

Larissa Hugentobler

Memories Set in Stone—How Visitors Make Sense of Memorials

On-Site and Online Experiences
of Public Memory at Two Dr. King
Memorials in DC

OPEN ACCESS



Springer VS

Memories Set in Stone—How Visitors Make Sense of Memorials

Larissa Hugentobler

Memories Set in Stone—How Visitors Make Sense of Memorials

On-Site and Online Experiences
of Public Memory at Two Dr. King
Memorials in DC

 Springer VS

Larissa Hugentobler
Universität Zürich
Zürich, Switzerland



ISBN 978-3-658-48916-8 ISBN 978-3-658-48917-5 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-48917-5>

The open access publication of this book has been published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The research project upon which this book is based was in part financed by the University of Zurich's Candoc grant (Grant N° FK-20-072).

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2025. This book is an open access publication.

Open Access This book is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this book are included in the book's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the book's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer VS imprint is published by the registered company Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, part of Springer Nature.

The registered company address is: Abraham-Lincoln-Str. 46, 65189 Wiesbaden, Germany

If disposing of this product, please recycle the paper.

Acknowledgements

This project stems from my lifelong wish to understand how people create feelings of belonging and my desire that we all may be so lucky to feel we belong in the families, neighborhoods and worlds in which we live. Looking around me, beginning with my immigrant / refugee grandparents, I was always fascinated by what can help a person feel “at home” and burdened by the many forces that—unwittingly as well as very purposefully—try to tell an individual “you do not belong here.”

I therefore want to thank those people who have made it possible for me to answer some of my questions about belonging, in one very specific context. These are, first and foremost, all the participants: those who willingly gave their time to talk with me, as well as those whom I only observed as they were walking through memorials or sharing travel experiences on Instagram. A special thank you to Sophia Kelly from the National Park Service, and Michael Sherman, Angela Dupont and Johanna McCrehan from the National Capital Planning Commission for the enriching conversations and their personal perspectives from inside some of the official “machinery” which helps to create official markers of public memory and thereby plays an important role in acknowledging and defining who “belongs” in the United States.

Thank you to all my colleagues at the IKMZ and ISEK and especially Bernhard Tschofen and Mark Eisenegger, who agreed to supervise a project I had already dreamed up in my mind, but for which only few people saw the need, as this journey began well ahead of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, which can be largely credited with carrying the niche conversations about public commemoration to a global audience. Thank you, to my supervisors, for believing this

project was worth doing and for lending me a helping hand from your respective expertise while allowing me to “stand between” disciplines. Thank you also to my examiner Louis Bickford, for your enthusiasm and your inspirational work. Our conversations enriched this project beyond any specific method or analysis.

Thank you to the two granting agencies who made this project possible: The University of Zürich’s Candoc for sponsoring part of my PhD from which this project stems (Grant N° FK-20-072) and the Swiss National Science Foundation for supporting the open access publication of this book.

Thank you to my friends, near and far, and a special thank you to Emily and Jess who contributed to this book with their illustrations. Thank you all for understanding when I had to spend a night with my project and for knowing when I needed to be forced out of the house because, after all, it has always been humans in their natural habitats that I was interested in. I love belonging to you all.

Thank you to my parents, who are my home, and my little brother, who continuously helped me define my place in that home. Thank you for being supportive and never questioning that what I was doing was worthwhile, even in those moments when I was unable to explain exactly what it was that I was trying to do.

And thank you to my grandparents, especially Nonna and Opa who showed me how to make a home so well, that it took me decades to fully realize the effort it must have taken. I admire you so much—still and forever.

Thank you all.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	The Structure of This Book	10
Part I Setting the Stage		
2	Washington DC and the Nation’s Public Memory	15
2.1	Creating the Nation’s Capital	15
2.1.1	The Creation of a Symbolic Capital	20
2.1.2	Memorials	21
2.2	Public Memory	22
2.2.1	Terminology	24
2.2.2	Selection, Interpretation and Revision	33
2.2.3	Group-Membership and Grand Narratives	36
2.3	Memorials in Washington, DC	41
2.3.1	The Mall	44
2.3.2	Building Memorials—A Complex Process	47
2.3.3	The Whiteness of DC	50
2.3.4	Protest in DC	51
3	The Two King Memorials on the National Mall	57
3.1	The “I Have a Dream” Inscription at the Lincoln Memorial	58
3.1.1	Looking for the Speech	59
3.1.2	President Lincoln	63
3.1.3	The Memorial	65

3.1.4	The Lincoln Memorial and the Civil Rights Movement	67
3.1.5	The Bookstore	69
3.2	The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial	73
3.2.1	Martin Luther King, Jr.	78
3.2.2	Memorials to African American Activists in DC	80
3.2.3	The Memorial	84
3.2.4	The Bookstore	87
4	The Literature on Public Memory	95
4.1	Transmission of Public Memory	96
4.2	Studying the Audience	97
5	Methods	103
5.1	The First Field Work	105
5.1.1	Autoethnographies	105
5.1.2	Observations	106
5.1.3	Photography	107
5.1.4	Interviews	108
5.1.5	Follow-Up Interviews	112
5.1.6	Expert Interviews	112
5.2	The Instagram Ethnography	114
5.2.1	Platform Selection	115
5.2.2	Creation of the Researcher Profile	120
5.2.3	Sampling Method & Sample	124
5.2.4	Content Analysis of Instagram Posts	125
5.2.5	The Instagram Interview	126
5.3	The Second Fieldwork	128
5.3.1	Interviews	128
5.3.2	Expert Interviews	130
5.3.3	Commented Walk	131
5.4	Researcher Role and Research Ethics	132
5.5	Combination of the Three Approaches	134

Part II Visiting Memorials

6	Motivations for Visiting and Experiences at the “I Have a Dream” Inscription and the Lincoln Memorial	139
6.1	Why Are People Visiting?	140
6.1.1	Tourism	142

6.1.2	Geography	146
6.1.3	Collection of Sites	147
6.2	What Visitors Enjoy	150
6.2.1	Aesthetics	150
6.2.2	History	152
6.3	Conclusion	153
7	Motivations for Visiting and Experiences at the MLK Memorial	155
7.1	Why Are People Visiting?	158
7.1.1	Geography	158
7.1.2	Tourism	160
7.1.3	Visiting Dr. King	160
7.2	What Visitors Enjoy	162
7.2.1	Location	163
7.2.2	Architecture	164
7.2.3	Aura	165
7.3	What Visitors Do not Like	168
7.3.1	Location	169
7.3.2	Narratives	171
7.4	Conclusion	175
8	Visitor Experiences: Differences Between the Two Memorials	177
9	Memorials and Information	181
9.1	Lack of Information on Site	183
9.2	Bringing Information Into the Space of the Memorial?	185
9.2.1	Adding Information Elsewhere	188
9.2.2	Adding Information in the Memorial Space	189
9.2.3	Reasons for a Lack of Information on Site	192
9.3	Discussion	197
9.3.1	The Affordances Are Invisible	199
9.4	Conclusion	201
10	Memorials and Photography	205
10.1	Why Visitors Take Pictures	207
10.1.1	Creating a Record	208
10.1.2	Photography as a Practice of Tourism	210
10.1.3	Meaning Making Through Photography	211
10.1.4	Photographs of People	213
10.2	Conclusion	221

11 Memorials and Instagram	223
11.1 Instagram: The Online Diary	224
11.2 Memorials and the Digital Realm	227
11.3 Sampling Methods	230
11.3.1 Sampling for the MLK Memorial	231
11.3.2 Sampling for the “I Have a Dream” Marker	233
11.4 Instagram Posts Tagged at the Lincoln Memorial	235
11.4.1 Visuals of the Inscription	239
11.4.2 Narratives About the “I Have a Dream” Speech	243
11.5 Instagram Posts Tagged at the MLK Memorial	245
11.5.1 Visuals Tagged at the MLK Memorial	246
11.5.2 Narratives	262
11.6 Discussion	266
11.6.1 Non-Critical Posts	266
11.6.2 Showing Visual Allegiance	269
11.7 Conclusion	270
11.7.1 The Potential of Social Media to Transform Memorials	271
 Part III Discussions and Conclusion	
12 Discussions	277
12.1 The “I Have a Dream” Inscription as a Marker of History ...	279
12.2 The MLK Memorial as a Statement of Public Memory	283
12.3 Image Sharing as an Act of Tourism	285
12.4 Sharing About Sites of Public Memory	287
12.5 Integrating Memorials Into People’s Everyday Lives	288
12.6 Limitations	290
13 Conclusion	295
13.1 Place Matters	295
13.2 Positive Representation Matters	299
 Works Cited	305

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1	The George Floyd Memorial in Minneapolis, MN. The mural in the third image is by artist Peyton Scott Russell. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 7 November 2021	3
Fig. 1.2	Memorial to Stephen Turner in Harlem, NY. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 18 November 2021	4
Fig. 1.3	The Experience of Visiting a Memorial, a Model. <i>Note.</i> Illustration by Emily Shern, printed with permission	9
Fig. 2.1	Washington, DC, on the Border Between North and South and the shore of the Potomac. <i>Note.</i> Map Data © Google, 2024. Adapted for this book by Jessica Tapolcai	17
Fig. 2.2	1792 Map of Washington, DC. <i>Note.</i> Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia : ceded by the states of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America, and by them established as the seat of their government after the year MDCCC, by Andrew Ellicott (1792). Retrieved from the Library of Congress	19
Fig. 2.3	Statues and Visitors in the Capitol’s Rotunda. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 20 June 2019	34
Fig. 2.4	The Reserve in Washington, DC. <i>Note.</i> Map source: Commemorative Areas of Washington, DC, and its Environs (National Parks Service, 2003). Printed with permission	46

Fig. 2.5	Program for the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. <i>Note.</i> March on Washington (Program), 08/28/1963; Bayard Rustin Papers; John F. Kennedy Library; National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed on January 5 th 2025, at https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/official-program-for-the-march-on-washington	54
Fig. 3.1	Unceremonious Road to Lincoln. <i>Note.</i> Screenshot from Google Maps (260 23rd St NW, Washington, D.C., District of Columbia, 2022). Retrieved December 29 th 2024, from https://www.google.ch/maps/@38.8943432,-77.0501808,3a,75y,183.49h,92.3t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1svqmU1oalTqBn68sN045SJA!2e0!6shhttps:%2F%2Fstreetviewpixels-pa.googleapis.com%2Fv1%2Ftumbnail%3Fcb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile%26w%3D900%26h%3D600%26pitch%3D-2.295003632072607%26panoid%3DvqmU1oalTqBn68sN045SJA%26yaw%3D183.4885547952436!7i16384!8i8192?hl=de&entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI0MTIxMS4wIKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D	58
Fig. 3.2	Approaching Lincoln. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	59
Fig. 3.3	Engulfed by a Mass of People. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, June 2019	60
Fig. 3.4	Pouring Water on the Marker. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	61
Fig. 3.5	Increased Visibility Through Water (?). <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	62
Fig. 3.6	Missing the Marker. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, October 2021	62
Fig. 3.7	The Sun Rising Over the National Mall. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	63
Fig. 3.8	The Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 24 May 2019	66
Fig. 3.9	President Lincoln in his Chamber. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	67
Fig. 3.10	The Lincoln Bookstore. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 11 October 2021	70

Fig. 3.11	Dr. King in the Lincoln Bookstore. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 11 October 2021; Postcard: Lincoln Memorial Washington, DC [postcard] Impact Photographs	70
Fig. 3.12	Lincoln Memorial Pamphlet. <i>Note.</i> Author scan of the pamphlet published by the National Park Service (2015)	72
Fig. 3.13	Approaching the MLK Memorial From the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	74
Fig. 3.14	The Entrance to the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	75
Fig. 3.15	A First Glimpse of the Stone of Hope. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	76
Fig. 3.16	Approaching the Statue. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	77
Fig. 3.17	The Statue of Dr. King at the MLK Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	77
Fig. 3.18	The Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial in Lincoln Park: “Let Her Works Praise Her”. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 3 June 2019	81
Fig. 3.19	The Statue of Bethune Across Lincoln Park. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 3 June 2019	82
Fig. 3.20	The Emancipation Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 3 June 2019	83
Fig. 3.21	Quotes on the South Wall. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	86
Fig. 3.22	“Make a Career Out of Humanity”. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 29 May 2019	86
Fig. 3.23	The MLK Book Store Invisible Behind the Trees on the Right. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 14 October 2021	88
Fig. 3.24	The First Shelf in the MLK Book Store. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	89
Fig. 3.25	The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Pamphlet. <i>Note.</i> Author scan of the pamphlet published by the National Park Service (n.d.)	90

Fig. 5.1	The Plus Sign as a Symbol for the Affordance of Uploading an Image or Video. <i>Note.</i> The plus sign can be found at the top right of the screen, next to the username	116
Fig. 5.2	Researcher Instagram Profile	121
Fig. 5.3	Instagram Feed With Images from DC Fieldwork	122
Fig. 5.4	Skeptical Response to Interview Request	122
Fig. 5.5	The Author During a Segway Tour in Front of the Capitol	123
Fig. 5.6	Conversations About Ethnicity	133
Fig. 6.1	Visitors Sitting on the Front Steps of the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 9 June 2019 ...	140
Fig. 6.2	Instagram Post Referring to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Showing Lincoln. <i>Note.</i> Posted by Luciana on 20 July 2021	141
Fig. 6.3	Referencing a TV Show in a Post From the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Post published on 20 June 2021	144
Fig. 6.4	A Segway Tour on the Way From One Memorial to the Next. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	148
Fig. 6.5	Bicycle Stop at the Jefferson Memorial, on the Tidal Basin. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021 ...	148
Fig. 6.6	Electric Scooter Tour in Front of the Jefferson Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	149
Fig. 6.7	Taking a Picture With the View. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 17 June 2019	152
Fig. 7.1	The Four Additional Entry Points to the MLK Memorial. <i>Note.</i> The additional entry points are marked with X-s on the map.Screenshot from Google Maps (Google Maps, 2023)	156
Fig. 7.2	Catching the First Glimpse of the Memorial Through a Mobile Phone Screen. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	157
Fig. 7.3	Guided by the Mobile Phone Screen. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 30 May 2019	157
Fig. 7.4	The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Across the Tidal Basin. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021 ...	159

Fig. 7.5	Visitor Interaction: Snapping a Polaroid Picture <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 7 October 2021	167
Fig. 7.6	MLK Across the Tidal Basin. <i>Note.</i> This picture was taken at about the halfway point between the MLK and FDR Memorials. Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	171
Fig. 9.1	Mobile Phone Use at Memorials. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 22 and 23 June 2019	181
Fig. 9.2	Visitors Looking At Their Phones in Front of Memorials. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 30 May and 12 June 2019	182
Fig. 9.3	Visitor Looking At a National Mall Map on Her Mobile Phone. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 12 October 2021	186
Fig. 9.4	Visitor Photographing Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	190
Fig. 9.5	Visitor Photographing a Quote at the MLK Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	191
Fig. 9.6	The Basement At the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 21 October 2021	193
Fig. 9.7	A PT-13 Stearman at the NMAACH. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 24 October 2021	195
Fig. 9.8	LP Exhibit in the NMAACH’s Culture Galleries. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 6 October 2021	195
Fig. 9.9	The Hi App At the NMAACH in October 2021. <i>Note.</i> This app is an interactive app that is different from the NMAACH app which includes maps and stories about artefacts throughout the museum. Screenshots by the author	196
Fig. 9.10	Park Rangers at the MLK Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	200
Fig. 10.1	Ducking Out of Someone Else’s Picture Frame. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 9 June 2019	206
Fig. 10.2	Getting in Line to Take a Picture With King. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 23 June 2019	207
Fig. 10.3	Photographing DC Memorials. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 9, 12, and 22 June 2019	211

Fig. 10.4	Noticing Others Taking a Picture of the Inscription. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 9 June 2019	212
Fig. 10.5	Taking a Photograph With King. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 30 May 2019 and 23 June 2019	215
Fig. 10.6	A Selfie With Lincoln. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 June 2019	216
Fig. 10.7	Taking a Selfie at the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	217
Fig. 10.8	Three Cameras, a Red Dress, and a Tiara: Photo Shoot on the Steps of the Lincoln. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 17 October 2021	217
Fig. 10.9	Pillars to Stretch: Yoga Shoot at the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	218
Fig. 10.10	Wedding Photography at the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note.</i> Photographs by the author, 9 June 2019 and 22 October 2021	219
Fig. 10.11	A New Day. <i>Note.</i> Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, photographed inside the Lincoln Memorial by Annie Leibovitz (Leibovitz, 2022a)	220
Fig. 10.12	Standing Tall. <i>Note.</i> Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, photographed at the Lincoln Memorial by Annie Leibovitz (Leibovitz, 2022b)	220
Fig. 11.1	The Location Tag for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial on Instagram <i>Note.</i> Screenshot taken by the author, 15 January 2023	232
Fig. 11.2	The Location Tag for the Lincoln Memorial on Instagram <i>Note.</i> Screenshot taken by the author, 15 January 2023	234
Fig. 11.3	Walking up the Stairs Past the Inscription. <i>Note.</i> Screenshots from a video (8 minutes 25 seconds), published 8 March 2022	235
Fig. 11.4	“Standing Where King Stood”. <i>Note.</i> Post published by Parker on 30 August 2020	236
Fig. 11.5	“Told You I Was Being a Tourist...”. <i>Note.</i> Shared with the author for publication, post published 28 July 2016	237
Fig. 11.6	“Nothing More Fun Than Pretending to Be a Tourist”. <i>Note.</i> Shared with the author for publication, post published in 2014	238

Fig. 11.7	The “I Have a Dream” Marker on a Visitor’s Instagram Feed <i>Note</i> . Screenshot by the author	239
Fig. 11.8	The View During the Speech: Today and in 1963. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Ivanna on 26 June 2021	241
Fig. 11.9	“My Favorite Moment of the Day Was Seeing Where Dr King Stood”. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Kimberly 13 June 2021	242
Fig. 11.10	The Memorial Is the Statue. <i>Note</i> . Screenshots from Instagram by the author	248
Fig. 11.11	Lincoln’s Statue. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	249
Fig. 11.12	One of Several Statues at the FDR Memorial. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 29 May 2019	249
Fig. 11.13	King’s Statue. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021	250
Fig. 11.14	The Thomas Jefferson Memorial. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 21 October 2021	250
Fig. 11.15	Photograph Visually Focusing on the Person. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Jayden on 9 September 2020	252
Fig. 11.16	Photograph Without a Visual Focus. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Wiafe on 8 September 2020	253
Fig. 11.17	Photograph With a Face Mask. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Addison on 3 September 2020	254
Fig. 11.18	A Picture With King and a Face Mask. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Benjamin on 24 August 2020	255
Fig. 11.19	Turning Away from the Camera. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Cameron on 1 September 2020	255
Fig. 11.20	Facing King. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Xaii on 1 September 2020	256
Fig. 11.21	Paying Respect to King. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Khloe on 23 August 2020	256
Fig. 11.22	Crossed Arms Like King. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Lavone on 2 September 2020	259
Fig. 11.23	One Image Speaking Volumes. <i>Note</i> . Post published by Leo on 20 September 2020	261
Fig. 12.1	Denaise at the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 25 October 2021, published with permission	281

Fig. 12.2	The Author at the Lincoln Memorial. <i>Note</i> . Photographed by Denaise, 25 October 2021, published with permission	282
Fig. 13.1	Standing With King. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 30 May 2019	302
Fig. 13.2	A Photograph With King. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 23 June 2019	302
Fig. 13.3	“Out of the Mountain of Despair, a Stone of Hope”. <i>Note</i> . Photograph by the author, 5 October 2021	303



Introduction

1

[...] you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds. Say, a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy... You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful. (Ellison, 1952/2001, p. 3)

In Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, the unnamed protagonist moves from a Southern U.S. town to New York City and struggles with finding a place for himself in the world as an African American man: both literally and figuratively. As many novels of the era—after the Harlem Renaissance but before the peak of the Civil Rights Movement—*Invisible Man* not only thematizes general issues of racism, but hones in on the importance of place to individual and group identities, and the impact of an absence thereof. This goes beyond the importance of having a place to call one's own and extends to being represented in the public sphere. Whoever does not see themselves represented within the world in which they live is unable to develop an authentic existence: hence the unnamed protagonist's wondering whether he really exists.

One way in which individuals can see themselves represented in the world around them is in public memorials. In a 2021 national audit—two years after the start of this project—Monument Lab (a non-profit public art and history lab) found that the United States' "commemorative landscape is dominated by monuments to figures who would be considered white, male, and wealthy in our common understandings today" (*National Monument Audit*, 2021, p. 17).¹

¹ The report analyzed a data set of 48,178 memorials and monuments (*National Monument Audit*, 2021, p. 10).

While marginalized communities are therefore largely absent in the commemorative landscape as celebrated heroes, they are overly visible as victims. One such group is the African American community on which I focus in this project, a choice on which I elaborate throughout this book. African Americans are often considered to be the group in the United States who, “with the exception of Native Americans, have suffered the widest, deepest, and too frequently, the most murderous inequality for the longest stretch of [the] nation’s history” (Lebron, 2017, p. 128). Their history is therefore often represented in the form of dark heritage sites remembering past atrocities committed against the group. Dark heritage sites revolve “around places of death, suffering, and disaster, whether battlefields, concentration camps, or notorious sites of disaster such as Chernobyl” (Thomas et al., 2019, p. 1), and they are a crucial part of transitional justice, a concept which

refers to ways and means of providing justice for past abuses in times of transition from violence to, at its most basic, peaceful coexistence. Conventionally, it incorporates a number of mechanisms such as truth commissions, tribunals, lustrations, reparations and more recently also memory work—including memorials—in order to deal with past injustices. (Buckley-Zistel & Schaefer, 2014, p. 1)

In the case of the United States and the African American community there are several moments in history which require such an engagement with the past, one of them being the history of slavery on U.S. soil. There are several dark heritage sites in the United States which process this dark history and their function is crucial since “memorials, if developed as inclusive spaces for dialogue on contemporary issues, can help strengthen democratic values and a culture of respect for human rights. An emerging norm calls for the obligation to remember and engage with past atrocity” (Brett et al., 2007, p. 21). As important as these sites therefore are, visiting dark heritage sites can be traumatizing to individuals who have personal connections to the events commemorated (see, for example, Shipler, 1998). In their study of visitors to the Laura Plantation in Louisiana, Butler and colleagues, for example, found that African Americans were not the group with the highest interest in slave narratives (Butler et al., 2008). They are, as a group, also less likely to visit sites of slavery and instead prefer sites such as Civil Rights museums which “show a more positive image of African American experience in the US” (Jamal & Lelo, 2011, p. 39, referring to Butler et al., 2008).

The possibility of trauma being activated through visits to sites associated with so much violence, however, does not deny the importance of such sites. Plantation

museums, for example, must walk a very fine line which is reflected in Eischstedt and Small's (2002) study, where they found that African American visitors did not want to visit plantation museums which watered down slave narratives, recognizing the importance of commemorating the atrocities of the past. They also, however, did not want "to be understood or defined as a people by their experience of enslavement" (Eichstedt & Small, 2002, p. 256). The latter point is crucial: As important as it is to acknowledge past atrocities and take responsibility for those actions, for a group to be represented in the public history of their nation exclusively as sufferers can be detrimental to group members' self-worth.

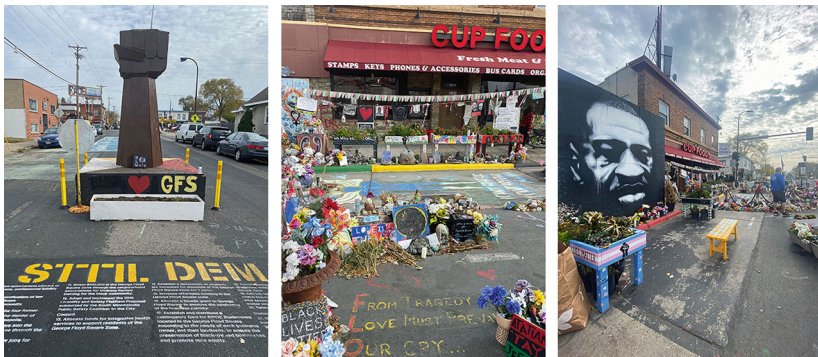


Fig. 1.1 The George Floyd Memorial in Minneapolis, MN. The mural in the third image is by artist Peyton Scott Russell. (*Note.* Photographs by the author)

In addition to dark heritage sites commemorating slavery, many contemporary (temporary) memorials to African American individuals have been created to mark the spot where they became victim to police violence. These memorials thus mark a location of tragedy. One such memorial is the George Floyd Memorial in Minneapolis which commemorates Floyd's murder on May 25th, 2020 (see Fig. 1.1). The memorial, while including inspirational exhibits and items celebrating Floyd's life, as well as those of other murdered community members, is also a place of mourning. While the memorial is absolutely necessary, the dominant visual of African Americans created by commemoration in the public realm is one of tragedy and violence. It is not uncommon to walk along a U.S. city street and happen upon a memorial to a murdered African American individual (see, for example, the memorial to Stephen Turner in Fig. 1.2).

Fig. 1.2 Memorial to Stephen Turner in Harlem, NY. (Note. Photograph by the author)



Being represented as victims, while crucial to processes of transitional justice, stands in stark contrast to how other groups, particularly White Americans, are represented. For example, half of the top-50 honored individuals in the United States—overwhelmingly White men—who are celebrated as national heroes, enslaved other people (*National Monument Audit*, 2021, p. 17). In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, protesters across the United States—and later the globe—began defacing or tearing down these types of memorials, particularly those to Confederate generals or Christopher Columbus, as they claimed they represent “historic and systematic racism and oppression” (Taylor, 2020). Conversations about how we commemorate figures from the past and, particularly, how we adapt our commemorations to current times have thus reached the public realm (e.g., Ortiz & Diaz, 2020). Conversations about the absence of celebratory memorials to members of marginalized groups, however, are rarer and more subdued.²

The absence of positive representations of marginalized communities increases the dominance of the narratives portraying them as victims and ignores the positive contributions by group-members: historically, “African Americans have not been seen as an integral, contributing part of American history” (Artz & Murphy, 2000, p. 74). This can increase feelings of a double consciousness, a concept coined by W.E.B. DuBois, which describes the impossibility to identify as African American *and* as American when the definition of what it means to be (an ideal) American categorically excludes African American individuals (see Boxill, 2020).

² For exceptions, see the discussions surrounding the Central Park memorial honoring women’s suffrage (McGreevy, 2020) or the inclusion of the first statue to an African American individual in the U.S. Capitol (Brockell, 2022).

This lack of representation of African Americans as a valuable part of American society has a long history. As African American history scholar, Jenny Woodley, writes in her book *Art for Equality: The NAACP's Cultural Campaign for Civil Rights*:

A study by the Bureau of Motion Pictures in 1943 of the depiction of blacks in wartime movies concluded that, "in general, Negroes are presented as basically different from other people, as taking no relevant part in the life of the nation, as offering nothing, contributing nothing, expecting nothing." (2014, p. 139)

Counteracting these types of narratives, beginning in the early twentieth century, "[t]o counter widespread popular accounts of blackness as pathological, black civic leaders revealed, or rather constructed, what they saw as the true nature of black identity" (Autry, 2017, p. 49). One strategy to counteract this negatively framed identity was to create an explicitly positive image.

A leader in the quest to not only change minds about marginalized groups but indeed to attain civil rights through a change of representation, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909. One of its main objectives, in addition to fighting institutional racism through litigation and legislation (e.g., Eig, 2023, p. 19), was to change the image of African Americans (Weinberger, 2011). This had two main goals, the first of which was to help fight racism by creating a positive image of African Americans for the dominant culture³. The NAACP's first black executive secretary, James Weldon Johnson, argued in 1928 that

³ Throughout this book, I repeatedly speak about the "dominant culture," which I define as "the culture which is predominant in society" (Ben-Rafael, 2001, p. 4839). It is a culture "whose values, language, and ways of behaving are imposed on a subordinate culture or cultures through economic or political power. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behaviour, or by monopolizing the media of communication" (Oxford Reference, n.d.). In the context of the United States and looking at ethnic groups, I consider White Americans to be the dominant group. It is important to note that this does not mean that it is the largest group or that other ethnic groups do not make valuable contributions to the "overall" American culture. Instead, I use this term to acknowledge the inherent power imbalances and the artificial dominance of narratives stemming from or being beneficial to the dominant group within larger national narratives. The use of the term "dominant culture" should signal that, within national storytelling, the dominant group is indeed given a primary role, as it dominates other—sometimes contradictory—narratives. This is not to say that minority narratives do not exist or that they are not the dominant narratives within specific sub-cultures or geographical regions. However, in this project, I study *national* narratives of public memory and, in this context, I consider the group of White Americans (as heterogeneous as that group is in many regards) as the "dominant group."

“the ‘race problem’ is fast reaching the stage of being more a question of national mental attitudes toward the Negro than a question of his actual condition.” It was “becoming less a matter of dealing with what he is and more a matter of dealing with what America thinks he is.” It was necessary, Johnson argued, to challenge racial stereotypes; in this way, the national mental attitude would be altered, and its consequence—racial inequality—would be defeated. (Woodley, 2014, p. 1)

While the organization’s main goal in terms of cultural changes was to showcase black artists to show proof of “the race’s status” (Woodley, 2014, p. 2), its ultimate goal was a generally more positive and non-stereotypical portrayal in the public realm. The NAACP

wanted to show whites the true nature and real achievements of African Americans and hoped that this would convince them to treat blacks as equal citizens [...] If racism existed in the minds of white America, then public opinion would be a key tool in the NAACP’s battle for civil rights. (Woodley, 2014, p. 3)

By creating an image of the African American for the dominant society that was not only more accurate but also more positive, racism was supposed to be eliminated.

In addition to creating a positive image for the dominant, mainstream, culture, the NAACP’s cultural campaign intended to create a positive image for African Americans which would lead to self-appreciation and positive self-imagery. The strategy included changing portrayals of African American individuals in “a wide range of media, from literature and art to advertisements, songs, and greetings cards. It focused particular attention on images of blacks in visual culture” (Woodley, 2014, p. 5). Through the creation of these new images, the NAACP hoped to project “positive black images [which] were intended to raise black pride” (Woodley, 2014, p. 6). The overall goal of the cultural campaign therefore “reflects the dual aspects of the NAACP’s engagement with culture during the 1910 and 1920 s: it wanted to change White attitudes, but at the same time it hoped to encourage racial pride among African Americans” (Woodley, 2014, p. 42). As Woodley concludes, the cultural campaigns “were part of a ‘great fight’ to secure a full and equal place for African Americans in the life of their nation” (Woodley, 2014, p. 204). Increasing positive representations of members of the African American community in visual culture has thus had a long history within civil rights efforts. However, it has not managed to eradicate racism and it has not changed the nation’s memorial landscape.

The importance of such positive, celebratory memorials and monuments, however, can no longer be denied. In 2020, the Mellon Foundation committed \$250

million as part of its “Monuments Project” to “express, elevate, and preserve the stories of those who have often been denied historical recognition, and explores how we might foster a more complete telling of who we are as a nation” (*The Monuments Project: Our Commemorative Landscape*, n.d.). It is because of an overwhelming absence and the absolute necessity of such celebratory memorials to members of the African American community, that this book studies two such unique sites. As I will elaborate on in Chap. 3, when deciding to study celebratory memorials to a member of a marginalized community in the nation’s most symbolic space for public memory—Washington, DC’s National Mall—there is only one option: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who is commemorated with a stand-alone memorial as well as a commemorative inscription on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial as a reminder of his 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech.

Focusing on those two unique sites, this project serves to provide an in-depth analysis of two exceptional memorials and visitors’ experiences thereof, with the hope that knowing more about them can help with future endeavors to create such celebratory memorials to members of marginalized groups in manners that will be used and appreciated by the public. As I study memorials to Dr. King in Washington, DC, approaching them from an interdisciplinary perspective is crucial since, as Chap. 2 will show, these memorials are used by visitors as sites of memory as well as sites of tourism. Drawing on research in the broad fields of memory and tourism studies (a review of research is conducted in Chap. 4), I intend to draw a holistic picture of the experience. This is important since these types of memorials are extremely rare and the project is therefore exploratory in nature. While built on previous research about visitors of cultural sites (see Sect. 4.2), at the time of writing, no study has analyzed visitor experiences of celebratory memorials.

This is why I conduct a qualitative project, which starts “from the perspective and actions of the subjects studied” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 7). Looking at how individuals experience the memorials, this project embraces the complex nature of the experience. As a media and communications scholar, I account for the fact that one specific encounter with a medium (in this case a memorial) is always necessarily impacted by one’s previous or simultaneous experiences with different media (see Couldry, 2012, p. 2). This could mean seeing a newspaper article about a memorial previously to one’s visit, a visitor’s experiences at other memorials during the same trip, or their experiences with narratives about the stories told by the memorial in different media (history lessons, social media, etc.). Studying a visitor’s experience with a memorial should therefore go beyond the process of “consuming” the one medium of communication—the memorial—during the moment of the visit. Instead, we should take account of the entire

experience including, but not limited to, interactions with the primary medium on site. As Nick Couldry has explained about his paradigm of media research:

it treats media as the open set of practices relating to, or oriented around, media... The aim ... can be stated directly: to decentre media research from the study of media texts or production structures (important though these are) and to redirect it onto the study of the open-ended range of practices focused directly or indirectly on media. (2004, p. 117)

Understanding individuals' experiences at memorials as a practice that is part of a larger (active or passive) engagement with the narrative and site, set within a context of experiences with other media, it then follows that purely studying the means of communication (the memorial), the text (the narrative of public memory) or the reception process (the moment of looking at the memorial), falls short of this complex experience. Instead, I take a more open approach, one that Couldy (2012) terms a "practice approach" which

starts not with media texts or media institutions but from media-related practice in all its looseness and openness. It asks quite simply: what are people (individuals, groups, institutions) doing in relation to media across a whole range of situations and contexts? How is people's media-related practice related, in turn, to their wider agency? (p. 37)

The present book therefore studies visitor experiences at the two memorials as encompassing the moment on site, the ideas and expectations visitors carry with them to the site, and potential engagement with the site after their visit through the sharing of images on Instagram.⁴ Understanding a memorial visit as such a multi-faceted experience then requires a theoretically and methodologically open approach to the subject. As Couldry (2004) describes his paradigm of media as practice:

It draws for its theoretical tools much more on general social science than on media research—unsurprisingly, since it addresses questions that are no longer questions about media as such, or even about the direct consumption of media, but rather questions about the contributions media practices make to social practice more generally. (p. 130)

⁴ See Fig. 1.3 for an illustration of the different aspects of the experience of visiting a memorial.

This is why, throughout this project, I rely on insights from different fields as they relate to the experience of visiting a memorial, including but not limited to, the actual use of the medium.

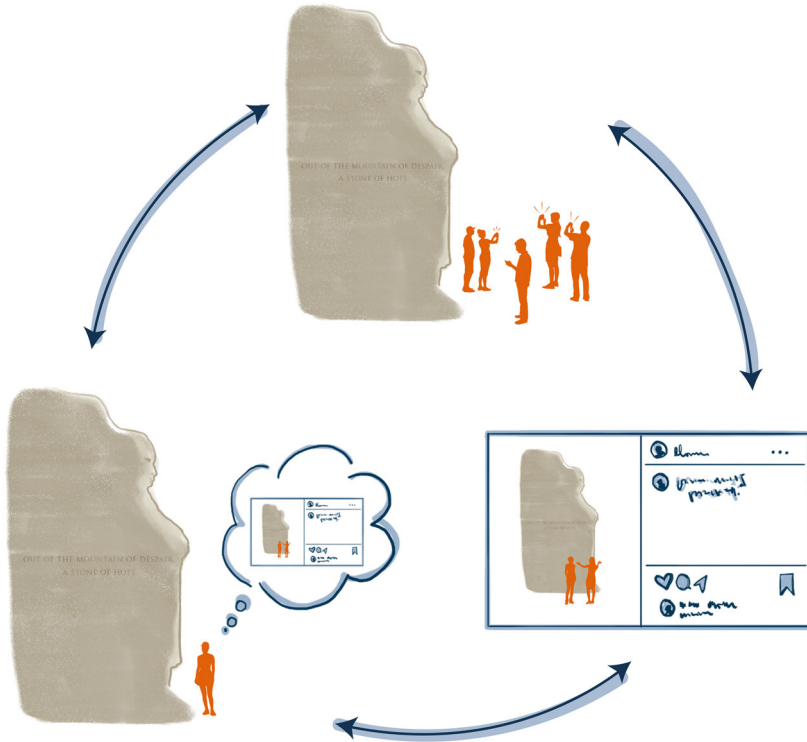


Fig. 1.3 The Experience of Visiting a Memorial, a Model. (Note. Illustration by Emily Shern, printed with permission)

In order to study this complex experience of a memorial, I chose an ethnographic approach to the study. This, first and foremost, means that I do not understand the experience of a memorial site as restricted to the on-site visit and use methods to approach the experience from different perspectives, depending on what *the visitors* consider to be part of their experience. Because a memorial in DC never stands for itself, as will become clear in Subchap. 2.3, and

a site-visit is also part of a larger (tourism) experience (see, specifically, Subchap. 2.3.1), I immersed myself in the field which included several additional experiences surrounding (literally and figuratively) the physical memorials. As I elaborate in Chap. 5, when explaining the project's methods, gaining insights into supplementary materials for the memorials as well as experts' opinions allows me to paint a holistic picture. While analyzing thick data—generated through different sources—about visitor experiences at the two memorials under study, the case study design naturally restricts the generalizability of this study. Its purpose is not to make conclusions about visitor experiences at any memorial across the globe. Instead, it should provide deep insights into two special cases. The project therefore seeks to answer the specific question of how visitors to these two memorials experience and interact with the sites and what we can learn from these visitor interactions for the creation or adaptation of future celebratory memorials to members of marginalized communities.

1.1 The Structure of This Book

This project is structured into three main parts, from introducing the reader to the topic and study design by providing crucial background information in Part I, to the results of the empirical project in Part II and discussions of the project's findings and implications in Part III.

Part I presents a “setting of the stage” in which the field considered or rather, created, for this project is defined and discussed. This begins in Chap. 2 with an elaboration on the context of Washington, DC as the nation's political and symbolic capital. This chapter also includes a Subchapter (2.2) in which I define my understanding of the central concept, public memory, and explain my choice of terminology. Chap. 3 introduces the two memorials which present the focus of this study: the “I Have a Dream” inscription in Sect. 3.1 and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Sect. 3.2. This is followed by Chap. 4 which provides an overview of previous research on public memory with a focus on studies interested in the audiences of cultural sites (4.2). The last chapter in this section, Chap. 5, elaborates on the empirical methods of this project, including the different points of access to the field and methods of analysis.

Part II is titled “Visiting Memorials” and begins with Chap. 6, which elaborates on findings about visitors' motivations for visiting the “I Have a Dream” inscription and their experiences at the site, while Chap. 7 discusses visitor experiences of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. In Chap. 8, I compare the experiences of the two memorials. Chap. 9 discusses the information provided

at the two memorials and how visitors feel about and engage with it. Chap. 10 focuses on another type of engagement with the memorials, namely photography and discusses its importance to the visit. Part II is concluded by Chap. 11, which discusses visitors' engagement with the two memorials through the sharing of photographs on Instagram. This chapter also includes a short introduction into the uses of Instagram more generally, and the role social media plays in acts of tourism (11.1), as well as the role of the internet in processes of commemoration (11.2) and the methods used in this project to sample on Instagram (11.3).

Part III, "Discussions and Conclusion," then discusses the overall findings of this project and their implications, including limitations and open questions for future research in Chap. 12 before Chap. 13 concludes the project by drawing conclusions and recommending possible future actions to ensure inclusive public memory which visitors can productively and joyfully experience.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Part I
Setting the Stage



Washington DC and the Nation's Public Memory

2

This chapter begins with an overview of the creation of Washington, DC to further understanding of the literal context into which memorials were placed. The first subchapter is divided into two parts, the creation of the political capital (2.1) and the creation of the symbolic capital (2.1.1), and closes with a brief overview of the function of memorials (2.1.2). Subchapter 2.2, then, elaborates on the concept represented by memorials: Public memory. This includes a discussion of the terminology used in this project (2.2.1). I then close this chapter by giving a brief overview of public memory as represented through memorials in the nation's capital, including the processes of construction (2.3.2) and the importance of the city for national protest (2.3.4).

