has been whitewashed through the prejudices of the past. It has either neglected marginalized populations or told their stories in a manner that downplayed their difficulties in life (Reid 2022, Gable and Handler 1997). The imaginary of Colonial Williamsburg has been described as much like Disney World in the past with colonial reenactors by Gable and Handler (1997). What tourists find are those harder issues to discuss such as slavery and racism. Even as Reid (2022) points out people of color in the local area normally do not feel as welcomed at the historical sites due to past discrimination of previous generations. The imaginary for those in the Black community suggesting that they do not belong there due to racially charged Jim Crow era laws or lack of representation of their historical culture. Understanding the connection between the imaginary and the cultural memory has merit in understanding the use of the space and place of historical areas in the present.

What Makes This Important?

Little work has been done that shows the contrast between the imaginary and collective and cultural memory. Imaginaries have been hinted at by authors when discussing cultural memory or collective memory (J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Gable and Handler 1997; A. Assmann and Schwarz 2013). Cultural and collective memory are also touched on when discussing imaginaries in historical tourism (Chronis 2012; Frost and Frost 2021; Miller 2006; Salazar and Graburn 2016). This project aims to

combine those two subjects and show their relevance to each other by including them in the same conversation. Through the study of the contrast between these concepts, we gain a better understanding of the relationship between memory studies of cultural and collective memory and tourism imaginaries.

This project also intends to gain a better understanding of the use of space and place utilization of historical areas and their roles within the concept of imaginaries and cultural memory to understand the dichotomy between them. By looking at the imaginary and the cultural memory together it is hoped that the correlation of similar theoretical foundations is shown using ethnographic work and can expand on the scholarly work for both concepts.

Chapter III.

Methodology

To understand the way the imaginary of a historically important location affects the cultural memory of the time depicted, understanding the experience of the tourist was required. This meant that participant observation through ethnography was the ideal method to conduct the research. Ethnography allows for thick description and is a staple of anthropological research (Geertz 1973). Ethnography has been used to understand tourism imaginary and in memory studies (Salazar and Graburn 2016; Salazar 2012; Chronis 2012; Zhou, Ap, and Yang 2023; Frost and Frost 2021; Miller 2006). The advantage of this type of qualitative research is the ability to experience Colonial Williamsburg from the perspective of a tourist while also being able to objectively observe how other tourists experience it.

Through participant observation, the ethnographic method allows for first-hand experiences (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018). Those include interactions with tourists and interpreters, joining in on interactive tours, and experiencing the site with other tourists from their perspective. This method makes it easier to understand the tourism imaginary and the cultural memory. Being a participant observer also allows for the observation of the routine use of space.

Observations were completed by visiting Colonial Williamsburg over several months in the late winter and spring of 2024. Every day presented something more, which meant that it was necessary to be selective of what to participate in or to see. As a sampling strategy, the researcher set out to do something different each visit. At least one

new tour, one new exhibit/ production, and one interaction with interpreters were intended per visit with some overlap as time permitted. Programs did change throughout the year as the seasons progressed, offering more than enough opportunities to maintain the goals for each visit.

The structure of the project was designed in two parts. The first was to explore how Colonial Williamsburg presented itself through advertising and the experiences of visitors in an attempt to understand the tourist imaginary. How tourists utilized and interacted with the historical space was one of the primary focuses for observations. The researcher intended to see if there was a difference between the imaginary of the tourist and the imaginary presented by Colonial Williamsburg.

Secondly, the researcher wanted to see if the memories created by visitors would be able to translate into a cultural memory. This portion was not intended to be done in real-time, although some examples did occur. Ideally, taking an active role in tours, activities, and discussions with other tourists, it was hoped observation participation would lead to insights into their feelings and ideas of Colonial Williamsburg and their understanding of its history. Interacting with other visitors this way would also help to validate personal observations. Interviews were also be used to validate observations made and to help keep a check on biases. Since Colonial Williamsburg is a familiar place to the researcher this strategy was important.

Being a tourist in your backyard is akin to being an insider and an outsider as a researcher (Zulfikar 2014). Simultaneously as a researcher, you are the one who knows where to go, have an idea of what to expect, and have contacts that act as gatekeepers to

open more opportunities. It also means that biases must be considered as a researcher. Having already visited Colonial Williamsburg there was a certain idea, a personal imaginary, based on experiences, others, and media. That meant that observations of the familiar potentially could blind what were new observations or the novel could be blinded with no context (Treitler 2014). Initially, it was not obvious these blind spots could dampen the ability to be objective in observations.

Bias checking made it possible to be more robust in observations. For example, the terminology used by the interpreters when referring to slavery and how those conversations felt. Were those conversations something that could be had without feeling too uncomfortable that academic integrity would be lost to emotional discourse? Checking personal bias based on the researcher's background, and using reflexivity are “core components to qualitative research” (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018, 200) Being open to the experiences offered as they came by spending extensive time in the field allowed for more understanding, helped to decrease blind spots, and add to the validity of the study.

Site visits were completed from February through July of 2024. The bulk of visits were on the weekends due, in part, to researcher availability. Beyond convenience, it was also thought the weekends were more likely to have larger crowds at Colonial Williamsburg during the weekend. Although every day of the week was seen. Especially during April and May with multi-day visits during the week and weekend.

Effort was made to see the various programs or presentations at Colonial Williamsburg during those times. Parts of this meant just following the crowd and seeing

where the popular areas were. Different tours also would gather outside their respective buildings while waiting for the tour to begin. Popular places such as the Capital Building, the courthouse, Raleigh Tavern, and the Governor's Palace had not been visited prior and were prioritized first. Due to their limited availability, it was not possible to reserve carriage rides or participate in some special programs.

In addition, information was collected from Colonial Williamsburg's website, travel websites, and Facebook page. These were used to help determine the best times and programs to visit but also as part of the multi-dimensional source of information. The idea being that to build an imaginary the marketing of Colonial Williamsburg should be included in the beginning as a first-time visitor would want to explore options before committing to going. It was also useful to explore what times and where different events or presentations would be taking place. The website also proved to be invaluable in determining the imaginary that Colonial Williamsburg was presenting for itself.

It is important to note the sheer size of Colonial Williamsburg as both a limiting factor for a day visit and as a reason for repeating visitors. The museum is large enough that after visiting consistently for several months many things have yet to be seen or experienced. When interviewing one of the volunteers, they said new programs are always being added making it impossible really to be able to see and experience everything Colonial Williamsburg has to offer. Gable and Handler (1997) noted this same constraint. The sheer size of the museum was greater than their ability to conduct a proper ethnography of *everything* at Colonial Williamsburg. This project was not designed to include every experience. Instead, it was designed to be flexible in nature to accommodate constraints.

Chapter IV.

Ethnographic Observations

The brisk spring air still had enough of a chill in it to warrant a hoodie in the mornings. The flowers bloomed brightly, daffodils and tulips in their many arrays of colors poked through in the gardens behind white picket fences. Their deep shades of red, pink, and yellow lined the walkways as visitors posed to take pictures inside of the beautiful gardens. Occasionally a fat bumblebee floats flower to flower, reminding everyone of the renewed life that is spring. In the pastures behind the houses just beyond those white picket fences longhorn cattle graze alongside sheep, standing in stark contrast to the modern vehicles parked just across the street. The newest lamb and its mother are separated in the next yard over, ignoring the small crowd of photographers trying to get the perfect picture against an 18th-century backdrop.