2.1 Creating the Nation's Capital

In the general area of DC's location on the Potomac river, a presence of Paleo-Indians has been recorded for more than 10,000 years (traced through spear points dating as far back as 9500 BCE) (T. Lewis, 2015, p. 2). When English explorer John Smith travelled through the Chesapeake Bay area in 1608, producing "unusually accurate maps," he depicted native villages on the river including the Patowomeke of northern Virginia and the Nacostan (T. Lewis, 2015, p. 2). The area had therefore already been inhabited for centuries when Europeans arrived in the 17th century. Tom Lewis summarizes their influx in the region as follows:

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-48917-5_2.

Traders in search of furs and minerals followed Smith to the region By the mid-seventeenth century, Jesuits had established missions there. European settlements began in 1662, when the English crown gave manorial grants along the Potomac for land that became the District of Columbia. (2015, p. 2)

With this arrival of the Europeans, colonial settlement of the area began in the areas in which, today, the United States Capitol stands.

Finding reliable information about what happened to the indigenous tribes in the area after the arrival of European settlers is difficult. The National Park Service, on a page titled “Native Peoples of Washington, DC” writes only:

After only 40 years of contact with the Europeans, the population of local American Indians was only one-quarter of those that lived in the region prior to 1608. Many of the Nacotchtanks and other local American Indians died from diseases introduced by the Europeans and in wars. Others joined other tribes to the north, south, and west. (*Native Peoples of Washington, DC*, n. d.)

Providing more detail, an article by Donovan Begay, citizen of the Navajo Nation, published on the *American Library Association* website adds: “The remaining numbers of tribes were forcibly removed from their homelands, pushed further to join larger tribes like those in the northern Algonquian speaking nations” (2019, par. 3). While many popular histories of building the capital city do not include references to indigenous tribes in the region, we must assume that, by the time of the beginning of its creation in 1790, their presence in the region had largely been eliminated, both, through illnesses as well as forcible removal.

The city built in this location—Washington, District of Columbia—was the young United States’ first permanent capital city. After the government had resided in New York City (1789—1790) and Philadelphia (1790—1800), the “US Congress established a 100 square mile (160 square kilometer) territory to serve as the permanent seat of the federal government” in 1790 (Fogle, 2021b, para. 2). This territory contains the city, which is “coextensive” with the district—to this day not a state but a territory—“governed by a locally elected mayor and city council over which Congress retains the power of veto” (Fogle, 2021b, para. 3).¹ For the construction of this city and district, land was ceded by Maryland and Virginia, its geographic location on the Potomac hoped to provide a pathway

¹ To this day, DC has not gained statehood. Although its citizens have been able to vote in national presidential elections since 1964, since 1970, DC has only had a non-voting delegate in the House of Representative and no representation in the Senate (History.com Editors, 2020).

to the nation's interior (T. Lewis, 2015, p. 3), and its location between northern and southern States considered a gateway to the South (see Fig. 2.1).



Fig. 2.1 Washington, DC, on the Border Between North and South and the shore of the Potomac. (*Note.* Map Data ©Google, 2024. Adapted for this book by Jessica Tapolcai, Source: United States Regions (National Geographic Society, 2009))

Its location close to, but south of, the Mason Dixon line, the line which—pre-Civil War (1861–1865)—separated the slave-states from the northern “free-soil states” (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n. d.), made for a complex history, particularly considering race-relations. Historian Jeanne Mason Fogle writes:

Prior to the American Civil War, Washington's Black population was part free and part slave. In 1800 about one-third of the population was Black, about one-fifth of which was free. By 1860 more than four-fifths of the Black population was free. The city's African American population more than doubled between the start of the Civil War (1861) and the end of Reconstruction (1877), when tens of thousands of freed Blacks poured into the city. By 1900 Washington had the largest African American urban population in the United States, and a number of prominent Black leaders and educators lived there. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, large numbers of rural poor African Americans moved from the South to settle in Washington. By the 1970s nearly three-fourths of the capital city's population was African American. Although this proportion shrank over the next few decades, African Americans continued to constitute the majority of DC's population into the early 2000s. (2021b, para. 76)

African Americans have therefore always been a significant presence in the city.² While this project is not directly concerned with inhabitants of the city or how specific ethnic groups relate to the topic under study, the city's history crucially informs the topic of public memory represented in the capital. Particularly when focusing on the lack of inclusion of marginalized groups, we must keep in mind the fraught history of the city itself, particularly remembering that it has always been ethnically diverse and that non-White residents significantly contributed to the rise and success of the city itself, at times quite literally: The White House—one of the most recognized structures in the nation—was mostly built by (some free but mostly) enslaved African American laborers (Conroy, 2020; Holland, 2007; T. Lewis, 2015).

The construction of DC as a whole was a conscious one, much more so than many other cities which grew with an influx of people and developed according to local and national needs as well as natural resources. In fact, upon coming to DC in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville—a Frenchman travelling to the United States to report on its prison system which resulted in his writing the seminal book *Democracy in America*—was said to be “homesick and a bit disoriented by the fact that the capital ‘city’ of the United States of America was more map than city. Forests had been replaced by great boulevards with no one walking them” (Reeves, 1982, p. 342). DC's artificiality can also be seen in the district's borders, which were drawn by George Washington in 1791: they are diamond-shaped with no apparent regard for the natural landscape (see Fig. 2.2). This treatment of space was long inherent within city planning, where conception of space was “not based on experiences of space, but ... concerned primarily with function in two-dimensional map-space” (Relph, 1976, p. 22).

² Throughout this book, I use the term “African American” which is often used synonymously with the term “Black Americans.” However, while the latter can also refer to recent (willing and forced) immigrants, the former denotes a descendance from enslaved African individuals in the United States. While, as an ethnic group, they are most often considered one, the communities can have different histories and ways of relating to national public memory and I therefore use the term “African American”.



Fig. 2.2 1792 Map of Washington, DC. (Note. Plan of the City of Washington in the territory of Columbia: ceded by the states of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America, and by them established as the seat of their government after the year MDCCC (Ellicott, 1792), retrieved from the Library of Congress)

Geographer Edward Relph further states: “Space is understood to be empty and undifferentiated and objectively manipulable according to the constraints of functional efficiency, economics, and the whims of planners and developers” (1976, p. 23). This reflects planners’ disregard for, both, the natural environment as well as the people who had already been living there and their attachment to the land and specific places within this geographical location.

2.1.1 The Creation of a Symbolic Capital

Laying claim on land that was already inhabited is also reflected in Washington, DC's nomenclature. "Space is claimed for man by naming it" (Relph, 1976, p. 16) and by naming the district after Christopher Columbus and the federal city after George Washington, the capital was marked to embody the ideals represented by those two individuals. Christopher Columbus, the man who 'discovered' the continent, is associated with curiosity and bravery, while Washington is considered the uniter of the nation (e.g. Schwartz, 2000). However, attaching symbolic value to the capital and, by extension, the nation, did not conclude with its naming. Instead, physical structures were used to visually showcase the nation's ideals.

The first DC city planner, French army engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant, took much of his inspiration for the city's boulevards from Paris and specifically Versailles (Fogle, 2021b, para. 8). His plan resulted in the city's meticulous division into blocks divided by streets and avenues which intersect to create many circles and squares. This design was motivated by more than practicality: in creating this city, the nation did not only fulfill the need for a permanent capital in order to institutionalize its governing bodies, but it also created a representational city. Being the seat of all three branches of the national government, DC is considered "one of America's most symbolically charged venues, a public space that embodies the national discourse of democracy, freedom, and the ideology of equal access" (Benton-Short, 2006, p. 297). By not only *housing* but also *representing* young America's political system in impressive structures, DC, from the very beginning, has been a place of immense symbolic value. This is, for example, why it was the Capitol building—housing the representatives of the people—that was placed on a hill overlooking the National Mall instead of the president's house (now known as the White House). And the symbolism does not stop at government buildings but quickly started to extend to memorials and monuments, the subjects of this study.

By turning specific locations within space into *meaningful* locations, the city was turned from a space to a place (for a differentiation between the two concepts, see Cresswell, 2014, p. 7). Creating a *place* means to inscribe history, power, culture, and language, into space (see Manzanas & Sanchez, 2011, p. 2). To do so, in addition to the strategic placement of government buildings, L'Enfant, in particular, was an advocate of placing outdoor sculptures in the capital "as a way to honour the new country's heroes" (Fogle, 2021b, para. 21). An equestrian statue of President George Washington, authorized in 1783, is often considered

the “first memorial in American history” (Straus, 2021, p. ii).³ But what does it mean if a capital city is filled with memorials to alleged heroes? To understand this, we must take a brief look at the history and function of the memorial.

2.1.2 Memorials

Speaking on the importance of statues, and mirroring L'Enfant's desire to honor heroes through public sculptures, BBC culture and art critic, Kelly Grovier writes the following about the origins of representational sculptures:

The earliest-known material likeness of a human being, a small statuette of a female body discovered in a cave in Germany's Swabian Forest in 2008, may offer clues about the essence of our impulse to create such things. A mere 6cm (2.4in) in height and carved from woolly mammoth tusk 40,000 years ago, the so-called Venus of the Hohle Fels crudely exaggerates the features of a woman's body and is thought to have served as a fertility totem. ... The prehistoric craftsman who slowly sculpted this hunk of ivory into shape made the extraordinary aesthetic decision to leave the object without a head. Where the neck should be, a small eye-hook loop, through which a string or strip of leather could be threaded, has been painstakingly sculpted. Dangling from a necklace, the statue's head is that of its wearer, who imaginatively completes the figurine by merging with it. From their earliest inception, in other words, statues were as much conceptual as they were material—less about the individuals they depict than about how we see ourselves. (2020, par. 6)

The statue, therefore, has always had an inherent double-meaning. While it does stand for itself as a material object, sometimes considered a work of art, it also stands for what it represents. In the case of memorials, the second meaning is often more relevant, its purpose being not only to please the eye but also to remind onlookers of a specific narrative.

The inventor of the art of memory, ‘ars memoriae’ is often considered to be Greek poet Simonides (6th century BC). The art was codified by the Romans as one of the five areas of rhetoric (J. Assmann, 2002, p. 29). The principle of the mnemo-technique—according to Cicero, cited in Assmann (2002)—consists of selecting specific locations and creating images of things that one wants to keep in memory, and then to attach them to the specific locations. Through this process,

³ However, the statue was only dedicated in 1860. In the meantime, another memorial had been built: The Tripoli Monument commemorated the heroes of the US Navy in the Tripolitan War was the first war memorial, first erected in 1808 in the Washington Navy Yard and later moved to the Capitol in 1831. It was moved to the naval campus in Maryland in 1860 (Fogle, 2021b, para. 21).

the *image* of the thing will denote the thing itself (Cicero, 1977, pp. 351–354, quoted in; J. Assmann, 2002, p. 29, my translation). The purpose of a memorial is therefore to create an object, placed in the physical world, that acts as a reminder. The memorial, then, no longer stands for itself as an object of art but for a memory. Pierre Nora spoke of *lieux de mémoire*—places of memory—to stress this attachment of memory to a specific place instead of it being transmitted from one person to another (1990, p. 11). Nora conceives of memory places as replacing *milieux de mémoire*, where memory was alive and transmitted among people and institutions such as the family or churches (Nora, 1990, p. 11). In places of memory, instead, the memories are “preserved by physical sites and cultural practices that last much longer than a lifetime” (M. P. Friedman, 2008, p. 135). Jan Assmann elaborates on this process by saying that every group which wants to consolidate itself strives to make and preserve places which are symbols of their identity and evidence of their memory (2002, p. 39, my translation). While the statuette from the Swabian Forest was dangling from a person’s neck, showing how the wearer saw themselves, memorials standing in public spaces thus show how a nation sees itself. They do so by communicating values and ideals through a common story: public memory.

2.2 Public Memory

Public memory is a socio-political construct which narrates a specific version of a group’s (most often a nation-state) past in order to create cohesion within the in-group, and differentiate it from others (see Neiger et al., 2011). By selecting important events and figures from the past to commemorate, the group constructs its ideals and values in the present and narrates a desired future. The first definitional boundary of the term must be drawn toward the term *history*. Historians (e.g., Nora, 1990, p. 12), communication scholars (e.g., Dickinson et al., 2010), anthropologists (e.g., Fortes, 2018, p. xi), and geographers (e.g., Benton-Short, 2006) mostly agree that the two terms refer to different concepts. They consider memory a construct which represents a selection of historical facts and a specific, subjective, reading which serves a purpose. The past, in this perspective, is seen as “vital rather than dead” (e.g., Kammen, 1993, p. 5). In this sense, public memory is considered different from history, which is supposed to “guarantee the relative stability of the past in its pastness” (Huyssen, 2003, p. 1). History is thus considered the (always problematic and incomplete) reconstruction of that which is no longer: the past (Nora, 1990, pp. 12–13) and historians analyze this past

within the past (M. P. Friedman, 2008, p. 136). History can therefore be defined as follows:

History ... seeks an objective standpoint to assess the causes and consequences of events. It is 'situated external to and above groups' and describes the past independently of contemporary opinions and conditions. Once established, ... historical knowledge remains stable—its stream of facts and demarcations 'fixed once and for all'. (Halbwachs, 1980, pp. 80–81; quoted in Schwartz, 2016, p. 10)

History therefore implies the intention of codifying past occurrences in an enduring and absolute manner (see Huyssen, 2003, p. 2; Nora, 1990, p. 13).

While public memory also selects events from the past, its intention differs, as “commemoration, like ideology, promotes commitment to the world by symbolizing its values and aspirations” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 11; referring to: Durkheim, 1973; Geertz, 1973). The difference between history and commemoration, therefore, is that history attempts to record past events and figures to factually represent what has occurred in the past while commemoration makes a selection of events and figures from the past to symbolize its values and aspirations in the present. Historian David Paul Thelen (1989, p. 1119), for example, goes so far as to claim that the study of history differs from memory studies in that the former is concerned with *accuracy*. While it is a topic of contention whether the retelling of the past can ever truly be accurate or objective (see M. P. Friedman, 2008, p. 137), by speaking of *memory* and not *history*, memory scholars signal that they explicitly do not focus their studies on the reconstruction of historical facts. Instead, memory scholars are interested in the selection and framing processes of events and figures from the past, the intended function of these narratives, the manners in which they are communicated, and the effects they have on the people for whom and to whom they speak.

This focus is made explicit in the following definition of *public memory* from the *SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*:

Public memory refers to the ongoing *choices* made when a group of people (typically, a nation) remembers a particular part of its history, *highlights* that part of history within a container available for everyone to experience, and locates that container within a social, cultural, and political *context*. (Aden, 2017, p. 2, emphases added)

Aden further elaborates on the process of creating public memory as a communicative process, which is

similar to creating a scrapbook or sharing one's life through social media; both processes involve [1] selection (one can't include every element of a life in a scrapbook or social media site nor can a group of people remember everything about its history), [2] interpretation (some people will find a social image hilarious whereas others may see it as inappropriate, just as some people will interpret a public memory container differently than will others), and [3] revision (scrapbooks and social media presences can be edited, just as one's understandings of the past can be altered). (2017, p. 2)

In the following, after discussing the terminology used in this book, I will briefly elaborate on these three characteristics of public memory—selection, interpretation, and revision—before discussing the type of narrative that is thus created. The chapter then closes by looking at the purpose of public memory and the function of grand narratives.

2.2.1 Terminology

The concept which I call *public memory* in this book goes by many different names in the literature: *collective memory* (e.g. Halbwachs, 1992), *cultural memory* (e.g., J. Assmann, 2018), *public memory* (e.g., Dickinson et al., 2010), *shared memory* (e.g., Ashuri, 2011), *historical memory* (e.g., Low, 2004), *joint memory* (Ashuri, 2011), *national memory* (e.g., Glassberg, 2008), *social memory* (e.g., Buckley-Zistel & Schaefer, 2014), *consensus memory* (e.g. Romano & Raiford, 2006), or simply *memory* (e.g., Knudsen & Stage, 2013). At times, the use of the terms appears to be random, including scholars who use multiple terms interchangeably within one text (Schudson, 2014, p. 85).⁴ While, in the broadest sense, these terms all refer to the same concept, there are certainly definitional differences, particularly considering the object of analysis. Nevertheless, authors often refrain from justifying their choice of terminology, even when discussing the fact that a plethora of terms exists (e.g., Zelizer, 1995), further implying that the terms are used synonymously. Memory scholar Kirk Savage, in a text for the National Park Service subtitled “An Overview of the Scholarly Literature on Commemoration,” uses the terms *collective memory* and *memory* interchangeably and does not discuss any other terms despite the fact that authors in the field of commemoration apply a plethora of terms. While other authors explain their choice of terminology, they often only differentiate it from certain other terms (Sharon MacDonald (2013), for example, mentions *collective*, *social*, and *cultural*

⁴ For example: *cultural memory* and *shared memory* (Kuhn, 2010); *cultural memory* and *public memory* (Rutten & Zvereva, 2013).

memory). Amongst these terms, three popular terms overlap in their broadest definition of the concept to an extent where they can be considered synonymous in most cases. These are *collective memory*, *cultural memory*, and *public memory*. In the following, I will elaborate on their definitional differences as well as their common use and explain why I will be using the term public memory.

2.2.1.1 Collective Memory

Scholarship of collective memory is interested in collectively shared and constructed memory practices with a focus on how social groups create a specific framework for individual remembering. It is likely the most frequently used English term in memory studies (Autry, 2017; Bird, 2011; Birkner & Donk, 2020; Dwyer & Alderman, 2008; Feige, 2002; Halbwachs, 1992; Han, 2016; Kansteiner, 2002; Katriel & Shavit, 2011; O’Keeffe, 2007; Osborne, 2001; Polletta, 2003; Schindler & Grabbe, 2008; Schwartz, 2000; Su & Gibson, 2016; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013; Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2011; Wertsch & Billingsley, 2011; Whelan, 2002). Importantly, it was used by Maurice Halbwachs who introduced the concept to sociology in 1925 (Russell, 2006, p. 792). Discussing Halbwachs’ understanding of collective memory, Sharon MacDonald summarizes it as follows:

[Halbwachs’] concern was to emphasise the importance of social groups in creating frameworks for remembering—for example, the role of the family in transmitting memory—and also the significance of shared memory for creating senses of collective solidarity. Halbwachs has been criticised for taking for granted the existence of stable social entities as the producers of memory, and for overstating the determining role of the collective memory so produced for individual remembering. (Macdonald, 2013, p. 14)

Halbwachs therefore focused strongly on a memory that “could not last more than a lifetime but [that] could be experienced by a community of individuals with common experiences” (M. P. Friedman, 2008, p. 135). While Halbwachs largely focused on the social group of the family, his understanding of the concept greatly corresponds to scholars who look at larger social groups such as the nation state. What connects them is their interest in the impact of the social group on individual remembering. While I am interested in the context and possibilities for shared narratives, particularly focusing on the dominant narratives and their perception, in his analyses, Halbwachs focuses on the individual and her/his role in this process: Halbwachs demonstrates that

individual recollections only exist and are localised in the past by linking up with the memory of others: one only ever remembers as a member of a social group. The singularity, the irreducible originality of personal recollections, are in fact produced by the criss-crossing of several series of memories which themselves correspond to the various groups to which we belong (family, friends, political party, social class, nation). (Wachtel, 1986, pp. 211–212)

This shift in focus was crucial in establishing a field that was not concerned with neural or other biological aspects of remembering but instead focused on the social context without which individual remembering would be impossible (see, J. Assmann, 2002, p. 35).

Using this foundational origin, which focuses on the individual, many scholars use the term collective memory to discuss a memory created through a collaborative effort of individual members of a society, often in the aftermath of a traumatic event. This is, for example, reflected in the use of the term in studies about the COVID-19 pandemic and how it is remembered (Hirst, 2020; Koscieljew, 2022; Malanski et al., 2022; Öner et al., 2022; e.g., Zumthurn & Krebs, 2022). Collective memory has also been the dominant term in discussions on how individuals collectively remember catastrophes, both in popular media reporting (e.g., Obrist, 2022) as well as in academic studies, covering topics as diverse as the aftermath of a Chinese high-speed train collision in 2011 (Han, 2020) or the 1967 massacres at Asaba (Bird, 2011). In these studies on collective memory, authors focus on the individuals as actors of remembering within a social context and acknowledge that remembering is a collective endeavor. Scholars using the term collective memory thus often “wonder who is doing the remembering” (Rigney, 2016, p. 66).

This focus can be likened to what Jan and Aleida Assmann term *communicative memory*, which most often becomes visible through oral history. Assmann and Czaplicka explain their use of the term communicative memory as follows: “Through the practice of oral history, we have gained a more precise insight into the peculiar qualities of this everyday form of collective memory, which, with L. Niethammer, we will call communicative memory” (J. Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 127). Jan Assmann further defines this everyday form of collective memory as “consisting of those memories that refer to the recent past. It is the memories that individuals share with their contemporaries” (2002, p. 50, my translation). These are memories that are in the process of being created, possibly being turned into institutionalized memories and this understanding is reflected in much of today’s scholarly use of the term collective memory.

Aleida and Jan Assmann, however, insist that collective memory does not purely consist of these quotidian, communicative, memories but rather includes

“organized” forms of memory (e.g., J. Assmann, 2002, p. 45). They therefore differentiate between communicative memory as the everyday form and cultural memory as the institutionalized memory. I argue, however, that many scholars today still use the term collective memory (which serves as an umbrella term for the Assmanns) to denote a quotidian form of communicative memory.

Furthermore, many authors using the term largely disregard power imbalances inherent in the concept I study. As Jan Assmann claimed, according to Halbwachs, memory

is not tied to any force or external influence, it is not ‘made’ or ‘bred,’ but instead it comes into being and builds itself in a manner which, Halbwachs, had he had the vocabulary of modern systems theory, certainly would have described as “autopoietic.” (1995, p. 59, my translation)

I therefore take issue with the term because it implies, and some authors explicitly claim, that collective memory is a concept that grows out of collective action, without force or inherent inequalities. One of these authors is Bernard Lewis who differentiates between three types of memory and claims that “[r]emembered history is the collective memory of a community; what the social group chooses to remember as significant, both as reality and symbol” (B. Lewis, 1975, p. 12). He differentiates this type of collective memory from “invented history” which, he claims, “(when necessary)[.] fabricates facts to suit a political purpose” (cited in Llobera, 1995, p. 41). While Lewis—and most other authors—do not explicitly deny the imbalanced agency of different participants in a society, the definition and naming of the concept as *collective* memory can imply a more collective nature than is in fact inherent in the concept I study.⁵

2.2.1.2 Cultural Memory

Because Jan Assmann took issue with Halbwachs’ understanding of memory for the purposes of his own scholarship, he uses the term *cultural memory*, just like Aleida Assmann does (e.g., A. Assmann, 2009). The two arguably most influential scholars on the topic of memory (at the very least in the German speaking world) use the term to describe an individual’s need for belonging to a group and the memory’s expression through cultural artifacts. However, when “Jan and Aleida Assmann first introduced the term *kulturelles Gedächtnis* (literally: cultural memory) in the early 1990s, they did so with reference to a much more restricted phenomenon than is covered nowadays by the term ‘cultural memory’”

⁵ As an exception, historian Michael Kammen explicitly writes that collective memory is “usually a code phrase for what is remembered by the dominant civic culture” (1993, p. 10).

(Rigney, 2016, p. 66). They used it to differentiate between cultural and communicative memory, as I have stated above. While the latter referred to memories of the recent past, cultural memory is an “institutionalized mnemo-technique” (J. Assmann, 2002, p. 52, my translation). This definition of cultural memory greatly corresponds to my understanding of the type of memory I study. I nevertheless use a different term in my scholarship for two main reasons and neither of them is to distance my work from the scholarship of Jan or Aleida Assmann. The first, albeit minor, reason is that the term cultural memory it is rarely used in the English-speaking canon (important exceptions are: L. Bond, 2016; Etkind, 2009; Florini, 2016; Harvey, 2008; Kuhn, 2010; MacDonald, 2013; Paul, 2014; Sturken, 1997, 2007, 2008).

The second reason concerns the object of analysis: Cultural memory scholars are often interested in the cultural artifact communicating the memory, which is implicit in much of the term’s definition.⁶ Sharon MacDonald, for example states: “It is useful for analysis ... to use ‘cultural memory’ more specifically to indicate memory whose primary form of transmission is through cultural media, such as texts, film and television, and museums and exhibitions, rather than through direct person-to-person transmission” (2013, p. 15). Some scholars employing this term then also shift their focus on the means of transmission. As Ann Rigney explained, the same term—cultural memory—has been used in different manners by scholars following different traditions:

[Cultural memory] has a double genealogy. It emerged first in German theory (see Olick in this volume) and then in the quite different research tradition of Anglo-American cultural criticism (mostly [sic] notably via the Stanford UP series ‘Cultural Memory in the Present’). In the latter case, the study of ‘cultural memory’ stands by and large for the close reading of particular phenomena, often a single cultural artefact, from an overtly critical or ‘etic’ position in the present. German-trained scholars in contrast are less focused on single works of high art, and more concerned with analysing more general processes from an ‘emic’ position that strives to be as value-free and systematic as possible. (2016, p. 66)

⁶ The difference in focus might have originated in a difference in focus based on linguistic traditions. As Dietrich Harth writes: “Already the words ‘kulturell/cultural’ have different semantic connotations in German and in English, as a glance at any common dictionary of standardized language use will show. Anglo-American usage locates ‘culture’ as a collective term for ideas, customs, and art in the contexts of society and civilization, while the lexeme ‘Kultur’ stands for the intellectual, artistic, and creative achievements of a community and is used to express the advanced development of humanity” (2008, p. 87). A closer connection of scholarship in the German speaking tradition with studying cultural artefacts under the term cultural memory might therefore be explained by the understanding of the term *cultural* in different language traditions.

Scholars in the Anglo-American tradition then

focus on the cultural foundations of collective memory: using which media technologies and with the help of which cultural models and forms, do particular stories become constituted, shared, and linked to identity? (Rigney, 2016, p. 66)

The object of analysis, in English-language studies using the term cultural memory, is therefore often the container of the memory and its creation (Etkind, 2009; Kuhn, 2010; Sturken, 2007). While the material context of memory (the memorial) is a relevant aspect of my study, just as the messages it tells (the grand narrative), my main focus lies on how individuals interact with them. Therefore, in conclusion, the main reason why I do not use the term cultural memory in my project is not that it differs entirely from my conceptualization of memory. Rather, the object of analysis in most studies employing the term cultural memory in the English language is the actual artifact which does not correspond to my object of analysis. Furthermore, there exists one term—particularly for the English-speaking field—that better fits my object of analysis.

2.2.1.3 Public Memory

After having explained why I do not use two of the three most common terms in memory studies, I want to justify why I use the term public memory.⁷ First, it is a term broadly used in communication sciences, which is where I locate my own scholarship.⁸ The *SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, for example, speaks of public memory (Aden, 2017) without differentiating it from any other terms, implicitly suggesting that this is the default in the field of media and communication. In another reference work, the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, the authors even claim that “[w]hile the study of public memory spans multiple disciplines, its uptake in communication and rhetorical studies has produced a wealth of critical and theoretical perspectives that continues to shape the field” (Houdek & Phillips, 2017). The term’s dominance within the field is therefore one reason why associate my work with the existing scholarship through the use of public memory.

⁷ Scholars using this term include Aden (2017), Benton-Short (2006), Bowman (2010), Brett et al. (2007), Carroll & Landry (2010), Dickinson et al. (2010), Grider (2007), Haskins (2007), Huyssen (2003), Kammen (1993), Macdonald (2008), McDowell (2008), and Yoshida (2004).

⁸ One notable exception is Barbie Zelizer (e.g., 1995) who uses the terms public memory (1995) and collective memory (1992; 1998; 2004).

To study public memory from a communications perspective has been suggested by different memory scholars: “monuments and their associated commemorations are best thought of as devices of communication rather than aesthetic representations” (Osborne, 2001, p. 52). And an approach through the field of media and communications implies a focus on the entire process of communicating public memory, which goes beyond, for example, simply scrutinizing the means of communication. Memory scholar Wulf Kansteiner wrote in 2002: “Most studies on memory focus on the representation of specific events within a particular chronological, geographical, and media settings without reflecting on the audiences of the representations in question” (p. 179). Therefore, approaching the concept from a communications perspective can be productive, as Kansteiner further elaborates: “For this purpose, collective memory studies should adopt the methods of communication and media studies, especially with regard to media reception ...” (2002, p. 179). Considering that I approach the topic from a more holistic perspective including the processes of communication and reception further justifies the use of the term public memory.

Furthermore, while the term *collective* implies a narrative that is created and held by the collective, I claim that the term *public* helps iterate that this type of memory affects all people in an area or nation (see the dictionary definition of “Public,” (*Merriam-Webster*, n. d.). In this sense, public memory stresses its existence as a narrative that is not created from individual memories:

... collective memory is not like individual memory at all; it is more similar to public opinion, because both memory and opinion have an individual aspect or meaning yet transcend the individual level. Collective memory, thus, cannot be reduced to an aggregate of individual memories. (Schwartz, 2000, pp. 8–9)

While Schuman and Schwartz both use the term collective memory, I find that speaking of public memory makes this similarity to public opinion, regarding the concepts’ underlying structures, clearer.

While Jan Assmann states that collective memory “sticks to” its carriers and that whoever participates in it shows group-membership and gains from it sense and meaning for one’s own self-image (2002, p. 39, my translation), in my study, I will claim—in line with other scholars—that public memory affects all members of a society, regardless of whether a specific individual participates in the narrative or not. This reflects the basic function of the public sphere which is to enable a society’s self-monitoring (see Imhof, 1996; Nuernbergk, 2020). Public memory defines and communicates an in-group and makes explicit who the ideal group-member is. This means that public memory even affects those individuals

who are not defined as group-members or who do not identify with the narrative told. In fact, these individuals might be affected even more by the dominant narrative because they are implicitly framed as not being (a valuable) part of the group. Using the term public memory allows me to study the effect of this memory on all members of the society, regardless of whether they participate in the narrative itself.

Memorials, as communicators of public memory, therefore claim to speak for all members of a society and they are also open to all members: there are no clear boundaries defining who could be the audience of a memorial, making them public in the sense of accessibility (see Habermas, 2018). Because the memorial is deeply rooted in the public space, an association with that terminology makes sense. This is also reflected in the fact that many of the authors in my literature review, who use the term public memory, study (engagement with) sites of memory (e.g., Armada, 2010; Benton-Short, 2006; Bergman & Duquette Smith, 2010; Bodnar, 2010; Bowman, 2010; Brett et al., 2007; Gallagher & LaWare, 2010; Grider, 2007; Huyssen, 2003; Macdonald, 2008). Interestingly, even certain scholars who employ different memory terms stress the public nature of memorials for their analysis: Brett and colleagues (2007) speak of *memory* but *public memorials*; Gurler and Ozer (2013) as well as Savage (2009) use the term *social memory* but analyze interactions with what they call *public memorials* and *public monuments* respectively.

In addition to being publicly accessible, memorials can also be considered public places because they encompass all three levels of the public sphere: encounters, assembly publics, and mass media (Gerhards & Neidhardt, 1991). Encounters are the most obvious types of interactions at a memorial site, namely that of the visitor engaging with the officially communicated narrative through the officially sanctioned means of communication: the memorial. Organized assemblies in the form of protests or rallies are frequently conducted at memorial sites (more on this in Sect. 2.3.4) and the memorial itself can be understood as a communicator akin to mass media, as it implies a limited level of interactivity as well as the implication of a disperse audience (see Schwaiger, 2022, p. 24; Neuberger, 2017). While, in this project, I focus on individuals' interactions with and opinions of the official, national communication and its medium (the memorial), by using the term public memory, I acknowledge the memorials' functions as not only a professionally communicated message, but also as spaces of encounters and organized assemblies. Particularly their function as places for organized assemblies has only become more important in recent years. While memorials have always been used as sites of protest, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, this has only increased (see, for example Grovier, 2020).

In times of crises, which the current discussions about the monolith of public memory can be considered, the future is perceived as open and uncertain and so the chances for alternative groups to be heard increase (see Eisenegger & Udris, 2019, p. 9). In this sense, memorials have a double function: they can provide a forum for other communicators or act as communicators themselves, telling the story of a nation's public memory. In both of their functions, memorials are surrounded by different publics. Those who are present at the site for any act of communication, as well as those who can be considered an audience through mediated communication—about either the memorial and its narrative—or organized assemblies at the sites. This disperse audience then can also be expected to have different reactions to the memorials and should be studied in future research. This project, however, focuses on only one type of heterogeneous audience: those visitors who have visited the site, mostly encountering the memorials without being part of or happening upon an organized assembly.

The situatedness of this memory within public space is crucial because the public provides a “space for representation” (e.g., Mitchell, 1995, p. 115). The placement of a symbol of public memory in public space legitimizes the narrative told: because memorials stand in public space, on public land, they speak for the general public.

Whelan, for example, argues that memorial icons of identity such as monuments, memorials, and buildings that have been invested with meaning, carry conscious and subconscious messages and are subject to competing interests. Their very public visual presence translates powerful ideological messages that are never apolitical, and ensures that the messages they convey are open to contested interpretations (2003, p. 14). (McDowell, 2008, p. 43)

This understanding is crucial for the study of memorials and how individuals engage with them because being situated in public space gives power to these sites and the narratives they tell. Communication in the public realm not only allows accessibility but also assigns societal relevance to the topic (see Nuernbergk, 2020, p. 1063). Memorials, standing in the public realm, are the officially sanctioned representation of the ideal citizen, they “instruct citizens what to value” (McDowell, 2008, p. 45), and they are open to be contested.

2.2.2 Selection, Interpretation and Revision

Public memory consists of a selection of stories about specific individuals and events from the past which are interpreted to embody the nation's (present) ideology. A selection is necessary because simply remembering everything from the past would render every occurrence and individual equally important. Choosing specific events and figures to remember, however, implies a first value judgement about who is worthy to be remembered and seen as instructive for the nation.

By selecting which narratives to tell, events and—particularly—figures are no longer remembered wholly but much rather interpreted to stand for something in the present moment. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, often considered the father of memory studies (e.g., Llobera, 1995), described the concept of public memory (which he called *collective memory*) as follows: “Every historical figure or event, as it enters into memory, becomes a lesson, a notion, a symbol; it receives a meaning; it becomes an element of the social system of ideas” (1925, p. 296; cited and translated in Llobera, 1995, p. 38). Dickinson and colleagues elaborate on this intention:

groups talk about some events of their histories more than others, glamorize some individuals more than others, and present some actions but not others as ‘instructive’ for the future. In other words, they make choices. Wittingly or unwittingly, they do so, conclude most memory scholars, on the basis of how they understand or value their present conditions. As David Lowenthal suggests, we “select, distil, distort, and transform the past, accommodating things remembered to the needs of the present.” He concludes that “The prime function of memory, then, is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present.” (2010, p. 7; quoting Lowenthal, 2015, pp. 184, 210)

This means that the commemorated individuals are not so much remembered for the entirety of their personhood or achievements but much rather for specific qualities which the dominant, contemporary, culture deems useful for creating and reinforcing a national identity. By “manipulating the past in order to mold the present” (Kammen, 1993, p. 3), historical figures become symbols for ideals the nation deems desirable and reflective of the nation.

This process of selection and interpretation is largely dictated by the intentions of the current society: In contrast to historical retellings, public memory interprets the past in a manner which serves contemporary purposes. This necessitates the possibility of revising memory.⁹ It seems natural that, as societies progress, some

⁹ For an in-depth example of how the public memory of a historical figure can be interpreted and revised throughout time, I recommend Schwartz' 2000 book titled *Abraham Lincoln and*

of the individuals they honored a century ago might no longer correspond to current values and ideals. However, current debates on this topic show that revision is not easy, and it is unclear who is responsible for it. One of the questions asked in this context is: is it enough to remove a statue from the public realm in order to change a nation's public memory, the underlying narrative?

Fig. 2.3 Statues and Visitors in the Capitol's Rotunda. (Note. Photograph by the author)



The topic of (potential) revision will be elaborated on throughout this book, but I want to give an example here of how revising public memory through the modification of representational memory markers is currently achieved. The United States Capitol houses two statues from each state in its rotunda: the architectural centerpiece of the building and a popular destination for tourists (see Fig. 2.3). In December 2020—in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests—a

the Forge of National Memory. It chronicles in great detail how Abraham Lincoln went from a “Whig who believed in emancipation followed by colonization (deportation) of all former slaves and free blacks” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 2), to the “freer of slaves.”

Virginia statue depicting Confederate General Robert E. Lee was removed from the Capitol rotunda, after a vote in a state commission (Williams, 2020b)¹⁰. In the discussions preceding the removal, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Democrat, California) was quoted saying that these types of statues pay “homage to hate, not heritage” (Bikales, 2020). She was further quoted commenting on Confederate portraits in the Capitol, saying:

The halls of Congress are the very heart of our democracy. There is no room in the hallowed halls of Congress or in any place of honor for memorializing men who embody the violent bigotry and grotesque racism of the Confederacy. (Williams, 2020a)

Frequently, as the example shows, these discussions are fraught with tensions. In this case, left-wing U.S. American politicians tend to find the symbolic power of Confederate generals problematic as they embody bigotry and racism. For many right-wing politicians, however, they represent their local or regional identities which are crucial in a nation in which the South was often seen—and is still often framed—as inferior to the more cosmopolitan places in the North. The discussions also illustrate differing understandings of public statues: while those advocating for the preservation of Confederate statues argue that they represent history, a reading of commemoration as public memory—and not history—reflects what historian Jane Dailey said in an NPR interview: “Most of the people who were involved in erecting the [Confederate] monuments were not necessarily erecting a monument to the past, [b]ut were rather, erecting them toward a white supremacist future.” (Parks, 2017, para. 6). This means that, not only in the process of creation but also the process of revision, the main question to be asked is what these memorials and the public memory they symbolize define as an ideal future for the nation and not necessarily which aspect of the historical past they remember. The example furthermore illustrates that public memory and its means of communications—in this case a statue—are so deeply entangled that the vessel becomes the message: removing a statue from the public realm assumes a change in the narrative it represents.

Deciding who is allowed to revise memorials and, by extension, public memory, is therefore no easy feat. When aspects of public memory no longer correspond to what a society stands for, the narrative and its containers must either be modified or removed to ensure that the current society’s values and ideals are represented “correctly.” While public memory is theoretically open to

¹⁰ It is the states who decide which two statues to send to the Capitol.

revision from all members of society, because the narrative is mostly communicated through institutionalized means of communication, imbalances of power have a crucial effect on what is actually done:

[C]ommemorative resources have always been controlled by the dominant class The great narratives and symbols of official memory, from the best-selling high school history texts to Fourth of July celebrations and the Washington Monument, are means by which America's elite class beguiles and imposes its own values on the rest of society and preserves the institutions in which it has personal stakes. (Schwartz, 2000, p. 15)

As long as the narratives support the current individuals in power, it is unlikely they will be changed or even eliminated.

The removal of statues, while prominent in the media in recent years, is a rare phenomenon. Monumentlab writes in their 2021 audit of national monuments: "Though the removal of monuments remains an area of great attention, we estimate that 99.4 percent of conventional monuments remain in place, with each one undergoing continual social, environmental, and material changes in clear and subtle ways" (*National Monument Audit*, 2021, p. 15). In this project it will therefore be interesting to see the subtle ways in which either public memory of Dr. King has changed or how individuals have changed their perspectives on the larger public memory and its limited inclusion of marginalized figures such as King. The following discussions will include visitors' and experts' opinions on the current communication of public memory through the memorials, which narratives this communicates (successfully), and how visitors not only engage with but potentially enhance or challenge certain aspects of the narratives in their engagement with the memorials.

2.2.3 Group-Membership and Grand Narratives

I have now briefly shown that the process of creating and preserving or revising public memory is a conscious one, fraught with political tensions. In the following, I want to elaborate on its purposes because, surely, if such elaborate thought is put into the creation of a national narrative, it must serve a purpose.

The main purpose of national public memory is to erect boundaries separating a nation from other groups with different pasts or different interpretations of the same past (Neiger et al., 2011, p. 3). As American studies scholar Heike Paul's (2014) book title indicates, it was *[t]he myths that made America*. However, these narratives not only differentiate one nation from another, but they also define who can be part of the in-group. For this, public memory communicates identifying features of group-membership, its purpose to create cohesion within a society. This can be observed particularly well in the creation of the United States, a young nation which relied heavily on different migrant populations (from settlers to forcibly removed individuals to refugees to immigrants). Kammen put it succinctly in his elaboration on the necessity of public memory for the United States:

From an affirmative point of view, a surge of tradition can supply the basis for social cohesion, especially in a nation so heterogeneous as the United States. Where religious, ethnic, and regional diversity are such centripetal forces, a sense of nationality and of its symptomatic 'official culture' can be useful. As Edward Everett of Massachusetts declared in 1824: "Divisions may spring up, ill blood may burn, parties be formed, and interests may seem to clash; but the great bonds of the nation are linked to what is past." (1993, p. 4; quoting Everett, 1879)

It is because of this heterogeneity and political turmoil, including a revolutionary and a civil war, that public memory was so crucial in the creation and upkeep of the United States. Public memory is, then, according to Schwartz, "a 'social construction' soothing the soreness of the day" (2000, p. ix).

Public memory of the United States therefore narrates not only who the nation is but also who an ideal member of the society is, and, by extension, excludes specific groups and individuals: Only those who are represented in the official reading of the past as valuable parts of society are able to identify with the in-group. In the case of the United States, this long excluded marginalized groups (see, for example, Paul, 2014, p. 20), which also has consequences for their *individual* identity: a person needs a memory to belong, Jan Assmann claims (1995, p. 51). Memory turns a person into a fellow human being, and enables them to live their life in community (J. Assmann, 1995, p. 51, my translation). And further:

A memory is needed by those who must pledge themselves, who commit. Memory conveys belonging, individuals remember to belong, and this memory is binding. We can therefore call it normative memory. Normative memory enables the individual to have an identity and a feeling of belonging. (p. 52, my translation)

This goes beyond what the individual can personally remember: “the identities that people display, perform, contest, or discuss in interaction are based on ideologies and beliefs about the characteristics of social groups and categories and about the implications of belonging to them” (De Fina, 2006, pp. 353–354). This means that while a plethora of individual identities can be found within one society, they are based on characteristics of the social group to which the person belongs or wants to belong. Therefore, while remembering can only be carried out by individuals, the memory we talk about here, the one that enables identity and belonging, is public memory: it “offers to individuals a symbolic connection with the group and a sense of belonging to it, ‘anchoring the self,’ as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka puts it, in the comfort (or sometimes discomfort) of a collective” (Dickinson et al., 2010, p. 7; quoting Irwin-Zarecka, 1994).

Those who cannot anchor the self in the collective are therefore excluded from the group. This is most often the case for members of marginalized groups as public memory “not only serves to reinforce narratives of national identity but often works to suppress the identity of minority or less powerful groups” (McDowell, 2008, p. 45). Therefore, for individuals who do not see themselves reflected in the nation’s public memory, it becomes impossible to see themselves as valuable parts of that society and, by consequence, creates a lack of individual identity.

In the case of the African American community, not seeing themselves represented within the nation’s public memory has a long history and can have detrimental effects on individuals’ personal identity.

In a passage that seems as if it could have been inspired by twenty-first century preoccupations with social identity, W.E.B. DuBois affirmed in 1897, in “The Conservation of Races,” that every [African American] who has thought earnestly about the situation of his people in America has asked himself at some time, “What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro?” (Boxill, 2020, p. 1; citing DuBois, 1997b, p. 233)

This is precisely the issue of a narrative of public memory which only includes a specific type of person: those who are not represented cannot identify with the narrative. DuBois’ narrator therefore further asks himself:

Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America? Is not my only possible practical aim the subduction of all that is Negro in me to the American? (DuBois, 1997b, p. 234)

This confusion about how to reconcile being black and being an American is also a reaction to the uniquely U.S. American myth of the melting pot which assumes that everyone melts into one identity, leaving previous identities behind. This interpretation of the myth

represents the emphasis on “Americanization” of immigrants around the turn of the century. While the melting pot image suggests a blending of cultures, the process was essentially one of “anglo-conformity” (Gordon, 1964, Chapter 4). Immigrants were encouraged to learn English and to discard their “foreign ways” (ethnic culture). (Hirschman, 1983, p. 398)

DuBois then explains this feeling of not being able to reconcile the ideas of what it means to be an American and what it means to be African American in the concept of the double-consciousness:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (1997a, p. 39)

In popular, official framings of the “ideal American”, identities that are non-White have long been (implicitly) excluded. African Americans have therefore been framed as outside of the nation’s official public memory and therefore not a valuable part of the group¹¹.

Public memory therefore excludes certain figures and events from the past that do not support the overall goal of the grand narrative. “According to Lyotard, grand narratives are seen as oppressive because one grand narrative excludes another” (Jensen, 2008, p. 373). Defining the group by excluding certain groups and types of individuals always serves a purpose. So, for example, did the exclusion of African Americans in the grand narrative of the United States help justify racist policies. Paul elaborates on the deceptive narrative of the American melting pot—which claims that all Americans have the same opportunities —saying:

¹¹ There are certainly versions of retelling the nation’s history that acknowledge the accomplishments of non-White individuals, and they have always existed. However, as this book is concerned with public memory on a national level, I argue that in the dominant, national public memory of the U.S., African Americans (as well as other non-White individuals) have long been excluded: Often by not being mentioned in the narrative about “ideal” American identity, but also by explicitly being defined as having characteristics that conflict with being “an American.” They are therefore defined as being “other.”

“The melting pot myth in its hegemonic version has often obscured the role of racism in American society by projecting a colorblind vision of social harmony and by obscuring ongoing inequality” (2014, p. 282). Even after emancipation, legal and then “de facto” segregation continued for decades (see Griffin, 2016). “Laws prohibiting African Americans and whites from marrying were only ruled unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court in 1967” (Paul, 2014, p. 286). The goal of negating (structural) racism was justified by the hegemonic narrative of the melting pot: if someone is not framed as part of the group, it is easier to discriminate against them. African Americans were therefore not allowed to become part of the nation’s public memory (see Paul, 2014, pp. 284–285). Ignoring (or suppressing) the complex history of the African American community within the national context therefore facilitates a brushing off of past atrocities committed by past versions of contemporary institutions.

The purpose of hegemonic narratives, as which I define public memory, then, is to serve those in power by protecting the status quo, or, put more extremely by historian Michael Kammen: “people invoke the legitimacy of an artificially constructed past in order to buttress presentist assumptions and the authority of a regime” (1993, p. 5; referring to Bourdieu, 1977). By selecting specific smaller narratives, taken together, those stories are used to create a coherent narrative which combines independent events and figures from the past to create a picture of cohesion throughout time as well as an easily digestible representation of an ideal state of the nation (see Given, 2008). The qualities honored in the individuals commemorated are traditionally ones which help the preservation of the status quo in a nation (see Given, 2008, p. 373): Individuals are honored for helping move the country into the direction of its current state. The United States, for example, remembers George Washington not only as the nation’s first president but also as the commander in chief of the continental army (see Schwartz, 2000). Washington is honored in his rebellious role against the British government but being rebellious against established forms of government is not *generally* deemed to be a good quality: it is only revered when it has contributed to the current state. As a counterexample, Malcom X is a figure whose impact might be comparable to that of Martin Luther King Jr., but who has not been accepted into the coveted narrative of public memory (see Romano & Raiford, 2006, p. xviii): While he helped move the country to where it is today, he also rebelled against the United States Government as it exists today and against structures which are still in place, and his rebellious nature is therefore not commemorated as it would endanger the status quo.

Because public memory is framed as a monolith, it is difficult to change. This is mainly because it is not a narrative that is enforced from above but one that enjoys large support, mainly because it serves the majority and because it seems natural. As a hegemonic narrative, it “does not arise primarily as a result of a dominant group performing some sleight of hand to deceive the ‘masses’ nor by a dominant group conducting a clever propaganda campaign to mislead subordinate groups into their social relationships” (Artz & Murphy, 2000, p. 3). Hegemonic narratives build “consent by establishing accepted practices through sheer repetition (‘this is the way we do things here’), then legitimizing them as valuable and natural (‘this must be the best way to do things’)” (Artz & Murphy, 2000, p. 40). By repeating the same narratives, told through different cultural artifacts, they are presented as natural lay of the land and as the guidelines for the future. There is an implicit assumption that these narratives are carried by the entire nation and, therefore, disagreeing with them is preemptively framed as an unpatriotic and extreme act.

These grand narratives defining the nation therefore create a rather homogeneous memorial landscape as they represent a restrictive retelling of events from the past and, particularly, the country’s heroes. This is not to say that there are no memorials to “niche” events and people with all kinds of backgrounds, but looking at the memorial landscape as a whole and then focusing on the possibly most symbolically charged location in the nation—Washington, DC—a very specific version of public memory presents itself.

2.3 Memorials in Washington, DC

While memorials were around as early as the ancient Greeks, Andreas Huyssen argues that memorials and monuments, as we understand them today as public markers of public memory, “are a 19th century phenomenon, receiving their power from the way they were instrumentalized in this period, ... tied as they were to the political needs of the nation states and the cultural needs of the bourgeoisie” (Huyssen, 2003, p. 40). It was during this period, when history “became the core of civil religion during the spiritual crisis” (Kammen, 1993, p. 12), that—Jens Klenner writes—memorials were

[p]romising to preserve internal coherence, [and] monuments further served as ram-
parts against social upheaval. In the United States, the erection of monuments, in order
to effect “... a public sense of chronology, values and legitimacy ...” was most appar-
ent in the late 19th century ... According to Michael Kammen, after 1870, the United

States witnessed the "... use of monuments, architecture, and other works of art as a means of demonstrating a sense of continuity or allegiance to the past." (2008, p. 19, citing Kammen, 1993)

It is, then, during times of turmoil that memorials and other symbols of public memory are most crucial. As Pierre Nora wrote, if that which places of memory defend were not under threat, they would not need to be built (Nora, 1989, p. 12). They "anchor national identity" (Glassberg, 2008, p. 64), or as Robyn Autry phrased it: "... sites that convey a shared past are essential to imagining a nation and to restoring a sense of wholeness and unity to otherwise heterogeneous and even divisive societies" (2017, p. 3).

This "Gilded Age" of memory coincided with the industrial expansion and urbanization:

Industrialism brought deep cultural and political change to the society, and the unsettling experience of this change enhanced the appeal of a settled past. "The decades between 1870 and 1910 comprised the most notable period in all of American history for erecting monuments in honor of mighty warriors, groups of unsung heroes, and great deeds" (115). Conditions that stimulated commemorative impulses provided the means for realizing them. Rapid economic growth brought the wealth that supported commemorative organizations; the rapid growth of cities made these organizations numerically strong; the rapid growth of railroads and urban transit enabled people to assemble and mark the past in greater numbers than ever before. (Schwartz, 2000, p. 90; referring to Kammen, 1993)

It was also during this time that the national capital increased in symbolic significance (Schwartz, 2000, p. 119), providing the rich soil for the future of this national memorial center.

During the long history of memorials, these symbolic representations have gone through periods of contention as well as doubts about their importance, even during the prime years of erecting memorials. During a debate in Congress about a bill proposing the erection of a Washington Monument in 1800, North Carolina Congressman Nathaniel Macon declared:

"Since the invention of types [printing], monuments are good for nothing. ..." Words, not stones or statues, preserved the memory of great men, he said. A modern enlightened nation, with democratic institutions and a literate citizenry, had no use for such "pernicious acts of ostentation." (Savage, 2009, p. 1; citing *Annals of Congress, 6th Cong., 2nd Sess.*, 1800, p. 803)

Poet Walt Whitman is quoted saying about just that monument in 1885: “Ah, not this marble, dead and cold” (Savage, 2009, p. 2).

But in addition to a dismay towards memorials, there have also been periods during which they were deemed useless due to invisibility. Austrian author and art critic, Robert Musil, made a comment often cited and attributed to the early 1900s¹²: “there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument” and he elaborated on this statement in 2006:

They are no doubt erected to be seen—indeed to attract attention. But at the same time they are impregnated with something that repels attention, causing the glance to roll right off, like water droplets off an oilcloth, without even pausing for a moment. You can walk down the same street for months, know every address, every show window, every policeman along the way, and you won’t even miss a dime that someone dropped on the sidewalk; but you are very surprised when one day, starting up at a pretty chambermaid on the first floor of a building, you notice a not-at-all-tiny metal plaque on which, engraved in indelible letters, you read that from eighteen hundred and such and such to eighteen hundred and a little more the unforgettable So-and-so lived and created here. (Musil, 2006, pp. 64–65)

Still today, there are people who claim, in the style of by Robert Musil’s exclamation: “There is nothing more invisible than a monument.” However, this present project was conducted before, during, and after the global spread of the Black Lives Matter movement which also sparked a conversation about memorials at a level never seen before. Memorials that are deemed ‘problematic’ are vandalized or toppled (e.g., “Confederate and Columbus Statues Toppled by US Protesters,” 2020; Hovland, 2020), while discussions about the lack of inclusion of marginalized groups in the memorial landscape are negotiated publicly in prolific papers as well as by private citizens on social media platforms (e.g., Bellafante, 2019). It is clear that *certain* memorials are by no means invisible. Furthermore, and crucial in the context of this project: if memorials are invisible, then why do millions of people travel to the nation’s capital to see them every year? Depending on the source, the National Mall, where the nation’s most important memorials stand, receives between 25 and 32 million visitors per year (National Park Service, 2020; National Park Service & U.S. Department of the Interior, n. d.).

¹² Benton-Short (2006) claims that it was in 1936 while Savage (2009) states it was in 1926.

While memorials can have a “stumble upon” character and be encountered by locals or visitors by chance, in the case of Washington, DC, we cannot think of memorials as separate from tourism: they are—together with museums—the largest draw for tourists to the nation’s capital. In their analysis of thirteen websites related to tourism in Washington, DC, Huang and Lee found six themes in the destination image of the capital. Among them is the portrayal of DC “as a place of history” (2009, p. 364). The connection of tourism and cultural sites is not a new one. Historians have traced this type of human behavior back to the time of Ramses II in the Nineteenth Dynasty in ancient Egypt (1303 BC–1213 BC). At this time, pyramids were traditionally “loci of religious participatory activity conducted only by elite, specialist priests” (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 49). Ramses II had colossal statues built outside of the pyramids so that ordinary people could also interact with what was within (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 49, citing Snape, 2007). Even in locations where the cult rituals had long ceased, the sites were turned into tourist destinations.

It has also long been a question why individuals travel to cultural sites and what value they attribute to their visits. “Memory places are destinations; they typically require visitors to travel to them. Thus is created a unique context for understanding the past, one that is rooted in touristic practices” (Dickinson et al., 2010, p. 26). This is particularly true in the United States, as Kammen writes: “Ever since the 1920s and ‘30s the history of American traditions and ‘heritage’ has been increasingly intertwined with entrepreneurial opportunities in general and tourism in particular—most of all from the 1950s onward” (1993, p. 13). In like vein, Bernhard Tschofen points out that one “‘banal but not self-evident’ feature of heritage turns the past into something visitable ...” (Macdonald, 2013, p. 18, citing Tschofen, 2007, p. 29). Memorials can therefore be understood not only as “visitable” but potentially even as sites of tourism. In this context, the National Mall is a special case where memorials are not only a big tourist attraction but also highly symbolic; even more so, than they are in any other city in the nation.

2.3.1 The Mall

The many people who visit the Mall every year to look at memorials are in fact doing more than enjoying public artwork, they are witnessing the nation’s public memory. “By the late 20th century, the National Mall had become the preferred location for the expression of national memory and national identity, a site of national commemoration for individuals as well as events in U.S. history”

(Benton-Short, 2006, p. 304). The Mall is therefore not only the touristic center of the capital but also the nation's "monumental core" (Savage, 2009, p. 172). As cultural theorist Lauren Berlant wrote: "When Americans make the pilgrimage to Washington they are trying to grasp the nation in its totality" (1997, p. 25). Berlant thus summarizes two central aspects of a visit to DC. First, it is akin to a pilgrimage, an aspect that will repeatedly appear when discussing the results of my field research. At a pilgrimage site, "communities of believers actually come together in the act of occupying a holy site, seeing a relic, reenacting a sacred event" (Savage, 2009, p. 4). Despite the grounds of DC not being sacred and memorials often not standing in a geographically significant location in relation to the person or event they memorialize, the narrative of a pilgrimage to DC is a strong one (see Berlant, 1997, p. 25; Bowman, 2010, p. 202; Rigney, 2016, pp. 69–70; Savage, 2009, p. 4; Schwartz, 2000, p. 9; Sturken, 2007, p. 128; Whelan, 2002, p. 509). Making a pilgrimage also implies a desire to experience something that results in a new and deeper understanding of the topic. The topic of the site of pilgrimage is the second point which Berlant succinctly mentions: the United States as a whole. Visitors do not simply travel to DC to explore the capital city, they do so to see the essence of their nation. This essence is condensed into museums, memorials, and other cultural artifacts. The desire to see these representations shows Americans' understanding that this city showcases "The United States of America." This reflects our understanding of democracy in which members of Congress represent their constituents; they are a representation of the people. However, it is also true in a more symbolic manner as DC's public art is a representation of America through its achievements and ideals. As John Cogbill, Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission under the Bush administration, said, the National Mall is "where we celebrate who we are and what we are" (Johnson, 2007).

The Reserve (see Fig. 2.4), which includes the Mall, the area around the Tidal Basin as well as the White House, is "an area that Congress determined is 'a completed work of civic art' ... where no new commemorative works may be constructed" (National Capital Planning Commission et al., 2012, p. 5). The memorials in this area therefore represent the canon of important individuals in the nation. A canon is the authoritative form of tradition: nothing can be added, removed, or changed; it represents the utmost binding character (J. Assmann, 2002, p. 103, my translation). This is the area of focus for this project, as it has the most symbolic power, even within an already symbolically charged city.

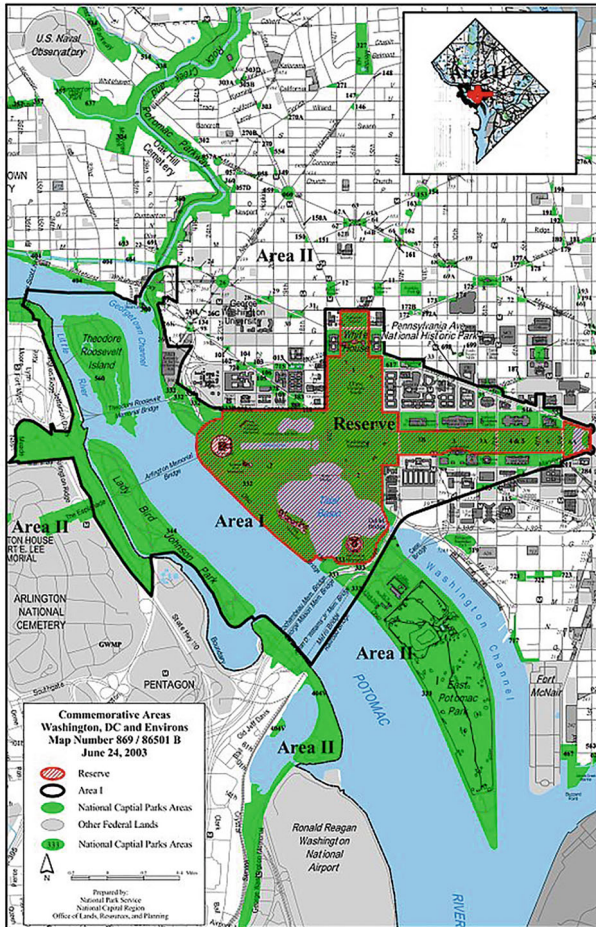


Fig. 2.4 The Reserve in Washington, DC. (Note. Map source: Commemorative Areas of Washington, DC, and its Environs (National Park Service, (2003), printed with permission)

The symbolism of the space already begins with its size: in parallel to the masses of land made available in the United States, the Mall is a large stretch of land, spanning about 3.7 kilometers East to West, which takes about 45 minutes to walk. While trees line the edges of the Mall, and the pathways are beautifully kept, walking the Mall in the summer months can be exhausting. Walking in the

blistering sun, the North/South circumference is only 0.6 kilometers (walkable in about 8 minutes). All this is to say that the Mall is a park of American proportions. It consists of vast empty spaces, flanked by major monuments, government buildings and museums. It exudes the magnitude of a place that is important. In the construction of the National Mall, the central part of L'Enfant's plan, "[t]he dreams of the Park Commission set in motion a process that displaced not only inconvenient histories but actual people, in the interest of ridding the Mall of what Burnham [, chairman of the Senate Park Commission,] called 'the ugly, the unsightly and even the commonplace'" (Savage, 2009, p. 171). The demolition of lower-class residential areas to "make room for nationally significant space" meant that former residents of these areas

experienced a double erasure, first of their neighborhoods and then of their history. Historical amnesia was not an accidental by-product of the monumental core. The process of forgetting what was once there became integral to its very creation, because unlike most other places this one was supposed to look eternal, as if it were the one and only landscape that deserved to exist there. (Savage, 2009, p. 172)

Once the Mall was built, memorials were erected upon it, a process which never fully stopped. In the following, I want to briefly sketch the process of building memorials on the National Mall and in DC more generally. I will focus only on the institutions involved and the basic processes to introduce the institutionalized actors who hold power in this process of creating and maintaining the nation's symbolic core.

2.3.2 Building Memorials—A Complex Process¹³

Building memorials in DC is a special case, not only because of their high symbolic value but also because of the manifold functions of the location: DC is both a city, a district, and the home of the national government. In practice, this means that land in DC is owned by different institutions. While there is no need to go into detail about the different types of land and the processes for building upon them, I want to briefly elaborate on the process of building on National Park Service (NPS) and General Services Administration (GSA) land because it has implications for the topic under study, particularly once we start looking at distributions of power in telling national narratives. In 2018, 24.7% of the district's

¹³ Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains additional content which can be accessed through the following link — Appendix 5.

acreage were federal land (Vincent et al., 2020). This includes the National Mall as well as many parks and squares throughout the city, which fall under National Park Service jurisdiction (National Park Service, 2013). The National Park Service is “a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior” and led by a director nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate (*What We Do*, n. d.). It is a government agency which is entrusted to preserve the National Park System. While the NPS is therefore the agency responsible for the land upon which memorials are built in DC, it is not the only agency involved in the process of building memorials.

Before 1910, “Congress appointed temporary commissions, primarily composed of laypersons, to oversee the development of new monuments and memorials” (National Capital Planning Commission et al., 2012, p. 4). This setup made it so that there was no overarching plan for the capital city in terms of its memorial landscape:

Until 1910, no federal agency or board reviewed monument proposals. For the most part, public monuments were built not by the federal government but by relatively small, politically connected interest groups—veterans associations, ethnic organizations, party elites. These groups were much more interested in putting their own mark on a site than in creating a spatial ensemble. (Savage, 2009, p. 15)

The lack of (aesthetic) coherence within the Mall was then also one of the reasons why in 1986, The Commemorative Works Act (CWA) was passed, formalizing the process for the review of proposed commemoration in DC.

In the following, I briefly describe the process of establishing a memorial in DC to show the relevant institutions involved and the hurdles encountered. I refer to a document by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) which summarizes the 24 steps for establishing a memorial in the capital but only mention the most crucial steps.¹⁴ The process of creating a new memorial always begins with a sponsor. This can be any entity, but it helps, particularly for later fundraising, if it is an established organization. The sponsor seeks assistance from the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) staff to review the requirements for the proposed memorial before speaking to a Senator or Representative.¹⁵ At this step, the sponsor has to convince a member of

¹⁴ The full document can be found in Appendix 5 of this book.

¹⁵ The function of the NCMAC is “to advise the Secretary of the Interior and the Administrator, General Services Administration, on policy and procedures for establishment of, and proposals to establish, commemorative works in the District of Columbia and its environs.

Congress to draft and introduce a bill to authorize the establishment of the memorial (National Capital Planning Commission, n. d., p. 167). The Congressperson or Senator introduces the bill, which names the memorial and designates the sponsor as the entity responsible for its erection at no cost to the federal government. NCMAC then considers the proposed legislation, making sure it adheres to the CWA. The authorizing subcommittees in the House and Senate then solicit views of NCMAC and can hold hearings as well as take action on the bill before they send it to the full House and Senate for a vote. If Congress passes the bill, the president signs it into law. The sponsor then works with NCMAC to, among other tasks, identify potential sites. Once the NPS approves a site, it must also be approved by the NCPC and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). At this stage, the design process begins and the NCPC, CFA, and State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) must approve the final design. Once the memorial is built, it is dedicated and transferred to the NPS or GSA for management and maintenance. Throughout this grueling process, the NPS plays an important guiding role. As memorials program manager at the NPS, Sophia Kelley, tells me:

I like to describe my role as kind of like a memorial concierge. So, once ... the memorial sponsor gets authorized by Congress, I help them go through the process to build their memorial. So, I help them organize the reviews by the commissions, and to get their stuff reviewed by our office and the Park, I help them get their permits and construction permits, and then we do like a financial certification. So, kind of like just walking them through the process. (21 October 2021, commented walk)

This abbreviated and yet extensive elaboration on the process of erecting a memorial should illustrate not only how difficult it is to get a memorial built in DC, but also stress the important role of institutional actors. The Memorial Trends & Practice Report, by the NCPC, NPS and CFA, claims that the current process of building memorials “encourages pluralistic, ‘bottom up’ initiatives” (National Capital Planning Commission et al., 2012, p. 7). However, looking at the many steps required to build a memorial and the heavy burden on the sponsor, it is clear that not just anybody can propose a memorial. And, further, a proposal will have an even harder time being realized if it is controversial because so many different entities must agree, particularly Congress which is made up of politicians. The report further states that there is no “incentive to authorize memorials to new or

... The Commission examines memorial proposals for conformance to the Commemorative Works Act, receives public comment, makes recommendations to the Secretary and the Administrator and to Members and Committees of Congress, and serves as a source of information for persons seeking to establish memorials in Washington, DC, and its environs” (*National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC)*, n. d.).

under-represented subjects” (National Capital Planning Commission et al., 2012, p. 7). This is despite the same report publishing an analysis over the preceding 50 years, showing “some important gaps in our commemorative landscape” including the fact that only about 6% of the memorials under study featured women (National Capital Planning Commission et al., 2012, p. 8). Therefore, the process of building memorials in DC is a highly institutionalized one in which established (political) institutions are in positions of power and this process results in a fairly homogenous memorial landscape as it represents the hegemonic narrative of national public memory. Having elaborated on the meaning and function of public memory, I now want to briefly elaborate on the resulting memorial landscape in DC, which represents the country’s center for the hegemonic narrative of national public memory.

2.3.3 The Whiteness of DC

Washington, DC is a white space. The symbolic center of the city is quite literally *white* as its main buildings are made of white stone, the most famous structure even called just that: the *White House*. As Marita Sturken writes: “Virtually all of the national memorials and monuments in Washington are made of white stone and designed to be visible from a distance,” stressing the dominance of the visual in this city (1997, p. 46).¹⁶ DC, however, is also a white space metaphorically speaking. It is the home of the most powerful institutions in the country, all of which are governed by a majority of White men.¹⁷ It is also a white space in that the individuals honored here are overwhelmingly White men (see Lefrak, 2020). This is not unique to DC and as early as in 2016, historian Barry Schwartz wrote about the function of memorials: “Monuments, including obelisks, antique temples, and other memorial structures, are designed to elevate the public imagination by dramatic reference to grand events and their *men*” (pp. 11–12, my emphasis).¹⁸ DC’s memorial landscape not only shows an emphasis on heroic

¹⁶ Sturken’s (1997) book is dedicated to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, made of black granite, which presents a stark contrast to these white memorials and one of the very few exceptions to this day.

¹⁷ Five out of nine supreme court justices and 206 out of 535 Congressmen are men (*Current Numbers*, n. d.). Furthermore, 77% of Congress is white, compared to 60% in the total population (Schaeffer, 2021).

¹⁸ See, for example the discussions in 2019 concerning the first addition of a historical female figure to New York City’s Central Park in the form of a memorial to feminist activists. The memorial was originally supposed to represent just two white feminists (Bellafante, 2019).

men, but heroic White men. While members of the military, who fought in the many wars that are commemorated in the city, are often non-White individuals, the individual people honored here are mostly White men. This is in part owed to the fact that many memorials commemorate deceased former presidents: to this day all White men. However, this imbalance is not exclusively due to a mere lack of available presidents, as other individuals are also honored here. Amongst them are historical figures with little to no ties to DC, who were nevertheless explicitly selected to be honored here. This includes Albert Einstein or Dante, and countless generals (Fogle, 2021a). While this memorial space is overwhelmingly white, the city's population is not, neither historically nor currently. According to the U.S. census bureau, in July 2021 (the most recent numbers at the time of writing), DC's population consisted of 46% who identified as "White alone" and 46% who identified as "Black or African American alone" (*Quick Facts: District of Columbia*, 2021). This makes the dominance of memorials to White (male) heroes across the city even more striking: a representation that is neither reflective of the city itself nor of the United States as a whole. This is a discussion that has increased in recent years and reached the public realm (globally) in the summer of 2020 when the Black Lives Matter movement sparked the conversation by defacing and tearing down memorials to slave owners and other problematic and/or racist figures (Grovier, 2020). Often, the interactions with statues were part of a protest, a form of publicly voicing one's disagreement with which DC is very familiar.

2.3.4 Protest in DC

DC is not only the place where decisions—affecting the entire nation—are made, it is also where the nation comes together to voice their opinions in front of the decision makers and demand change in the form of protest. Sometimes called "America's Front Yard" (*March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, n. d.), protest marches in DC often pass by important government buildings and frequently end at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial (Fogle, 2021a, para. 23). Amongst these marches is the world-famous 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which is listed as the number one protest on DC's tourism website in a list called "The nation's capital has hosted some of the most influential

After public outcries and ensuing media coverage, the monument was dedicated in 2020 and now includes Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton as well as Sojourner Truth (McGreevy, 2020).

protests in the country's history" (*The Nation's Capital Has Hosted Some of the Most Influential Protests in the Country's History*, n. d.). The 1960s and 70s were an era of social protest movements. Paul, scholar of American myths, writes of this time: "The dominant version of American beginnings, which had been privileging certain groups while marginalizing or entirely leaving out others, was no longer accepted as representative of *the* American experience" (2014, pp. 20–21).

On August 28, 1963, the March on Washington attracted a crowd of an estimated 250,000 people to the National Mall. Its purpose was to "protest racial discrimination and to show support for major civil rights legislation that was pending in Congress" and it was led by civil rights leaders from different groups (Brittanica, 2021). The march had originally been devised by Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin (*The historical legacy of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.*, n. d.), the former having had twice proposed large-scale marches in DC which were both cancelled when their pressure alone moved Presidents Roosevelt and Truman respectively to sign executive orders (*March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, n. d.; Eig, 2023, p. 47). However, this time around, it became clear that a march was necessary. Leaders of the five major civil rights groups joined in sponsoring the march: Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Whitney Young of the National Urban League (NUL), Martin Luther King Junior of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), James Farmer of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Others who were also involved in the planning of the march were Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers, Joachim Prinz of the American Jewish Congress, Eugene Carson Blake of the Commission on Religion and Race of the National Council of Churches, and Mathew Ahmann of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice. According to the National Park Service, Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women also participated in the planning but operated behind the scenes in this male dominated leadership group (*March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, n. d.).

Bayard Rustin, one of King's closest advisers at the time (Eig, 2023, p. 31), was the leader of the march (Carbado & Weise, 2004, p. 1133). Rustin is one of the figures whose impact on the movement has long been ignored or even negated, due to his previous membership of the Young Communist League (Eig, 2023, p. 166), and his homosexuality, which he lived "as openly and honestly as a gay man could at that time" (Eig, 2023, p. 167). Knowing that his reputation could damage the Montgomery bus boycott movement, Rustin began staying "out of sight" but kept working in the movement, including ghost-writing magazine articles for King (Eig, 2023, p. 167). In 1960, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (a Black congressman from New York) threatened that he "would publicly allege

that King and Rustin were lovers” (Eig, 2023, p. 230). Because Rustin feared that the allegation would damage King’s reputation, he resigned from the SCLC, disappointed that King accepted his resignation (Eig, 2023, p. 230). However, as Daniel Levine puts it, “[t]hroughout the Civil Rights Movement, Bayard Rustin was always there” (1999, p. 3). Indeed, after his resignation, “from the backrooms of the movement . . . , Rustin developed the blueprint for the 1963 March on Washington” (Carbado & Weise, 2004, p. 1140). He was, then, not only a crucial part of organizing the March on Washington, but he was an important member of the Civil Rights Movement who has not been included in its grand narrative (Carbado & Weise, 2004, p. 1137–1138). While there appear to be some changes in acknowledging and celebrating more members of the movement and Rustin in particular (see, for example the 2023 Netflix movie “Rustin”), John D’Emilio’s 2003 statement still rings true two decades later: Rustin’s “enormous contributions to American life . . . have been covered over, his name mostly forgotten, his contribution to a world worth living in largely obscured” (p. 1).

The march was organized in less than three months and relied on a staff of over 200 civil rights activists and organizers to publicize the march, organize marchers, raise money, etc. (*March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, n. d.). The march ended at the Lincoln Memorial which had symbolic power: Lincoln was, starting in the 1910s, widely regarded “a natural ‘labor leader’ who recognized not only the legitimacy of property but also the rights of the working man” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 131). It was therefore fitting that the March for Jobs and Freedom culminate at his memorial, suggesting an alliance between President Lincoln and the marchers’ demands. Speakers included John Lewis, Whitney Young and Joachim Prinz. The day also included musical performances by Marian Anderson and Mahalia Jackson, and prayer lead by Rabbi Uri Miller.¹⁹ However, the event retains its historical significance to this day not only from the magnitude of the march and its concomitant peaceful nature, but also from Martin Luther King Junior’s “I Have a Dream” speech. The widely televised event still rings clear in the ears of many today. Aided by Dr. King’s expertise as an orator, his speech not only transported an important message, but also was delivered in a manner suitable for TV and subsequent immortalization.

¹⁹ See the program in Fig. 2.5 for the full list of speakers and performers (*March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963: Lincoln Memorial Program, 1963*).

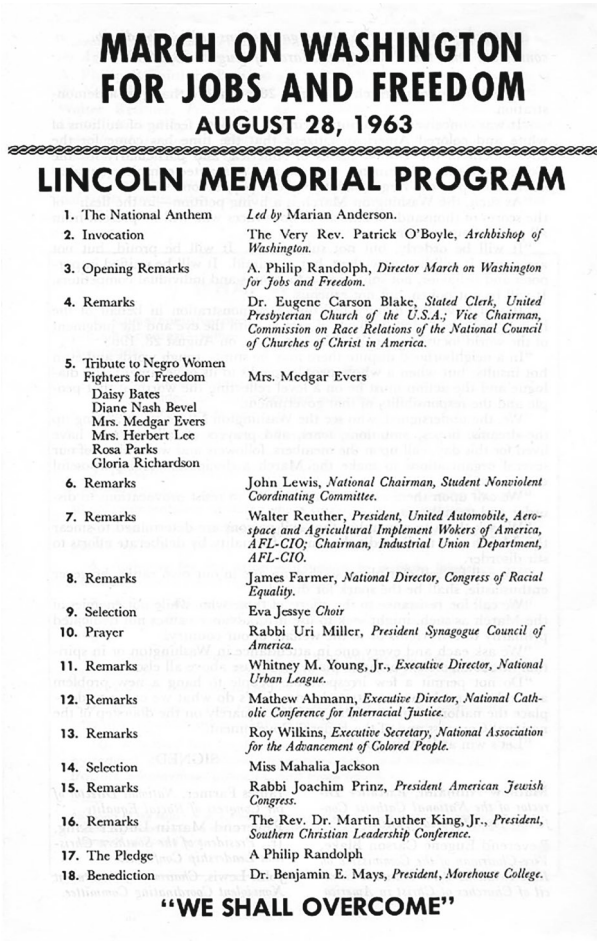


Fig. 2.5 Program for the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. (Note. Accessed through the National Archives and Records Administration)

The March on Washington is not only immortalized through its memorable media coverage and the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, but is also commemorated physically on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The march literally left a mark, albeit one that took 40 years to materialize. It took an additional

eight years for a memorial to the central figure of the march to be created on the edge of the National Mall: The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial. These two memorials not only present a physical mark of the impact of the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. King in the nation's capital, but they also are the only memorials honoring a member of a marginalized community on the Mall. Studying these sites and focusing on how visitors experience them should give us first insights into positive memorials to members of marginalized communities. This adds to the current literature on the United States' memorial landscape by including exceptional cases and focusing on the perspectives of the visitors, including how they interact with the memorials, potentially engaging with narratives. Before delving into the methods used to answer these questions, the following chapter introduces the two King memorials, elaborating on their meaning as well as their components.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





The Two King Memorials on the National Mall

3

Choosing my sites of study in Washington, DC, I decided to focus how the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s left a mark on the city. It has been commemorated in two strikingly different ways in the most symbolic space, the National Mall, through an inscription for the “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and through a stand-alone memorial to one of its most prolific leaders in the Martin Luther King Junior National Memorial (henceforth referred to as the MLK Memorial). As different as these memorials are, they both include more than just the structures themselves. In this chapter, I therefore elaborate on the different aspects of the two memorials to provide the context in which to understand visitors’ experiences and opinions.

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-48917-5_3.

3.1 The “I Have a Dream” Inscription at the Lincoln Memorial

Getting off the metro at Foggy Bottom, the July heat hits me in the face. The trek to the Lincoln Memorial is not pleasant. I could have taken another route, along the partly shaded Mall, but—according to my trusted maps app on my smartphone—this is the fastest way. I do not want to take one of the scooters lying on every street corner and I do not want to call a car. It is therefore my own fault that I am schlepping through the heat, but it also corresponds to the means of transportation most visitors here seem to choose: walking through the burning heat. I head South on 23rd Street, a non-ceremonial road, first passing housing for the George Washington University, and then large government buildings such as the U.S. Department of State (see Fig. 3.1). This is by no means a picturesque walk, but I know I am heading in the right direction: The Lincoln Memorial becomes visible well before I stand in front of it. Even only seeing one of its upper corners, I know what it is, because I have seen this structure hundreds of times before in photographs and movies (see Fig. 3.2).



Fig. 3.1 Unceremonious Road to Lincoln. (*Note.* ©Google Maps 2022, screenshot by the author)

Fig. 3.2 Approaching Lincoln. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



3.1.1 Looking for the Speech

Walking up to the memorial structure itself, I am engulfed by a mass of people. They move in two major directions. The less pursued one turns left, to overlook the Reflecting Pond and the Mall, with views to the Washington Monument and the Capitol. The majority of people, however, immediately turn right and start moving up the steps, joining visitors arriving from the South and East (see Fig. 3.3). Some are running up the steps, filming each other, seemingly recreating the final scene of the first Rocky movie which is famously set in Philadelphia, the stairs he climbs leading to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The two sites, while serving vastly different purposes do look similar. Rocky had to run up 72 steps while, when starting at the Plaza level, only 58 steps must be climbed to arrive at Lincoln sitting in the chamber at the top. After the first, short, flight of stairs, there is an option to go into the bottom of the structure, where bathrooms are located and where one can take an elevator to the chamber. Outside, several

shorter flights of stairs lead up the memorial, with larger platforms in between. Once the memorial structure itself begins, there are two flights of stairs, separated by one landing. On this landing, after 23 more steps, I start looking at the floor because I know that this is where one of my study sites is located. In the exact spot in which King stood while delivering his “I Have a Dream” speech, I am looking to find a commemoration.



Fig. 3.3 Engulfed by a Mass of People. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

Somehow, I have the word “plaque” in my mind, and I am looking for something brass or golden.¹ This is part of the reason why it is hard to find at first: the inscription commemorating Dr. King’s speech is directly carved into the marble, hardly visible: the contrasting color of the letters does not help much in making them more noticeable.



Fig. 3.4 Pouring Water on the Marker. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

During my many visits here, I will often see people pour water over the inscription: because the water collects in the crevices of the engraving, making it more easily visible and legible (see Figs. 3.4 and 3.5). The other reason, why it is hard to find, is that people are walking over it, sometimes absentmindedly standing on it while looking up at the memorial or out on the Mall. During my many visits to the site thereafter, I will repeatedly observe people stopping, looking at the engraving and taking pictures, pointing it out to members of their parties.