Figure 3. Tulips In Bloom

Flowers such as tulips and daffodils line walking paths in gardens mixed between historical houses. Photo by Joshua Jordan

The old streets of Colonial Williamsburg are filled with tour groups. Families and school trips take advantage of the mild weather as they explore the trades and the shops. The crowds make way for a single vehicle that pulls up to the church, it stands out against the carriages passing it by. The ringing of the blacksmith hammers echoes as one group crowds around the inside of the workshop. The ringing of metal on metal and the woosh of the bellows blowing life into the fires highlight the difficult task it is to shape something as simple as nails. Cellphones are raised above the crowd to take a picture of the blacksmiths at work. The crowd observes an unspoken etiquette of quietly and thoughtfully listening to one of the blacksmiths as they explain how the apprenticeships also included reading and writing. The interpreter teaches the group about how an apprentice needed to be able to run their own business when their apprenticeship was over. Quietly a question is spoken in the front that no one in the back would hear followed by “Not all blacksmiths would be men” from the interpreter. “Wives or daughters would also help in the smithy and help run the business as well.” Slowly the crowd thanks their blacksmith host and fades away as a new group comes in followed by welcomes from the interpreters.

Not all visitors are there to see the insides of the trade buildings, or to walk into the gardens with heirloom vegetables being planted. Instead, as the afternoon wanes the crowd shifts from groups of students to families enjoying a stroll through the beautiful area. The Governor’s Palace Green, the tree lined grassy area between Duke of Gloucester Street and the Governor’s Palace, is scattered with blankets and picnickers. The blend of modern life mixed into the 18th-century setting expands the use of Colonial Williamsburg from just a museum to something more.

Museum or Theme Park?

To fully engage in participant observations as a tourist, the first step was to plan the visit as a new visitor. This was necessary to understand the imaginary presented by Colonial Williamsburg. How did it advertise itself through social media, its web page, and travel blogs? Through these avenues, it was possible to ascertain how others viewed Colonial Williamsburg. In the past, it has been likened to a historical theme park such as Disney's version of colonial America (Gable and Handler 1997; Greenspan 2009). As such, part of the intent of the initial planning stages of a visit was to see if this was still the case.

The first online search for "What is Colonial Williamsburg?" returned some reviews by travel sites such as Tripadvisor and Hotels.com, and more articles on Colonial Williamsburg published on their website. Tripadvisor was the top result, describing it as an immersive living history museum ("Colonial Williamsburg - All You Need to Know BEFORE You Go" 2024). The travel website rated it highly on their things to do in Williamsburg, above the theme park Busch Gardens Williamsburg.

Considering how many times in the past Colonial Williamsburg was referred to as a theme park by travel guides, there had to be more to that idea. However, if it is a theme park, then the ability of Colonial Williamsburg to contribute to the collective memory and its status as an educational foundation could be called into question. Its contributions to understanding the early history of the United States could be taken as historical fiction. To validate if it was a theme park or not some of the more recent reviews of Colonial Williamsburg on TripAdvisor were consulted ("Colonial Williamsburg - All You Need to Know BEFORE You Go" 2024). With over 100 reviews read from 2023 to 2024, there

was not a mention of it being a theme park. Instead, the majority of complaints seemed to be from the prices of admission or food, the lack of activities during the winter or spring seasons, or how there were more interpreters in the past and now there seem to be fewer (“Colonial Williamsburg - All You Need to Know BEFORE You Go” 2024). The reviews also noted that it was interesting, beautiful, and required all day or even multiple days. It was occasionally described as a trip back in time, but often worthwhile. The carriage rides and the trades were mentioned often as must see or do. The view of Colonial Williamsburg as a theme park seems to have changed from previous research at the museum.

Previous scholars based their observations on interviews, travel magazines, and newspaper travel articles (Gable and Handler 1997; Greenspan 2009). In the modern digital era, travel blogs, travel websites, and customer reviews have replaced newspaper versions. After reading the reviews on Travelocity, the digital search continued with one travel guide page from US News and World Report that referred to Colonial Williamsburg as a theme park (“Everything You Need to Know About Visiting Colonial Williamsburg,,” n.d.). US News rated Colonial Williamsburg as the number one thing to do in Williamsburg, once again above Busch Gardens, but there is no date attached to the article or when it was last updated. According to the web page, “This history-themed park also earns kudos for employing knowledgeable guides and maintaining pristine facilities throughout.” (“Everything You Need to Know About Visiting Colonial Williamsburg,,” n.d.). The trend of news media attaching the title of theme park to Colonial Williamsburg continues, even saying that “According to many, this site is like a Disney theme park for history fanatics,” (“Everything You Need to Know About Visiting Colonial

Williamsburg,," n.d.). The only argument that is made by this site that it is a theme park though is that it has been called that in the past.

Another travel blogger made the argument that it is a theme park based on their need to pre-plan their day and complained of the buildings being from the 1930s (Niles 2009). The argument behind calling Colonial Williamsburg a theme park in this case truly is flawed. The author focuses on the reconstruction and not the significance of the number of historical buildings, to justify his idea of "a recreation of another time" to make it a theme park. He goes on to say that a related area, Jamestown Rediscovery, is for real history where there are no reconstructions. Yet there have been reconstructions at Jamestown since 2004, (Sabin 2023). The biggest distinction between the two historical sites is the way they are presented to the public. Colonial Williamsburg clearly wants to be a tourist attraction, with accommodations and advertising itself as a step into the past. Jamestown Rediscovery does none of those things it seems.

As most reviews read on travel guides ("Colonial Williamsburg - All You Need to Know BEFORE You Go" 2024), the way the museum presents itself ("Our Organization | Colonial Williamsburg Foundation," n. d.) and data gathered from interviews and participation observation the theme park view of Colonial Williamsburg should be debunked and put to rest. It distracts and removes its validity as a museum. Calling it a theme park diminishes Colonial Williamsburg capability to act as a social structure that is needed to transfer the past to present as a collective memory by negating its importance as a place of remembrance.

Pristinely Unkept

Saturday mornings see the return of the farmers' market situated between Burton Parish church and the Market Square. The transition of the present to the past is noted by the famous Cheese Shop and William and Mary's bookstore to the Magazine where Redcoats are preparing to display cannons used during the Revolutionary War. It would not be a true farmers' market experience without music guitars and drums strumming wordlessly over the din. Pop-up stalls sell everything from flowers to early spring vegetables, honey, and mead. Early visitors enjoy tasty treats of donuts, coffee, and breakfast burritos. All of this creates disposable trash that finds its way into the wooden barrels that disguise trash cans along the Duke of Gloucester Street. The streets of Colonial Williamsburg are somehow kept clean no matter how many cups of coffee or napkins are passed out. That same unspoken etiquette of how to visit a museum seems to also help keep the 300 plus acres of Colonial Williamsburg streets from being overly cluttered.

One aspect of Colonial Williamsburg that has been criticized is that the site offers a presentation far cleaner than would have been possible during that time. Its streets were too clean, the paint was too fresh, and there was no authentic town feel to it. There have been efforts to not continue the ultra-pristine presentation of the buildings and shops (Gable and Handler 1997; Greenspan 2009). These efforts add to the historical accuracy. There is clear wear and tear that shows a lived-in appearance of the historical area. Except it is still overly cleaned. Where an actual town would have some areas of rubbish or even the occasional discarded plastic bottle in the street gutter, there is still a standard expected of a museum to be presentable. Even though there are more than a few of the

old buildings with moss covered roofs and paint chipping on the picket fences, the general area is pristinely kept. There is a balance between allowing aspects, such as chipped paint on the fence, to age naturally and keeping up sanitation standards for guests.