¹ On the website of the NCPD, titled “Memorials in Washington DC” the commemoration is called: “I Have a Dream Speech Marker/Plaque.” See: <https://www.ncpc.gov/memorials/detail/49/>

Fig. 3.5 Increased Visibility Through Water (?). (Note. Photograph by the author)

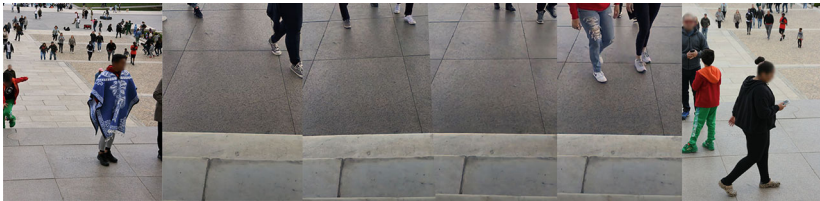


Fig. 3.6 Missing the Marker. (Note. Photograph by the author)

But I will also continue to see people walking over it and, significantly, walking past it, not only ignoring the physical inscription but missing the historically significant location (see Fig. 3.6). They do not turn around, seeing what Dr. King was seeing (shown in Fig. 3.7) when he stood in this exact location, giving one of the most famous speeches in modern history. The marker is only there for

people who look for it, or for people who happen upon it. It is quiet and discreet; it does not distract from the larger structure of the Lincoln Memorial.

Fig. 3.7 The Sun Rising Over the National Mall.
(Note. Photograph by the author)



3.1.2 President Lincoln

To understand visitor experiences of the “I Have a Dream” inscription, we must understand the context in which it is placed. I therefore want to briefly elaborate on the man for whom the larger structure was built. Abraham Lincoln was the United States’ 16th president from 1861 until his assassination in 1865. Often named America’s favorite president (M. Smith, 2021), he is also often considered America’s “best” president (*Presidential Historians Survey 2021*, 2021).² Lincoln, however, had not been universally popular during his time as president. In fact,

² A C-SPAN survey of 142 historians, professors and “other professional observers of the presidency” shows that in 2021, just as in all previous years (2017, 2009, 2000), president Lincoln was chosen the “best” amongst all the presidents (*Presidential Historians Survey 2021*, 2021).

it took his assassination to transform him “from a controversial president into an emblem of Northern society” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 23).

Today, President Lincoln is mostly celebrated as the “freer of slaves.” However, as memory scholar Barry Schwartz writes in his book *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*: “Abraham Lincoln was no civil rights champion. He was a Whig who believed in emancipation followed by colonization (deportation) of all former slaves and free blacks” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 2). Furthermore, Lincoln was explicit about his hesitations concerning true equality between the races:

Debating Stephen Douglas during the 1858 Illinois senatorial campaign, Lincoln’s greatest fear was that his opposition to slavery’s extension might be mistaken for a radical view favoring racial equality. He explained: “I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races ... and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality” (Lincoln 1953–55, 3: 145–146). (Schwartz, 2000, p. 3)

Lincoln therefore could not be seen by his contemporaries as an advocate for civil rights. He had, however, understood that “fighting a war for freedom was ideologically more satisfying than fighting simply to preserve a morally neutral Union. To save the Union, it was necessary to find rationales for the war other than ‘to save the Union’” (Loewen, 2018, p. 186). His insistence that the Civil War’s main purpose was to end slavery was denounced by many and Lincoln’s popularity sunk (Loewen, 2018, p. 187). It was only after his assassination that, “[f]or many months ..., no publisher would have dared to print harsh opinions of the president, even though many people continued to hold them” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 43). After a while, his public reputation sank again and, for decades, he was revered less and less (Schwartz, 2000, p. 295).

Lincoln’s memory was reframed again after World War I: “By the end of the Great War, Lincoln had become part of the substance and continuity of the American soul. Possessing in common his ‘rich legacy of memories,’ America could retain its identity while its political structures re-formed” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 296). Lincoln’s personification of “statism” became a useful tool at this time to convey a level of continuity and stability in the nation (Schwartz, 2000, p. 296). By the time of the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial, his memory was reinterpreted as the uniter of the North and South:

The Lincoln Memorial, Taft said [at the dedication,] marked the final restoration of 'brotherly love' between North and South (*New York Age*, June 10, 1922, 2). However, nothing was said about brotherly love between blacks and whites. The U.S. Congress, with the full support of its Southern members, had built the Lincoln Memorial to celebrate regional, not racial, reconciliation. (Schwartz, 2000, p. 5)

The Lincoln Memorial is therefore a structure built for a president whose memory has been reinterpreted through the ages. The framing of his memory represents a contemporary selection of narratives which create the public memory of a president who initiated the process of reaching equality between ethnic groups in the nation. Lincoln's contemporary public memory as the freer of enslaved people can be seen in the use of his memorial:

As one of the most recognized buildings in the world, the Lincoln Memorial has become a symbol of the United States of America, a backdrop for national celebrations and the nation's pre-eminent stage for the rallies and demonstration, particularly those for civil rights. (National Park Service, n. d.-a)

3.1.3 The Memorial

The memorial, mostly made of marble, was dedicated in 1922. Architect Henry Bacon modeled it after the Pantheon in Athens, Greece, because "Bacon felt that a memorial dedicated to a man who defended democracy should echo the birthplace of democracy" (National Park Service, n. d.-b). In its white glory, it rises about 30 meters into the sky at the Western edge of the National Mall (Fig. 3.8). The memorial's location on the Mall was not of historical importance at the time of its construction. In fact, Congressman Joe Cannon is said to have exclaimed: "So long as I live, I'll never let a memorial to Abraham Lincoln be erected in that goddammed swamp" (Mandel, 2008, para. 8). Its location did, however, become symbolically charged through its construction and through the erection of other memorials on the Mall. Today, the memorial stands in one line with the World War II memorial, the most defining event in the 20th century and the Washington Monument, representing the defining ideologies of the 18th century (Benton-Short, 2006, p. 299). The Lincoln Memorial, then, represents the defining symbolic event of the 19th century (Benton-Short, 2006, p. 299). The location of the memorial, therefore, was not a naturally meaningful one but rather one that was imbued with meaning through the creation of the memorial and its neighboring structures.

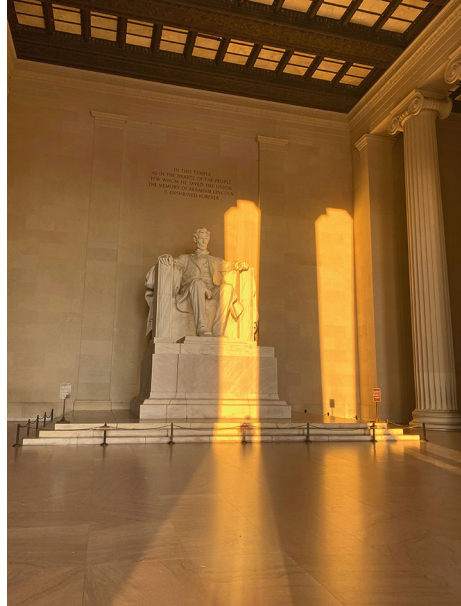


Fig. 3.8 The Lincoln Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

Its roof is supported, on the outermost layer, by 36 fluted Doric columns which represent the 36 States in the Union at the time of Lincoln's passing (National Park Service, n. d.-b). At the top of the memorial, in the central chamber, stands the 5.8-meter-tall statue of Lincoln (see Fig. 3.9). Above his head is engraved: "In this temple/ as in the hearts of the people/ for whom he saved the union/the memory of Abraham Lincoln/ is enshrined forever." The South Chamber houses a section of the Gettysburg Address which was delivered in 1863. As the National Park Service writes on the Memorial's website: "This address was selected for its familiarity to many, but also because it displayed the president's strength and determination to see a successful conclusion to the American Civil War" (National Park Service, n. d.-e). The North Chamber shows Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address from 1865 which was chosen because

[t]his speech, delivered just one month before the conclusion of the Civil War, creates the policy for reuniting the divided states. The reelected president firmly believed that the northern states should welcome their southern sisters and brothers back into the Union with open arms. (National Park Service, n. d.-e)

Fig. 3.9 President Lincoln in his Chamber. (*Note.* Photograph by the author, 22 October 2021)



The selection of both quotes was therefore legitimized by their symbolic power representing the end of the Civil War and, particularly, the reconciliation of North and South.

3.1.4 The Lincoln Memorial and the Civil Rights Movement

The Lincoln Memorial was originally not understood as a testament to President Lincoln, “the great emancipator,” but much rather a celebration of Lincoln, the arbiter of regional reconciliation (visible in the full support of Southern Congress members in the building of the memorial) (Schwartz, 2000, p. 5). However, many protests for civil rights have occurred around or culminated at the memorial (the memorial therefore is often used in its function of the assembly public (see Gerhards & Neidhardt, 1991)). The association of the Civil Rights Movement with Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation, then, served a specific purpose. Associating the Civil Rights Movement with established “history” could help legitimize the movement: The claim was that these were not new ideals

being demanded but they were framed as being a continuation of what Lincoln, by this time a commonly celebrated president, had started.

Representative Fred Schwengel of Iowa addressed the Lincoln Memorial University graduating class on June 3, 1963, two months after Martin Luther King Jr. announced the Children's March on Birmingham, Alabama. President John Kennedy supported the marchers' goals, but the first president to realize that segregation was wrong, Schwengel told his Tennessee audience, had been Abraham Lincoln, whose spirit presided over the occasion: "The authoritative position of the government of the United States is the position this Nation inherited from the restatement you left us of the meaning of free government; that is government of the people, by the people, for the people—as originally stated by the Founding Fathers. Not some people—all people It began from the hour you issued the Proclamation of Emancipation" (Schwengel 1963, 10173). The civil rights crisis, as Schwengel describes it, appears as part of a narrative beginning with the American Revolution, running through the Civil War, and moving toward a climax in 1963. (Schwartz, 2000, p. 293)

By connecting the Civil Rights Movement to President Lincoln, civil rights are framed as an inherent part of the American creed, one that can therefore no longer be denied. However, as Schwartz writes:

King knew that the Great Emancipator had not been the Great Integrator; that Lincoln, influenced by his ideal, Henry Clay, supposed that the Declaration of Independence entitled blacks to the protection of life and property, but not to the right to vote, petition, or serve on juries—and certainly not to social and cultural equality. (2000, p. 2)

Associating the movement with Lincoln was nevertheless deemed helpful because it framed the demands as inherently American and having a deep historical tradition which began with the Emancipation Proclamation.

The protests at the memorial also symbolize an insertion of marginalized communities into the nation's public memory, symbolized by the ultimate American Memorial. This began with a 1939 concert by world renowned African American contralto Marian Anderson, which was supposed to be held at Constitution Hall—the capital's largest and finest concert hall—but was cancelled by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the organization which had built the hall (T. Lewis, 2015). Eventually, Anderson played to a crowd of 75,000 from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Founder of the National Council of Negro Women, Mary McLeod Bethune said of the event: "Through the Marian Anderson protest concert, we made our triumphant entry into the democratic spirit of American life" (T. Lewis, 2015, p. xx). The corporeal insertion of civil rights movements at the

Lincoln Memorial therefore helped legitimize the movements by associating them with America’s (at the time) favorite president and it also served to symbolically insert marginalized groups into the nation’s public memory.

3.1.5 The Bookstore

The memorial today includes a bookstore which provides glimpses into the site’s history. Walking past Lincoln’s second inaugural address, one can find a narrow door leading into a cramped, windowless space, covered in dark wood, presenting merchandise on wall-to-wall shelves, and exhibiting posters on sale below the ceiling (see Fig. 3.10). When looking around the bookstore, Lincoln looks down on the visitor from almost every shelf. The shop includes little trinkets such as magnets and keychains, but also many books. These include several volumes on Mary Lincoln and DC. When looking for books including Martin Luther King Junior—because he is honored on the steps of this memorial—or the March on Washington—because it culminated at this site—I first notice another member of the African American community: President Barack Obama. He appears, for example, on a children’s book titled *Who is Barack Obama?* next to which its pendant *Who is Michelle Obama?* can be found. It is unclear if Obama’s prominence here has more to do with the Lincoln Memorial’s unique status as the most visited memorial on the Mall or with Obama’s African American heritage which is implicitly connected to President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. The former might be reflected in the fact that there is also a section on “War Memorials” which signals that visitors to the Lincoln Memorial might not visit all other memorials and buy their souvenirs in one convenient, central location. The latter would be supported by the fact that there is a significant focus on the end of the Civil War in this bookshop and the election of the first black president of the United States is often (incorrectly) heralded as the final step in the fight for racial equality (see Love & Tosolt, 2010).

In a section filled with different books from a series titled “Great speeches,” Obama again appears on a cover of the volume “Great Speeches by African Americans.” It is in this section where I first see Martin Luther King Jr.: on the cover of a booklet of the MLK Memorial (see the bottom of the first photograph in Fig. 3.11).

Fig. 3.10 The Lincoln Bookstore. (Note. Photograph by the author)



Fig. 3.11 Dr. King in the Lincoln Bookstore. (Note. Photographs by the author, postcard by Impact Photographs)

I also find one postcard which references the “I Have a Dream” speech prominently on its front image (see the last image in Fig. 3.11). Lastly, there is one poster for sale, which is titled “Transformation” with a subtitle “Civil Rights Leader” and includes the images of Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama, and Dr.

King (see the second photograph in Fig. 3.11). It also includes historical photographs including Michelle Obama standing next to her husband being sworn in as president. This poster is in fact a perfect representation of the narrative elaborated on in previous chapters: that the Civil Rights Movement has come to fruition with the first black president. The bookstore, therefore, focuses largely on Lincoln but also includes material for other DC memorials as well as a few resources about the Civil Rights Movement, mainly framing it as a continuation of Lincoln’s legacy. Dr. King and his speech serve as one, minor (?), part of that process.

3.1.5.1 The Lincoln Memorial Pamphlet³

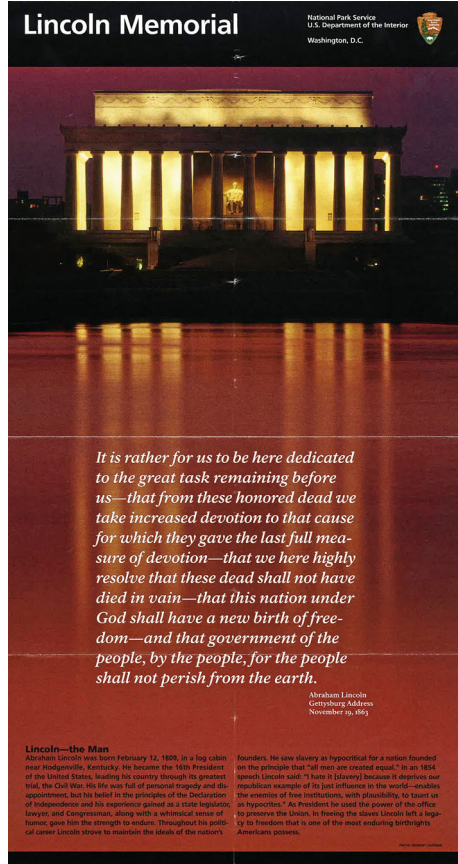
For all the major memorials, the National Park Service publishes a pamphlet, replete with color printed images and text, to be found at the information stands at the respective memorials, which, at the Lincoln Memorial, is the bookstore. The Lincoln Memorial pamphlet consists of one large page, double sided, folded into four parts.⁴ It includes short chapters on “Lincoln—the Man,” “Lincoln—the President,” “Building the Memorial,” and “Visiting the Memorial.” In addition to information about how to access the memorial, there is also an image and caption including two individuals who are not Lincoln: Daniel Chester French, the sculptor, and architect Henry Bacon. However, there is one striking absence in this pamphlet: neither Martin Luther King, Jr. nor the March on Washington are mentioned.

At the end of the Lincoln pamphlet, there is a small indication for where to find more information. A postal address is provided, as well as the website www.nps.gov/linc where different content about the memorial is provided.

³ Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains supplementary content which can be accessed through the following link — Appendix 4.

⁴ See Fig. 3.12 for the first page of the pamphlet. A full scan of the pamphlet can be found in Appendix 4.1

Fig. 3.12 Lincoln Memorial Pamphlet. (*Note.* Author scan of the pamphlet published by the National Park Service (2015))



3.1.5.2 The Lincoln Memorial Website

This website is also where I look for information about the “I Have a Dream” speech as the marker does not have its own website. Under the tab “Learn About the Park/ History & Culture/ People,” Dr. King is listed along with six other individuals. Here, we can read:

The civil rights leader who sought to improve race relations and guarantee for every American those fundamental rights for which Lincoln had fought and that had been denied for far too long. His devotion to equality and human rights brought King to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963 for the March on Washington for

Jobs and Freedom during which he delivered one of the more memorable and moving speeches in American history. (National Park Service, n. d.-d)

This, at the time of writing, is all the information provided to the reader regarding Dr. King or the March on Washington. While therefore locating Dr. King at the Lincoln Memorial in history, the website does not inform the (potential) visitor that there is a marker in the exact position where the reverend stood during his speech. The subtab “Features of the Lincoln memorial” also does not include a mention of the “I Have a Dream” inscription (National Park Service, n. d.-b). This means that while the historical event is associated with the physical structure, the visitor’s on-site experience is not prepared or enriched by locating the speech within the physical space of the memorial so that it can be experienced there.

As this chapter illustrated, the marker for King’s speech is only one small aspect of a larger structure. It is secondary to the figure of Lincoln which can be seen in the discreetness of the marker as well as a lack of references in the supplementary materials. Because the speech cannot be visited without also visiting the Lincoln Memorial, in the following, visitors will often make references to the Lincoln Memorial when asked about their experiences of the “I Have a Dream” marker. One cannot experience the marker without experiencing the larger structure and it is therefore part of that experience. However, there exists an entirely different memorial to King in DC where he is the sole focus: The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial.

3.2 The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial

“A Dream Fulfilled” celebrated a headline in *The New York Times* on August 22nd, 2011, when the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial was opened (Tavernise, 2011). The memorial was a long time in the making. The site’s sponsor, responsible for the project, was approved by Congress in 1996 (N. King, n. d.). The geographical site had been approved in 1999 (National Parks Service, 2005, p. 2), the winning design selected in 2000 (*Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial: Environmental Assessment*, 2009, p. 5), and the sculptor in 2007 (N. King, n. d.). 15 years after the process was initiated, the dedication ceremony was scheduled for Sunday, August 28th, 2011, coinciding with the 48th anniversary of the March on Washington. However, due to Hurricane Irene, the actual ceremony was postponed until October 16th that year (N. King, n. d.). The median time interval between authorization and dedication for memorials in DC is five years (National Capital Planning Commission et al., 2012, p. 4), so not only did

it take a long time for King to receive a national memorial—43 years after his assassination—it also took comparatively long time to be built.

Fig. 3.13 Approaching the MLK Memorial From the Lincoln Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



It also takes me a moment to find the site when I first visit. I have to repeatedly check my digital map to ensure I have not gotten lost. The memorial is not located in the central area of the National Mall and when I walk there from the Lincoln Memorial, I am struck by the very ordinary and loud street I once again must follow (see Fig. 3.13). While the sidewalk is well-maintained and removed from the road, the cars speed past me at 25mph (40 km/h), I cannot see a memorial anywhere and the National Mall to my left is obstructed by tall trees. As I walk away from the grounds of the Lincoln Memorial and past a concession stand, I see a large piece of green across the street: what turns out to be baseball fields and a park. Checking my map again, I see I am on the right track. After a while, I discover that on the upcoming corner—across the two three-lane streets and the green median—there is *something*. As I'm waiting at the red light to cross

Fig. 3.14 The Entrance to the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



the street, I wonder if I've accidentally walked toward the back entrance because it does not really look like a memorial from here. But as I make my way into the memorial site, through two large pieces of carved marble, meant to look like a mountain from which a piece is cut to provide an entry, I am adhering to the architect's intention: this is how visitors are supposed to enter the site (see Fig. 3.14).

Fig. 3.15 A First Glimpse of the Stone of Hope. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



Walking through the mountain, I see another large stone structure standing in front of me at an angle (see Fig. 3.15). It is unclear what it is, but this is clearly its backside which looks like it was cut from the passage through which I just walked. As I circle around the block of granite to the other side, I stop on its Western edge and read the inscription: “Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope” (see Fig. 3.16). And then, as I turn toward the statue’s front, I see the likeness of Dr. King, standing with his arms crossed, holding a roll of paper in his left hand, his legs disappearing into the stone: unfinished (see Fig. 3.17).



Fig. 3.16 Approaching the Statue. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



Fig. 3.17 The Statue of Dr. King at the MLK Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

3.2.1 Martin Luther King, Jr.

It goes beyond the scope of this project to include an exhaustive discussion about Martin Luther King Junior's life, work, and legacy. There are several books that have already done this superbly (e.g., his autobiography (King, 1998), as well as books by Branch (1988) and Eig (2023)). Furthermore, this project is not necessarily concerned with Dr. King himself, but rather how he is memorialized and how visitors perceive his commemoration. In the following, I will therefore only give a short summary of those major events in Dr. King's life which are important to his commemoration in DC.

Born on January 15th, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, Michael King—later known as Martin Luther King, Jr.—(Eig, 2023, p. 23) was an assistant pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta and, later, pastor at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, holding BAs in sociology and in divinity from Morehouse college and a doctorate in systematic theology from Boston University which he graduated in 1955 (*Major King Events Chronology*, 2014). In 1955, after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white rider, King and others formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to oversee the bus boycotts (“Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA),” 2017). King was elected as its leader, an action which, he writes, caught him “unawares. It happened so quickly that I did not even have time to think it through. It is probable that if I had, I would have declined the nomination” (King, 1998, p. 56). He was then instrumental in organizing a car pool in the city, inspired and helped by his friend T.J. Jemison who had led a bus boycott in Baton Rouge, and ensured the boycotters could still get around (Branch, 1988, p. 145). The boycott ended in December 1956 after “the US Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of Montgomery city buses” (Kirk, 2004, p. 335). King was later named the chairman of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (King, 1998, p. 100). With the SCLC, he helped organize many marches and protests including the March to Montgomery during which marchers were violently attacked by the police on what was later called “Bloody Sunday” in a first broadcasting of the violence. King was also instrumental in organizing the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 and the ensuing passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

King might be most famous for his insistence on nonviolent protest, a tenet he supported even during the speech he gave in front of his home, after it was bombed one night in 1956 (*Major King Events Chronology*, 2014). However, while insisting on nonviolence, King was a staunch supporter of strategies to disrupt public life and insert black bodies into spaces where they were unwanted or

legally prohibited from being, such as sit-ins, in which he sometimes participated himself and called “more than a demand for service; it represented a demand for respect” (King, 1998, p. 139). He was jailed several times including at a sit-in in a department store, as well as for demanding service at a Whites-only restaurant or holding a prayer vigil (*Major King Events Chronology*, 2014).

Despite receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, his popularity was by no means universal during his lifetime. On the contrary, he was “one of the most brutally divisive figures in American history—attacked not only by segregationists in the South but also by his own government, by more militant Black activists, and by white northern liberals” (Eig, 2023, p. 4–5). Days before his death, a depressed King said “we do have a great public-relations setback where my image and leadership are concerned ... it will put many Negroes in the position of saying, ‘Well ... Martin Luther King is at the end of his rope’” (Eig, 2023, p. 544). He went so far as to say “the movement might not recover, ... ‘unless I do something now’” (Eig, 2023, p. 545). King suffered several attacks, including a stabbing to his chest with a seven-inch letter opener in 1958 (King, 1998, pp. 117–118). The disdain for his goals, however, was more wide-spread and structural. In 1963 U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy authorized the FBI to wiretap King’s home phone (*Major King Events Chronology*, 2014). King was shot and killed on April 4th, 1968, while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, where he had come to support the sanitation workers’ strike which had erupted into riots as King was arriving (Eig, 2023, Ch. 45).

3.2.1.1 King and the March on Washington

The primacy of King’s role in the March on Washington is not a singular incident. Indeed, the remembrance of the Civil Rights Movement, at times a fragmented movement, is largely associated with the reverend. It conforms to the United States’ tendency to value individual exceptionalism: “The story of a movement created by thousands of people and of a man who had been surveilled relentlessly by the FBI was rendered as a Horatio Alger story of personal scrappiness and American exceptionalism” (Theoharis, 2018, p. 9; see also Eyerman, 2016, p. 81). Something predicted by J. Edgar Hoover who is quoted to have said, when he received the news of King’s assassination “I hope the son of a bitch doesn’t die. ... If he does, they’ll make a martyr out of him” (Eig, 2023, p 551).

By focusing remembrance of the movement on King, the light it sheds around him is dimmed and other figures fighting alongside King do not receive the same level of commemoration, which is no unique occurrence in U.S. culture: the selection of aspects of history to “historiciz[e] an event often serves to depoliticize it and allows for the creation of at least the ‘illusion of consensus’” (Kammen, 1993,

quoted in Florini, 2016). This is often done by focusing on the least controversial individual or part of a movement. In the context of the commemoration of the Civil Rights Movement, this means that other movements are largely ignored:

One significant element of this process is the erasure or distortion of the activism of Black Power and Black Nationalist groups that happened concurrently with the Civil Rights Movement or after it asserted triumphs. Such groups are either erased completely, as with organizations like the Republic of New Afrika, or, as with the Black Panther Party, remembered as angry, violent ‘thugs’ rather than rational political actors. (Rhodes, 2007 cited in Florini, 2016, p. 117)

Celebrating one specific (part of the) movement therefore allows the dominant culture to celebrate the more digestible aspects while ignoring the contributions by other movements which do not correspond to contemporary values and ideals of the dominant culture:

Official celebrations limit the occasion to discourses about King’s nonviolence, patience, and moral character. Although such odes to King may be well-intentioned, they cover up his intransigence against racism, his opposition to the war in Vietnam, and his willingness to take direct, mass action against established institutions. To focus on King the man downplays the historic significance of the civil rights movement and obscures continuing race discrimination. (Artz & Murphy, 2000, p. 78)

Therefore, celebrating the Civil Rights Movement through a narrative focus on King allows the dominant narrative to frame the struggle as one of the past: the reverend is, after all, no longer around. “By painting the heroic Civil Rights Movement era as the final chapter in structural and institutional racism, the dominant history effectively relegates such racism to the past, neutralizing it as a contemporary political issue” (Florini, 2016, p. 117). The movement can narratively be concluded with King’s death.

3.2.2 Memorials to African American Activists in DC

Despite King’s preeminent role in the (re-)telling of the Civil Rights Movement, there is another African American activist who was honored in DC before him: in 1974, the Mary McLeod Bethune memorial was dedicated in Lincoln Park (see Fig. 3.18). Dr. Bethune—an educator and civil rights activist—was the first African American, and the first woman, to be honored on federal land in the

capital (Woodley, 2017).⁵ However, importantly, Lincoln Park is not part of DC’s monumental core. In fact, it is a 55-minute walk—or a 35-minute bus ride—from the Washington Monument (the geographical center of the Mall). The location is symbolically significant as I will show in the following, but it is geographically removed from the center of the monumental core of the city where the most important structures are placed. In fact, this project originally included the Bethune Memorial as a site of study. However, during my first field research I had to learn that virtually nobody visits the memorial (see Fig. 3.19). Lincoln Park is a popular destination for dog walkers and caretakers visiting the playground with their children. However, visitors to the capital’s memorials rarely find their way here. During my three-day stakeouts in the park, I did not find a single person who came to see the statue or who took a picture of it.

Fig. 3.18 The Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial in Lincoln Park: “Let Her Works Praise Her”. (Note. Photograph by the author)



⁵ In July 2022, Dr. Bethune was honored in the United States Capitol with a statue replacing the statue of a confederate general in the Statuary Hall where every state can place two statues and, since 2000, is able to replace statues. Bethune is the first African American woman who is represented in the Statuary Hall (Brockell, 2022).

Fig. 3.19 The Statue of Bethune Across Lincoln Park. (Note. Photograph by the author)



The memorial is therefore not placed in a geographical location that attributes value to it. Instead, it is placed there in symbolic conversation with another memorial: the Emancipation Memorial, built in 1876 (*Emancipation Memorial*, n.d.). This memorial shows Abraham Lincoln, cast in bronze, standing over an enslaved man kneeling to the president's feet, one hand still in shackles, in the process of being freed (see Fig. 3.20). The president holds a rolled-up document in his right hand—the Emancipation proclamation—and extends the other hand over the man. It is a gesture of generosity, symbolizing the freeing of the enslaved people by Abraham Lincoln.

Fig. 3.20 The Emancipation Memorial. (Note. Photograph by the author)



The intentions of the memorial were thoroughly positive. Funded by individual donors, the campaign for its financing had originally begun by freed enslaved individuals who raised \$18,000 for the memorial, and the keynote speech at its dedication was delivered by Frederick Douglass (*Emancipation Memorial*, n. d.). However, the memorial has since (and even during its creation) been the subject of much criticism. The inscription on the statue reads: “FREEDOM’S MEMORIAL; In Grateful Memory of; ABRAHAM LINCOLN ...” clearly honoring the president while removing agency from and not acknowledging the suffering of the African American man symbolizing all enslaved people or acknowledging that Lincoln was not the only and not even the staunchest supporter of emancipation. There has been some discussion about the level of activity ascribed to the kneeling man. Woodley writes:

The black figure’s fist is clenched; an alteration Ball made in response to the commissioners’ request that the black figure be more ‘representative’, in others words, less passive. One reading of the sculpture, therefore, is that the slave has broken his own chains, and so was responsible for his own freedom, rather than relying on the actions of Lincoln. (2017, p. 8)

However, she also acknowledges the deeply problematic placing of the figures and the dominant visual of a heroic Lincoln and a thankful formerly enslaved man.

Because of its problematic narrative, DC delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton introduced a bill to Congress in February 2021 to remove the memorial (Zapata, 2021) but was unsuccessful. When I talked to Sophia Kelly from the NPS about the statue and the attempts to remove it, she said: “We’ve definitely been talking about what we can do there. And there’s a legal question about legal authority: if Congress authorizes a memorial, does it take another congressional authorization to remove a memorial?” (21 October 2021). Her statement shows the complexity of proposals to update existing memorials beyond just an ideological question.

Because of the presence of the Emancipation Memorial and its problematic nature, Lincoln Park was chosen as the site for the Bethune Memorial as the park was considered an important site of African American commemoration. In the process of building the Bethune Memorial, the Emancipation Memorial’s problematic narratives were not further questioned but the statue was turned around by one-hundred and eighty degrees so that Lincoln now faced Bethune instead of looking in the direction of the Capitol. As Woodley cites from an NCNW fundraising leaflet: “the Lincoln statue was repositioned to face Bethune ‘to convey the message that the children of slaves had progressed from servitude’” (Woodley, 2017, p. 9). Bethune was therefore placed in this park to show a positive image of an African American woman, a liberator herself, a woman with power, who brought about positive change for her community, without the help of a White man. The placement of the memorials thus reflects important cultural projects such as the Harlem Renaissance, which might not have been successful in fully changing “the way whites treated blacks” (Woodley, 2014, p. 59)—represented by the Emancipation Memorial—but which “helped in creating a new identity amongst African Americans, as they developed new ways to see and define themselves” (Caroll, 2005), by creating a positive image.

3.2.3 The Memorial

This short elaboration on the Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial should show that, while Martin Luther King Junior was not the first African American activist to be honored in DC, his stand-alone memorial has a different symbolic power. The memorial is located in a symbolically charged place, DC’s Reserve, which is “designated for commemorative works of ‘preeminent historic and national significance’” (National Parks Service, 2005). The memorial was the last one built

here, after amendments in 2003 restricted building in this area (*Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial: Environmental Assessment*, 2009, p. 7).⁶

The memorial site includes several structures centered around a statue in Dr. King's likeness. Built by Master Lei Yixin in his studio in China, it is approximately nine meters tall (N. King, n.d.). The 159 granite blocks which later would make up King's statue and the "mountain" were "first transported to Master Lei's studio in Changsha, China, where he assembled and sculpted 80 percent of the artwork," and then assembled and completed artworks on site in DC (N. King, n. d.). Having an artist outside the United States create this memorial created substantial backlash (e.g., U. Friedman, 2011). This was in addition to the criticisms of the man who engraved the quotes: Nik Benson is a White American stone carver. Therefore, criticisms were voiced that this first memorial to a member of the African American community was created by and according to the views of non-African American artists.

3.2.3.1 The Quotes

Flanking the site to the North and South, walls inscribed with 14 quotes stand tall (see Figs. 3.21 and 3.22). These quotes are inscribed "in no particular order," none of them using "the words 'racism' or 'segregation' or 'racial inequality'" (Theoharis, 2018, p. 9). While some of them indicate a location for where King delivered the speech from which the quote was taken, others only indicate a year. The latter are quotes from his books *Strength to Love* (1963) and *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958), although this information is not displayed anywhere. Furthermore, to King's right, on the side of the statue, there is a short quote from the "I Have a Dream" speech without any indication as to the origins of quote. The memorial pamphlet states that the quotes were chosen to "stress four primary messages of Dr. King: justice, democracy, hope, and love" (National Parks service & Department of the Interior, n. d., p. 2).

⁶ As was discussed before, memorials in DC are initiated by so-called sponsors. For the MLK memorial, the authorized organization was the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. It was "the first intercollegiate Greek-letter fraternity established for African-Americans" (*Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial: Environmental Assessment*, 2009, p. 1). The fraternity established a foundation to operate on its behalf "in the development of the location, design, and construction of the Memorial" (*Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial: Environmental Assessment*, 2009, p. 1).

Fig. 3.21 Quotes on the South Wall. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

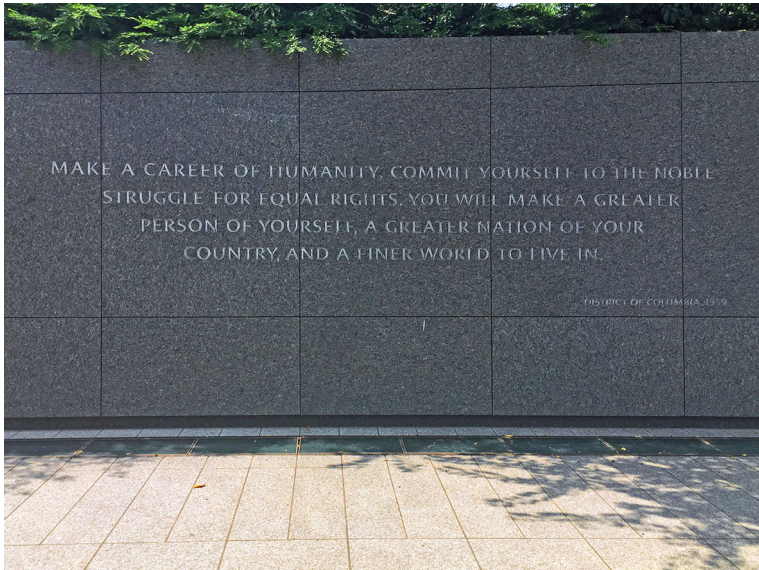


Fig. 3.22 “Make a Career Out of Humanity”. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

The quotes were selected by the Memorial Foundation in consultation with a council of historians (Bruyneel, 2014, p. 82). However, even when not directly assigning blame to those who made the choices, critics take issue with the quotes selected and, particularly, with the lack of context given. Specifically, several critics state that there is a blatant absence of references to racism. This reflects a general tendency in commemorating African American history: “As APEX curator Michele Mitchell stated, ‘People today are more comfortable with a civil rights focus than black history.’ A civil rights lens draws attention away from an explicitly black identity-based orientation toward the past” (Autry, 2017, p. 116). This criticism also makes explicit the memorial’s lack of connection to today. As memory scholar Kevin Bruyneel writes:

Without a sense of the wider context of King’s views on race and politics, quotations that implore twenty-first century readers to think of themselves as part of a “single garment of destiny,” to “make a career of humanity,” and “transcend race” can easily foster an image of King as an advocate of post-racialist views. Whether or not foundation executives, project designers or consulting historians intended this post-racial construction, by acceding to a universalizing, haloed vision of King they risked constituting King’s body politic as one that has moved beyond race as a persistent political issue and concern. This vision commends its contemporary admirers to move beyond race themselves, not by engaging racial concerns directly so as to address present-day injustices, but by presuming that it is an issue consigned to the past. (2014, pp. 83–84)

While the memorial therefore highlights some of King’s words through the inclusion of 14 quotations, it provides no context for the reverend’s life, work, or the movement of which he was a part and obscures the injustices against which he fought.

3.2.4 The Bookstore

The MLK bookstore is larger than the one in the Lincoln Memorial. It is a free-standing building, which also includes the public restrooms, just outside the memorial. While the Lincoln bookstore seems like an afterthought, this building was clearly built intentionally from the beginning. However, as much as it looks like a lot of thought went into this structure, it is easily missed. When standing at the main entrance of the memorial, the building is difficult to see, and it is almost completely invisible when approaching from the Lincoln Memorial (see Fig. 3.23 for the approach from the direction of the Lincoln Memorial: the bookstore is on the right, obstructed by trees). Many visitors do not know it is there and most

of the individuals I talked to only discovered it when using the restrooms, which was also how I first happened upon it.

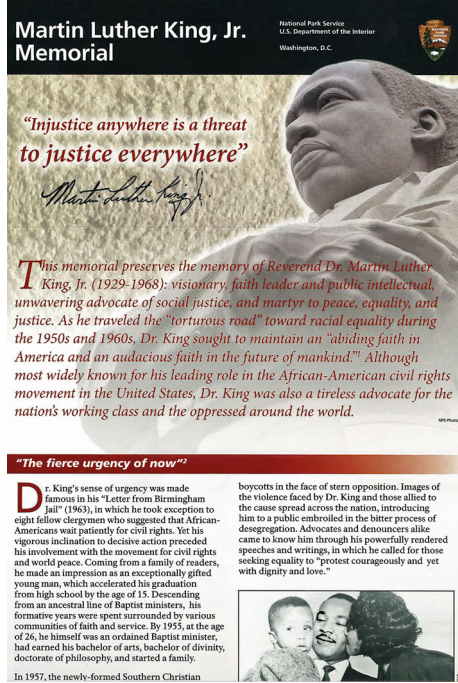
Fig. 3.23 The MLK Book Store Invisible Behind the Trees on the Right. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



The store sells books and memorabilia, such as T-Shirts, pencils, and cups, centered around the memorial but also the capital region. One can buy miniatures of the White House or the Capitol, as well as books covering the Civil Rights Movement or King’s autobiography. During a visit in October 2021, the first shelf facing me upon entering the shop was titled “Civil Rights” and it included sixteen books, none of them dedicated (exclusively) to Dr. King. Instead, there were four books on Malcom X on the lower shelves (see Figure 3.24).⁷ The shelf next to it, titled “Black History” also did not include any books on Dr.

⁷ A similar setup can be seen in an upload to Google Maps from April 2021 (the only photograph on Google Maps which fully shows this shelf)—Dr King is not represented while Malcom X appears on four books. See the following link: https://www.google.com/maps/place/Martin+Luther+King+Jr.+Memorial+Bookstore/@38.8863705,-77.0451573,3a,75y,90t/data=!3m8!1e2!3m6!1sAF1QipPKIikhbeTK-ZxVi9b0b4du6StMY9K4BFze_ezZ!2e10!3e12!6shhttps://lh5.googleusercontent.com/p/AF1QipPKIikhbeTK-ZxVi9b0b4du6StMY9K4BFze_ezZ%3Dw203-h114-k-no!7i4000!8i2252!4m7!3m6!1s0x0:0x9a641cfcb918ab0a!8m2!3d38.8863705!4d-77.045191!14m1!1BCgIYEg

Fig. 3.25 The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Pamphlet. (Note. Author scan of the pamphlet published by the National Park Service (n. d.)



3.2.4.1 The MLK Pamphlet

The MLK Memorial pamphlet can be picked up free of charge at the checkout counter in the bookstore. However, it is easily missed; I did not realize there were pamphlets to be found there until, one day, during my second visit to DC, I ended up buying a pen at the store. It was only at the cash register that I saw the pamphlets. They are the same standardized format as—but about one third longer than—the pamphlet for the Lincoln Memorial, folded into six parts. It begins with a quote from Dr. King and a description of his character and work.⁸ The rest of the pamphlet is structured into four sections and also includes a map of the memorial location. At the end of the pamphlet is written: “For more information about National Mall and Memorial Parks, please contact,” followed by a postal address and website titled “National Mall and Memorial Parks”.⁹ This

⁸ See Fig. 3.25 for the first page of the pamphlet. A scan of the full pamphlet can be found in Appendix 4.2

⁹ <https://www.nps.gov/nama>.

website provides an overview of “Icons in the nation’s capital” but one must click through several tabs to find a first reference to the MLK Memorial.

3.2.4.2 The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Website¹⁰

Despite the pamphlet not including its link, an official website for the MLK Memorial does exist. This website’s homepage has seven sub-sections. The only section that provides additional information about Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement is the section “Remembering the Man.” This page consists of five paragraphs, opening with a short elaboration on Dr. King’s life. The second paragraph stresses the importance of the memorial and reiterates King’s insistence on nonviolence. The third paragraph again details the early points of his life (such as his birthplace) and his involvement in the Montgomery Movement, mentioning the name of Rosa Parks. She is the only other activist mentioned on this page. In the next paragraph titled “The Civil Rights Movement,” no other organizer or activist is mentioned but the text chronicles some of the most important marches and successes of the movement. The final paragraph “The Message” again focuses on non-violence and associates King with Mahatma Gandhi, one of his biggest inspirations.

There is an entire section dedicated to the quotes inscribed in the memorial walls. The first page is a list of all the quotes. On a second page, one can download photographs of the inscriptions. There is no additional information given on any of the quotes, except the quote on the statue, which reads: “From the “I Have A Dream” speech in Washington, DC on August 28, 1963. The quotation serves as the theme of the overall design of the memorial, which realizes the metaphorical mountain and stone” (*Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial: Quotations*, n. d.). This provides more information about the symbolic meaning of the quote but no additional context for the speech from which it was taken. Interestingly, while the Lincoln Memorial website provides audio of the President’s two speeches commemorated on site, this website does not include any audios. This is striking because Dr. King is famous for being a powerful orator and several visitors commented on the auditive impact of his speeches: “It would be nice if there was [sic] speakers playing his speech or speeches. ... It is different to read what someone said than to listen. And hear the emotions behind it” (Peter, 4 September 2020, Instagram interview).

¹⁰ Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains supplementary content which can be accessed through the following link: Appendix 4.

There is also a short elaboration on a quote that was originally engraved on the other side of the statue, but then removed again: “I was a drum major for justice, peace and righteousness.” This quote was removed from the memorial in 2013. Taken from his February 4, 1968, sermon in Atlanta, it was originally supposed to read:

Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice, say that I was a drum major for peace, I was a drum major for righteousness, and all the other shallow things will not matter. (*Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial: Quotations*, n. d.)

This was already a shortened version of the original speech, but it would not fit on the statue which is why the even shorter version was engraved. The website does not elaborate on the reason why the quote was eventually removed. Here is how Kevin Bruyneel captured the backlash against the quote, which was mainly directed at its context-free nature:

Vocal criticism of this change began immediately after the unveiling. Most notably, African-American author Maya Angelou said the paraphrase made King look like an “arrogant twit,” that it “minimizes the man” and that “he would never have said that of himself. He said ‘you’ might say it.” Martin Luther King III said, simply: “That was not what Dad said.” And satirist Stephen Colbert captured a deeper tension that pervaded the project, suggesting that the rephrased words were “to the point. Not Dr. King’s point, but still. . . .” As with the choice of white granite stone, there seems to have been no deliberate intention to distort King’s words, since the change was made in order to address a practical problem, and the aim of using the north side space more efficiently took precedence over the need to provide an accurate portrayal of King’s words and meaning. (2014, pp. 95–96)

Not elaborating on the process of removing the quote or much other context for any of the quotes, the website therefore mainly provides additional information about the memorial itself as well as Dr. King. It does not add information about the larger Civil Rights Movement or figures who were a part of it.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





The Literature on Public Memory

4

Public memory has often been understood based on a transmission model of communication which accounts for the sender, message, medium, and audience (see Lasswell, 1948). This understanding conceives of an institution which creates a narrative and communicates it through a memorial to an audience which, in the case of traditional memorials, are visitors of the site. This perspective, however, locates the power wholly with the sender and assumes a one-directional transmission of information. This is reflected in the definition of public memory scholarship in the *SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*: “Scholars of public memory highlight how the selection of content, container, and context contribute to an understanding of how we collectively remember the past presented at the site,” focusing on the question: “What does this site say we should remember and forget about the subject remembered?” (Aden, 2017, p. 3). This means that, from a communications perspective, the reception process has long been secondary in the study of public memory. This absence of focus is not as all-encompassing as the quote might suggest. In fact, scholars from different fields have approached the topic of public memory from different perspectives.

Throughout this chapter, it should become clear that this project was deeply inspired by research in the field of museum studies. The related nature of memorials and museums has long been established and the point I want to focus on here is their function as a representation of specific identities. As Sharon Macdonald writes:

In many ways, the museum is an institution of recognition and identity *par excellence*. It selects certain cultural products for official safe-keeping, for posterity and public display—a process which recognizes and affirms some identities, and omits to recognize and affirm others. This is typically presented in a language—spoken

through architecture, spatial arrangements, and forms of display as well as in discursive commentary—of fact, objectivity, superior taste, and authoritative knowledge. (2006, p. 4)

While this research thus focuses on a different type of cultural site, I consider it deeply related to the memorial and several of the perspectives and methods stemming from museum studies have productively informed this current project.

4.1 Transmission of Public Memory

When looking at the message of public memory, which is transported at a specific memorial, studies have focused on analyses of the selection of narratives, how that narrative is communicated, and whether the narrative is *successfully* communicated through a specific site (-design) (e.g., Benton-Short, 2006; Buckley-Zistel, 2014; Dickinson et al., 2010; Dwyer & Alderman, 2008; Glassberg, 2008; Schwartz, 2000). Studies concerned with the selection processes often highlight the power-imbalances behind that process (e.g., Braun, 2014; Yoshida, 2004).

Another set of research focuses on how specific narratives are communicated (Brown, 2014; Buckley-Zistel, 2014; Crowley, 2007; Dwyer, 2006; Huyssen, 2003; Macdonald, 2013; Sonnevend, 2016; Strakosch, 2014). These scholars analyze the medium through which the narrative is communicated: the memorial itself. In studying the actual memorial sites, one strand of the research focuses on the spatial realities of specific sites, conducted by scholars in fields as diverse as cultural studies, art history, geography, and urban planning. This research has shown that memorials and their narratives are largely impacted by the physical space in which they are located: the place of a memorial site has symbolic power and becomes part of the message (Benton-Short, 2006; Gurler & Ozer, 2013; McDowell, 2008; Moore & Whelan, 2007; Osborne, 2001; Riegl, 1903; Schwarz-Bierschenk, 2008; Stevens, 2015; Whelan, 2002).

Focusing on more “niche” sites, scholars have expanded research on memorials’ creators to alternative memorials including street names (Alderman, 2006), or grassroots memorials (e.g., Low, 2004; Sánchez-Carretero & Ortiz, 2011). These studies reflect the possibility of ‘heritage from below,’ implying a different type of sender:

Drawing on the widely accepted view that heritage is a social and cultural construct firmly embedded in the power relationships that structure society, this perspective relies on the recognition of the possibility of the expression of alternative forms of

heritage that ‘work’ from below and within, conceived for, from and by local communities with minimal professional help from without. (Robertson, 2008, p. 143)

Building memorials, particularly in Washington, DC, is a highly institutionalized process, therefore seemingly closed to being conducted without “help from without” (see Subchapter 2.3.2). This is where the online realm is often seen as a possible alternative to include narratives into the nation’s public memory which are not sanctioned by the institutions in power. This is reflected in studies of online war memorials (Grider, 2007; Knudsen & Stage, 2013), or online memorial websites for tragic events (Maddrell, 2012; Papailias, 2016). The latter present a specific type of memorial which is impacted by a personal connection to the deceased person. Through these types of commemorations, “[o]nline memorials offer a democratized space in which grief can be expressed immediately and by a wide range of people who may otherwise not have a right to speak” (Gibson & Carden, 2018, p. 100). This research often focuses on how small narratives, when combined, can act as alternative histories or counter-narratives to the dominant stories, such as the website for the Malcom X Grassroots Movement, which “disrupts the dominant historical narrative with individual accounts of oppression that are distributed throughout the website, allowing users to encounter them regardless of their navigational choices” (Florini, 2016, p. 119). Memorial research has therefore produced a plethora of insights into the senders of narratives of public memory, both institutionalized and “bottom up.” Scholars have shown that institutional actors use narratives and memorial sites to uphold hegemonic narratives and that bottom-up narratives engaging with public memory, particularly when they take advantage of the online realm and its potential for connectivity and reach, can produce counter-narratives. However, whether those counter-narratives can contribute to hegemonic narratives changing has not yet been studied.

4.2 Studying the Audience

A focus on the reception process of public memory is crucial because, as we know from different communication models, only because an intended message is communicated, this does not necessarily mean that the message is received by the audience in the intended manner (see Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model (1980)). While studies have been focused on the narratives told through memorials, the memorials themselves, and the intentions behind the narratives, the reception process was long ignored. Referring to studies about U.S. American monuments, Geisler wrote in 2005:

the literature dealing with US monuments is largely sympathetic to or unconscious of the idea of possible problems in the construction of public memory (namely, who constitutes the public, and how this constructs the memory, or the possible effect of public memorials on real or imagined publics) (2005; cited in Grider, 2007, p. 268)

However, while the focus on the (active) audience at a memorial is relatively new, the field of museum studies has expanded its focus to include the perspective of the visitors, particularly in an effort to cater to a heterogeneous audience:

the amount of work dedicated to trying to understand how museums and exhibitions may be perceived or otherwise related to by those who go to them—and also, though this remains under-addressed, by those who do not—has expanded greatly since *The New Museology* was published [in 1989]. Not only has there been an expansion of the quantity of visitor research, but a greater range of methodological approaches—particularly qualitative—has also been brought to bear. ... [T]here has been a shift, underway for quite some time now though still only patchily achieved, toward understanding the public as diverse, plural, and active, rather than as a relatively homogeneous and rather passive mass. ... (Macdonald, 2006, p. 8)

It is exactly those types of studies, which focus on the active visitors and acknowledge the diverse nature of “the visitor” that I rely on in my study. In the following, I want to briefly elaborate on research about visitors’ interactions with cultural sites. I artificially divide the field into studies differing in their understanding of the level of activity on part of the visitor.

Most traditionally, studies about visitor experiences at memorial sites have focused on how visitors feel at a site. Trying to capture how something absent (history) can be transported through specific artefacts, or contexts, scholars often use the term *hauntology* which Jacques Derrida coined to describe a feeling of something absent being palpable (Derrida, 1994). The concept has been frequently adapted to visitor experiences at memorial sites, attempting to grasp what it is that makes an experience of a site where nothing is happening an experience, nonetheless. These studies attempt to answer the question posed by Kirk Savage: “Why make a pilgrimage to a site with no historical significance to read a text that was already elsewhere? The answer is simple: the monument manufactures its own aura” (Savage, 2009, pp. 5–6). Analyzing this aura, studies often focus on sites of historical significance (Brauer & Assmann, 2011; Etkind, 2009; Lincoln & Lincoln, 2015; Lovelace, 2021; N. Shepherd, 2013; Yampolsky, 1995). While these studies acknowledge that the effect of a memorial is not the same regardless of the visitor, they still focus on the impact of the memorial on the person and do not include any active engagement of the visitor with the sites or the narratives it tells.

Studies acknowledging the audience of specific memorials as heterogeneous and active have, for example, focused on visiting motivations. These studies largely focus on sites of dark heritage. This topic is almost exclusively treated in case studies, which is crucial since not only do motivations vary greatly from individual to individual (going so far as some visitors not even finding the term “dark” appropriate for a given site (Thomas et al. P. 7)), but also from one site to the next. This research includes studies focused on visits to slave castles in Ghana (Mowatt & Chancellor, 2011), plantations in the United States (e.g., Butler et al., 2008), concentration camps in Poland (Biran et al., 2011) or concentration camp memorials in the Netherlands (Isaac et al., 2019). Studies on motivations to visit dark tourism sites have shown that one strong motivating factor is to learn something about the past (e.g., Isaac et al., 2019; Mowatt & Chancellor, 2011; Yan et al., 2016). Isaac and colleagues found two additional factors in their study of visitors to a concentration camp: ‘exclusivity,’ which implies a desire to see a famous site, and ‘memory,’ which is about taking a trip as an act of remembrance or to tell the story to a next generation (Isaac et al., 2019, p. 747). While many fascinating findings have thus been produced by scholars of dark heritage sites, motivations for visiting celebratory memorials have thus far largely been neglected. This might be because a visit to such a site does not seem unusual. Visiting a site where some of humanity’s darkest atrocities occurred can beg the question: why would people do this to themselves? Looking at a beautiful statue, however, is much more in line with our common understanding of motivations for leisure activities, including tourism: it is to have a good time. However, we must acknowledge that even when the behavior under observation might appear more frivolous it still benefits from scientific study. To fill this gap in the research, it is therefore one of the purposes of this project to understand visitors of celebratory memorials.

Research assuming an active audience also expands to studies which look at visitors’ *interactions* with cultural sites. This research began before the advent of the smartphone and often looked at the impact of audio guides on visitors’ on-site experiences (e.g., Bowman, 2010). This focus is still present today in research which looks at mobile phone apps that function as guides and how they impact visitors’ on-site experiences (e.g., Arita-Kikutani & Sakamoto, 2007; Kramer et al., 2007; Pierroux et al., 2011). The focus on mobile phone use on offline behaviors is also reflected in studies of museums.

In their study, Thomas Hillman and colleagues asked six students to visit a natural history museum and gave them a worksheet with tasks to complete during their visit. One task was: “Use one of your cell phones, cameras, iPads or similar

to document the differences and similarities between whales and hippos” (2016, p. 357). Looking at the students’ photographs and observing them on their paths through the museum, the study showed “that simply making the technology for multimedia production available is not enough to support increased student engagement or to foster enriched learning experiences during museum field trips” (T. Hillman et al., 2016, p. 367).

Hughes and Moscardo (2017) similarly conducted an experiment with three different groups of students at the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Australia. One group was told they could use their cameras, while one group was prohibited from doing so. The third group was told they should pretend they were a curator, and they could take five photos to showcase what is important in the exhibit. Their conclusions showed that the group which was not allowed to use their devices claimed they were less distracted than the other groups (Hughes & Moscardo, 2017, p. 46). These studies, focusing on the impact of mobile phone use on the offline experience at a museum, were therefore largely conducted under experiment conditions and the focus was purely on the offline behavior and the analysis did not include any of the artefacts that were created during the visit.

Those artefacts created at the cultural sites and shared online have been studied through a variety of methods, most frequently through content analyses of photographs shared. This is why Instagram as the leading social networking site for the sharing of photographs has seen some research in this context (e.g. Budge, 2017, 2020; Suess, 2018; Villaespesa & Wowkowych, 2020). Weilenmann and colleagues (2013), for example analyzed Instagram images posted at the geolocation of a national history museum in Sweden and they also conducted an on-site experiment where they asked visitors—who were regular Instagram users—to visit the exhibit and make Instagram posts “as they normally would” (Weilenmann et al., 2013, p. 1846). When analyzing the online content created during a visit of a cultural site, these studies focus exclusively on the online artefacts and do not include a more holistic analysis of the experience, including how picture-taking impacted the visit.

Studies focusing on online content created at memorial sites, while rare, has thus far largely focused on selfies from dark heritage sites (Adriaansen, 2022; Bareither, 2020a, 2020b). Christoph Bareither’s project on mobile photography at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin (2019, 2020a, 2020b) is a unique example as he assesses both, visitors’ offline and online experience and discusses them as part of one and the same experience and does so under natural conditions. By doing so, Bareither acknowledges the complexities of experiences

in a digital era, harkening back to the conceptualization of the digital wayfarer by Hjorth and Pink:

the digital wayfarer as we conceptualize her or him does not simply weave her or his way around the material physical world. Rather, their trajectory entangles online and offline as they move through the weather and the air, with the ground underfoot and surrounded by people and things, while also traversing digital maps, social networking sites, and other online elements. They thus make places that are at once online and offline places through these movements and their photographic representations of them, which also traverse and connect the materialities and sensoriality of the experienced physical world with the experience of being online. (2014, pp. 45–46)

Bareither then studies how the taking of a selfie can be used to engage with a memorial site both on site as well as when sharing it to social media. Expanding on this methodology, the present project focuses on visitors' online and offline behaviors and experiences at two celebratory memorial sites. I build on the existing literature, including Bareither's insights about engaging with a memorial through online photography, but add the perspective of the on-site experience without a focus on mobile engagements. This combination of perspectives has thus far not been employed in studies of memorials and the present project therefore takes a first step toward understanding visitors holistically, acknowledging that for some visitors, the online and offline experiences are interconnected. In the following, I elaborate on the specific methods used to study these complex visitor experiences of the two memorials.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





My overall approach to studying visitor experiences at the memorials is one in which I am guided in my qualitative research endeavor by the desire to understand a specific experience in as much detail as possible. The methods discussed in the following should thus help understand how individuals experience two memorial sites to Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington, DC, accounting for all aspects of their experience. This includes their motives for visiting, their experience and behavior on site, their experience of the memorials in the context of DC, as well as thoughts and site-related behavior they exhibit after their visit. Because I want to create a holistic picture of this experience, deciding on a method which would allow to create thick data was crucial. In the following, I elaborate on three sets of data collection which all informed one another, and were all utilized to answer the same questions. I therefore do not perceive the three points of access to the field as independent from one another. Structuring this methods chapter into three parts serves as a systematic overview of the methods by elaborating on them chronologically, but it should not suggest that any one method could have stood on its own.

The methods of data collection were “successively revised in the course of the research process” based on which data was deemed necessary, a common method in Grounded Theory research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 55). This was mainly owed to the exploratory nature of the project. Only after studying the field for a first time in-depth did additional questions arise and necessitate the development of further methods to gain additional data. This reflexive methodology corresponds to the following elaboration by Alvesson and Sköldberg on the process of abduction in qualitative research:

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-48917-5_5.

© The Author(s) 2025

L. Hugentobler, *Memories Set in Stone—How Visitors Make Sense of Memorials*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-48917-5_5

Abduction starts from an empirical basis, just like induction, but does not reject theoretical preconceptions and is in that respect closer to deduction. The analysis of the empirical fact(s) may very well be combined with, or preceded by, studies of previous theory in the literature; not as a mechanical application on single cases but as a source of inspiration for the discovery patterns that bring understanding. The research process, therefore, alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other. (2009, p. 4)

Following this approach, I entered the field with ideas about tourist motivations, visitor interactions with cultural sites, and the intended function of memorials, while at the same time not seeking to prove any hypotheses as a positivist research project might (see Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, p. 70).

In the following, through the description of my three points of access to the field, it should become clear that, while being guided in my questions and perspectives by previous research and theory, I let the field guide me on which aspects to focus. I understand this approach as a form of ethnography. Speaking with Clifford Geertz:

[Ethnography], it must immediately be said, is not a matter of methods. From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, “thick description.” (1973, p. 6)

While I do not strictly employ traditional methods of ethnography, such as locating myself within the field for extended periods of time, my aspiration is to create a thick description of the field. I describe and analyze the goings-on at the two memorials which is why I chose to incorporate autoethnographies, interviews and observations of visitors, including their Instagram posts from the sites, and expert interviews. This is to capture the whole experience which includes everything that occurs in the location but also behavior that happens off-site and is related to the experience. What images and expectations do visitors carry into the site with them? How do they think about the online realm while on site and how does post-visit engagement with the site play into the experience? This is why, as the following sub-chapters will show, I have included offline and online methods, all in an attempt to create as complete a picture as possible of visitors’ experiences and interactions with the two memorials.

5.1 The First Field Work

From May 23rd until July 1st, 2019, I spent my first time in Washington, DC, and explored what visiting the two memorials feels like for visitors, including myself. During these five-and-a-half weeks, I repeatedly spent time at the memorials, in the heat of DC summer. The fieldwork was inspired by traditional ethnographic methodology but my stay in the field was limited. I never spent more than a few hours at a memorial site for several reasons, only one of them being the at times unbearable heat. Visits to these memorials are generally short: individuals arrive at a site, engage with it for a couple of minutes and then leave again, often not spending more than fifteen minutes there. Because the visit is a rather short experience, I was able to justify my comparatively short-lived engagement with the field-site, mirroring the typical visitor experience. As Paul Atkinson writes in his book *Thinking Ethnographically*, fieldwork “implies some degree of participation in and observation of everyday life in naturally occurring social settings” (2017, p. 10). I consider my field visits in line with naturally occurring social settings because I behaved like a visitor would and this included not spending an entire day at one site. My first fieldwork consisted of autoethnographies, observations, photography, and interviews with visitors and experts.

5.1.1 Autoethnographies

Visiting the two memorials without paying explicit attention to my research questions or the other visitors on site, I tried to gain an understanding of the experience which “derives most directly from the immediacy of participation in social actors’ inter-subjective experience (Prus, 1996). In practical terms, this means the researcher needs to share experiences, but not necessarily viewpoints, with those being studied” (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001, p. 163). This essential trope of ethnographic research was at the center of my intention to visit both sites for the first time as the international tourist to Washington, DC, that I was. I observed my own reactions to the sites as a first-time visitor and documented them in a notebook. I mostly focused on what struck me, such as the difficulty of finding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial and reading specific quotes.

I also took photographs which was insofar a natural task as I had travelled to DC for the first time and was naturally doing “tourist things.” Exploring these memorial sites was therefore embedded in my own travels, and this project reflects the assumption that “all ethnographic work implies a degree of personal engagement with the field and with the data (that are always made and not

'given')" (P. Atkinson, 2006, p. 402). I continued to observe how I reacted to the sites throughout my field visits (including a segway and a Nighttime Monuments tour), paying particular attention to how I felt about the presence of other visitors. As Caroline Scarles writes about her autoethnography in her paper "Becoming Tourist: Renegotiating the Visual in the Tourist Experience:"

Autoethnography emerged as a fusion of observation and first-hand experience. It provides an avenue through which researcher subjectivity is embraced within the research setting (see, for example, Church, 1995; Morgan and Pritchard, 2005; Sparkes, 2000; Westwood et al, 2006). As Krieger (1996) suggests, autoethnography explicitly discusses the experiences and presence of the researcher in the research context. (2009, p. 467)

Throughout the following chapters, I will therefore repeatedly refer to my own experiences at the memorials in addition to the experiences of the visitors I encountered there while being careful not to mix the two.

5.1.2 Observations

In order to answer my research question asking what visitors do while at the memorials, I conducted on-site observations. During these observations, I looked like any another visitor at the site, which enabled me to study visitors without drawing attention to myself. This is an advantage of tourist sites, which see many visitors moving through quickly, where taking photographs is common and, generally, the atmosphere is casual and one does not have to be too careful not to step into someone else's personal space, as might be the case at a site of worship, for example. This type of observation helps to create data that is naturally occurring.

This process is in the vein of Erving Goffman who, in his methodology of interaction ethnology aims "to investigate the processes of interaction 'naturalistically', that is, first to discover and document them in their 'natural milieu'" (Willems, 2004, p. 24; referring to Goffman, 1989). This is what my on-site observations were intended to provide: an in-depth description of the behavior in a natural setting, without drawing attention to my role as a researcher. I conducted observations at the memorials every time I visited them and took notes in traditional notebooks and, sometimes, on my phone.¹ In these observations, I focused on aspects that struck me as particular. This could be two men shooting

¹ The notes were all transferred into digital documents at the end of a day in the field.

what looked like a music video on their phones, a little girl riding on a scooter with her dad, or two strangers exchanging phones to take one another's pictures. I then also started to look for patterns in the visitors' behavior, such as how they moved through the memorial sites or where they paused to read quotes or take pictures.

Observations are a productive method to study behavior that is unconscious which can be expected for many of the behaviors of visitors as tourism is a habitualized type of behavior. As Tim Edensor writes:

although it is often implied that performance concerns the strategic, purposive management of impressions, conscious intentions are not always part of the actively 'being-in-the-world.' For organizing routine, everyday practices produce unreflexive, embodied forms of practical knowledge. This is clearly the case with regard to a wide range of tourist practices. (2000, p. 324)

Observation is therefore suitable because, "[a] result of the 'unconscious' nature of this kind of behaviour ... is the limited nature of methods that depend on explanations and self-descriptions from the actors under investigation (for example, interviews, or personal biographical evidence)" (Willems, 2004, p. 24). Observations, therefore, help access behavioral patterns that visitors might be unconscious of or that only appear as patterns when observed across many individuals. I also conducted observations during two guided tours, focusing on the tour guides as well as the visitors, paying particular attention to what the latter were most curious about: where did they take pictures, when did they ask questions, where did they stop to take a moment to look at a memorial more closely?

5.1.3 Photography

From the first time I visited the two memorials, I took countless photographs of the sites for my personal documentation of this trip. This photographic practice helped me understand the memorials as a visitor does: many take photographs, mainly with their mobile phones and sometimes with cameras.² In a first iteration, just as I would during a non-research trip, I tried to capture my experience more so than to document my field site. However, what I discovered quickly, was that even when I was focusing on trying to get the picture I wanted, other visitors would often be visible in my photographs. This means that even before I began to use my cameras to document visible tourism behavior on site, I had already

² I used both my smartphone and my camera.

captured it in my personal photographs. Explicitly taking pictures of visitors on site then served the purpose to focus my eyes on visible patterns and extraordinary moments. It reflects the documentary purpose of photography described by Larsen as follows:

Inspired by Pink (2001) ... and Parr and Winchester (1995) ... , my particular way of observing photographic performances is structured around photographing 'photographing tourists.' Because cameras and photographers were ubiquitous in both places, people seldom noticed that my camera was aimed at them, not at the attraction. I portrayed photographic performers who were unaware of my presence: They did *not* pose for my camera, and I never asked them to do so. I aimed at "documentary" photography. I am certainly not arguing that the photographs I produced are passive mirrors of "reality." (2005, p. 417)

The photographs from my visits to the sites therefore show natural visitor behavior on site without claiming that they describe a "reality" that exists outside of my interactions with and interpretations of the field. The photographs therefore help to document my field visits, but they also create data for analysis.

5.1.4 Interviews³

In addition to accessing (unconscious) behavior through observations and photography, I also wanted to learn about individuals' emotions while at the sites, understand why they chose to visit and how they judged the success of their visits. For this, I interviewed twenty-two visitors at the Lincoln Memorial and thirty-five at the Martin Luther King Junior Memorial.⁴ I approached visitors at the site when they were not in deep conversation or reading quotes, introduced myself briefly and asked if I could ask them a few questions about their visit. If they agreed, I asked them if I could record our conversation, which all confirmed. I recorded the interviews with my smartphone which I had placed in a pouch enabling me to wear the phone around my body like a purse. This ensured that I did not have to hold the phone like a microphone and was able to put the screen on mute: the interview environment was therefore kept as natural as possible. I first asked interviewees to answer some demographic questions as well as their use of social media sites and mobile internet access. To allow individuals to

³ Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains supplementary content which can be accessed through the following link: Appendix 2.

⁴ See Appendix 2 with information about all interviewees from this fieldwork, including demographics as well as interview formalities.

stay anonymous, I did not ask them for their names but documented them when offered voluntarily.

The interviews were comparatively short for qualitative interviews (median of seven minutes and forty-nine seconds). However, this shorter version is suitable for the research project at hand because visitors do not spend much time at the memorials. Respecting the interviewees' time, the interviews had to be integrated into their visits in a manner that would not torpedo their experience.⁵ Short interviews like the ones I conducted are often used to study the behavior of individuals in public spaces (e.g., "Passantenbefragung" by Friedrichs & Wolf, 1990) and, more specifically, as exit interviews at sites of tourism (e.g., Larsen, 2005). I usually interviewed visitors while they were still at the site, since exit interviews proved difficult because people usually were headed somewhere else, and sometimes already had an Uber waiting or ran to catch a bus. I most often approached visitors as they were sitting on the benches at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial or along the shaded parts of the Lincoln Memorial.

I followed a semi-structured interview-guide including questions about how the person chose to visit this specific memorial, how they prepared their visit including the search for information online, which pictures they were trying to get, if they already had or planned to share images with others. The interviews also included questions about the site itself, which included asking visitors about what they particularly enjoyed about being here, whether they could have had a similar experience of Dr. King had they looked at the memorial online or read about his work in books, whether they would recommend this to friends and if so, for whom it would be a suitable choice. I had the interview questions ordered into sections ("Why Physical Memorial Sites?", "Online Engagement," "Physical Place vs Online") and printed on A5 sheets of paper. I kept this script in my hand during the interview to ensure I did not forget any of my points and to take some

⁵ Keeping interviews short, in many cases, also helped sustain their quality. In a few cases, when a visitor clearly wanted to move on, their answers quickly became short and were no longer very informative. When a visitor was glad to talk, I let our conversation continue, which is reflected in the longest interview being 21 minutes long. I experienced very few cases where visitors denied participation. It sometimes occurred that they were not very talkative, in which cases I led a rather short conversation with them. It is important to respect people's time, particularly while they are on a site-visit which might be a once-in-a-lifetime experience: if people changed their minds about wanting to talk to me, I respected this and did not insist on asking all my questions. There were very few instances of denials due to language barriers and I interviewed three individuals in German and one in French.

notes if I found something particularly interesting or wanted to get back to an earlier point. The interviews were transcribed from audio after each field-day⁶.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I had been curious about how individuals engage with memorials online including the writing of reviews. I found it fascinating that people write reviews for cultural sites but quickly discovered that the participants I talked to did not do so. None of them read reviews before their trip either. To both questions (active or passive use of review sites) they reacted stunned, telling me this never even occurred to them. When I asked one couple at the Lincoln Memorial whether they might write an online review of the memorial, the man answered with “nope” and they both laughed, explaining how absurd they thought the idea was (Daniel and Emily, 8 June 2019). Some responses showed visitors’ general unawareness that reviews of memorials existed such as one individual at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial who told me: “I didn’t even know [Google Maps] did reviews” (Xander, 22 June 2019). Having received this reaction repeatedly, I would no longer dwell on uncovering who the people were who indeed did write those online reviews but, after receiving a negative answer to the question moved away from asking about this specific type of online engagement and asked about it more generally in terms of how they engage with the site online.

This was also important because my research is explorative, and I wanted to—as Emma Dahlin puts it—seek “to challenge existing theories and add new knowledge about the study object, [push] the state-of-the-art beyond already established information and taken-for-granted understandings” (2021, p. 3). It is therefore necessary, as Dahlin elaborates, to try to

resist, rather than accept, first impressions and general assumptions of the study object and thereby take seriously what might first appear as uninteresting or insignificant for the study. Additionally, by not getting too familiar with the practice (by not accepting first assumptions), a skepticism of how the studied practice or phenomenon works could be maintained. (2021, p. 3)

This need to remain open to topics and opinions I might not have considered relevant before speaking with specific individuals was the main reason why I employed a semi-structured interview protocol: While I had important questions

⁶ Quotes in this book have been truncated to increase readability while keeping the interviewee’s speech patterns intact. Mostly, I removed hesitation markers such as “uhm” and “like.” It is important to ensure that participants are represented by their own words when speaking about their personal experiences, which is why word choices are never changed and additions to increase intelligibility are always indicated.

I wanted all my respondents to answer, I was careful to let them guide the conversation into a direction they personally found important. This helped me uncover themes that came from respondents and were not forced through my theoretical lens or preconceived ideas as doing so encourages a focus on how visitors understand their own practices (see P. Atkinson & Coffey, 2003).

5.1.4.1 Sample

I talked to 57 visitors, 31 men and 26 women. The largest group (30 individuals) were White visitors (2 English, 2 Dutch, 2 German, 24 U.S. American), followed by 23 African American individuals, two African visitors (from Nigeria and Sierra Leone), and two Hispanic individuals (from Florida and New York). 86% of visitors were therefore from the United States. This relative distribution reflects visitor statistics for DC: In 2019, the most recent year for which a report is available at the time of writing, 22.8 million U.S. Americans visited the capital and only 1.8 million visitors came from overseas (*2019 Visitor Statistics Washington, DC*, n.d., p. 2). This relative distribution was matched in my sample by chance. To have a sample that was not biased toward one gender, age, or ethnicity, I tried to account for this through the people I approached. If, for example, I had just talked to a young, Black woman, I would next try to speak to someone who had at least one differing visible marker, such as an older White man. Through this strategy I managed to achieve a sample of fairly diverse participants, although it is unclear whether my sample corresponds to the larger populations at these sites. I only talked to children when they were with an adult. Because I asked about people's ages before beginning the interview, I could ensure that no minors were interviewed without a parental figure present. When visitors were in groups, I would always ask all participants of the group if they wanted to participate and if the confirmed, proceeded to conduct a group interview, always making sure that everyone had a chance to answer each question but allowing the person who appeared to have most to say, to guide the conversation.

Contacting the visitors on site ensures that the sample exclusively consists of people who visit the site irrespective of any research intervention. One disadvantage of sampling through the memorial sites during the researcher's visit is the likelihood that the sample differs from the larger population of visitors to these two memorials. To account for as many different types of visitors as possible, I visited the site on different days of the week as well as different times of the day (see Friedrichs & Wolf, 1990): individuals with less free-time and/or vacation days are less likely to visit during the week, particularly when they come from

far away.⁷ Visitors are also likely to have different experiences depending on the volume of visitors at the site, which was lowest during weekdays in the morning and highest on Friday early evening and Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The weather was always good while I was there, so I cannot make any claims about visitors who came here in the rain or during the cold season.

5.1.5 Follow-Up Interviews

At the end of the visitor interviews, when time allowed, I asked all individuals if they wanted to give me their email address so I could contact them with follow-up questions: 41 individuals did so. I also offered my business card in case someone wanted to contact me with questions or more ideas. None of the visitors contacted me independently. I sent 41 emails to those who had given me their addresses and eleven responded. This included two participants whom I met during guided tours and whom I had not interviewed on site: one Vietnamese man and one U.S. American woman.

These email conversations differed significantly in their nature. For some individuals, I continued a conversation we had started on site. For others, I asked about specific aspects of their visit we did not previously talk about. For everyone, I wanted to know if they had engaged with the site online after their visit (writing a Google review, sending pictures to a friend, making a social media post). I also invited them to share with me if they had posted any images through any channel. Two participants did so.⁸ Initially, this was supposed to be my access to individuals who post about their site-visit online. However, the response rate was so low that I had to find a new strategy to access social media posts from these sites (see Sect. 5.2 “The Instagram Ethnography”).

5.1.6 Expert Interviews

Despite my research focus on visitors of the memorials, I nevertheless wanted to enrich my understanding of this memorial city by talking to memorial experts. Some of the visitors I spoke with happened to be locals (sometimes bringing out-of-town visitors, but also visiting by themselves). To get more of an in-depth local

⁷ My site-visits never occurred during any (national) holidays.

⁸ Petra sent me an Instagram Story she had posted while Iris sent me several pictures she and her husband uploaded to a private family album on Facebook.

perspective, I interviewed two tour guides who both live in DC. This allowed me to access both, their perspectives as locals with a special interest in memorials, as well as experts who witness visitors at memorial sites almost every day and therefore have “insider knowledge” (e.g., Bogner & Menz, 2005). The interviews focused on their own perspectives on the memorials, the importance of memorials for DC and their observations of visitors during the tours. This included questions about which memorials visitors look most forward to, which ones they are most frequently asked about or which sites people always want to stop at for pictures.

After my time in DC, I flew to Montgomery, Alabama because I wanted to see the sites of the Montgomery bus boycott and two of the places where Dr. King lived and preached. The main reason for my visit, however, was to see the National Lynching Memorial and the Equal Justice Initiative museum (opened in 2018). These are sites of dark heritage created by the Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit organization committed to “ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice, and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society” (*About the Equal Justice Initiative*, n. d.). I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of dark heritage sites associated with the African American community which is also why I concluded the trip by seeing the Whitney Plantation in Louisiana which is the only former plantation site in the state with an exclusive focus on slavery.⁹ In Alabama, I stayed with Farris, an African American woman, at the time 77 years old, who had grown up in Montgomery. She was there for the arrival of the marchers from the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965 and was very generous with telling me her personal stories and memories of the Civil Rights Movement from the perspective of someone having lived in one of its geographical “epicenters.” One evening, during one of our conversations about the EJI memorial and museum, I asked Farris if I could record our conversation which led to a sixty-minute recording and subsequent transcript from which quotes will appear in this book.

⁹ <https://www.whitneyplantation.org/>

5.2 The Instagram Ethnography

As I learned during my first fieldwork, many people do not post about the memorials in the moment, which supports previous findings that have shown that most people do not share photographs from their travels online (Lo et al., 2011). My original idea had been to sample through the on-site location and then speak to individuals about their experiences at the memorial, as well as their online engagement post visit (by collecting email addresses). However, acknowledging the advantages of online interviewing methods, one can also sample “in reverse.” This means that, in a second step, I contacted individuals who had in fact posted about the memorial on the platform I was interested in and then talked to them about their offline experiences to contextualize their posts and learn about their visits. In her entirely offline study on the photographic practices of Georgetown students during a trip to Israel, Rebekah Sobel found that, in her conversations with the students about their photographs “they often described how they felt or what was happening before, during and after the image was taken” (2009, p. 236). This means that individuals are able to switch back and forth between spaces and moments in time when looking at travel pictures: they are able to think back (with more or less accuracy) to the moment of the visit. Considering the prevalence of social media in many people’s lives I decided to see if this would be a viable option and decided to sample participants on Instagram to look at their photographs shared from the sites and talk to them about the context of their visit.

Integrating an Instagram ethnography into this project helps to expand my ethnographic approach to a platform on which visitors meaningfully engage with the memorials.¹⁰ Combining observations of behavior with insights into visitors’ thought processes, the ethnographic methods had to be adapted to the online

¹⁰ It is because of the importance of combining online and offline methods of access to the field that I use the term “Instagram ethnography” here, instead of, for example “netnography,” which is defined by Robert Kozinets, as “participant-observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 60). In this sense, my understanding of the method corresponds to Kozinets. However, where I employ the method differently is in my focus on embedding it in a study which also accesses the field through offline methods. As Tribe and Mkono write, Kozinets claims that “[t]here are however significant differences between ethnography and netnography, and it would be simplistic to view netnography as ‘online ethnography.’ While both approaches are immersive, netnography does not have access to the physical context that ethnographers draw from in real world fields” (2017, p. 106).

context (see O'Reilly, 2005). For this Instagram ethnography, I conducted qualitative content analyses of Instagram posts (observation) with interviews with the creators (insights into the participants' perspectives). In the following, I first elaborate on the decision to focus on Instagram before elaborating on setting up the Instagram ethnography.

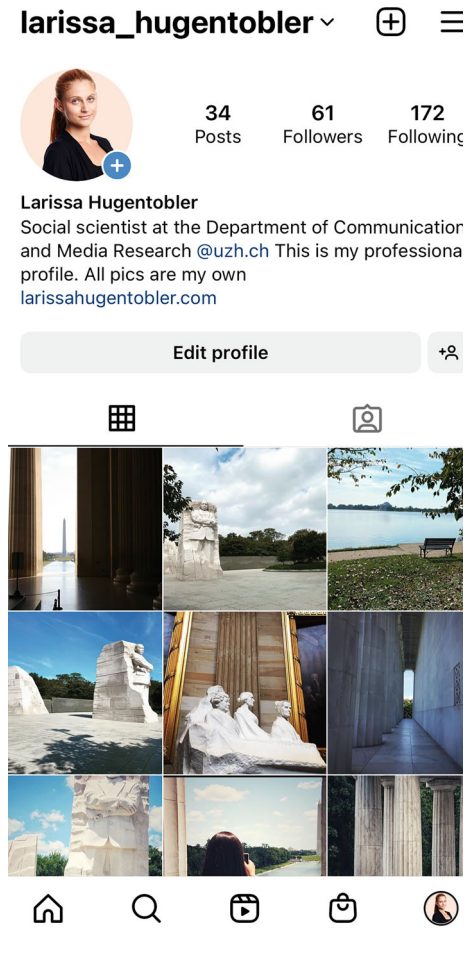
5.2.1 Platform Selection

Often discussed in the literature with the help of the uses and gratifications approach (Katz, 1959), scholars have long acknowledged that people select social media platforms based on specific needs (Quinn, 2016). The current social media environment can be described with the term *polymedia* coined by Madianou and Miller which describes a communication environment in which people must choose among different affordances as media are not interchangeable in their uses (2012, p. 170)¹¹. Therefore, when studying visitors' online interactions with a memorial site, different platforms might be suitable depending on the research questions.