Figure 4. Reconstructed Hartwell Perry's Tavern

The moss covered roof reflects the lack of use of the building and its natural state. Photo by Joshua Jordan

Visitors seem to remark on the novelty of how carriage rides do not clean up after themselves as they pass through the town. Or at least not right away as other carriage rides would. Visitors are forced to watch their step as part of the experience. Some of the unpleasant smells of rural life both in the streets and the various pastures throughout

Colonial Williamsburg take away from the pristinely clean sense. Living with and using animals would have been an integral part of the 18th century, and it stands in stark contrast to the present standards of living. The sights, sounds, and smells of Colonial Williamsburg husbandry programs are but a small glimpse into that. Despite the occasional assault to the nose, it is difficult not to appreciate the cuteness of seeing baby animals with their mothers inside a museum.



Figure 5. Lambs at Play

Baby animals such as these lambs are a highlight for photographers during spring. Photo by Kathy Dennehey, used with permission.

One of the biggest excitements drawing in photographers during the spring was the baby animals being born and the gardens starting to bloom. Visitors seemed to want to see the lambs as much as they wanted to explore the buildings themselves. One photographer noted that they would come out every year to see the tulips and lambs. They would return during other parts of the year to photograph other events such as fireworks, leaves in the fall, or Christmas decorations. Rarely would they want to go inside the ticketed areas, even with an annual pass, because most of what they wanted to photograph was in the public areas. This type of local visitor is one example of how Colonial Williamsburg acts as a third place. How the museum's space is utilized to create a place outside of its intended use was a phenomenological discovery that correlated to the imaginary of the museum.

Colonial Williamsburg as a Third Place

According to Ray Oldenburg (2013), third places are spaces for communities to be together that are not at home or work. These are different from "Third space," a combination of the real space and imagined that encompasses the physical spaces, social ties, and experiences as defined by Edward Soja (1996). Soja's third space could also be applied to historical areas utilization. Third space uses the real space being by the public for more than just what it was intended to be and emphasizes the social ties of those who use it. For example, in early spring it is not uncommon to see groups of runners on Duke of Gloucester Street from William and Mary. It is more important at that point of who they are individually and within the group versus where they are running. The blocked

off streets of Colonial Williamsburg provide a more protected area for their run and some unique views.

In reference to tourism imaginaries and cultural memory, Oldenburg's third place is more apt in the utilization of Colonial Williamsburg. It is a gathering point for socialization and community experiences in addition to its function as a historical locale. The addition of other opportunities to experience community exists outside of Colonial Williamsburg's main function as a museum.

They are centers of communities and spaces that allow for communal gathering. Museums are not often considered to be third places as Oldenburg describes them. They are not a place where people would know who you are as he envisions the idea. On the other hand, Colonial Williamsburg does meet many of the criteria to be defined as a third place (Ray Oldenburg 2013; Jagodzińska 2018). Additionally, research has indicated that museums act as third places when the museum starts to live outside of its walls (Jagodzińska 2018). Colonial Williamsburg has many indoor activities, but a sizable portion of the visitors are not there to participate in those activities as seen by the larger crowds outside versus compared to the small tour group sizes inside.



Figure 6. Bruton Parish Church

*Sunday church service is one of the exceptions for cars to drive on Duke of Gloucester St.
Photo by Joshua Jordan.*

The various activities hosted at Colonial Williamsburg such as the farmers market, ice rink in the winter, and Sunday services at Bruton Parish Church add to this idea. These activities are outside of Colonial Williamsburg but hosted within the museum grounds. Partnerships such as these add to the imaginary of Colonial Williamsburg and its place in the community. Again, the consumer adds to the imaginary along with the intermediaries, to create the imaginary and recreate it through its use (Salazar 2012; Chronis 2012). The use of Colonial Williamsburg as a third place links the historical place back to the collective memory as well. The link between iconic symbols or social structures with collective and cultural memory allows for the museum to pass on identity and history (Zhou, Ap, and Yang 2023). As a third place, the museum is also a structure

that memorializes the past and carries the cultural memory that is used by the community in the present as more than it was intended to be.

Everyday Exploration

It is almost easy to forget that Colonial Williamsburg encompasses most of the original town within its museum grounds. The museum encapsulates many aspects of city life from the 1700s, including how people slept and ate. It is possible to stay in some of the historic houses, enjoy the tastes of the past in the bakery, or even dine out with friends in one of the taverns. These are not small details, rather they are large events in everyday life and create a bond between the place and the person through experiences.

Food is one of the ways in which collective memory has been shown to transmit the cultural identities of the past to the present (Almerico 2014; Zhou, Ap, and Yang 2023). Traditional foods remind people of the past and carry the memory of that time with it. It can relate to cultural and family ties to carry on ideals and traditions. A few visitors will go out of their way to find a food experience such as those offered at the King's Arms Tavern or Shields Tavern. When asked, one visitor noted that it was to have a more immersive experience of historical times through food. Immersion is a major selling point of why tourists should visit Colonial Williamsburg, the everyday experience of eating is a natural fit to be included.

Dining out would have been important to travelers to the Virginian capital as it was the only meal they probably would have for the day. This was one of many facts presented by the waiter at the King's Arms Tavern during the meal. The historical recipes are adopted for the modern pallet as they said. The setting, wait staff, the harpist, and the

food itself created an out of time atmosphere for dinner. With references to historical origins, specifically Martha Washington's Cookbook, the past was brought to life for dinner. The pork shank fell off the bone and was served over mashed potatoes covered in sauce. The food was delicious, sides of baked whole carrots and broccoli filled out the main dish. The table was served bread with choices for toppings, along with squash or peanut soup, and for dessert pecan pie with ice cream. Each portion of the meal was presented with some explanation of its origins and preparations, delivered theatrically. The harpist played music for the room while also informing the diners of the music's history. The dinner elaborated on traditional foods while also creating a memorable experience, creating a personal memory, and expanding the imaginary of the consumer.



Figure 7. King's Arms Tavern

King's Arms Tavern is one of several immersive dining locations in Colonial Williamsburg. Photo by Joshua Jordan

For chocolate lovers, there was a surprise in the general goods store, especially those who knew the origins of cocoa and other ingredients used to make early chocolate bars. Commercially made, but as the interpreters were delighted to explain, based on colonial American recipes. Small additions like this linked us to the past and offered an opening for conversations between the visitors and the interpreters. Highlighting the different trades back and forth between the New World and Europe. Most of the visitors had not realized that most of what is used to make that particular chocolate was native to Central America.; cocoa, vanilla, sugar, peppers, etc. (Coe and Coe 2013). This small interaction was able to show the collective memory of chocolate being transformed through the imaginary.

The idea that chocolate came from Europe was changed to it being from the Americas. Through the interaction with the interpreters in the store, a spark of new reality was ignited. For the visitor, the reality clashed with that imaginary as it is a Central American native, reshaped into a more complex idea of the past. The visitor showed their exchange of this with comments like “I did not know that I thought it was from Belgium.” Others listened to the interaction intently, expressing similar thoughts. Before the exchange was done six people were listening to the interpreter explain how chocolate with pepper was the more common recipe during the 18th century.