As I write in my paper "The Instagram Interview: A Qualitative Method to Access Individuals' Offline and Online Experiences" (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 249), the selection of Instagram was directly tied to my research questions and reflects the platform's (perceived) affordances and conventions (see Norman, 1999, 2017). I want to take a moment here to differentiate between the three concepts, as they have been frequently misused in the literature, as Don Norman, who introduced the concepts to the field of user-centered design, points out repeatedly:

¹¹ Nick Couldry similarly uses the term "media manifold" to indicate not only a mere plurality, but a linked configuration (2012, p. 16).

Fig. 5.1 The Plus Sign as a Symbol for the Affordance of Uploading an Image or Video. (Note. The plus sign can be found at the top right of the screen, next to the username)



The term affordance refers to the relationship between a physical object and a person (or for that matter, any interacting agent, whether animal or human, or even machines or robots). An affordance is a relationship between the properties of an object and the capabilities of the agent that determine just how the object could possibly be used. (2017, p. 11)

Affordances are therefore possible actions an agent can carry out with an object. These affordances can be visible or invisible. This means that, circling back to social media, there might be functions that are technologically possible, but users might not be aware of because they are invisible. On Instagram, one affordance is that users can take and upload photographs straight through the app: this is an affordance. However, users need signals to know that this is something their app can do and where exactly to do it. For this, there are two strategies: swiping the screen to the right opens the camera view, revealing the affordance of photography. However, there is no indication in the app that swiping the screen indeed leads to the camera screen: it is something that must be learned through trial and error or word of mouth. There is, however, an additional path that leads to the camera: a little “+” sign at the top of the app’s home screen as well as on the user’s profile picture (see Fig. 5.1). When clicking on this icon, the user is given the options “post,” “story,” “reel,” and “live.” This icon, then, is the signifier for the affordance (see Norman, 2017, p. 13).

Affordances enable and restrict what is possible to do on an app and (good) signifiers can help make those affordances perceptible. However, the technological possibilities are not the only factor that guides the way in which individuals use Instagram (or any other everyday object). Platform conventions play an equally important role. Don Norman defines conventions as a type of cultural constraints (2017, p. 146). Cultural constraints are “a set of allowable actions for social situations” (Norman, 2017, p. 128) and they help individuals know how to behave in specific situations or how to interact with certain objects, based on what they deem to be normally acceptable in their culture (be this the culture of visiting a pub and ordering at the bar, or the culture of turning on a computer by pressing some sort of prominent button). Conventions, then, are “arbitrary, artificial and learned” (Norman, 1999, p. 42) and Norman uses the example of eating utensils or appropriate clothing to show that there are cultural conventions that can take on a plethora of different incarnations but within one culture they are deemed to be correct and proper while others are not (2017, p. 146). This is true of social media as well. Twitter, for example, is used as a platform to voice one’s political opinion and participate in discussions. This convention is encouraged by the platform’s perceived affordances: it is a text-first platform. While images can be uploaded, it is clearly not the main purpose of the platform, as defined by its conventions. Instagram, on the other hand, is an image-first platform. One cannot share content to Instagram without a visual component.¹²

¹² Granted, today, the visual field can be filled with a text that is rendered in image-form, but the affordances still demand an image-file to be uploaded in order for a post to be created.

Instagram is therefore an inherently visual medium, as are memorials. Visitors frequently stress that much of their enjoyment stems from a site's aesthetic beauty. This corresponds to the nature of tourism which is often considered a uniquely visual experience (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). This is reflected in previous research showing that tourists tend to share about their tourism experiences visually rather than through narrative content (e.g., Bilgihan et al., 2016; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014, p. 53; Oliveira et al., 2020, p. 9). I therefore study interactions with tourism locations on a site with a visual focus. While other social networking sites now also provide the affordance of uploading photographs straight from the mobile phone, in 2021, Instagram was still the most frequently used image-based social media platform among the general U.S. population (Auxier & Erson, 2021). The platform's largest user group is that of 25 to 34-year-olds (Clement, 2020), which is quite a bit older than other social networking sites but corresponds best to the median age of visitors I encountered on site (27 years old). At the time of writing, even among teens (ages 13 to 17), Instagram is still the third most used platform, closely following TikTok (67 vs. 62% of teenagers use the platforms, (Vogels, 2022)), which bills itself as "the leading destination for short-form mobile video" (*About*, n. d.). The video platform YouTube is the most popular platform for this age-group at 95% (Vogels et al., 2022). Instagram is therefore still in the top three platforms for teenagers and the most frequently used image-based site. Overall, it can therefore be said that by studying tourism images on Instagram, I study one of the—if not the single—most popular image-based social networking sites at the time of the research. Despite the platform's popularity and prevalence in travel-related storytelling, "Instagram as the most popular site for travel posts remains underexplored" (Daxböck et al., 2021, p. 245).

In addition to the platform affordance of uploading pictures guiding which type of content can be shared on Instagram, the *type* of image uploaded and the type of story it tells is also determined by platform conventions. This corresponds to the different stages, on which—according to Erving Goffman—individuals perform (1959). Instagram is often considered the stage on which to represent one's life in a positive manner, such as a highlight-reel or an online photo album. The motivation, then, is to share positive self-representations (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Gibbs et al., 2015; Hu et al., 2014; E. Lee et al., 2015; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Even before the advent of social media, taking a picture of one's vacation has always (also) served the purpose of communicating and projecting the

The image comes first, both in the production process (one cannot add text until an image file is selected) and in the perception process.

self (Robinson & Picard, 2009, p. 20). Sharing travel photographs on Instagram, however, has evolved into a main motivation for using the platform (Christou et al., 2020; Siegel & Wang, 2019; S. P. Smith, 2021). By sharing a photograph from a Martin Luther King Jr. memorial, an individual can therefore shape their online persona by showing that they are a person who travels, as well as someone who is interested in history and, specifically, the celebration of a marginalized community.

Looking at these photographs shared on Instagram, I focused on Feed posts: one of two affordances on the app, the other being Stories. While every Instagram post can be deleted after publishing, Feed posts are created to remain on a person's Instagram feed while a Story post disappears again after 24 hours. Instagram introduced a feature called "Story Highlight" in December 2017, and now users can archive their Story posts as well. However, they are not visible on the feed but rather have to be accessed through a little icon on the person's profile banner. While the difference in permanence between the two features has therefore been complicated, Feed posts still have a superior standing in that they are created with the intention of durability, representing the user on their feed, and have higher aesthetic demands attached to them. However, what is more crucial to this research project than the modality of the two features is their "searchability." Story posts are only viewable by a person's followers. They can be tagged at a location, but the search behavior works in reverse; if I see a Story on a friend's profile, I can follow the location tag to the site. However, I cannot search for the location and find all tagged Story posts. This means that, while these posts are by no means irrelevant for research, they do not present an engagement with the site which is public to the same extent. I therefore chose to look at Feed posts for practical reasons—because I could not search for the location tag in Stories—as well as conceptual reasons: because I am interested in posts that are published with an intention of permanence and that are searchable by the public through the location tag. While this methodology does not allow generalizations beyond this platform, it is a productive method to study visitors' engagements with the memorials on the primary social networking site for sharing tourism images and negotiating one's identity.

5.2.2 Creation of the Researcher Profile

In order to access Instagram post, one needs an Instagram profile. As I discuss in my paper on the Instagram interview (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 4)¹³, there are advantages to both, creating a research-specific social media profile and using one's own, personal, social media profile for conducting online research (see Urbanik & Roks, 2020). I decided to create a professional profile for several reasons. First, I am an active Instagram user with a private profile. Aside from not wanting to share personal posts from my everyday life with anyone but my private circle (hence my privacy settings), I believe that using this profile for research purposes would defy one of the advantages of online research: the minimal impact of interviewer-markers (see Fischer, 2009, p. 73). If potential participants would be able to look at my personal profile, they might not only find many clues about my personal preferences and political affiliations, all of which could bias their answers, they would also find posts about my personal experience in DC, which could show personal opinions on the topic I want to discuss with them. Furthermore, this project is not specifically interested in sensitive data and relies on relatively short interactions: the level of trust-building for these conversations was therefore comparatively low (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 4). This was specific to the project at hand and when researchers rely on establishing personal and intimate relationships with their participants, using one's personal profile or a profile which is populated with more personal information (more on this later) can be beneficial.

Regardless of whether or not a researcher uses a professional profile, I suggest keeping the biography on the profile related to the study at hand, at least for the duration of the research. This is because, while I do not study online communities per se, I want to be as transparent as possible about my intentions as a researcher, which corresponds to widespread agreement on digital media research ethics which posit that researchers must disclose their "professional persona when collecting data in online communities" (Seta, 2020, p. 90). I decided to add the University of Zurich handle to my profile to signal to potential participants that this is a trustworthy profile (see Fig. 5.2).

¹³ This chapter is largely based on my paper "The Instagram Interview: Talking to People About Travel Experiences Across Online and Offline Spaces" (Hugentobler 2022b).



Fig. 5.2 Researcher Instagram Profile

The addition of the handle, instead of simply writing “University of Zürich”, helps users track the institution and should signal an official affiliation since linking to an institution of which one is not a member might be risky. This is also important because interviewees will likely share personal information and they should know that this is going to be handled with care. I also added the URL to my professional website to further ensure that potential participants can check my credentials and also learn a bit more about my project. Lastly, I added a profile picture which is the same picture as on my website. This should further help legitimize my account (see Hine, 2000, p. 74).

Once I created the profile bio, I added images to my profile because, as we know from previous research, empty profiles can look like they are lurkers or social bots (Urbanik & Roks, 2020). I also wanted to create more of an equal exchange opportunity: If I learn something by studying participants’ Instagram profiles, they should also be able to learn something about me when they look at mine. This idea of reciprocity posits my researcher role in close alignment to the “observer-as-participant” (Gold, 1958, p. 221): I participate in the activity I study by sharing images and looking at other individuals’ profiles. However, I remain more of an observer than an active participant (importantly, being an observer is indeed part of being a participant in the activity of Instagram use). The photographs I chose to share were all from my fieldwork in DC (see Fig. 5.3). I decided to thus signal my interest in memorials but was careful not to attach personal opinions to my posts. This is why I kept captions purely descriptive, simply naming the memorials. I also tried to have a bit of a range of different memorials on my profile, so as not to slant my interest in one direction (e.g., only memorials to marginalized communities).

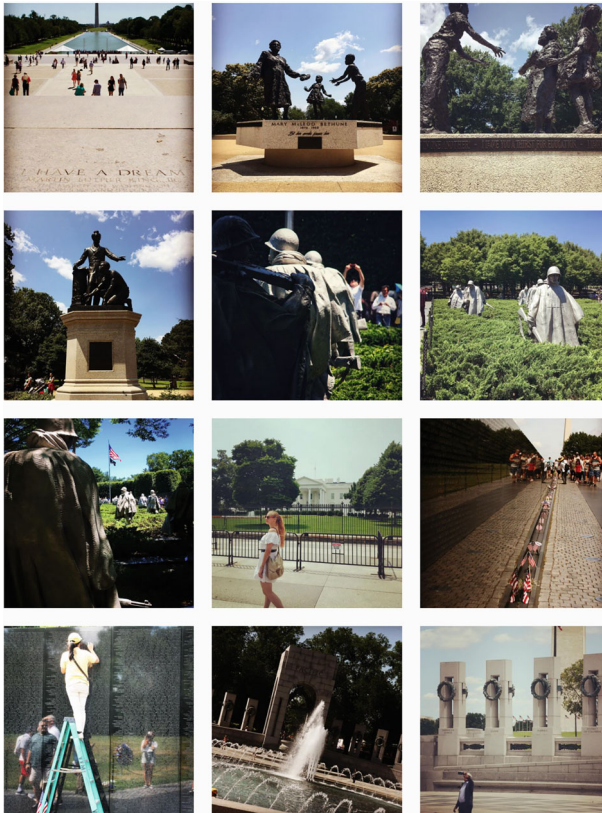


Fig. 5.3 Instagram Feed With Images from DC Fieldwork

Fig. 5.4 Skeptical
Response to Interview
Request

How do I benefit from this?
Honestly, I looked at your first
message as very unusual and
some type of Spam. Not
saying that it is but I wasn't
sure.

I made some changes to my researcher profile after I had already contacted several users. This was because I had gotten fairly frequent responses where the individual I had contacted was skeptical of my intentions, sometimes telling me explicitly that they think it might be spam (see Fig. 5.4). I assumed this might be in part caused by the manner in which I had set up my profile because I had only shared pictures of memorials despite knowing that Instagram is a platform on which users share many pictures of people (themselves or others). In fact, Hu and colleagues have found that “nearly half (46.6%) of the photos in [their sample] belong to Selfies and Friends categories with slightly more self-portraits” (2014, p. 597). In a second step, I therefore added several photographs which showed me during fieldwork (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 250).



Fig. 5.5 The Author During a Segway Tour in Front of the Capitol

I decided to only include pictures from my fieldwork because it would keep the research interest of the profile clear while at the same time allowing potential participants a glimpse into my life where researcher and private person overlap (see Fig. 5.5). In this sense, the images I shared were personal, but they also fit my research intentions. I captioned some of these images in a more playful manner. Adding these pictures of myself should help increase trust which is

crucial for participation. It was a way to build rapport, because, as “O’Connor and Madge (2017) suggest [,] one way to build rapport in online interviewing is to identify shared characteristics and experiences between the participant and the researcher” (Dahlin, 2021, p. 8). I showed images of myself visiting memorials in the hope that other Instagram users who shared images from their memorial visits would see this as a common interest. I do believe this strategy helped in building rapport and it also seemed to have impacted skepticism about my intentions or the “realness” of my profile: after I had populated my profile with said images, I no longer received any skeptical messages. This could, of course, have been a coincidence but I nevertheless recommend researchers create profiles according to the platform logic to increase participation but also to participate in the interactional nature of a specific platform.

5.2.3 Sampling Method & Sample

To sample for posts of and visitors to the two memorials, I searched for the two memorials on Instagram, under their respective location tags in order to find posts which engage with the physical site explicitly in the public sphere of Instagram. The sampling methods for each memorial site are discussed in the respective chapters (11.3.1 and 11.3.2), as sampling already revealed some answers to my research questions. During my sampling process, I saved the posts that followed my criteria and then messaged its creator to ask if they would be willing to speak to me about their post. This sampling method presents one significant bias: self-selecting into a research project always means that participants will be more interested in the topic than the average person (see Bethlehem, 2010). Furthermore, individuals who agree to be interviewed through Instagram are likely more experienced Instagram users (see Altmann, 2011, p. 100; Fischer, 2009). However, as I mentioned in a previous paper (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 252), being able to answer research questions online can also lead to more shy people participating than in traditional research settings (see Hertel et al., 2008). By sampling through the location tag, private profiles are automatically excluded as only posts on public profiles appear.

While one can argue that I therefore exclude posts by users who might exhibit different posting behaviors—in line with their privacy preference—for my research question, focusing on public profiles in fact makes sense: I am interested in *public*, individual engagement with the official narrative. This means that, for my research question, private Instagram posts are in fact not relevant

and, therefore, sampling public profiles only is not a disadvantage (see Hugentobler, 2022b). However, researchers must consider this issue when adapting their own research question to Instagram research. Therefore, overall, sample biases are comparable to the ones in offline interview methods. The method is not inherently inferior, and its advantages will be shown in the following.

By employing this sampling method, I study individuals' posts which serve two functions: By being aggregated through their tag at a specific location they become part of a larger narrative. At the same time, however, they are also showcased on users' personal profiles. These Instagram posts thereby serve two functions: to add a personal story to a larger narrative and to create and manage a personal identity through a curated profile. These posts can then be read as contributions or challenges to public memory and as personal narratives about the self.

5.2.4 Content Analysis of Instagram Posts

Analyzing the 153 Instagram posts corresponded to the ethnographic observation in the online realm. In focusing on the posts, I acknowledge that

[c]ultural constraints and conventions are about what people believe and do, and the only way to find out what people do is to go out and watch them—not in the laboratories, not in the usability testing rooms, but in their normal environment. (Norman, 1999, p. 41)

I therefore wanted to study Instagram sharing of memorial sites in its natural environment: on individuals' personal Instagram profiles where they had created the posts without being aware of any research intervention.

To analyze the Instagram posts, I conducted a qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2010), which is commonly used to uncover themes in online material (e.g. Eriksson, 2016). I created a codebook with deductive codes that came from the literature on motivations for active Instagram use and tourism photography and then added inductive codes throughout the first coding round. I also added codes informed by my on-site field research, mostly concerning if and how individuals talk about King in their posts, what the posts say about individuals' opinions about the narratives told at the memorial, and their personal understanding of Dr. King. As I began coding, I continuously added inductive codes found in the data to my codebook and wrote memos including all observations about the data which came up during coding. I stopped adding more posts to my data

set once I reached theoretical saturation, “which occurs ‘when additional analysis no longer contributes to discovering anything new about a category’ (Strauss, 1987: 21)” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 65). As Christou et al. describe, “[s]aturation was operationalized in a way that it was consistent with the leading questions (Saunders et al., 2018) by ensuring that sufficient evidence for each theme was established, to reach conclusions” (2020, p. 290).

After the first round of coding, I cleaned up the codebook making sure that codes and subcodes were clear and added coding instructions where I thought boundaries between codes might become blurry. I then conducted a second coding cycle during which I applied inductive codes which I found later in the dataset to all other data, where applicable. When individuals posted more than one photograph in one post, I analyzed the post as a whole (see Lo & McKercher, 2015, p. 108), paying particular attention to the photograph that was chosen as the first one in the post, appearing in previews. Once all the data was coded, I conducted a frequency analysis for the most interesting codes and, particularly, some of the subcodes. In this step, for example, I looked for the aspect of the memorial which appeared most often or what people were most frequently talking about in their caption. After this, an in-depth analysis of the data coded into specific categories was conducted to answer the research questions.

When coding the captions, I differentiated between “text” and “hashtags.” I coded both aspects of the captions but, for my analysis, differentiated between the two because the two types of texts have different functions. Hashtags are used to insert a post into a larger conversation, making it findable through common keywords. Hashtags are therefore interesting for this study because they signal which narratives users want their posts to be attached to. Hashtags, are, however, not part of a caption in the sense that they are read by viewers, and they do not tend to be intended as part of the narrative. This can be seen in some examples where users in fact insert several line breaks after their captions before adding their hashtags. While they are important to a post, they are not thought to be part of the narrative.

5.2.5 The Instagram Interview

In parallel to the content analysis of the Instagram posts, I conducted interviews with twenty-eight creators to find out about their motivations for the posts as well as their on-site experiences. I then combined a person’s statements about their Instagram post with the actual post and conducted a semiotic analysis, which “focuses on the relationship of signifier and the signified. Signifier is a visual

component of an image. The signified is the intentional message or possible meaning that the signifier represents” (Lo & McKercher, 2015, p. 108; referring to Thwaites et al., 1994). In this Instagram ethnography, the intentional message could be accessed through the interviews and the possible meanings through my literature research as well as previous fieldwork.

I have published a paper titled “The Instagram Interview: A Qualitative method to Access Individuals’ Offline and Online Experiences” (Hugentobler, 2022b), in which I elaborate in detail on how to conduct an Instagram interview, in which circumstances it can be a productive addition to a research project, and also discuss its advantages and disadvantages. As Emma Dahlin wrote in her 2021 article on the email interview, “while there is no lack of discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of such methods, there is little guidance in the literature in terms of how electronic methods can be used effectively and productively in qualitative research” (2021, p. 1). I hope to have contributed to this literature and do not want to repeat my findings here. I therefore refer the reader to the paper published in the journal *Media and Communication*. The main conclusions are that the Instagram interview is suitable to speak with visitors of cultural sites about the artefacts they shared from the site as well as their on-site experience after the visit. Furthermore, talking to individuals through Instagram can create a setting which allows for personal and intimate conversations, particularly for those who use the platform for everyday communication.

When analyzing the data from the Instagram ethnography, I treated those cases where I had access to an individual’s post and their statements through the interview as one case. As Pink writes about her method of the ethnographic visual analysis: it focuses on the triangulation of one’s oral account of their photographs and photographic practices with the artefacts (2001). In doing so, the method acknowledges the “importance of the voice of participants along with the researcher’s interpretation of the text (Holm, 2008; Pink, 2005)” (Lo & McKercher, 2015, p. 107). This is why I triangulated my analyses of the posts with the interviews (see also Hugentobler & Rüedy (2023) for another application of this method).

5.3 The Second Fieldwork

The Instagram ethnography proved so productive that it created more questions about visitors' on-site experiences, especially regarding the in-the-moment atmosphere. During my first fieldwork, my focus in the interviews was mostly on online interactions with the physical site. Now, however, I also wanted to find out how experiences in the digital realm can impact on-site behaviors without explicit online interactions. Furthermore, I wanted to focus more on the experience of being at the site and what was considered unique about it. While the Instagram interviews were successful at accessing the overall impression of the memorial, they—at times—were not ideal for accessing in-the-moment reactions to the sites. My ethnographic approach here, again, profited from Grounded Theory strategies, which

can increase ethnographers' involvement in their research enquiry, despite however involved they might be in participating in their research settings. ... Grounded theorists select the scenes they observe and direct their gaze within them. If used with care and thoroughness, grounded theory methods provide systematic procedures for probing beneath the surface and digging into the scene. These methods help in maintaining control over the research process because they assist the ethnographer in focusing, structuring and organizing it. (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001, pp. 161–162)

I therefore not only refocused my questions and approaches during the first fieldwork but continued to do so throughout the entire research process. This led me to conduct a second set of on-site observations and interviews with visitors and experts.

5.3.1 Interviews¹⁴

I interviewed 16 individuals at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial and seven at the Lincoln Memorial. This time, I did not fill out a form of demographics for each participant. In my first field research, I did this as the first step of the interview to ensure that, when people had to run off, I had gotten this information. However, when analyzing the data from my first fieldwork, I realized that I was not interested in demographic markers that I could not gather naturally during the

¹⁴ Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains supplementary content which can be accessed through the following link: [Appendix 2](#).

conversation.¹⁵ Gender and ethnicity can be guessed relatively well in conversation with a person (78% women, 87% White). Country or state of residence also quickly become clear as most visitors mention it (95% US American).¹⁶ Age is more difficult to guess but for my purposes I do not need to know a person's exact age. For each person I wrote down an estimate, helping me to categorize them into teenagers, young adults, adults, and older adults. These categories are useful when it comes to educational experiences as well as technology use. Furthermore, having realized how short my time with these visitors is during the first fieldwork, I did not want to waste any time on information that was not absolutely essential to the analysis (the median length of the interviews was 6:30 minutes). I noted my impressions on these markers after the interviews and documented when a visitor commented on one of them.

This time, I therefore started my interviews by asking how individuals like the memorial. I had learned that this often brought the conversation into a direction that was not only interesting for my research questions, as it shows what individuals personally deem important (see Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 22), but also encouraged visitors to talk about their experiences because they could choose what to speak about. This approach of keeping the interview more open corresponds to a phenomenological approach:

Generally, in qualitative inquiry, phenomenology is a term that points to an interest in understanding social phenomena from the actors' own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 22)

This is exactly what I wanted to know: what visitors felt was part of their experience of the memorial.

The interviews were not completely unstructured, however, as I had different sections I tried to discuss with all my interviewees. This time, I was most interested in the benefits of being at a site in person, so I put this topic next on my list. I asked about how it feels being there, and what people have been doing since they got to the site and what they were thinking about while walking around: questions that are almost impossible to ask during the online portion of the project. This was followed by a section about learning at the memorial. I began by asking if they feel they learned something from their visit, if they

¹⁵ See Appendix 2.2 for a table with all the information for the interviewees.

¹⁶ This sample was less diverse than the sample for the first fieldwork. It could be that the time of the fieldwork in October, might be a less popular time for international travel and also a more difficult time to get off work or school, as summer breaks tends to end by September.

consumed any information (offline or online) while here and whether they would like there to be some (more) information on site. I then moved on to the topic of photography and the co-presence of the digital. Here, I asked about what expectations individuals had before coming here to find out about what media might have influenced their travel behavior and expectations of the memorial. I asked about what they have been photographing and what they want to do with their photographs. I then also asked about whether they have social media and if they think about posting about this experience, including if they are already thinking about this as they are walking around here.

This time, I distributed my card to all the interviewees, and I also wrote my Instagram account on the card. This increased reactions only by a fraction as one interviewee contacted me through Instagram through her own volition while after the first field interviews no one had contacted me.

5.3.2 Expert Interviews

During this fieldwork, I also wanted to hear from experts about what the intentions were behind creating the memorials and how they perceive and handle the potential of new media and the changes in visitor behavior. While the focus of this project is on the visitors, I wanted to contextualize their experiences and see to what extent the institutions in power account for individuals' experiences and wishes for these memorials and whether visitors' online engagement is something the institutions are aware of or engage with. During my analysis of the memorials and the offline and online interviews, I came to conclusions, particularly regarding the information provided by the memorial sites, to which I desired a reaction by the institutions who created and manage the sites.

I first conducted a group interview with three members of the National Capitol Planning Commission (NCPC). The three members who generously gave their time (85 minutes) were Angela Dupont, a senior urban planner in the policy and research division, Joanna McCrehan, an urban planner in the policy and research division and Michael Sherman who is the director of the policy and research group.¹⁷ This conversation followed a semi-structured interview guide.

The second expert interview, which was enabled through my contacts at the NCPC was with Sophia Kelly. Sophia is the memorials program manager at the

¹⁷ We had to conduct our conversation through Zoom since they were still not allowed back in their offices at the time of our meeting, due to measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. However, the digital aspect of the conversation was not a hindrance to our very productive conversation.

National Park Service and met me for a walk around the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial and the Tidal Basin. We walked around for over an hour and discussed topics including the process of building memorials in DC. This commented walk was more of a walking expert interview, although our conversation was in part guided by the sites through which we strolled (MLK and FDR memorials), and we discussed some of the narratives told by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial as we were walking through the site.

5.3.3 Commented Walk

The second, genuine, commented walk I went on was with Denaise Seals. Our walk lasted one hour and twenty-seven minutes “during which I recorded our conversation, and we took photographs that we later shared with each other” (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 13). Sometimes called the “guided tour technique” (Forrest, 2016, p. 195), the “go-along” (Kusenbach, 2003), the “walking interview” (Evans & Jones, 2011; Jones et al., 2008; Kinney, 2017), or the “commented walk” (Layeb & Salem, 2014), the method’s goal is to capture “data relating to people’s understanding of place” (Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 849) and to observe social practices “in situ while accessing ... informants’ experiences and interpretations at the same time” (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 463). Located primarily in geographical research, the method was seen to contribute to this project with a more in-depth view on how a visitor experiences the spaces of the memorials. Even though the on-site interviews were already far removed from the sedentary interviews which walking interviews are often placed in opposition to (e.g. Evans & Jones, 2011), they were comparatively short. This is why I wanted to add a longer walk with a visitor during which we could really take our time to look at all components of the memorials.

I had talked to Denaise through the Instagram ethnography and when I asked her if she wanted to meet for a visit to the memorials, she happily agreed. Having established a rapport throughout our Instagram interview, I believe that it was easier for both of us to meet. The interview set the groundwork in terms of trust and common interests. This is why I would not recommend simply writing to people on Instagram to immediately meet in person. In addition to potential safety concerns, it can cause the researcher to waste time when they only realize once on location that the participant actually wants to talk about other things. This happened to me during the online interviews too and sometimes I was unable to reign in interviewees who talked about things irrelevant to my questions. The goal of this walk was not only to continue our conversation but also to witness Denaise

experience the sites and gain a more in-depth understanding of her behavior at and understanding of the memorials under study.

Denaise is a professional videographer and passionate photographer. I therefore did not need to encourage her to take pictures as we were walking along the memorials. Instead, she often asked me to stop so that she could get a shot. Observing one person throughout a longer trip was helpful in understanding her photography behavior. I had already observed photography behavior of tourists on site and the outcomes of tourist photography on Instagram. However, this walk allowed me a unique insight into one individual's process of production as well as the final outcomes as Denaise gladly shared her images with me after our walk.

5.4 Researcher Role and Research Ethics

In my interactions with visitors both on site and—to a lesser degree—online, it was clear that I am a White woman and, often, a White woman from outside the country. This positions me clearly as someone outside the narrative of public memory which the two DC memorials represent. It is important to understand that responses to my questions must have been colored—sometimes more sometimes less—by my presence in the field. However, this must not necessarily be a negative aspect. Instead, it is crucial to reflect my role and the impact my identity markers might have had on my respondents. For example, I observed that in my on-site conversations with African American visitors, I was often told that the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial was for “everyone” and “not just for black people” (e.g. Derek, 3. June 2019). This can potentially be seen as a reaction to my appearance in the field as a White woman: African American visitors might have changed their responses to conform to a social desirability bias when speaking to an apparent representative of the dominant group by not claiming the memorial as their own. Being a member of the dominant group could therefore have resulted in some visitors avoiding confrontation by not voicing more controversial opinions about the memorials or the narratives of public memory in the United States more generally. However, as the following discussions will show, many visitors shared critical opinions with me, showing that my presence on site did not entirely preclude honest conversations. It is nevertheless crucial to be aware of this setting in my interpretations and I elaborate on more instances of how my presence in the field might have affected responses throughout the book.

In the Instagram ethnography, I in fact explicitly discussed my role as a White woman studying the public memory of Dr. King with several participants (see Fig. 5.6). I did this in conversations when we had already built rapport and the person had already brought up their own African American identity (see, R. Atkinson, 1998, p. 35). These conversations showed that it is not only crucial to reflect one's own role as a researcher but discussing how a conversation might feel when the interviewer is part of the dominant group can in fact create further insights into the topic (Hugentobler, 2022b, pp. 254–255).

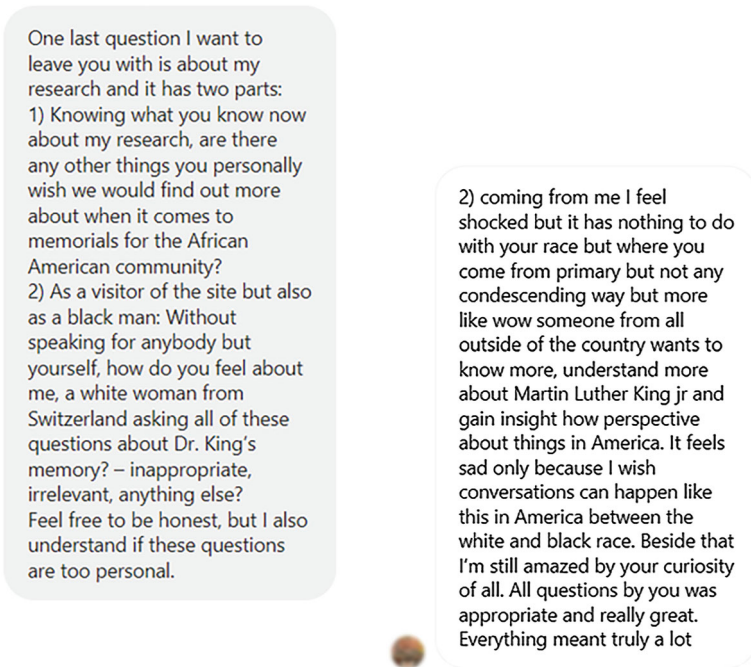


Fig. 5.6 Conversations About Ethnicity

In all my approaches, whenever I interacted with people, I always gave them the option to stay anonymous. During my in-person interviews I ensured this by not asking individuals their names. When they offered them, I asked them if they wanted me to use their names in any potential publications. In the Instagram ethnography, most participants had their names in the biography. I asked all of

them at the end of our interview if they would like for me to use their name in my book. For those who said no or when they did not respond, I anonymized their name in this publication.¹⁸ Any posts by interviewees which appear in this book have been cleared by their creators as their posts are connected in this book to the opinions they voiced in our conversations. For those Instagram users who did not participate in the interviews, I reproduced the posts as I found them, but blurred all faces and user names to ensure a level of anonymity because, while these posts were published publicly, the creators nevertheless did not explicitly agree to appearing in a scientific publication.

5.5 Combination of the Three Approaches

To synthesize the three approaches, I combined those data points which were used to answer the same questions. This means that all 108 interviews were combined into one MAXQDA file and I ensured that all codes corresponded to the same concepts. This was important to find instances of the same theme across data created through offline and online methods. I conceive of my data as *one* data set which was created through online and offline methods at three different points of access to the field, and including different *types* of data, all of which help answer the same questions while highlighting different perspectives. What this means, for example, is that I asked questions about online engagement not only through the online method and questions about on-site experiences not only through offline methods. In analyzing my data, I then also found that this combination of modalities was in fact highly productive. Throughout this book, I refer to interviews conducted on site as well as through Instagram when discussing the same questions. This reflects my use of the methods not to ask specific modality-related questions (e.g., only asking about online behavior through online conversations), but instead to use different methods to access different perspectives on the same phenomenon.

I have written about the advantage of combing different approaches in my paper on the Instagram interview, where I specifically elaborate on how the Instagram interview can overcome the offline/online dichotomy (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 257). What makes Instagram particularly useful as a platform to speak with visitors of tourist sites is not only the possibility to sample through a location but

¹⁸ Appendices 2.3 and 2.4 include all Instagram users whose posts were analyzed from the MLK and Lincoln Memorials respectively. They were all given unique ID numbers which were then supplemented with anonymized names for those participants who appear in this book. All the anonymized names can be found in the appendices.

also to speak with individuals on a platform which bridges the offline online gap: users post about their offline lives on Instagram, visit places in the physical world that they have seen on “the gram,” and they use the app to talk to friends they know from online or offline contexts” (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 257). The conversation therefore occurs in a natural environment, at least for those individuals who routinely use the app in their everyday lives. Speaking with these individuals on the platform on which they engaged with the phenomenon under study is also productive because, having “logged onto Instagram, participants were already in an appropriate mindset and ready to talk about their travel experiences and their understanding of public memory because the platform affordances and cultural constraints encourage engagement with such experiences” (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 257).

Lastly, by looking at visitors’ online artefacts created from a memorial visit and speaking with them about both—their experience on site and their Instagram post—I acknowledge that, for certain individuals, the experience of the visit does not end once they leave the location. Instead, just as before the advent of digital media, they might reflect on their experience, think about it in the context of their daily lives and speak about it with friends and family. In the digital age, sharing about the visit can be considered more than an “after the fact” accounting of an offline experience, but a part of the experience itself. When acknowledging that the experience of a memorial site can span across time and space as it does for visitors who share about the site on Instagram, we must adapt our methods to study these complex experiences accounting for all of their components: before, during, and after the physical presence on site (see Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 257).

By combining online and offline points of access to the field, and studying offline and online experiences, as well as speaking with experts of the specific sites, I created a rich dataset from which I will draw in the following analyses.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Part II
Visiting Memorials



Motivations for Visiting and Experiences at the “I Have a Dream” Inscription and the Lincoln Memorial

6

Walking up the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on a sunny summer day, I am greeted by dozens if not hundreds of people sitting on its “front steps” (see Fig. 6.1). The steps are directed eastward which means that, any time after noon, visitors sit in the blistering sun. While all three of the other sides are now at least partially shaded, this is where most people sit. But what else do they do besides sitting here? The main question I have in mind as I brace to chat to visitors is: have they come to visit Lincoln or Martin Luther King, Jr.? The following chapter elaborates on visitors’ reasons for visiting as well as their experiences of the site. My conversations show that individuals’ main motivations for visiting are tourism, geography, and the collection of sites. When asked about what they enjoy most about their visit they mostly mention the aesthetics and history.

Fig. 6.1 Visitors Sitting on the Front Steps of the Lincoln Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



6.1 Why Are People Visiting?

In my conversations with visitors, I talked to seventeen individuals (thirteen on site, four online) about their motivations for visiting. Their responses were coded into nine categories which were not mutually exclusive. Before delving into the different motivations, I want to briefly elaborate on the one reason which was never given: to see the “I Have a Dream” inscription. Even in those cases when individuals knew it was going to be there, it was not a motivation for their visit. The fact that visitors do not come to the Lincoln to see the inscription can be illustrated with an example from the Instagram ethnography. Luciana made it clear in our conversation how much she admires Dr. King and she posted an image from the Lincoln Memorial, which she dedicated—textually—to King. In the caption, she wrote:

As descendants of slaves, it was very special for me to be at this place today. Standing in the very spot where MLK gave his million-man speech [this visitor confuses the speech title with the 1995 Million Man March] is an honor. “Injustice anywhere

is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”—Martin Luther King #juneteenth. (Instagram post from 20 June 2021, see Fig. 6.2 for the post)

This post shows that Luciana not only knows that King gave a speech in this location, but she also shows her appreciation for it in the post. This is what makes it all the more interesting that she told me: “There is a marker on the ground indicating where he stood for his speech. I looked up the speech but I had forgotten he gave that speech in that spot until I actually saw the marker” (20 July 2021, Instagram interview).



Fig. 6.2 Instagram Post Referring to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Showing Lincoln. (*Note.* Posted by Luciana on 20 July 2021)

Luciana, a person familiar with the Civil Rights Movement needed a reminder that this is a historically significant location. This example shows that even for a visitor aware and appreciative of the speech, it was not the reason why she visited, partly caused by the fact that she did not know it was there. During my on-site conversations, eighteen visitors said they did not notice the inscription, while only seven said they did. As Felix summarized it: “I don’t think I would

change anything about it other than how easy it is to miss while you're there" (1 September 2021, Instagram interview).

The manager of a Segway tour also noted that, during their tours, guides usually do not mention that there is a marker in this spot, but they assume that people know that the speech happened there:

We at least mention that it happened there. Again, I think most Americans, and most of our tourists are Americans ... generally know what that is, so we don't really go in to talk about what it was. We just say "I Have a Dream" speech happened here, go stand in that same spot. Most people are going to know what that meant, or what it means. (Gerhard, 2 June 2019, interview at his office)

But not everyone remembers as none of the visitors in this study gave the speech as the motivation for their visit: many forgot that this is where the speech took place and most did not know there was a marker commemorating it.

6.1.1 Tourism

The reason most visitors mentioned for why they came to the Lincoln Memorial is "tourism" (59% of responses), which describes justifications for a visit which are directly tied to tourism behavior such as: "It's one of the landmark sites that we figured that we should see" (Quinn, 17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). These individuals frame their visit to the Lincoln Memorial as an integral part of their trip to DC and they explicitly state that it is one of the sites which they consider a "must see." This means that this is a landmark that is recognizable and part of every successful trip to the nation's capital, as one visitor said:

I think it was just a part of what we were doing, you know, ... we were seeing all the other monuments and stuff, and this is one that is just, I think, talked more about ... Like, the Washington Monument, the Capitol, the White House and here, are probably more of the ones that are talked about amongst people but then also, like nationally, like on TV and stuff. (Teresa, 17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial)

This quote illustrates that visitors to the Lincoln Memorial not only come to see it for the reason of seeing this specific memorial, but also because it is "what one does" when visiting DC: visiting the city's cultural heritage (see Cros & McKercher, 2020).

Implicit in this desire to see all of DC's most significant landmarks is the desire of the tourist to see that which is important. As Bourdieu stated: when

travelling, there are “sites and monuments which one must ‘do’” (1990, p. 37). Cros and McKercher further claim that.

[t]ourism is driven by attractions or, in marketing terms, demand generators. However, not all tourism attractions have equal demand-generation potential. A clear hierarchy of tourist attractions exists that can be defined according to the degree of compulsion felt by tourists to visit. (2002, p. 61)

The Lincoln Memorial appears to be a “must do” memorial, confirmed by its annual visitor numbers. In 2021, 8.5 million people visited the Lincoln Memorial, ranking in 8th place among most-visited National Parks in the nation, before sites such as the Grand Canyon (4.5 m) and Yosemite (3.3 m) national parks, and far ahead of the next-most-visited memorials, the World War II Memorial (3.7 m) and Vietnam Veterans Memorial (3.6 m) (*Visitation Numbers*, n.d.). One visitor, now living in DC, verbalized this landmark status as follows: “Before I moved here, when I would come to visit, we would always do the monuments and like walk around and stuff. [The Lincoln] is kind of like a staple, you know?” (Faye, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). Another visitor explained to me why their group was at the Lincoln that day as follows:

I told everybody we were coming here. Because we were here last year and we didn’t get to come here. We had done a lot of walking that day and we didn’t have the appropriate shoes on. So, we didn’t make it down here. But it’s part of the main reason we came back: we didn’t get to see the Lincoln Memorial—we have to get back and see it. (Ryan, 17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial)

This illustrates that a visit to DC is not complete unless one has visited the Lincoln Memorial: One of the city’s staples. As Quinn put it: “It’s one of the landmark sites that we figured that we should see” (17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial), framing it as an essential part of a successful trip to DC.

As a part of tourism, some individuals mentioned popular culture as a reason for visiting, such as Rita who answered my question about what made her decide to visit this memorial with: “Uhm, I don’t know, it’s such an iconic monument. And you see it in all types of movies and shows and you know” (Rita 5 June 2019). This was also reflected in some of the Instagram posts from the Lincoln Memorial, which specifically referenced a fictional product (see Fig. 6.3). Sharing an image from the Lincoln Memorial—overlooking the Reflecting Pond, Washington Monument, and Capitol—this visitor wrote in her caption “Visiting the set of one of my favorite shows, *Scandal*.” Having seen a tourism location on TV is not an uncommon reason to visit as tourism and popular culture are

deeply intertwined (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 62; Muslimah & Keumala, 2018). As Urry and Larsen write about the tourist gaze: “Over time, via advertising and the media, the images generated through different tourist gazes come to constitute closed self-perpetuating system of illusions which provide tourists with the basis for selecting and evaluating potential places to visit” (2011, p. 8).



Fig. 6.3 Referencing a TV Show in a Post From the Lincoln Memorial. (Note. Post published on 20 June 2021)

The images future visitors have in mind can stem from different places, including the national currency which several of the visitors mentioned as their motivation to visit: “I mean it’s on multiple currencies that we use, so to see it in real life is one of the reasons it’s really cool. I mean, it’s on the penny! Everybody has seen a penny” (Harper, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). This means that tourists tend to select sites to visit based on images they already have in their minds, reflecting the mediated gaze which leads visitors to see those sites that are famous for their mediated imagery (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 20). Visitors to DC therefore want to see the famous DC locations which they have already seen elsewhere.

Interestingly, people did not mention the internet or, more specifically, social media as a triggering factor for their visit. I explicitly spoke about this with twelve individuals among whom nine said they hadn’t looked up anything online

prior to their visit, while two said they looked up how to get to the memorial and one said: “Probably a few pictures” (Florence, 8 June 2019). Even when explicitly asked about if they remember having seen images of the memorial before their visit, none of the participants in my study mentioned a social media site or the fact that they had been influenced by previous visitors’ recommendations. While research into individuals’ travel decisions in the context of online review sites has produced many valuable insights into tourism motivations (e.g., Cox et al., 2009; Gretzel, 2007; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008), the role of social media is still under-studied and often focuses on how individuals use social media to find or receive travel information (Chang & Shen, 2018). However, research into how travel decisions are impacted by individuals’ social media use—not related to information searches—is still in its infancy. While anecdotal evidence has long shown that individuals use social media to be inspired in their travel decisions, one of the first scientific studies looking at this phenomenon was published in 2018 (Hajli et al., 2018). The authors then found that being envious of friends’ travel posts on social media can trigger individuals’ own travel intentions (Hajli et al., 2018, p. 188). We should therefore consider visitors’ potential—subconscious—interactions with online travel content before their visit as this is part of the tourist imaginary of a site:

Rachid Amirou, in *L’imaginaire touristique* (1995), has defined imaginary as a ‘universe of meaning,’ which creates a ‘third space’ that is filled with pictures and symbols that compose a fantasy about the place that has been elected as a tourist site In that context, imaginaries are sets of pictures, references, and knowledge which create a dreamy image of a site, an image that is more or less close to reality, but which works as a guide for the tourist experience. (Sabre, 2016, pp. 163–164)

These pictures can originate anywhere and are often held on to subconsciously. Because images of the nation’s prime cultural sites are so prevalent, it might remain unknown to the visitors, on which images exactly they built their imaginaries of a place.

Statements such as the following show that visitors to the Lincoln Memorial had images in their mind of what to expect, even when they could not remember where those images had come from: “Well, we mainly came for the water, for the reflection pool. We wanted to take a picture of that, but it’s empty” (Henry, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). Overall, therefore, the visitors frequently mentioned a tourism-related motivation for their visit, often including a reference to popular culture as the origin of their images but, more often than not, not giving a source for the tourist imaginary they had brought along in their minds.

6.1.2 Geography

The second most frequently mentioned reason for visiting the Lincoln Memorial was geography. 47% of visitors claimed that they visited (also) because of the memorial's convenient location in respect to the rest of their trip: "It was kind of just on our walk today," (Gideon, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial) one man said, while a visitor from the Netherlands mentioned: "We just rented the bikes and we're just riding up and down, really. So, this was just the next stop, the next cool thing to look at" (Brandon, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). Visiting the Lincoln Memorial because of its convenient location on the Mall shows that visitors to DC see the National Mall as a pre-selection of the most important memorials in the nation (which corresponds to its intended function). When I asked two friends (one from DC, one visiting from California), whether they were visiting any other memorials beside the Lincoln on that day, they said: "Uhm, just the ones which you can see on the National Mall" (Ivy, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). This shows that for these visitors, the Lincoln Memorial was not necessarily a memorial they sought out, a priority on their visit, but rather something that appeared on their trip, as Sarah told me: "I walked through the Mall and saw it and thought 'oh, beautiful!'" (17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). This supports the view of tourism as a passive activity (see Stylianou-Lambert, 2012, p. 1817): allowing the memorials to come to the visitor rather than seeking them out specifically. These types of visitors could then be aligned with what Boorstin called "tourists"—as opposed to "travelers." Mostly characterized by her passivity, the tourist is the one who "sight-sees" and who expects for things to happen to her (1967, p. 85).

However, this argument falls short in part because the National Mall is known to house the most important memorials in the city. By selecting to see everything within this park, the visitors in fact make a choice, albeit on a meta-level: they choose to see the most important memorials and the Lincoln Memorial happens to be amongst them. This stumble-upon character of the memorials on the Mall stresses the importance of location, illustrating a finding from Kramer and colleagues' study of the use of a mobile tour guide, which showed that—once on site—tourists like to trust pre-selected suggestions of specific sites (2007). While their study focused on the impact of mobile tour guides, the Mall can be considered a pre-selection as well: Memorials placed in this highly symbolic space are considered important. This shows the importance of the canon of the Mall: The most important memorials are the ones centrally located on the Mall, which can be visited in one sweep. As one visitor said: "For me, you start at one end, and you go to the other end. Because you have to, you have to! You got to see them

all!” (Ursula, 17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). If the Mall houses all the most important memorials, by extension, all memorials encountered while travelling along the Mall must be important.

6.1.3 Collection of Sites

The two themes of tourism and geography are tightly connected, considering that what one must see as a tourist in DC is the Mall, which is a geographical condensation of the nation’s history. The two then reinforce one another by encouraging the collection of sites. I have written about this briefly in a previous article (Hugentobler, 2022a) but would like to elaborate on it further here. Visitors to DC tend to want to see the canon of most important memorials. Seeing them all corresponds to an inherent aspect of the tourism experience to collect sites that are deemed important.

Collecting sites results in a need for speed.¹ As Tim Edensor writes, “[o]n guided tours, the tempo of supervised tourists takes on the character of a brisk march to designated destinations, interspersed with periods in which information is transmitted, photographs taken and souvenirs purchased, to constitute a segmented, stop-start collective performance” (2000, p. 339). This stop-start performance is most palpable on the Mall watching the many Segway tours zipping through the memorials (see Fig. 6.4). The Segways—even more so than scooters and bicycles, which are also in high demand—enable visitors to move through the vast space of the Mall more quickly, making the collection of as many memorials as possible an easily achievable reality (see Figs. 6.5 and 6.6 for bikes and scooters at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial). It is one example, to use Heidegger’s words, of “changes in technology turn[ing] the world into a collection of objects” (cited in R. J. Shepherd, 2015, p. 65).

¹ I have also written about the relevance of speed to DC tourism in my paper “No Incentives to Interact: A Case Study of Mobile Phone Interactions with Martin Luther King Jr. Memorials in Washington, DC” (Hugentobler, 2022a).

Fig. 6.4 A Segway Tour on the Way From One Memorial to the Next. (Note. Photograph by the author)

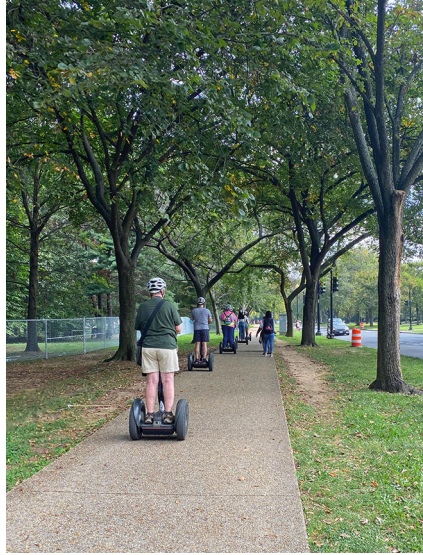


Fig. 6.5 Bicycle Stop at the Jefferson Memorial, on the Tidal Basin. (Note. Photograph by the author)



Fig. 6.6 Electric Scooter Tour in Front of the Jefferson Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

I experienced this myself when I partook in one of these tours, realizing how little time really is spent at each site. I joined a 2.5 h “National Mall” tour, offered by City Segway Tours.² While the Segway is indeed useful to manage the vast space of the Mall, it is a mode of transport: one cannot stand still on that machine and one cannot even really lift a hand to take a photograph. In fact, it is strongly discouraged by the guide, which is why we occasionally took quick stops to take pictures of particularly significant memorials and were told to dismount our Segways and walk a few steps to explore. This was at the White House and the Lincoln Memorial. The only location where the tour guide offered to take each participant’s individual picture was in front of the Capitol.³ The stopping points are therefore attributed with extraordinary value: While the other sites are only to be consumed in passing, these three locations are deemed important enough to warrant taking a short break.

The speed of the tour was striking to me, particularly because I had been spending several hours at once at the memorials I was studying, a type of visit I knew was atypical but still made me experience the Segway tour as even more

² The business has since been renamed Fat Tire Tours.

³ See Fig. 6.5 in Sect. 5.2.2.

rushed. However, the brevity of the interactions with the specific memorials is by design and it is an aspect of the tour that is appreciated by participants and is indeed the intention of the tours as the manager of City Segway Tours told me:

A lot of our tours are pretty short. The max, on our Segways at least, is only three hours. They are really more of an overview of the city. They're more just to show a wide range of the city more than any specific goal really. So, yes, it's more just to appreciate the sites a bit more than when they just walk. (Gerhard, 2 June 2019, interview at his office)

However, while these tours are intended to give more of an overview as a starting point, many visitors only consume the memorials in this manner.⁴ One of the participants during my tour was only in DC for the day during a layover and therefore booked the tour in order to see as much of the city as possible in the limited time she had available. In a city of countless memorials, individuals must make choices about which ones to see. It appears that their choice is largely dependent on seeing those memorials which are conveniently located on the National Mall as this not only makes it possible to collect several of them but it also ensures that the visitors see those sites which are important: amongst them the Lincoln Memorial.

6.2 What Visitors Enjoy

Regardless of why they were visiting, I wanted to know how visitors experienced the Lincoln Memorial and, particularly the “I Have a Dream” inscription. I explicitly talked to 27 individuals about what they enjoyed about their visit, and the two most frequently mentioned topics were *aesthetics*, which was never about the inscription, and *history*, which was rarely about the speech.

6.2.1 Aesthetics

The most frequent topic that appeared in my conversations with visitors was aesthetics (55%). When asked what he enjoyed *most* about the Lincoln Memorial,

⁴This is also reflected in the relatively short stay of tourists in DC: in 2019, the average length of overnight stays in the district was 2.8 nights for domestic travelers and 5.4 nights for overseas travelers (*Washington, DC Visitor Research*, n.d.).

one visitor looked around and said: “It’s pretty cool, honestly, we’ve been marveling at the architecture more than anything” (Brandon, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). Another visitor said: “The marble and the stone, it’s like an artwork in itself, so ... it’s always something to look at” (Gideon, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). Visitors therefore appreciate the architecture of the memorial and frequently mentioned its size, such as Peter who said: “It’s huge. ... I mean, we’ve been going around, ... we’ve been seeing a lot of memorials and everything and everyone is different. And this one is like, *big*, compared to them all” (17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial).

Interestingly, this focus on the visual was not restricted to the memorial itself. Several visitors mentioned the view from the memorial, such as across the reflecting pool, saying, for example: “Honestly, the reflecting pool is my favorite! Just sitting here and watching it, it’s like my favorite view, definitely” (Faye, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). And another visitor said: “I like the view. Number one!” (Harper, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). This feeling can be confirmed by looking at the distribution of visitors around the memorial. While most visitors appear to walk up the steps and straight into the chamber with Lincoln’s statue, the place where they linger most is out front on the steps. Naturally, this makes sense because this is where they can sit down. However, it is striking that people mainly sit at the front of the memorial even during the scorching summer months and where many spend the bulk of their time: mostly because of the beautiful view across the Mall.

This is where a German student who used to be a nanny in the city and now returned for a visit told me: “I find the view from here to there [points toward the capitol] just the most beautiful. With the pool and with the [Washington] Memorial” (Sarah, 17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial, translated from German). She continued saying that it was her favorite spot and told me about a memorable night she had spent here with a friend, just looking out over the Mall. Stressing the appeal of the view, one visitor told me, sitting on the front steps of the memorial: “we came and sat down right away” (Gideon, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). Their desire to see Lincoln’s statue or read any of the speeches was therefore not strong enough for this to be the first thing they did when they arrived. Instead, they enjoyed the view. This reflects what more than half of the visitors I spoke with mentioned: that their enjoyment of the memorial stemmed (at least in part) from its aesthetics including the architecture of the memorial and the view *from* the memorial (see Fig. 6.7 for a visual of a popular spot for selfies: With the National Mall in the background).

Fig. 6.7 Taking a Picture With the View. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



6.2.2 History

After architecture, history was the second most frequently mentioned aspect of enjoyment (33% of participants mentioned history). What visitors meant by history, however, varied greatly. Some just mentioned history without referring to any historical event, such as Peter who said:

I've never been like a history guy, like, I hate the "this happened on this date, and this happened in this year." But the part of history that I like is sitting here and thinking about who else has sat in this spot and how long this took to build and everything that went into it. I like that part of history. (17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial)

In his response, Peter showed that part of what he refers to when mentioning history is the history of the memorial itself. This reflects my findings about individuals' visiting motivations which were about the memorial itself and not President Lincoln. When making references to historical events or people, most visitors—just like Peter—referred to vague events or people:

It's more about DC as a whole. I think this is just such a staple. ... And you just look out at the Washington Monument, Capitol Hill, and the White House is right there. ... And then you stop and think about all the people that have roamed this place (Gideon, 12 October 2021).

While these visitors made vague references to “other people” who have been at the memorial, only two referred to the March on Washington specifically.

The two individuals who mentioned their enjoyment of standing in the spot of the speech mainly referenced the size of the event:

I think it's pretty amazing because it's the Lincoln memorial, everybody comes here for that and then if you don't know [the marker] is there, it's shocking. But then you realize [Dr. King] was standing there and the whole reflecting pond was filled with people and everybody and it's really powerful to look over and out and see and think about all the different people that were there. (Zane, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial)

It becomes much more palpable how many people were present for the march and the speech when standing in the spot and seeing the vast space that was filled to the brink with people. Witnessing this can help acknowledge the importance of the event: “I mean, it blew my mind, because, all of that: they filled all of that up. ... It is mind-blowing, it's crazy. That really happened here” (Kevin, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). What is striking about the few comments about the historic speech is that none of the visitors mention their appreciation of the marker itself. It is, then, not the marker which brings these visitors pleasure, but the reminder that this is where the historical event occurred. It might have activated their memory of the event (or rather, their memory of records of the event), but it was not enjoyed in its own right.

6.3 Conclusion

Visitors' self-proclaimed reasons for visiting as well as their appreciation of the site first shows that the visitors with whom I spoke came here for the Lincoln Memorial, not President Lincoln and not Dr. King. The interviews further showed that the memorial is deeply entrenched in a narrative of tourism. What makes the memorial a success from a tourism perspective is that it is recognizable and a “staple” of the U.S. Capitol. Consequently, the individuals commemorated here become less important to the visitor. Instead, visitors to DC want to see the famous DC memorials and the Lincoln is a prime example among them. Similarly, Nick Couldry has written in his analyses of visitors of a TV set: “part of the pleasure is not seeing something different, but confirming that the set is the same as something already seen” (2005, p. 61). The same process is inherent in visiting the Lincoln Memorial: visitors want to see that which they have already seen, the “DC memorial.”

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Motivations for Visiting and Experiences at the MLK Memorial

7

During my first visit on this glistening summer day in 2019, after looking at the statue, I sit down in the shade of the more than 182 cherry trees (*Two Memorials and the Cherry Blossoms*, 2018). As I look back toward the parted mountain I just walked through and start observing the other visitors, I notice that our patterns of walking into the site are very similar. Most people walk through the mountain and straight toward and then around the statue of Dr. King. But some of them appear to see the statue for the first time as they walk in from the Southwest and Northeast. These visitors use one of the four additional entrances to the memorial, the other two being located along footpaths on the Tidal Basin (see Fig. 7.1).

A park ranger, Anders, I talked to in October 2021 told me that he wishes there were no other entry-points to the site because he feels that visitors miss an important experience when they do not enter through the mountain. The magnitude of the stones and the mystery of walking around the statue to finally be able to look at Dr. King's face are integral to the experience of the site, he says. Visitors are literally walking in the path that is left by Dr. King in that his statue was—symbolically—removed from the mountain which is the entrance. This way of entering the memorial represents the need for others to walk in King's footsteps. Regardless of the point of entry, however, most visitors have their mobile phones already drawn as they walk toward the statue. It is almost as if they are



Fig. 7.1 The Four Additional Entry Points to the MLK Memorial. (Note. The additional entry points are marked with X-s on the map. Screenshot from Google Maps (© Google Maps, 2023))

afraid they might miss the moment when this big chunk of stone becomes meaningful (see Figs. 7.2 and 7.3). In this chapter I elaborate on my conversations with visitors of the MLK Memorial and focus on their self-proclaimed motivations for visiting as well as what they enjoyed most about being here.



Fig. 7.2 Catching the First Glimpse of the Memorial Through a Mobile Phone Screen. (Note. Photograph by the author)



Fig. 7.3 Guided by the Mobile Phone Screen. (Note. Photograph by the author)

7.1 Why Are People Visiting?

I spoke with forty individuals (thirty-one on site, nine online) about their reasons for visiting this specific site. In the following, I elaborate on the three most frequently mentioned themes which were geography, tourism, and Dr. King. I start with the least frequently mentioned reason as this will help me draw out not only the crucial factors for visiting but also the similarities to and differences from motivations for visiting the Lincoln Memorial and its “I Have a Dream” inscription.

7.1.1 Geography

Nine individuals (22%) told me that the main reason why they came to visit the MLK Memorial was due to its geography: They had been in the vicinity and saw that there was something here, so they came to see what it was: “We planned on parking over here and going to the Jefferson Memorial and then we saw that these memorials were on this side, so we came” (Yonah, 22 June 2019, MLK Memorial). Its “proximity to everything else” (Albert, 3 June 2019, MLK Memorial), as one visitor put it, led some individuals to visit. This is surprising because the memorial is a bit removed from the Mall itself but this finding also reiterates that people will look at what they walk by: if they *are* in the vicinity and they notice a memorial structure, they visit it, reflecting the findings from the Lincoln Memorial.

However, in the case of the MLK Memorial, the factor of geography is less important than it is at the Lincoln Memorial. This certainly has to do with the fact that the memorial is not on the Mall, which means fewer visitors tend to find themselves in this general area. Along the Tidal Basin, only two other memorials are situated: the Thomas Jefferson Memorial (see Fig. 7.4, photographed from the MLK Memorial) and the FDR Memorial. Less than one fourth of visitors I spoke to about their reasons for visiting the MLK Memorial mentioned geography, while at the Lincoln, it was more than half.



Fig. 7.4 The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Across the Tidal Basin. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

This shows that the location of the MLK Memorial might be inconvenient, being situated in the Reserve but not the Mall proper. Instead, the memorial is often sought out and visited purposefully: it does not have a “stumble-upon” character for most visitors. Furthermore, only three visitors claimed they came to see the MLK Memorial because they were trying to visit all—or as many as possible—of the memorials on the Mall. This included Sabrina who said, when asked if this is the only memorial they were visiting: “no, it’s not, we’re doing all of them, I think” (14 October 2021, MLK Memorial) or Charlotte who said she had come to DC “to see all the monuments” (3 June 2019, MLK Memorial). This reflects the collection of sites many visitors mentioned at the Lincoln Memorial. However, as it is a type of behavior encouraged by memorials’ locations, it is not surprising that it is not a frequently mentioned reason for visiting this memorial: because visitors have to explicitly walk away from the Mall.

As one visitor of the Lincoln Memorial told me: “Specifically, the Martin Luther King one, I would have liked [to see], and granted, I didn’t seek it out because we were on our scooters and they charge per minute and you can’t ride through there, you have to walk” (Harper, 12 October 2021, Lincoln memorial). For this visitor, collecting the important sites was more important than seeing

the MLK Memorial. While some visitors therefore came to the MLK Memorial because of its location, it was a weaker motivating factor than at the Lincoln Memorial.

7.1.2 Tourism

Fifteen visitors (37%, as opposed to 70% at the Lincoln Memorial) mentioned a reason for their visit related to tourism. This included different individuals saying that they have guests in town whom they brought here (Yves, Charlotta and Sabrina). These individuals also show an understanding of the important memorials in DC as a collection, one that should be seen in its “totality.” One visitor put it as follows: “Once people come into town, we bring them to see all the stuff that’s here. But there’s so much stuff!” (Jane, 4 June 2019, MLK Memorial). Interestingly, this visitor not only mentioned that visiting one memorial is part of a larger visit to the capitol, she also calls the memorials “stuff” showing that they are a site to be collected. Similarly, Xavier said: “We were coming here for a conference and then now that we’re in town we figured, we’d go see everything” (5 June 2019, MLK Memorial). These visitors confirm the finding from the Lincoln Memorial that a trip to DC must include seeing its memorials. However, what is noticeable in these responses—in contrast to visitors I spoke with at the Lincoln Memorial—is that they mention seeing “all” the sights. The visitors who see the MLK Memorial as part of a collection of DC memorials therefore threw a larger net than those who planned on seeing the *most important* ones on the Mall.

7.1.3 Visiting Dr. King

The most frequently mentioned reason for the visit—significantly different from the Lincoln Memorial—was Dr. King himself. Seventeen visitors (42%) mentioned that they came to see the memorial to see or pay respects to Dr. King.¹

¹ While Martin Luther King, Jr., the person, was mentioned almost as often as tourism, I still consider it the most important motivating factor. This is because while 14 visitors justified their visit with some type of narrative of tourism, only eight of them mentioned tourism as the *only* reason for their visit. The other six included motivations such as learning about black history (and often also visiting the NMAAHC), civil rights, or because it is a memorial to Dr. King. When claiming the desire to see Dr. King as a motivation for visiting, all of my interviewees gave it as their only or main motivation. I therefore consider it—for this sample—a stronger motivating factor than tourism.

This could be as straightforward as a visitor responding to my question “Why did you come here today?” with “to see Martin Luther King” (Derek, 3 June 2019, MLK Memorial) or “because it’s him, I just wanted to see the memorial!” (Thomas, 5 June 2019, MLK Memorial).

As simple as that response might appear, it is striking in contrast to the responses at the Lincoln Memorial where none of the visitors mentioned Lincoln or King as a motivating factor for the visit. While the MLK Memorial is not geographically significant in relation to Dr. King, and there are no artifacts here that he was ever in contact with, visitors want to see “him.” This reflects an aspect of the hauntology of non-authentic heritage sites, which can create a sense of “something being in the air,” even when the site has no natural connection to the individual memorialized there (see Bowman, 2010).

Visitors mentioning Dr. King also often told me that they came to specifically see only this one memorial today and were not planning on visiting any other ones: “I didn’t see or visit any other [memorials] or sites in DC on this trip” (Branden, 20 October 2020, Instagram interview). One example was a family of three generations of women who will appear again later in this book. Frances, visiting with her mother and daughter, told me:

We’re actually here today because [my daughter] has college tours planned for Howard and Hampton. ... So, we couldn’t come to DC and not go see this memorial. And this is really the only one that we are going to today. (26 June 2019)

To this family, the MLK Memorial is *the* memorial to see in DC and this is reflected in how they spend their time in the city: They prioritize this memorial. Similarly, Luciana told me: “On this trip I didn’t go to any other monuments because most of them are closed due to COVID... Plus they are not as exciting as the MLK monument” (20 September 2020, Instagram interview). She shows that the reason why she only visited the MLK Memorial was not (mainly) motivated by a lack of time or other resources, but really by a need to see this one memorial and none other. Many individuals furthermore mentioned that they did not know what to expect of the memorial and when I asked one visitor: “*So before you came here, did you do any research online?*” they responded in a way typical of the individuals I talked to: “No, I did not. It didn’t really matter to me, I just wanted to see it” (Nathan, 5 June 2019, MLK Memorial). This example shows that the actual structure of the memorial site was secondary to Nathan, what mattered was to see it.

The need to see Martin Luther King and his memorial was further elaborated on by six individuals who in fact framed their visit as paying homage to Dr.

King. When speaking with Anais about the importance of the site, I asked her what made her want to come here in person, she answered: “Just honoring the man himself. In honor of him to come here to take time off to just come and see what he did” (26 June 2019, MLK Memorial). This was a sentiment shared by other individuals as well. Brenda, visiting from England, in fact used the word *homage* explicitly when saying: “I think Martin Luther King is a quite important person, even for history in Britain, so we learn about him and stuff. So, I think it was that: pay homage to that person and see the words reflected” (3 June 2019, MLK Memorial). This reflects the association of visits to memorial sites with pilgrimages (see Couldry, 2005, pp. 71–72; Isaac et al., 2019, p. 747; Savage, 2009, p. 265). The National Park Service also uses this word in its foundation statement for the National Mall in which it says: “A visit to the park sites is a pilgrimage to find inspiration among the principal symbols of America’s heritage” (National Park Service, n.d.-c). In this regard, visits to the MLK Memorial have much more of a character of pilgrimage than visits to the Lincoln Memorial. They tend to be more purposeful visits to see this specific memorial and sometimes to honor the person commemorated, implying a more active choice by the visitors and a visit that is more inspired by the person commemorated than the popularity of the structure.

7.2 What Visitors Enjoy

People’s impressions of this memorial, just as with any other tourism location, differs. Some visitors were not quite able to put into words how they felt about the memorial, signaling that while they did not dislike it, they were a little underwhelmed. This is reflected in how Gerhard, the Segway tour manager, responded to my question about how he feels about the MLK Memorial:

Hm, the memorial is ok. I don’t have a strong opinion about it one way or the other. It’s just, it’s ok. He definitely deserved that memorial its, just—meh—it’s fine. And we don’t spend a lot of time at that memorial, most people, it seems like at least, have the same kind of opinion. It’s just “meh,” it’s fine. And I can’t even put my finger on why and what I feel about it [hesitates]. It doesn’t seem as grand as the other memorials. And maybe that’s for a reason. He wasn’t as big of a personality, so I think maybe it’s on purpose but you go into any of the other memorials, and they just feel grand and big and that one, it kind of doesn’t for some reason. Yeah, it’s just ok [laughs slightly embarrassed]. (2 June 2019, interview at his office)

For Gerhard—a White man who is an expert in DC memorials and someone who sees at least some of them regularly—the memorial’s lack of grandeur resulted in him not really feeling excited by it. Some of the visitors I spoke with also mentioned the absence of grandeur, but to them it was a positive aspect of the site. Nathan, for example said: “It kind of like symbolizes the very essence of what he stood for. It’s not very grand and it’s subtle and it gets the message across very tranquil as well” (5 June 2019, MLK Memorial).

During my conversations with visitors, the topic of on-site enjoyment was discussed explicitly with 48 visitors (38 on-site, 10 Instagram interviews). While many individuals were unable to say what aspect of the memorial it was specifically that made them enjoy or cherish the site, others were more concrete and mentioned the following main reasons why they enjoyed the site, some mentioning several: *location*, *community*, *inspiration*, *feeling* and *architecture*. For the following analysis I combine the categories community, inspiration and feeling as they refer to a similar experience, “the aspect of a place that can only be grasped by going there” (Couldry, 2005, p. 68; referring to Benjamin, 1968).

7.2.1 Location

The location was only mentioned by four individuals as a reason for why they appreciated the memorial, but I still want to dedicate some space to this feature since one individual in particular made an interesting and unique comment. Denaise Seals, in her Instagram interview told me the following:

IMO [in my opinion], the MLK memorial’s does non [sic] “stumble upon” feature is one of its strongest attributes. It invokes a physical visit rather than just a visual sighting, a category which many of DCs many sites, statues and memorials are relegated. The stroll of a few hundred yards, to the memorial, is a physical manifestation of the hundreds of miles (and years) traveled in the pursuit, delivery and enforcement of equal rights granted under the Constitution of the U.S. (20 October 2020, Instagram interview)

Her explanation not only implies a purposeful pilgrimage to the site, it also includes an implicit criticism of the memorials densely populating the Mall. To Denaise, a visit to the MLK memorial gains part of its value exactly from the fact that it must be sought-out and time must be dedicated to visit, harkening back to the idea of the pilgrimage.

Closely related to the memorial’s location, but only mentioned by one visitor, was the accessibility of the site for visitors with physical disabilities:

What I like most about the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial is that it is accessible to more people than some of the other memorials. There are no steps or stairs. And anyone can approach the statue and interact with it or take a photo next to it. (Tim Wright, 6 September 2020, Instagram interview)

This is a very astute observation, and it is true that the Lincoln Memorial, for example, does include an elevator to the chamber, but the inscription for the “I Have a Dream” speech can only be reached by stairs. His comment also made me aware that all other visitors I spoke with were able-bodied and this project’s representation of experiences at the memorial sites might therefore be biased toward individuals without physical disabilities.

7.2.2 Architecture

While discussions of the memorial categorized under location focused on its literal placement in space, architecture was mentioned by 13 visitors (27%) who said that they appreciated the memorial mostly for its aesthetics. In contrast to the Lincoln Memorial, however, only few individuals mentioned aspects of the architecture that were not in fact part of the MLK Memorial, such as “I think it’s beautiful. ... you can see out over there [points towards the Tidal Basin]. It’s really peaceful, it kind of takes you to a different place” (Brenda, 3 June 2019, MLK Memorial). One visitor in fact commented on having looked away from the memorial, claiming: “I was one of the few admiring the surrounding landscape and tidal basin” (Denaise Seals, 9 October 2020, Instagram interview). Whether or not this observation was accurate, her impression is striking: turning away from the memorial itself and looking at the surroundings seems out of the ordinary to her. This might indicate the centrality of the memorial structures and, particularly, the statue: turning away from it to enjoy the landscape does not seem like the natural thing to do.

The main difference to the responses at the Lincoln Memorial, when it comes to architecture, is that, at the Lincoln Memorial, those statements mostly referred to the larger structure, not to the statue of Lincoln or the “I Have a Dream” marker. At the MLK Memorial, however, individuals repeatedly referred to the statue: “I think the figure itself is very lifelike, so I really like that part” (Deborah, 26 June 2019, MLK Memorial). The appreciation of the statue was often put into the context of this being one of very few statues of African American individuals. Sage Davinci told me:

... a lot of black boys or girls that grew up didn't get to see a statue/memorial of someone black and that make us feel as if we weren't good enough or smart, etc. That we couldn't lead or move a nation. It served as a big inspiration [to see this memorial] forreal. (29 September 2020, Instagram interview)

For many visitors, most of them African American individuals, the aspect of the architecture they appreciated most was that the statue was a visible representation of an African American man.

Furthermore, it was important that it was an *impressive* structure that represents King. As mentioned above, not all individuals agreed that the memorial was grand. Nevertheless, amongst my interviewees this impression was dominant, particularly regarding the statue: "I think the size of the memorial really made the experience valuable for me" (Wendy, 5 June 2019, MLK Memorial), one visitor said and another mentioned: "Well it's pretty impressive, the size of the monument. How it is carved out" (Valentino, 14 October 2021, MLK Memorial). Luciana told me about her visit with her children:

As I walked them through the entrance, first thing out of my son's mouth was "oohhh wooww mom it's more amazing in person!" Mind you he is eleven so to have him finally put his phone down and actually look at something and see someone who actually really mattered to our culture and to African Americans period just shows me and tells me that we need more representation because these kids really don't know. (4 September 2020, Instagram interview)

As Sophia Kelly confirms, the statue is indeed large compared to other statues on the Mall; it is not only subjectively grand, it is also literally tall (commented walk, 21 October 2021). As Barry Schwartz writes, all memorial structures "must be worthy of what they represent" (Schwartz, 2000, p. 281). Reversing that logic, an impressive memorial assigns value to the person it represents.

7.2.3 Aura

19 Individuals (39%) mentioned an emotional aspect as their favorite part of their experience. The aura of the MLK Memorial is often described as inspirational:

This was one of the very first ones when I first moved here that someone said "you have to go see!" I don't necessarily know if it's about the monument or about the person. But it's beautiful and inspiring and here we are. ... If you walk through and read all of his quotes and things like that, *reading* everything that he's said, it's very inspiring, it's very moving. (Sabrina, 14 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

Another visitor wrote to me:

Every time that I am at the MLK memorial it gives me the chance to see MLK how he was, and makes me revive everything he had done to improve equal rights to black community. He was a civil rights fighter and being able to see that memorial make [sic] want to continue the fight for justice that he started. It makes me proud. We have a voice, and we won't be quiet while there is injustice. (Caleb, 21 September 2020, Instagram interview)

Caleb shows that, not only does the memorial inspire him because it acknowledges the work of Dr. King, but also does it motivate him to continue the “fight for justice.” This shows the visitors’ understanding of the memorial’s role as a communicator of public memory: It is not only about honoring King, the historical figure, but also about making a statement about what is important in the present moment.

A different kind of inspiration was implicit in statements by seven visitors who mentioned interactions with other visitors on site as one reason why they enjoyed their own visit (this refers back to memorials as public spaces where spontaneous encounters with others are possible (see Gerhards & Neidhardt, 1991)). I observed one particular interaction between a middle-aged White woman, Ella, who was visiting with her granddaughter, and a group of three Black women (see Fig. 7.5). I noticed Ella taking a picture of the three women in front of the statue and after a conversation, one woman—holding an instant camera—sent Ella with her granddaughter to the memorial and took their picture. She then handed them the polaroid, and they parted ways. After the interaction, as the three women left in a rush, I approached Ella and asked if she would mind telling me about the interaction. She told me that after taking the women’s picture, one of them offered to take her picture in return and when she realized Ella did not have her phone, offered to take one with her instant camera. I asked Ella what it meant to her to now have this photograph: “It’s absolutely amazing! It is going to go on my mirror on my dresser. Because, Martin Luther King [tears up] and my granddaughter? To share this moment together? And to have a complete stranger be like ‘no, let me get that picture!’ I mean, it’s very, very special” (Ella, 7 October 2021, MLK Memorial). These types of interactions—a person taking another person’s photograph—were the most frequent visitor interactions I observed at the site, usually only lasting a few seconds and restricted to the moment of handing over a phone or camera, taking a picture, and returning the device.

However, even when not directly interacting with any of the other visitors on site, my interviewees often commented on their presence. I asked a young



Fig. 7.5 Visitor Interaction: Snapping a Polaroid Picture

woman, on a school assignment, what was special about being at the memorial in person. She responded:

There definitely is something more personal coming here, it's also the people you hear in the background when they are looking at these quotes. Like just five minutes ago I heard this dad, and he was biking with his daughter and he said "these quotes are really important, you have to read them out loud." And I was just like yes, like this is such an experience that I cannot really see just virtually. (Berta, 7 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

Another woman responded to my question about what made her visit valuable with:

I don't know, when I read these quotes in, like, a textbook, you don't really get the same effect as seeing the memorial. And you see all of these people from all around—I think that's what it is: it's all the people from all around the world, looking at it and it's kind of like... We are all connected, you know what I mean, and he helped for that. (Kendra, 4 June 2019, MLK Memorial)

Rich elaborated, saying:

I prefer at least some people engaging in these sites while I'm also there. It's better than feeling I'm the only one there appreciating what the memorial represents, and I really do think visits to these sites should be communal. Otherwise—and maybe

this is just me—what’s the point of constructing a memorial or monument at all? (19 September 2020, Instagram interview)

These comments show that the effect of having other people present on site is so meaningful that it lasts beyond the visit. If visitors can still access that feeling after their time on site, it must have made an impact, as Ashley wrote: “I really enjoyed paying respects there and seeing so many others do the same” (14 September 2020, Instagram interview).

I want to close here by quoting a visitor who combined her appreciation for the aura on site with her recognition of the importance of representation:

I would say the thing I remember about the first time I saw it was seeing it, and it was after dark and there were a lot of people, there were buses coming in of people from African American churches and they were looking at it and their faces were reflected off of it. So that was my best image of it. (Charlotta, 7 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

Much more than actual interactions, these quotes reflect the positive impact of a feeling of community. Many individuals said they enjoyed the feeling of not being there alone and the manner in which they phrased it often showed that seeing other people at this location underlined that this was an important site: if it were not, nobody would be visiting it. This reflects Urry and Larsen’s definition of the collective tourist gaze which “involves conviviality. Other people also viewing the site are necessary to give liveliness or a sense of carnival or movement. Large numbers of people indicate that this is *the* place to be” (2011, p. 19). I would add that, in the case of memorials, other people being present not only shows the visitor that the place is important but also that the narrative behind it is.

7.3 What Visitors Do not Like

In my conversations with the visitors of this memorial, some not only elaborated on their enjoyment of the site, but also on what they took issue with. In the following, I want to elaborate on the two topics that most often appeared in our conversations: The memorial’s location and the narratives it tells.

7.3.1 Location

While four visitors said they appreciated the location of the memorial, five told me they found it disrespectful. Located on 1964 Independence Avenue, the memorial is a ten-minute walk from the Lincoln Memorial. Obstructed by trees and on the other side of Independence Avenue, the memorial cannot be seen from the National Mall and is sometimes considered “out of the way,” (Peter, 9 October 2020, Instagram interview) as visitors who had indeed made the trek often told me:

Interesting enough, it’s not a frequently visited or well-known statue. It’s situated a ways away from all the rest and you really have to look for it. I think that’s what surprised me most. My friend showed it to me. Had I not been with her, I never would have found it. (Ashley, 27 October 2020, Instagram interview)

Other visitors also had trouble finding the site: “I didn’t know we [were] going to the MLK memorial until we arrived there. Literally I was shocked in surprised because I always got lost trying to go by myself” (Sage Davinci, 29 September 2020, Instagram interview). This was also reflected in another statement by a visitor of the Lincoln Memorial who told me about his opinion of the commemoration of the speech: “I mean, he’s got his own memorial, I don’t remember where it is, but I would imagine that has something about it ...” (Noah, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). This shows that the location of the MLK Memorial is not “easily grasped by the memory” (Yates, 1966, p. 6), which would aid the remembrance of an individual. As Dickinson and colleagues argue: “That some memory places are located at a city center, while others occupy more peripheral locations, affects how it is that they will be interpreted, or whether they are attended to at all” (Dickinson et al., 2010, p. 29). For the MLK Memorial, its location not only means that it might be visited less often because it is not part of the center, it also—according to some visitors—assigns the memorial a different value, as Xaii told me: “I think the fact it’s so far removed from the center of that district [the Mall] in DC, says a lot” (7 September 2020, Instagram interview).