The collective memory of where chocolate is from changed as the consumer experienced a new fact of the past. The kick of pepper in the flavor added to the experience, emphasizing the Central America origins and its ties to colonial America through trade. Before leaving the general goods store, four other patrons decided to try

the traditional chocolate for themselves. The seed of new knowledge was planted based on historical facts, and it would hopefully bear even more fruit.

Historical Translation

Glimpsing down at the floor of the Raleigh Tavern the smooth wood is held in place by the blacksmith's square head nails. The blissful coolness of air-conditioning is a welcomed relief from the early summer day. It may be a modern convenience, but no one is voicing a complaint against it. The tour begins with describing who would have been guests, mainly the Burgesses, as it is only a block away from the Capitol building. With an apron dress and more than a few words of disdain for some of the men who are founding fathers, the interpreter begins to move from one room to another with the group. The disdain was for the treatment by some of those men of the enslaved.

The tavern's history is told through who rented what room before the dissolution of the House of Burgesses in May of 1774. The upper rooms were more private, she explains, in that they were smaller although by no means soundproof. Gentlemen would practice their speeches prior to delivering them in the House of Burgesses. Moving on into the next dining room that would have also been rented out as a ballroom, she continues her history of the tavern and the people who came to it. The imagination runs wild thinking of George and Martha Washington hosting dances with friends in the same room. After the dissolution of the House of Burgesses, she explains, it was also the place where the House reconvened in the first Virginia Convention. The room fills again in the imagination as men angry at the Virginia Governor meet to debate their next moves through her historical storytelling.

In the back rooms where business deals were made over billiards and rum, the tour winds down. The room is crowded with a surviving mid-18th century billiards table kept behind a yellow rope. It is one of a few surviving originals, she tells the group. The tour ends in a tangible connection to the people from colonial America. The billiard table fills the room so that seems less like a museum display and more of a showpiece for an afternoon spent with friends. Bringing the past to life as the group is shown the exit door to the back gardens. The tour ends with pictures and questions for the host as would be expected. For once, the tour group broke the unspoken etiquette of quietly walking with a thoughtful expression. Perhaps it was due to the small tour size or the interactions before the tour started with the interpreters. They asked for more information on the games played, what would have been the drinks or other vices shared in the room. The visitors start to humanize the people of the past with the idea they also just wanted to have fun sometimes and forget the hardships of life occasionally.



Figure 8. Raleigh Tavern Billiards Room

18th century Billiards table fills one of the back rooms of the Raleigh Tavern. Photo by Joshua Jordan

Though tours and interactions with live interpreters show how a museum can help to transcend the past to the present, it is also important to understand the space as it is perceived. The amount of original 18th century buildings, most still in their original location, bring to life a realism of the past in the imagination. It is difficult to tell which buildings are reconstructed and which are original without reading the placards on each one. The past coming to life includes many intricate details, including how the museum

manages to sustain its restoration projects. For example, the nails in the floorboards were crafted by blacksmiths.

The trade buildings are recreating many of the material goods that would have been needed in the mid to late 18th century. These interactions with the tradespeople solidify the idea of a self-sustaining community that builds what it needs. As mentioned, the blacksmith's nails or the brickyard uses the bricks in the restoration process of other buildings are major examples. These bricks are built in the same labor-intensive manner as they would have been in the past. The tailor shop creates new period clothes by hand, although it alone is not able to supply all the needed clothing. There is an entire costume shop that supports most of the museum's needs so not all the labor is on a few skilled tailors who are constantly interrupted to talk with guests.

The trade shops are part of the imaginary of the museum, both as it is presented by Colonial Williamsburg and as the guests help to create the tourist imaginary as consumers. However, they are also a major point in the cultural memory of Colonial Williamsburg, as a means to continue how those crafts were completed historically and add to the authenticity of the museum (J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Miller 2006; Zhou, Ap, and Yang 2023). The imaginary and the cultural memory are shared in the historical craftsmanship as they are both a producer of the past and a holder of that memory.

Discussions with other guests during the Raleigh Tavern tour also showed the present view of how people lived in that time with a sense of nostalgia for a simpler time. Comfort in the modern amenities aside, the nostalgic feeling was for the romanticized idea of the past. The highlights being those of the rich gentry. Then when asked about the

situations of the time, the dissolution of the House of Burgess, the beginnings of the American Revolution, and seeing Founding Fathers such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, the mood changes. For some, there is a sense of pride and patriotism. With others, it was unclear what they were feeling, especially as they looked at the past through the lenses of the present.

How the past is viewed is based on the present, and this will also affect the collective memory. As seen in the case of Gettysburg, the viewpoints of history and its collective memory are not always aligned in one homogenous view (Chronis 2012). Instead, the present circumstances dictate how the past is presented, such as how slavery is addressed at Colonial Williamsburg.

Addressing Harder Truths

As a museum that focuses on a portion of American history, it is impossible to avoid the topic of slavery at Colonial Williamsburg. Previous efforts to portray the life and ideas of the past have had mixed results. From the highly criticized slave market reenactment (McConachie 1998) to the nearly complete disregard of the presence of over 50% of the population to appease the cultural norms of the modern day (Greenspan 2009). These approaches have checkered Colonial Williamsburg's past and have forced difficult conversations. Today it is difficult to visit almost any portion of the museum without seeing how slavery would have affected the daily life of everyone in Virginia's second capital.

During this project, every visit to Colonial Williamsburg would have at one point or another resulted in a discussion of slavery and the enslaved in one manner or another.

It is addressed in theater presentations such as *Performance: To Purchase a Likely Man* and in tours such as at the Randolph House. Even the interpreters who portray the enslaved make it a point to let the visitors know that they hold a subservient position, such as is seen at the Raleigh Tavern. These interactions open the dialog of slavery in the 18th century and show the role that Colonial Williamsburg has taken in this discourse.

In one observed interaction while waiting for a tour of the Raleigh Tavern, one of the interpreters who was portraying an enslaved servant of the tavern proprietor led such a discussion. His clothes were worn and ragged, the linen of his shirt starting to unravel. The hat he wore had sizeable holes in it. All the while he stayed in character while he addressed the small group waiting for the Raleigh Tavern tour sweeping off the rocks from the sidewalk. Without asking it outright, he queried the crowd on how one human being could assume legal ownership over another. In the same breath, he conversed with some of the guests about counterweights of land ownership, highlighting property rights. For other guests waiting with the tour group, it seemed like a tougher discussion than they wanted to have at that point as they were noticeably uncomfortable. Those same guests then asked pointed questions about the roles of the enslaved within the tavern during the tour. The idea of the past and the roles of the enslaved seemed to be a point in which they wanted to be more aware of.

Engaging in small talk with an interpreter true to their role in this manner opens the question of whether this is education or activism. The way the interpreter engaged with visitors shows that he could have a conversation about what it was like to be enslaved. Some would criticize Colonial Williamsburg for going “Woke” because they encourage the conversation that addresses the enslaved and white supremacy (Hafera

2023). They would argue that there is no room for advocacy within education. To say otherwise is an attempt to politically correct the past in a left-leaning agenda. A veiled stance in trying to usurp the past and continue the whitewashed historical narrative that pushes marginalized communities even further to the side. After all, during colonial times, the population of Williamsburg was over 50 percent Black (Greenspan 2009).

The interpreters of enslaved people are instrumental in opening the conversation of those who have been pushed to the fringes of history. The Black community has been severely underrepresented in the past. Colonial Williamsburg adds to the broader knowledge of the community's past by bringing to light these more difficult conversations. As Reid noted there are often times when members of the Black community would not want to go to Colonial Williamsburg because they did not "want to see any more 'slave stuff.'" (2022, 44). Those attitudes, as she noted, are changing though and with it the imaginary of what these historical places are to the Black community. As the imaginary changes, so too does the cultural memory.

There is more than one side to understanding the roles of enslaved peoples in Colonial Williamsburg. *To Purchase a Likely Man*, George and Martha Washington discuss purchasing two young boys from an estate of a widow who is about to remarry. Pointedly the interpreters referred to the enslaved as people. Meaning they would have a man to care for Washington's matters such as a manservant would. Within the production, it was mentioned how one of Martha's enslaved men ran away to see his family. Subtly bringing to light that the enslaved were still people with families often apart from each other.

After the production, the interpreters were able to spend time answering more questions on the specific topic. In this role, they slipped from their personas and into the role of educators. Pointedly, they reminded the audience that half the population of Williamsburg at that time was enslaved, and they were still people with their own lives and histories.

When discussing slavery throughout the museum, interpreters and volunteers will refer to the men, women, and children in bondage as the enslaved, as opposed to referring to them as slaves. As one interviewee who worked at Colonial Williamsburg discussed, the word, slave, as it is used in noun form, was perceived as dehumanizing. It suggests that any being called a slave eternally exists in a position that is beneath that of a human being. Using the adjective, enslaved, as they explained, separates the conditions of enslavement from the people made to endure those conditions. With that explanation alone, the same grammatical practice was adopted for this project, as it restores the element of humanity to the enslaved. Additionally, using this terminology may cause less discomfort during tough discussions.

Discussing such topics as slavery in America, in any context, comes with the risk of revealing unsavory truths about what people believe about themselves and what people believe about people of different races. Chronis (2012) showed how beliefs can change the view of the past in such charged topics as Gettysburg. For example, how southerners tended to view the Civil War as the War of Northern Aggression and would lament the loss even today. Not only are racial equality and slavery difficult to discuss but they are also difficult to learn about. This is especially true if such topics are being deliberately

discussed with guests who hold opposing sets of beliefs, and an interpreter standing inches away in tattered clothes sweeping rocks off the sidewalk.

The tourist imaginary of Colonial Williamsburg being a sterilized version of history and the cultural memory of slavery in the Colonies stand in stark contrast here. The museum is the social structure that shows both these concepts. In the sense of tourism, being confronted with the harsh reality of slavery in America is unsettling. Yet once visitors are there, the reality of slavery is addressed in the presentations of the museum. It is possible to visit without confronting these issues if the visitor is only there to see the free public space as the third place. Yet it is still a part of the history and becoming a part of the collective memory. As was seen by the number of visitors who showed an educated interest in who the enslaved were and who were the ones that enslaved them. Even patriotic pride dimmed when interpreters and visitors discussed Thomas Jefferson and how many were enslaved by him. Historic places such as Colonial Williamsburg are the social structures Halbwachs, Assman, and others (Halbwachs 1980; J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; A. Assmann 2008) have described in relation to the collective and cultural memory of colonial American history.

From the Field

These harder discussions about slavery and human rights are skipped over or rarely thought of when planning visits. None of the reviews from Travelocity that were examined for the initial portion mentioned anything about slavery. Instead, it is through participant observation that it was brought to light. The imaginary of Colonial

Williamsburg is what it advertises itself to be, and it is also more to those who live or visit more often.

Participant observation showed that the utilization of space is key to understanding the tourist imaginary. How tourists engage with the museum, from full immersion to family strolls, creates a memory related to colonial-era America, even if it does not immediately translate to the cultural memory from a single visit. Established expectations about what tourists will experience at the museum shape how visitors interact with exhibits and space. Colonial Williamsburg uses that idea and produces what the imaginary for the museum, while also educating and creating the cultural memory.

Chapter V.

Interviews

Being a participant-observer in the field sometimes leads to questions that cannot be answered by observation. Ethnography also allows for interviews and conversations with other participants to fully understand the concept the researcher is observing. Previous research has shown this combined approach to be an effective means to study how museums contribute to the narrative of the past (Gable and Handler 2000; 1997; Chronis 2012; Reid 2022). To ascertain whether the collective memory formed from the participation in the visits, interviews provided a second set of voices to confirm or contradict the observational data.

Visitors were often willing and able to talk about the historical significance of various aspects of the museum during site visits. They would also discuss their views of the past and how it has changed through education from places such as Colonial Williamsburg. In-depth semi-structured interviews also confirmed many of the same themes as these short discussions with other visitors.

Interviews with locals were conducted after their most recent visits. As a second group, current and past interpreters and volunteers at Colonial Williamsburg were also interviewed. Semi-structured interview protocols allow for a free-flowing conversation, while also ensuring consistency in the type of data collected (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018). There were two separate sets of interview protocols for the different groups (Appendix 1). Both interview protocols were designed to complement each other and cross reference for data analysis.

Over the course of fieldwork, nine formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with four visitors and three insiders. Two follow up interviews were conducted for further clarification, with one visitor and one insider. The insiders either worked with or for Colonial Williamsburg as interpreters or volunteer staff. In selecting interview volunteers, the criteria were based on whether they had visited Colonial Williamsburg within the last year, were willing to conduct a 30-minute to an hour-long interview, and were over the age of 18. All interviewees participated on a volunteer basis and each of them coincidentally were repeat visitors.

The interview questions for the visitors were focused on their experiences at Colonial Williamsburg and how it related to their understanding of the historical context. The questions also tried to learn how they understood the ideas presented by Colonial Williamsburg contributed to the collective memory of the past. Similarly, the questions for those associated with Colonial Williamsburg were focused on how the history was presented by the museum. Additionally, the interview questions sought more information on how the museum interjects on the ideals and creates the social structure for a cultural and collective memory based on the past.

Method of Analysis

Analysis of interviews was completed using thematic analysis and coded using Taguette. Following Naeem et al. (2023) six steps were used to develop a thematic analysis. These steps included transcription, selection of keywords, coding, theme development, conceptualization (through interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes), and development of the conceptual model. Transcription and familiarization of the

interviews were initially done with notes and recordings of the interviews. These would be added to Taguette to help with choosing keywords and coding into themes. Additionally, as each item was coded some could fall into more than one coded category. These helped to understand the complexity between the different emergent themes from what was expected and what was surprising (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018).

Cultural memory and tourism imaginary were expected themes the interview protocols were designed to find. For example, interview questions from both protocols such as “How do you see Colonial Williamsburg?” would hopefully lead to an answer that was expected to be coded within the tourism imaginary theme. Other expected themes included activities based on how the interviewee utilized the space, and relating the educational aspects of the museum to their own experiences. Third place was an unexpected code to have but was added based on early observations and from the activities and use of space noted by the interviewees.

Conceptualization through the interpretation of keywords was conducted by reanalyzing the codes individually and looking for patterns to develop. These thematic patterns were reevaluated against the interview data for confirmation of meaning in context. The coding program Taguette also provided a numerical value to each theme that was developed. Finally, the narrative nature of ethnography was used to develop the conceptual model as was appropriate for this project (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018; Naeem et al. 2023).

Interviews with Consumers

The themes gathered from the interviews with visitors can be divided to a certain extent based on the level of historical knowledge and how long or often the individual had been visiting Colonial Williamsburg. This was discovered during comparisons of the above themes to the original data for context. The two groups were split between those who have been visiting infrequently during their adult lives and those who have been avid lifelong visitors. Both groups are local to the area and have the same access to the museum. These were labeled as Group 1 and Group 2 with the first being those who only reported visiting seldom, maybe two or three times a year at most. Group 2 is those that tend to visit more regularly, more than five times a year.

Together these two groups offered much insight into Colonial Williamsburg as a social structure and how the imaginary of the museum is also shaped by its consumers. Some of the visitors reported that their ideas would change with repeated visits as they would learn more about the history, “It’s not uncommon to talk to someone and learn something new and reinforce and understand the past” (Interviewee 4). With more interactions, it is only natural to have a changed image of the past. However, this is not always the case. Interviewee 1 noted, “I don’t think I learned anything about that time period after visiting”. Interviewee 1 had reported only visiting Colonial Williamsburg once or twice a year and Interviewee 4 reported visiting a couple times a month, contributing to the argument that the consumption in tourism affects the idea of what Colonial Williamsburg is to them.

Utilization of Space

The Interviewees' imaginary of what Colonial Williamsburg is changed based on how they utilized the space available if their main intent was not to visit the paid portions of the museum. The frequency of visits also correlated to the type of tourism they would take part in. Those who tended to visit more often also seemed to want to visit more places within the museum to include the trade shops. That affected how they internalized their personal memories of the historical social structures of Colonial Williamsburg, and its contribution to the cultural memory.

Group 1's visits are limited to not more than three visits a year but also are spread out more throughout the year. This group has reported spending more time walking around without a pass and visiting the public spaces more than the museum pass only spaces. However, this group reported experiencing more of a time and place shift after their visits such as walking through the historical area and seeing interpreters and craftsmen from afar. This is a representative group of how Colonial Williamsburg's open to the public space is also utilized as more of a third place. Group 1 will tend to visit more for community engagement and to be not at home or work.

Group 2's visits are by far more frequent, with this group having season passes to be able to see more of the museum itself. The most often times of the year Group 2 would visit varies too much to be able to put a trend to it. Visits are throughout the year, and they want to see the various seasons and holidays. Both Group 1 and 2 limit their time in the summer due to the heat and humidity of Virginia. This is backed by late observations in July at the weekly farmers market and dinner at King Arm's Tavern. It was observed there were far fewer tourists than during the spring or winter months.

Both groups had various ideas of what Colonial Williamsburg was in their opinions. They saw it as just a museum with reenactors to a cultural icon that played a vital role in shaping the foundation of a nation, the Civil War, and “How we celebrate Halloween and Christmas,” as Interviewee 4 noted. These ideas were harder to place into a group as each was different from the others. Instead, it was more akin to the level of interest one took in the historical aspect of their local area. Those who saw it as just a museum also reported having learned the least from their visits. Those who saw it as more, such as a representative of the historical past, reported having learned something more each visit.

Of course, the level of interest would logically impact a person’s ability to explore the area more in depth. The superficial visits of those just looking for something to do seemed to be more interested in the third place aspect versus the social structure shaping a cultural memory aspect. “It’s like the Yorktown waterfront” (Interviewee 2) where there are special events like the farmers market, historical markers, and a public beach on the York River for families to use. The amount of time a visitor spends visiting does seem to correlate as expected to the level of interest and depth of knowledge of the history portrayed by Colonial Williamsburg. This should not be surprising, as it also correlates with how each interviewee responded when asked if Colonial Williamsburg helped to understand or contemplate any contemporary issues.

Linking the Past to the Present

The casual visitors of Group 1 did not seem to correlate any current issues with the museum or its programming. The more superficial the visit, meaning the less they

interacted with the ticketed areas, the more this seems to be the case. For example, Interviewee 1 reported, “I don’t think that I learned anything about that time period after visiting”. They would also only visit the public spaces. At most, they would report a stark contrast between the past to the present in how people lived and treated each other. Interviewee 2 noted, “Some of their ways were barbaric, if you were not Anglo-Saxon then you were not an equal”. Referring to the institution of slavery, it was seen as one of the mistakes of the past that society has learned and grown from.

In contrast, Group 2’s engagement with the past in the present was more vivid. Being able to see the same buildings and interpreters speaking as their portrayed figures sets the idea for them of the past and reminds them that these individuals were ordinary people in extraordinary times. As noted by another Group 2 member many of the Founding Fathers were seen as divine individuals, citing the 1841 George Washington statue by Horatio Greenough in the Smithsonian Museum as an example. “We revere them and justify our actions based on our perception of their beliefs” (Interviewee 3). Being reminded that Washington was just a man they felt was needed to ground both the past and the present.

Finally, for both Group 1 and Group 2 the importance of historical sites plays a role in the understanding of the past and develops the culture of the present. Historical sites as seen by visitors are a place to learn firsthand of their collective past, and Colonial Williamsburg is seen by some as a beginning to that idea. “I think that kids are lucky to be able to see the history that happened, both state and national” (Interviewee 3). Along with the rest of the local area, which includes Yorktown and Jamestown, history is tangible and real. It can connect visitors to their history at Colonial Williamsburg. “It was

the start of a new civilization...” (Interviewee 2). Even when the experience does not create a greater understanding, it still contributes “...a better appreciation of the past.” (Interviewee 1). Understanding, appreciation, and growth as a nation are examples of how visitors think historical sites are important.

Critically, some believe that Colonial Williamsburg could do better. The pristine representation of some parts of the past could be less. More inclusion of the enslaved and Indigenous peoples would be desired “They are making an effort to put (them) to the forefront” (Interviewee 4). One interviewee felt these stories were just as important as the stories of famous revolutionaries. “We are so focused on making everyone happy and sanitary we are not willing to admit the dirty parts of the past,” (Interviewee 4). Colonial Williamsburg’s efforts to show the harder truths are needed, in their view, to be able to teach facts based on evidence unlike what is sometimes found online. “We need it, we can’t trust the internet and kids won’t learn about it in school.”.

This reflects similar criticism from scholars that the museum was too pristine and pretty (Gable and Handler 1997; Greenspan 2009). Not only in appearance but also in how they address or do not address those harder parts of the past such as slavery and dealings with Indigenous peoples. The imaginary of Colonial Williamsburg still maintains itself though, and “... being able to interact with something it becomes real, it becomes meaningful because I experienced it,” (Interviewee 3).

Interviews with Producers

While interviewing interpreters and volunteers at Colonial Williamsburg, it became clearer how the cycle of consumers and producers is created, as described by

Salazar (2012). As presenters of history the interpreters and volunteers of Colonial Williamsburg act as educators and consumers of their tourist imaginaries (Salazar 2012). The interpreters are given the task of creating a program for their persona that is based on the history and primary sources available. This means that they must have a thorough knowledge of the person they are interpreting. A lifetime of experiences condensed into a single presentation of the past. They are also seeing the same presentations and exploring history more in depth to be able to present it even better for themselves.

The cycle of learning and educating is, at least for those who present the history at Colonial Williamsburg, is the same cycle of producing and consuming the tourist imaginary for the public. As has been noted here before, Colonial Williamsburg is too large to be seen in a day. The main tourism imaginary of the founding of America and Williamsburg and her citizens' role in it evokes patriotic feelings that bring people together. One interpreter said, "They might come here thinking it's a yay us patriotism, then realize it's so much more than that" (Interviewee 7). Though in the past Colonial Williamsburg would be utilized to instill patriotic ideals in troops in WWII (Greenspan 2009), there is more to it than that today.

To entice visitors, the programming must be something that visitors want to see. Insiders at Colonial Williamsburg noted that the main attractions to bring in these tourists are the craftsmen and women such as the blacksmiths and tailors, along with the theatrical performance. This is collaborated by the visitors' interviews and by participant observation. These programs make repeat visitations alluring and are also a favorite of those insiders who are at the museum. Seeing how the crowds react to interacting spontaneously with nation builders such as George Washington on the palace green after

a brief introduction is another part that they seemed to enjoy. These interactions as observed are informative about the history of the character and are a credit to the depth of knowledge the interpreters have of their personas.

As they are the ones who understand what the idea of the museum is best, insiders are also the best to answer when does tourism becomes education. This is the point where the imaginary becomes a part of the individual and cultural memory. It does depend on the person visiting, for example, those in Group 1 who only walk around the public spaces would be less likely to gain any further insights. There are still educational programs being presented such as the street theater, which insiders are quick to point out. Group 1 though would be more akin to browsing the highlight reels of history than engaging in it in these contexts. The opportunity is there to engage in it more deeply, yet they are not that interested in doing so. Lifelong learners instead are more likely to engage with the programming. For example, they are the ones who will engage in conversation with the interpreters and question the volunteers. They will visit the tradespeople, take the tours, and be interactive. The interpreters interviewed agreed that is on the individual to take something from what they present, but most would walk away with at least a better understanding of colonial America.

From the Interview Table

Using the interviews to balance the field observations, it was found that not everyone who visits Colonial Williamsburg is there to see more than just the historical façade. There was a large interest in using the space as a third place to be with family and friends. However, those who are interested in its history visit much more often. As

consumers, they create an idea of what they believe Colonial Williamsburg to be. Additionally, the volunteers and interpreters create the imaginary as producers from their consumption of the past.

These different levels of use of the space of the museum show the complex interrelations between the imaginary and the place. The interviews also hint at the imaginary shifting to the cultural memory the more the museum is visited. Even from a producer stance, the more they learn about the past and present it, the more they consume and produce the imaginary. When the history of the culture is the production of the tourist imaginary then it shows a strong tie to the cultural memory through the same social structure.

The tourist imaginary becomes a product of the collective memory by the utilization of the space by the tourist. In the case of Group 2 specifically, the more the visitor engages with the educational aspects of the museum the more the imaginary is affected. The consumer of the imaginary helps to create it as Salazar (2012) described. In a museum setting though, the memory is created by the group in a “disembodied form” (Assman, 2008 111) to preserve the identity of the past. Together, as these interviewees have shown, the cultural memory is reflected into their tourist imaginary just as much as the tourist imaginary affects their cultural memory.

Chapter VI.

Discussions

By including as much of the past as they can into the immersive experience, Colonial Williamsburg's use of living history helps to shape the cultural context of the period. By including the "big picture" (Interviewee 7) the importance of historical sites such as Colonial Williamsburg becomes the conduit to transfer the collective and cultural memory to the next generation. Additionally, it is situated uniquely to be able to do so with its 89 original buildings. Continuous archaeology efforts will also add to this capability such as the recent discovery of revolutionary barrack foundations in May 2024 (Cheek and Knight 2024). These are part of the capabilities of Colonial Williamsburg works to bring the past to the present.

Creating the tourist imaginary of the past living in the present for everyone to be able to engage with history is the main theme. Advertising on their home webpage "The Revolution Is Here." (www.colonialwilliamsburg.org 10 June, 2024) highlights this imaginary as they try to apply this to the cultural memory through tourism as well. They want to be known for Williamsburg and her resident's role in the beginning of the American Revolution. It would also seem they want to be known for the archeological work they complete to present that history. In this way, the museum is a cultural social construct that acts to be both a tourist destination and a conduit to the cultural past.

Because most of the observations were from winter through early summer, changes in programming were easier to see. Where a shift would happen tended to be aligned with the celebrations of different peoples. For example, a highlight was placed on

women's role in the revolution during March. During February more emphasis was placed on the Black community that resided in Williamsburg, free and enslaved. By emphasizing the more terrible parts of the past, the mission statement of Colonial Williamsburg "That the future may learn from the past" ("About Colonial Williamsburg Foundation" 2024), becomes more than a placard for understanding the past. Try as they might though they do not always get it right.

As discussed in Chapter II, the attempt in the 1990s to recreate a slave auction (McConachie 1998), shows that there have been times when Colonial Williamsburg attempted to present slavery that did not go over well. However, there are other examples of cruelty in the past that sometimes should stay in the past. Another example is the method of crime and punishment, specifically the use of the pillory as a tourist attraction. The current use of the pillory is as a ketch picture opportunity for tourists. During COVID, it was blocked off and there was a debate on its use by visitors in the future (Inker 2021). Inker's argument is based on the perception of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Dr. Inker was against the public being able to use the pillory as it was a method of punishment that would be considered today a violation of human rights. Instead, he argued that the pillory be shown as it was intended to be, physical punishment and public humiliation. As his article was part of the official Colonial Williamsburg website, it is interesting that the pillory is once again being used as a ketch photo opportunity.

Dr. Inker made another strong point that during the last few years, there were "opportunities to reconsider how we tell stories of the past" (2021). That idea is key to

understanding how social structures play a role in the collective memory. In Gettysburg, Chronis noted that “It is not uncommon to meet tourists who become very emotional during battlefield tours,” (2012, 1803). Emotionally the cultural memory is felt at Gettysburg, but how the Civil War is viewed varies across the United States. The recent inclusion of Juneteenth as a federal holiday to celebrate the end of slavery is in stark contrast to Alabama still celebrating Confederate Memorial Day as an official State holiday.

How the past is taught and what that means for the future is the crux of cultural memory. Cultural memory “exists also in disembodied form and requires institutions of preservation and re-embodiment,” (J. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 111). The way history is taught to the next generation is through the ideas of what happened. In school, this is from history class or books, and in the public domain it is through monuments and museums. These social structures are sanctified in the spirit of patriotism or remembrance and used as foundations of cultural importance. Undoubtedly historical sites hold that spirit for the reasons they were made important. To tell that story though they need visitors, so they create the tourist imaginary of the past for them. It may be a romanticized or superficial version of it, by name dropping founding fathers who live in the area as Colonial Williamsburg does. As this project has seen, the imaginary supports the memory of what happened. The social structures of remembrance that shape the cultural memory are likewise affected by the tourist’s imagination.

The imaginary, though, does not exclude other uses of these places of remembrance. The past comes to life as the imaginary uses the space to create the story within the place, as space gives a more open expression, and the place is filled with

emotion and ideas (Tuan 1979). The concept of third place was not something that was originally a part of the intended study. It is important though because of the imaginary created by space utilization for other social activities such as the farmers market or the ice rink that takes its place in the winter. Much like how cultural memory is reliant on an imaginary, the imaginary is reliant on the use of space and place as part of its creation.

Exploring these topics within the context of colonial America helps to understand the imaginary and collective memory of America's past. Highlighting the roles of different people within the period of Colonial Williamsburg's focus seemed to be their attempt to add to the historical narrative. As discussed above, the imaginary is both created by and consumed by the various agents involved. In this case, the museum is utilizing an additional imaginary, such as Black History Month, to explore further its role within that social structure. Contemporary issues highlight the past in new ways and how the present sees them. As one insider interviewed noted, Colonial Williamsburg has tried to have a more inclusive narrative of all the people who lived there. With over fifty percent of the population in colonial times being black (Greenspan 2009), it is especially important to include their voices in the narrative.

Presenting the problems of the past in a way that respects the people affected by it is not an easy task. Especially those parts that would affect human rights of the present. Even the theatrical recreation of a slave auction fails a gut check of “does this violates the participants' human rights and dignity?”. It is still a modern condition that affects over 50 million people according to the latest ILO report (2022). Colonial Williamsburg though does highlight the enslaved in a very up front manner. Using the special language of the *enslaved* highlights the condition and not the person. This framing could also be to

protect the interpreters who play those roles as well. Their positions are important to remind visitors of the institution of slavery but their right as humans needs to be protected.

Limitations

Limitations of this project were initially set by a twelve month deadline for research and writing, along with the size and number of activities available to participate in, and nature. With a longer period of field research, it would be possible to observe more of the seasonal changes and how that affects the use of the museum. Weather plays a significant role in the amount of people willing to spend their free time in a mostly outdoor living museum. Cold and rain are often enough to drive most of the crowds away as much as hot and humid.

Every site visit involved mostly new information and yet it would still just scratch the surface of everything. Many of the desired programs were missed because reservations would sell out or inability to schedule them such as carriage rides, ghost tours, or special theatrical programs. Though the robust number of tours and activities participated in were extensive, there is always more to see and do.

Finally, interviews were more difficult to obtain in a short research period time with limited resources. Finding diverse groups of volunteers for interviews proved to be challenging even with extensive networking. Additionally, finding suitable time to conduct interviews presented difficulty between obligations for interviewee and researcher.

Further Research Suggestions

Further research would be warranted and could build off previous ideas of museums as a third place at Colonial Williamsburg. This was not the focus of this project but a coincidental finding from observations and interviews. As such it should be considered for another time. Understanding the tourist imaginary for historical places that act as more than just a place of remembrance and their interconnected relationships with the community at large will further both third place studies and tourist imaginaries.

The connection between cultural memory and tourist imaginary has only been made recently in other research in tourist studies (Zhou, Ap, and Yang 2023). Further anthropological and cross discipline studies should be able to dive deeper into the connection between the two.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to observe the relationship between the tourist imaginary created by Colonial Williamsburg and the collective and cultural memories of Colonial America. Since its creation, Colonial Williamsburg has created a pleasant and inspirational atmosphere focusing on the values of liberty and freedom while promoting patriotism. This presentation falls closely in line with other institutions that depict this time period: Philadelphia, Washington DC, Jamestown, and the movie *The Patriot* to name a few. These institutions, along with formal education, create in the mind of individuals an idea of the past, a memory of a time they did not experience, a collective memory.

Additionally, the use of space and place was shown to also be important in the context of how the tourist imaginary is created. In some instances, it was simply an example of a third place, used by the community for relaxation. While in others it was a structured educational experience. It was a place for visitors to learn about the people and the lives they lived in the colonial era. How the space is utilized to create the place affects the experiences of both the visitor and the museum staff. Colonial Williamsburg uses this atmosphere of community to unite current visitors with the residents of the past to create an imaginary of a living town. Even as Colonial Williamsburg is being utilized as a third place, the community keeps its interest in the past by including its space in their present.

Interviews with visitors showed a close relationship between the frequency of interactions with Colonial Williamsburg and the depth of their cultural memory about colonial America. The interviews also added ethnographic evidence to the cultural attractor theory in psychology. The individual experience adds to the macro level of cultural memory by Colonial Williamsburg acting as the objectified social structure of the colonial past. The lesser use of the space, or using it as a third place, also adds to the cultural memory by visitors existing within the historical location to spend time outside of work and home with a community. The imaginary is the curated image of a tourist destination. Within the context of historical places, the imaginary relies on cultural memory; the view of the past is shaped and shapes the use of the space. Together the cultural memory and the imaginary work to bring in tourists to the historical location and by using individual memories of the experience to create a larger cultural memory of what the site memorializes.

Using ethnographic work, this paper has sought to demonstrate the interaction between tourist imaginary and cultural memory regarding historic locations. It was discovered that the use of space and place directly impacts both the imaginary associated with Colonial Williamsburg and the collective memory of colonial America. Utilizing Colonial Williamsburg as a testing ground, this project has shown that the tourist imaginary and cultural memory in context of historical locations should be included in the same conversation. Both concepts rely on the other in one form or another, using the same social structures to manifest themselves. The ability to understand either will be greatly improved through this inclusion.

Appendix 1.

Interview Protocols

The interview questions were semi structured, designed to carry a conversation to better understand the experiences of participants. These questions focused on what was expected before their visits and how they understood the past. Alternative questions were added to help facilitate conversation while still focusing on the desired information.

1. What is the main reason for your visit? Alternative: Why did you go/come to Colonial Williamsburg?
2. How often do you visit Colonial Williamsburg?
3. How do you understand this place? As a theme park or a museum? Why do you characterize it like that.
4. What, if any, were your ideas about Colonial Williamsburg before you visited?
5. Why do you think you felt that way about Colonial Williamsburg before you came?
6. How did the surrounding area affect your experience, going from the more modern side to the historical area? When do you think you felt a transition?
7. What is your understanding of the importance of the events that happened in and around Williamsburg in colonial America?
8. Do you feel as though the history presented at Colonial Williamsburg plays some importance in your understanding of colonial times? Why?
9. What kind of activities/ experiences caught your attention during your visit to Colonial Williamsburg?

10. How do you think those experiences contributed to your own understanding of colonial times in America?
11. Has Colonial Williamsburg helped you to understand or contemplate any contemporary (current) issues and if so, which?
12. How do you view the importance of historical sites in the contemporary era?
Alternative: Why or why not do you think historical sites are important to our modern understanding and way of life?

These questions were designed for the interviews conducted with people who are working or volunteering at Colonial Williamsburg.

1. How long have you been associated with Colonial Williamsburg and what is your job/specialty?
2. How did you imagine it would be before you started at Colonial Williamsburg and how does that compare to reality?
3. Do you have many interactions working with the public on your specialty or skillset?
4. In your own view is it a theme park or a museum or something else entirely and why do you think that?
5. With your own interactions with the public, have you seen visitors be confused on if it is a park or museum? Is there a common reason for that confusion?
6. How do the programs offered at Colonial Williamsburg recreate history or tell a historical story?

7. When does tourism become education based on your experience working at Colonial Williamsburg?
8. Does the tourism side of Colonial Williamsburg take away from its ability to educate the public and how does it factor into the process?
9. Do you think the visitors have a better understanding of historical events and the importance of Colonial Williamsburg in colonial America? Why?

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