Its location, however, is not random. Its address, 1964 Independence Avenue was chosen in reference to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. However, it is questionable how many visitors notice this symbolism, particularly considering that this memorial is situated in a part of town where there are hardly any buildings: neither commercial nor private, and locating oneself in space therefore is rarely done through the help of addresses. It is much easier to find the site by comparing its location to surrounding memorials. In fact, none of the visitors I spoke

with made a reference to the memorial's address. There is additional symbolism in the memorial's location in regard to other sites: it is situated on the direct line between the Thomas Jefferson and the Lincoln Memorials. According to the National Park Service, this.

helps to reinforce the connection between these three leaders at three important moments for civil rights in our nation's history: from the promise that 'all men are created equal,' to the freeing of the slaves, to the final push for full and equal rights. (N. King, n.d.)

The three important moments refer to Jefferson's principal authorship of the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. However, the Lincoln Memorial is not visible from the MLK Memorial and the MLK Memorial is not visible from anywhere on the Mall. In fact, it is just barely visible from the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

One visitor said to me while she was sketching the statue of Dr. King: "That's the stuff that I wanted to capture, like where he's looking, like he is looking onward to, what is that place, that memorial?" as she pointed toward the Jefferson Memorial (Berta, 7 October 2021). This shows that while this woman noticed that there was a direct eye line from Dr. King's marble face to the Jefferson Memorial, she did not know what the memorial stands for and in fact made an incorrect conclusion by assuming that Dr. King is looking into the future: the visuals instead suggest he is looking at a president that came before him. While many visitors to the MLK memorial get their pictures taken with the Tidal Basin and the Jefferson Memorial in the background, when standing on the steps of the Jefferson, King's statue can only be seen from a distance, guessed at that there is a structure there at all (see Fig. 7.6). This is in parts purposeful as Sophia Kelly from the National Park Service tells me: the only reason why the statue was able to be built this high was because it tucks within the tree canopy, providing distinctive views from the Tidal Basin, but not entering views in other components of the existing landscape. However, as Marita Sturken states in a quote I have cited before, the national memorials and monuments on the Mall are "designed to be visible from a distance" (Sturken, 1997, p. 46), a characteristic not true of the MLK Memorial.



Fig. 7.6 MLK Across the Tidal Basin. (*Note.* This picture was taken by the author at about the halfway point between the MLK and FDR Memorials)

Furthermore, the logic behind the location's symbolism and the specific phrasing on the memorial homepage reiterates the dominant narrative in which civil rights have been fully achieved; in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This was a significant occasion and one that Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement shouldered. However, it was not a law that eliminated all expressions of structural racism against which the Civil Rights Movement fought and is still fighting today. Therefore, while there are almost as many people who appreciate the memorial's location as those who find it disrespectful, what appeared throughout the sample is an unawareness of the symbolic meaning of the memorial's location.

7.3.2 Narratives

With some visitors, my initial question "What do you think of this memorial?" already sparked a conversation about the narratives it tells, or rather, what it does not talk about. After a young student told me about the symbolism of the unfinished statue, I asked her how she knew about this and she said:

Oh, actually at my school we read this letter at that [Birmingham jail], I forget And my teacher, he is a very good teacher and he taught us about ... I think a lot of people on social media, they think that MLK is like very “oh yeah it is all so peaceful” and a lot of people, especially in the 2020 protests, they were using his quotes but in a way that they were saying like “guys, let’s not destruct things around neighborhoods and towns, that’s not what MLK would support!” And that letter from jail actually kind of showed that he was a little bit more radical than people thought. So that was really interesting, and I think that background knowledge also helped me here. (Berta, 7 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

The fact that King is often portrayed to have been less radical than he actually was, was voiced by several other visitors including the following statement a woman made when I asked her how she feels about the statue: “I’m not even crazy about that! I mean, he was a man of like action, and absolutely thoughtful, but action and speech and words! And it kind of makes him look like a little bit of a bystander, and that’s not who he is!” (Ella, 7 October 2021, MLK Memorial). These visitors therefore take issue with the narrative told because they find it simplified in a reductive manner which—in their eyes—falsifies historical facts.

A comment by the student, Berta, can serve to elaborate on this impression and provides a first speculation for why the narrative is told as it is:

I think, going around here, looking at the quotes here, they are very “we need peace, and all of this” because we can’t just have an absence of hate we need peace. And I love all of these quotes, but I really wish that they included more of his radical ideas especially from that letter that he wrote. So I do wish that there were more political statements from him here. Although I do get that maybe the creators of this wanted it so that ... all people could want or *would* want to come here and the idea like love trumps hate. ... So I think it connects more to people than some of his more “we need justice things” that are a little bit more out there than his like “peace and love” quotes, I mean it might alienate someone. (7 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

Berta highlights the parts of history that were left out of the retelling of the narrative at the memorial and makes an insightful observation that those aspects of history might be considered too divisive. In this sense, she acknowledges the need for public memory to unite people, but she also criticizes the simplification of the narrative in order for it to be less controversial. She reflects a sentiment often voiced in the scholarship of the commemoration of the Civil Rights Movement (see, for example Baldwin & Burrow Jr., 2013). In their introduction to *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, Romano and Raiford write:

... many argue that the image of Martin Luther King Jr. perpetuated in collective public memory has been effectively sterilized, made nonthreatening and harmless by

ignoring King's struggles against poverty, his critique of capitalism, and his attack of American foreign policy. King is instead revered publicly for his nonviolent, integrationist rhetoric, especially for the "I Have a Dream" speech The process of turning Martin Luther King into a national icon, historian Vincent Harding has argued, has required a massive case of national amnesia about what King really stood for. As Edward P. Morgan's article . . . highlights, the media has played a crucial role in propagating a vision of King as a "good" civil rights leader as opposed to supposedly more threatening figures like Malcom X. (Romano & Raiford, 2006, p. xviii)

Or, phrased differently: "For a once-hated figure to become celebrated and included in the national pantheon necessitated a cleansing of his memory (Morgan 2006). The same can be said regarding the positive interpretation of the social movement of which King was part" (Eyerman, 2016, p. 80). Adam Fairclough further writes of this cleansing of memory:

Conveniently forgotten is the man who berated America for its excessive materialism and militarism, who stated qualified admiration for Karl Marx and who regarded Sweden's social democracy as a model that the United States of American would do well to follow. (2013, p. xiv)

It is this cleansed narrative of public memory of King which some of the visitors of the MLK Memorial criticized as they felt that the representation of the man, while positive, did not fully embrace neither his character nor the intentions and the strengths of the movement.

Some individuals in fact mention that just because there is now a memorial to an African American man in DC does not mean that racism is over, such as this woman who told me:

I think a lot of people will tell you that because of, he did what he did, it is all better now. And, legally, it is better in some ways, not in all. It's frustrating that we aren't any better than we were before. (Tina, 14 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

Other visitors go a step further in their criticism and voice how torn they are about the fact that this memorial was built: "You kind of get the feel that it is a trophy like 'Hey look what we have given this guy!'" (Xaai, 29 September 2020, Instagram interview). In our long conversations, Xaai, an African American man living in Oregon, made it clear that he appreciates the memorial and is grateful that it had been built, stressing repeatedly how important it is as a sign of respect.

However, in the above quote he shows his complex emotions about it because he does recognize that it could also be used as a token to absolve the nation from taking responsibility for current expressions of racism. King's statue standing there alone represents dominant narratives about his role in the movement. As Romano and Raiford elaborate:

Lost in the process are the organizations that stood behind the individuals (the NAACP, which Eddie the barber noted in Parks's case), the many individuals who acted but who are not famous (all those others who refused to give up their seats on the bus before Parks), and most significantly, the sense that ordinary people cannot change their lives unless they have a great, almost superhuman, leader to guide them. (2006, p. xix)

This is particularly palpable at the memorial centered around the oversized statue of King. It creates an uncomfortable tension in some visitors: wanting to honor the man while not reducing the movement to his person. This feeling was most eloquently expressed by Xaai, when he told me:

For me personally, as a black man, it's kind of bittersweet that he is the only monument I could find out there. He is the only person that gets championed through the movement even though we had Fred Hampton, we had Malcom X, we had Rosa. And other people, I think, get their roses, but not like he does. And ... I don't want any taken from him but I would love more given for sure. (29 September 2020, Instagram interview)

He stresses the importance of honoring King while at the same time voicing frustration about others being ignored. Implicit in his comment is that there is only room for one African American hero in the national context, at least in the grand narrative as it exists today. Interestingly, the memorial was originally supposed to include references to other civil rights activists. However, their inclusion was deemed illegal as the following document by the NPS shows:

Three unresolved issues were identified that will be considered for elimination during the design review and approval process. Two issues that should not affect the evaluation of impacts in this assessment are: (1) the niches named for other persons in the Civil Rights Movement along the upper walkway because that would violate the Commemorative Works Act by memorializing more than Dr. King without specific Congressional authorization. (National Parks Service, 2005, p. 11)

This shows, once again, how political the construction of memorials in DC is. There could not be references to other civil rights activists because only a memorial to Dr. King was authorized. This then results in complex emotions in many visitors. They appreciate the site because it visibly honors Dr. King, but they also feel torn because it makes it seem like he is the only one worth championing. Furthermore, for some visitors it creates the illusion that the nation celebrates the end of racism through its celebration of one African American individual in the nation's symbolic core of public memory.

7.4 Conclusion

Visitors to the MLK Memorial frequently mention Dr. King as the motivating factor for their visit and when speaking about their enjoyment of the site, they most frequently refer to aspects of the site which assign value to King. Lucia makes this explicit when she writes: "Because since it is a monument dedicated to an African American, we really didn't expect it to be as beautiful and huge as it is" (8 October 2020, Instagram interview). This shows that this stand-alone memorial to a member of the African American community in DC's monumental core—the only one of its kind—shows an explicit appreciation of the man by the institutions in power and, implicitly, by the nation which it represents. That was a sentiment reflected by many of the visitors such as in this conversation: "It's amazing to have a black man up there like that, in this country" (Derek, 3 June 2019, MLK Memorial)—"In Washington, DC. In his own, private, area" (Charlotte, 3 June 2019, MLK Memorial).

It is therefore the context of DC and the proximity to the National Mall that assigns this memorial and, by extension, Dr. King value. The importance of the context is palpable in several interviews, such as with one visitor who referred to DC as a "kind of placeholder for the entire country" (Elijah, 7 October 2020, Instagram interview), representing the nation as a whole. The importance of representation is also reflected in many visitors' appreciation of other visitors on site: their attention assigns the memorial and its narratives value. This study has also shown, however, that some visitors have ambivalent feelings about the memorial, mostly because of the simplified narratives it tells. While they appreciate the overdue memorial to a member of the African American community, they take issue with the simplified narratives told.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Visitor Experiences: Differences Between the Two Memorials

8

In the previous two chapters, I have shown why the visitors I spoke with chose to visit the two memorials and what they enjoyed about their visits. In this concluding chapter, I discuss the main commonalities and differences between visits to the two sites. While their motivations to visit and their enjoyment on site differed somewhat between the two memorials, in their comments, visitors of both sites showed that being physically present at the respective memorials was what made their trips valuable. This is not surprising considering that DC memorials are also sites of tourism. After all,

[t]o be there oneself is what is crucial in most tourism, whether this place occupies a key location within the global tourist industry or is merely somewhere that one has been told about by a friend. Places need to be seen “for oneself” and experienced directly. (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 21)

What makes *being at the memorials* such a positive visitor experience is the structures’ monumentality. This is reflected in visitors’ comments about the sheer size of King’s statue and the Lincoln Memorial and its vast view. It is also reflected in the absence of statements of enjoyment about the “I Have a Dream” inscription: its lack of monumentality makes the experience of seeing it less valuable. This is also because monumentality implies the importance of a site. As Luciana said, “certainly larger structures are more grand and impressive. ... [S]maller memorials on the other hand may minimize its importance and value” (2 September 2021, Instagram interview). While the view from the “I Have a Dream” marker is impressive and was appreciated by those visitors who noticed it, the marker itself is subtle and easy to miss and this might explain why no visitors mentioned that seeing it gave their visit meaning.

Monumentality is interpreted differently at the Lincoln and the MLK Memorials. Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial feels like standing in a movie. Regardless of the associations visitors have when standing at the memorial, what they seem to have in common is a feeling of overwhelm. I feel this myself, every time I sit at the memorial and look out across the National Mall. The space is vast, and my view includes some of the nation's most iconic structures. It is the fact that I am here which overwhelms me, fills me with gratitude. In this sense, then, it's about having seen one of the utmost important heritage sites in the United States, not necessarily about the actual experience of a structure commemorating President Lincoln. The architecture and, particularly, the view, further encourage this feeling. Looking out on the Mall one cannot help but think "I cannot believe I am really here!" The Lincoln Memorial is a very special place which is easily experienced by simply looking around.

In this sense, then, it makes sense that many of my interviewees mention tourism-related reasons for being at the site as well as for enjoying it. Tim Edensor writes that "[o]ne of the effects of tourism is to mark out time, that of the extraordinary from the time of the mundane" (Edensor, 2000, p. 325). This is certainly what visitors describe about their visit to the Lincoln Memorial (not the inscription for the speech): their visit is one to see this extraordinary structure for its own sake and for the sake of having been here, which is extraordinary. As one eighteen-year-old visitor from Louisiana elaborated: "It's a good experience. Not many people get to say that they been to the Lincoln Memorial" (James, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). Being at the Lincoln Memorial therefore leaves visitors feeling "I cannot believe I am really here!"

At the MLK Memorial, "being here" mostly meant that individuals wanted to see with their own eyes that this memorial really existed. Speaking about the invention of the representation of memory through art, "Cicero emphasizes that Simonides' invention of the art of memory rested, not only on his discovery of the importance of order for memory, but also on the discovery that the sense of sight is the strongest of all the senses" (Yates, 1966, p. 4). Visitors repeatedly stressed that they just wanted to *see* the memorial: "I was young when all of that [The Civil Rights Movement] was going on. From seeing it on TV, I've always wanted to come and *see* it" (Samuel, 5 June 2019, MLK Memorial). Miranda similarly said "nothing is like a personal life up close experience. You read about it and reading is one thing, but actually seeing it and experiencing it is a totally different thing" (4 June 2019, MLK Memorial). The importance of seeing such a site in person seems to only become more important in the digital age. As one visitor explained:

People claim that we do everything online and this doesn't matter anymore. As we go on, there's more pictures of everything. So, pictures kind of become boring, you know what I mean? So, I think seeing it is more important now [to be somewhere in person]. (Xander, 22 June 2019, MLK Memorial)

As I have elaborated on before, the MLK memorial is a rare site and a rare sight. As Denaise said: "I am a Black woman living in the United States of America. Everything is a tribute to White men. Everything. Check the history books" (29 November 2020, Instagram interview). Therefore, seeing such a rare memorial, visitors are witnessing its existence. Here, people found joy in the emotion "I cannot believe this site exists!"

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Memorials and Information

9



Fig. 9.1 Mobile Phone Use at Memorials. (*Note.* Photographs by the author)

The previous chapters have shown that visitors' appreciation of the memorials mainly comes from "being there." However, as I observe them roam the memorials, I often see them looking at their phones, making me wonder if they are really *here* or if they are transporting themselves to other spaces or bringing other (online) spaces into their visit (see Figs. 9.1 and 9.2). This thought is based on the concept of the digital wayfarer, coined by Pink and Hjorth, introduced in Sect. 4.2. The concept is productive in studying individuals' engagement with physical places because it accounts for the copresence of the offline and online realms. The claim inherent in the digital wayfarer is that people are not "switching back and forth" between the offline and online realms but that the two have become entangled and thereby part of the same experience (see Hjorth & Pink,

2014, pp. 45–46). Visitors of memorials can therefore be present in the offline and online realms simultaneously through their internet connected mobile phones. In the following three chapters, I focus on individuals’ experiences of and engagements with the memorials including their mobile phone use. I first elaborate on their phone use to enhance the space of the visit by potentially bringing information into the space. I then shift my observations to photographic practices before closing this empirical section with an analysis of Instagram sharing behavior to see which information individuals share from the physical space and thereby broaden its borders.



Fig. 9.2 Visitors Looking At Their Phones in Front of Memorials. (Note. Photographs by the author)

The question whether visitors use their mobile phones to bring information into the space of the memorials occurs to me early in my fieldwork when I realize that both memorials lack information: the commemoration of the “I Have a Dream” speech consists of the inscription only, indicating the date and context of the speech. The MLK Memorial, on the other hand, includes several of King’s quotes but no information about his life, achievements or struggles. Here, the short excerpt from the “I Have a Dream” speech is not even marked as such which led one visitor to tell me: “We were looking for the ‘I Have a Dream’ speech. Strangely, it wasn’t there. I thought that would be the first thing because that’s what he’s famous for” (Gina, 5 June 2019, MLK Memorial). Much of the architecture also has symbolic meanings which are difficult to grasp without any explanations.

In this context, I wanted to know if visitors enhance their experiences by using their mobile phones to bring more information into the space. This is also because, despite hardly any of my participants stating that they visited to learn something, scholarship on dark heritage tourism has shown that one of the main motivating factors for travelling to dark memorials is to learn something about the past (Isaac et al., 2019; Mowatt & Chancellor, 2011; Yan et al., 2016). I therefore wanted to know if—even if was not a motivating factor for the visit—learning was also a part of the experience for these visitors of celebratory memorials. Do they want to learn about Dr. King or the March on Washington? And if so, are they satisfied with the amount and type of information the memorials provide?

I have published on this finding in a paper titled “No Incentives to Interact: A Case Study of Mobile Phone Interactions with Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials in Washington, DC” (Hugentobler, 2022a). In the following, I briefly elaborate on the main findings (based on a larger sample) and expand them with the help of expert interviews which were conducted after the publication of the paper. I will also contextualize visitors’ engagement with information about the memorials considering the additional resources mentioned previously as well as briefly situating the memorials within the larger context of DC as a city with many different types of cultural sites.

9.1 Lack of Information on Site

I discussed the amount and quality of information with fifty-four visitors, most of whom felt that there was not enough information on site (twenty visitors of the Lincoln Memorial, twenty-three at the MLK Memorial, overall 79%).¹ Because there was no perceivable difference between the two memorials for this question, I discuss these findings together before then differentiating again for the question where additional information should be provided.

Interviewees often volunteered the opinion that the sites lacked information unprompted, such as Luciana, who told me about the “I Have a Dream” marker in our Instagram conversation: “I’d also add that there isn’t a lot of information on site about the memorial” (13 July 2021, Instagram interview), showing that the lack of information is a topic she considers important. The topic further came up unprompted in field interviews as a response to different questions, such as

¹ Six individuals at the “I Have a Dream” inscription and ten visitors at the MLK memorial said the information was enough.

in the following example when I asked a visitor of the MLK Memorial if he had enjoyed his visit:

Definitely. I would say, if I were doing it, or if I could change something, I would have wanted it to be presented a little differently with a little more information. I think it should be a little more educational. It's really aesthetically pleasing out here, but at the same time I kind of want to find something a little bit more in depth, a little bit more information. So, if I were to do it differently, I would have more information. (Yves, 5 June 2019)

While stressing that he enjoys the memorial, this visitor wishes that a visit to the site could be more educational by providing more information.

Some individuals also explained what, specifically, they thought was missing. Speaking with a visitor at the MLK Memorial, I asked her, after she had told me about her group's educative visit to the National Museum of African American History and Culture:

[Interviewer] So, had you not been at the museum, do you think this place would be missing something? You said the museum "added so much." Do you think if people just see this, will they get enough out of it?

[Rita] Not really, because this is just a statue of him. You can't actually see anything or hear anything that he has done. I mean, I know they got some writing on the walls, of things that he has said and stuff, which is fine. But I think that he represented a whole lot more. And a lot of people ... don't know his history, and his struggles. (5 June 2019)

Rita refers not only to the "history" of the man represented here but specifically mentions his "struggles" which are not acknowledged. There is, for example, no mention of the fact that King was assassinated. This lack of acknowledgement was mentioned by several visitors, including Xaii:

[I]t doesn't speak to the pain and the acts of struggle that he went through. It kind of glorifies the end result without talking about the journey and the journey is something we are still living through in this day so it's just weird to internalize it in that way. (29 September 2020, Instagram interview)

Some visitors criticized the memorial's representation of history as too positive and not an accurate depiction of the movement, reiterating the finding that the memorial frames the movement as a success which is now concluded (see also Sect. 7.3.2) This is reflected in this statement by a visitor from Mexico City:

About the emblematic phrase of Martin Luther King is an incredible sensation mainly because of what it represents in the social life of the North American country as well as in the symbolism in the social movement of the abolition of racism and freedom. (Graham, 10 February 2022, Instagram interview)

His comment that King represents the “abolition of racism” reiterates the idea that by celebrating an entire movement through King, memorials such as this one “purposely forget the decades when these activists were surveilled, harassed, ostracized as troublemakers, and upbraided as ‘extremists’—how part of the way racial injustice flourished was through the demonization of those who called it out” (Theoharis, 2018, p. 18). While some of the visitors I spoke with therefore accepted the narrative told by the memorial which frames the movement as “in the past,” others called out this framing and insisted that the lack of information simplifies history.

9.2 Bringing Information Into the Space of the Memorial?

When speaking about the lack of information on site, several visitors mentioned that if anyone wanted to know more, they could look it up online: “Google exists, you know!” (Gina, 3 June 2019, MLK Memorial). However, among all individuals I talked to, only one did this. In our conversation on Instagram, Luciana mentioned the Lincoln Memorial’s Greek columns to me. When I asked her how she knew that they were *Greek* columns she answered:

I looked up the architecture online while I was walking there, I think there may be a lot of hidden architectural meanings in DC, like where monuments are located, their east/west orientation compared to other monuments and linked to each other, but I haven’t spent that much time looking into it yet. (13 July 2021, Instagram interview)

Her online research was sparked by her interests, as she immediately added:

I learned about architecture because the university I went to had been designed to bring together faith and knowledge, on one end of the campus is a church and on the other end is the library, the classrooms are in between therefore as you walk between the classes you are walking the path of faith and knowledge. So, I guess you can say my education background educated me on looking for the architectural meaning. (July 13, 2021, Instagram interview)

Luciana was therefore primed to look for meaning in the architecture and when she could not determine its symbolic significance based on her own knowledge or the information on site, she used the internet to find an answer. This shows that the reason why she chose to look up information was intrinsically motivated and not sparked by a prompt on site (see also Hugentobler, 2022a).

At first glance, the absence of mobile phone use to look up information while on site stands in contrast to previous research which has found that one of the purposes for which tourists use their mobile phones was ‘information search’ (e.g., Cox et al., 2009; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2013a). However, the definition of ‘information search’ was narrower in these studies: they focused on looking up transportation, accommodation, activities, dining—i.e. organizational purposes and not the intention to find additional content about the site. The definitional difference of information might be—in part—caused by the development of the internet since those studies were published: today, many more activities are possible, and travelers can find more different types of content online that might be immediately relevant to their experience.

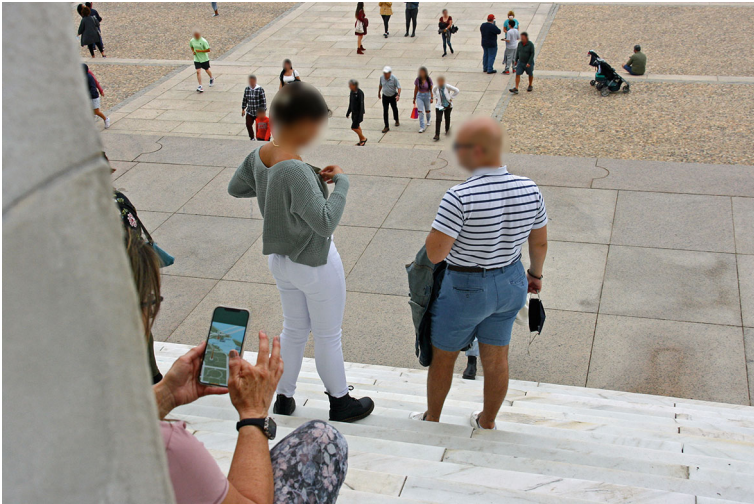


Fig. 9.3 Visitor Looking At a National Mall Map on Her Mobile Phone. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

However, in my limited sample, visitors still tended to use their mobile phones similarly to what earlier research has found: some visitors used their mobile phones for different purposes, including navigating on an online map (see Fig. 9.3 for a visitor looking at a mobile map) or seeing what other memorials might be near them². They did, however, not use them to look up information about the memorial structures or the individuals commemorated: the objects of their visit (see Hugentobler, 2022a). In an article from 2022, Lee and colleagues similarly summarize the use of mobile phones during travel as follows:

Tourists maintain mobile connectivity for various travel and non-travel related purposes such as information search, navigation, problem solving, communicating with others, making travel arrangements, updating and monitoring updates on social networking sites, taking photos and videos, uploading social media content, playing games, and to kill time (Ayeh, 2018; Gretzel, 2010; Tan, 2017; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; Wang et al., 2016). (C. Lee et al., 2022, p. 3)

The vast majority of mobile phone use in the literature therefore focuses on how mobile devices can enhance the experience by providing “planning information” or by being used in entertaining manners that do not necessarily have anything to do with the travel experience at hand (e.g., “killing time”). In this sense, then, my study supports the findings in the literature on mobile phone use by tourists, extending it to memorial sites: The participants in my study did not use their mobile phones to bring additional information into the space to enrich their experience of the physical location.

When talking to visitors about the missing information, at the MLK Memorial, it was never a question of where that information should be located: right here at the memorial. At the Lincoln Memorial, however, visitors had differing opinions. In the following, I first elaborate on those visitors who said that information about King’s speech should not be added at the Lincoln Memorial before discussing those visitors at both memorials who said information should be provided in the memorial space.

² Kendra told me: “I had an app, the national Mall app, and it has all these sites on it listed. The map part of it kind of sucks, so I’ve been using Google Maps. But it has a list of everything” (4 June 2019, MLK Memorial).

9.2.1 Adding Information Elsewhere

At the “I Have a Dream” inscription, seven visitors (27%) said that information about the speech should be added but not here. When I asked Luciana if she would add any information to the speech at this location, after she had told me that it was missing, she replied:

I don't think anything should be added. The Lincoln memorial was created for another purpose, and I think the integrity of its original purpose should be preserved. I don't know that there is a lot of room around the premises where information could be erected about the speech without detracting from the space, but also be big enough to give the historical speech justice. (8 August 2021, Instagram interview)

Other visitors similarly mentioned that adding more about the speech would distract from the Lincoln Memorial:

I don't think it's necessarily that big of a deal if it's recognized here or not. Other than, of course it's good to recognize, to at least have some sort of recognition. I don't think it needs to be something huge. Because the memorial is specifically for Lincoln. So, it would maybe take away from it if you were to [add anything]. (Peter, 17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial)

Many of these visitors mentioned the visual distraction that more information might mean, such as Julio who said: “I think adding more would kind of like take away from the meaning and the art behind it, so I would not” (12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). This reflects the visitors' enjoyment of the Lincoln Memorial which was largely about the aesthetics of the larger memorial structure.

This aesthetic concern was also referenced by a park ranger I talked to in 2021. He told me that one of the reasons why there are not more informational boards at memorials in DC was that they obstruct the view when tourists take pictures.³ This is a particular issue at the Lincoln Memorial where the historical location is on top of a location that already has symbolic meaning and is itself a memorial, appreciated for its aesthetic value. Sophia Kelly, while not explicitly confirming the claim by the park ranger, told me about some of the interpretive considerations in building the World War I Memorial (dedicated in 2021):

The memorial originally was going to have these poppies, these little poppy icons which were going to act kind of like QR codes and you can scan the poppy with your

³ I was unable to confirm with any of the institutions if this is an actual concern or a coincidence.

phone and then get information, cue up information about different aspects of the war. That was taken out of the design ultimately, because they were finding it hard, like, if you are going to have certain content that you want to change or update, it was hard to have kind of these physical features. ... And QR codes are ugly, and you don't want to have a QR code there, that's really obvious, so it's definitely something that's being thought about: How do you educate while you still maintain the commemoration without adding a whole bunch of text? (October 21, 2021, commented walk)

Keeping a memorial aesthetically intact when adding additional information therefore appears to be a concern for the NPS as well as some visitors.

9.2.2 Adding Information in the Memorial Space

While seven individuals said that information should be added but not at the Lincoln Memorial, nineteen (73%) said that it *should* be provided in that space. Furthermore, all twenty-three individuals who said more information was necessary at the MLK Memorial said it should be in that space. Several mentioned that they would appreciate it if they could learn more while they were on site: “If you're not here and learning, what are you doing? Like, if you don't know the history behind it, you can't appreciate it” (Kate, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). This reflects their desire for the memorial site to provide all relevant information for a visit, to create a full experience. As historian Daniel Boorstin claimed in 1967, “[t]he tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. ... He expects everything to be done to him and for him” (p. 85). While such an entirely pessimistic perspective on tourism seems extreme, even when acknowledging some touristic agency, it can be seen that—in my project—visitors do indeed expect information to be provided for them. While it has never been easier to access information online, do one's own research, enhance one's own experience, visitors to these memorials instead want the information to be present at the site.

One reason for this might be more so their level of trust in the institution than their laziness as passive tourists (Hugentobler, 2022a).⁴ These visitors have travelled to the capital to see the nation's cultural heritage. They can be expected to have an above-average interest in these sites—which are clearly legitimized by official institutions—otherwise they would not have travelled here. Now, why

⁴ This paragraph is based on my methods paper “The Instagram Interview: Talking to People About Travel Experiences Across Online and Offline Spaces” (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 19).

should these visitors rely on their own, amateur, online search skills to find more information about the memorials? As Rosenzweig and Thelen claimed in 1998, above all other media, Americans put most trust in museums and historic sites (1998). This still appears to be true for visitors to DC memorials (Hugentobler, 2022b).

Fig. 9.4 Visitor Photographing Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address. (Note. Photograph by the author)



Looking up information online—while convenient and able to provide a myriad of different perspectives on a topic—might be less appealing to visitors because “[t]he more these voices clamor for our attention, the harder it seems to find an online destination from which to obtain reliable and authoritative cultural knowledge” (Russo et al., 2008, p. 23). It is therefore possible that visitors expect information to be provided at the site because they trust the institution behind it. This can be seen in the many visitors in fact taking information *away* from the memorial to consume later, such as taking photographs of the quotes at either of the two memorials (see Figs. 9.4 and 9.5). One visitor told me “I took a couple of pictures of the writings so I can read them later. So I don’t have to stand in there and just spend all the time in there because we wanted to see a bunch of places” (Peter, 17 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial). While Peter also

Fig. 9.5 Visitor
Photographing a Quote at
the MLK Memorial. (*Note.*
Photograph by the author)



reiterated the need to see many memorials rather than spending much time at one, in this act, he also affirms visitors' trust in the information provided on site: This must be not only reliable information but also a good selection.

Another argument, which some visitors name explicitly, for providing information at the memorial site is that learning about the person memorialized is part of the experience of visiting a memorial: "I do not believe we learn enough just by visiting these sites. I think of children who visit who may not have had the opportunity to know the history and how they may leave with unanswered questions" (Alena, 9 September 2020, Instagram interview). Some visitors made explicit their belief that learning should happen in that specific location:

There's not much about [King's] history or even his relevance, why he is right there, so I feel like a lot of that can be missed. ... Usually, there's like, you were here and then somebody's talking about it when you leave. I feel like it should be like in that time, in that space, you should be able to talk about, to see the information, see the stats or the facts about him or whatever. I think that would be pretty cool. (Yves, 5 June 2019, MLK Memorial)

Learning while being in the significant location is therefore crucial to many since it connects the more visceral experience of visiting an important symbolic location and the more rational experience of learning about its significance and the narratives it is meant to transport.

9.2.3 Reasons for a Lack of Information on Site

The stance of the agencies involved in the creation of memorials in DC on the question of information is clear; memorials commemorate, they do not educate. This reflects research claiming that “collective remembering is most effective at reinforcing group identity when its representations are simple, unambiguous, and able to elicit strong emotional responses” (Wertsch & Billingsley, 2011, p. 32). As Sophia Kelly said:

We don't want memorials to be outdoor museums, because we see museums to be separate from commemoration. The commemoration is more about the emotion, there's a bit of a historical component, obviously, because it's often to people or events that are rooted in history or placed in history. But the main purpose is about the emotion and the symbolism of the commemoration. (21 October 2021)

She further elaborated:

I think the idea is that what Congress is authorizing is a memorial itself. They aren't authorizing a museum or an education program or the art. And while those might be completely needed and valued, that's not the purpose of what this is. (21 October 2021)

Kelly refers to the process of creating a memorial and the fact that in its authorization, its purpose is technically set. She then also mentioned one rare exception, the World War I Memorial:

There's something called a belvedere and there are informational panels in the circular belvedere. And it was something that we don't typically do at memorials because it was sort of an outdoor museum type thing So, it had a lot more text than we would typically put in. So it does happen *sometimes*, but it's something that we try to avoid in general. (21 October 2021)

This shows that, while the official stance on information at memorial sites is clear, there are memorials which indeed showcase more information. Some memorials,

such as the Jefferson, even include spaces with small exhibits, closely resembling a small museum (see Fig. 9.6).

Fig. 9.6 The Basement At the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



While some exceptions therefore do exist, the purpose of a memorial, while currently under more scrutiny, is clearly different from that of a museum, as Michael Sherman from the NCPC confirmed:

Internally, and within our commission, there are discussions about “well, what is a commemorative work?” There are those who say: “It’s not there to tell the full story!” And in fact, the art itself may not even *hint* at the entire story. And that’s not its purpose, it’s maybe just to commemorate as a *reminder*. But if you want more information, you really need to go to a museum to find out more about that particular event or person. That’s one school of thought. I would also tell you that there’s another school of thought that ... says they need to tell the story at that location with some type of augmentation. Whether it’s a physical visitor center, or digital technology, that augments as you’re walking around: something that helps tell the story. And I’m oversimplifying but those are sort of the two schools of thought: that the question of the fundamental purpose of commemorative works should or should not be able to tell a full aspect of an event. ...There’s another debate to this where a commemorative work may have been done 200 years ago and now it’s taken on new meaning because

we learn more about that event or that person or that place even where that commemorative work is. Should we tell more aspects of that story, that might be both good, bad, and ugly about that person, place, or event? And, if so, how do you do that: through digital technology, or other means? So, I wish we could give you a more firm answer, but I can tell you that it's very much in our discussions as we think about commemoration. (Zoom call, 13 October 2021)

These statements show that the institutions involved in the construction of memorials are aware of public debates about contextualizing memorials and they are trying to find a way that is also in line with the law. They furthermore acknowledge the function of public memory which is to present a selection and not a full history of the past. However, while education may not be the primary function of memorials, they cannot function completely without it. They must at least contain enough information for the visitors to understand who or what is being commemorated. Furthermore, if visitors do not understand the symbolism of a site, they are not able to fully experience it.

It has repeatedly been mentioned by visitors and, particularly, experts that memorials should not be outdoor museums. Museums (which are free to visit) indeed are also an essential part of a visit to DC for many visitors. I want to close this chapter on information with a brief contextualization of the memorials in the space of the National Mall. I have already cited several visitors who have mentioned the National Museum of African American History (NMAAHC) as a good addition to their memorial visit. I went to the NMAAHC repeatedly and I always had to end my visit after about four hours, not because I had seen everything, but because I was exhausted.

The NMAAHC, just as most Smithsonian institutions, is curated extremely well. There is a seemingly unending amount of information communicated through different channels. There are traditional exhibits, films, and many extraordinary artefacts such as an airplane—a PT-13 Stearman used to train Tuskegee Airmen (see Fig. 9.7)—or Emmett Till's casket. Several exhibits include interactive material such as in the music section of the Culture Galleries, where visitors can browse through a section of LPs while listening to music (see Fig. 9.8). This gallery in particular speaks to several senses at once, with different pieces of music streaming from speakers in different corners, mixing together different genres, videos glimmering from several screens within one corner of the exhibit, and my hands busy browsing through the LPs: This is a sensorially immersive experience. While I was visiting the museum in 2021, one exhibit in the Visual Arts Gallery had introduced an app with which one could scan artwork and would be provided not only with more information but also connections to other material in this exhibit as well as elsewhere in the museum (see Fig. 9.9).

Fig. 9.7 A PT-13 Stearman at the NMAACH. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



Fig. 9.8 LP Exhibit in the NMAACH's Culture Galleries. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



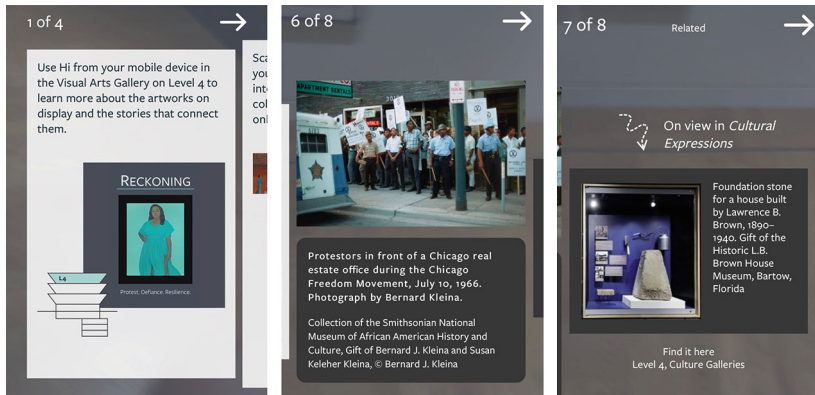


Fig. 9.9 The Hi App At the NMAAACH in October 2021. (*Note.* This app is an interactive app that is different from the NMAAACH app which includes maps and stories about artefacts throughout the museum. Screenshots by the author)

As much as I enjoyed this multi-sensory experience, I usually felt overstimulated before my visit ended. The sensory overload I felt in the museum did not make the experience a negative one at all. It did, however, put my visits to the museum in direct contrast to my memorial visits. This might have been implicit in some of the visitor’s comments when they mentioned that they appreciated the simplicity of the memorials: “I can’t imagine what else could be said. I mean, there’s so much that’s there and there’s so much that could be there but, you know, you can’t—there isn’t the space, and there is overload also” (Jane, 4 June 2019). Another visitor mentioned that he was glad there was not a focus on education at the Lincoln Memorial:

I kind of like the fact that there is not, people who are like: “oh hey, do you need help?” Because I’ve been to a lot of museums and a lot of that kind of thing and it’s always somebody standing there that’s bored that wants to say “hey I can talk to you about this?” They want to talk about what’s there and it’s kind of nice to take things in on your own. (Braxton, 8 June 2019, Lincoln Memorial)

It is therefore possible that, in the context of DC, visitors appreciate the pared-down designs of the memorials because their visits also include museums where the opposite is true. This was certainly how I experienced the different cultural sites in the city.

9.3 Discussion

It appears, then, that there are two main types of visitors I spoke with: those who do not want more information and those who do. To satisfy both of their needs, it could prove most productive to add prompts in the physical realm for additional information provided online (Hugentobler, 2022b, p. 20). This addition would still accommodate those who prefer a pared-down experience, acknowledging that “some people simply prefer to engage with culture as a live experience and a visit to a museum, heritage site, library or theatre is an opportunity to step away from digital activity for a few hours” (*Culture Is Digital*, 2018, p. 22).

Adding information through the digital realm would also not distract from the aesthetic experience of the site but it would still prompt those who want more information to easily access it. In a discussion with two visitors, they elaborated on how they would like to see more information at the Lincoln Memorial:

[Gideon] I always want more information. So, one idea is that ... they could easily put like the bar-code and you scan it and sit there and say you walk inside and put a single...

[Faye] QR code?

[Gideon] Yeah, a single QR code and it could bring you to like a Wikipedia page or it could bring you to any other source of information. And that would be another thing on its own so instead of being just like this is the Lincoln memorial and then a few half-dozen plaques, they could use that QR code and it could bring you to not just the Website because honestly, the websites for these memorials that they have from the Park Service, are terrible. Awful job. So, if they brought you to specialized sources of information, that would be perfect

[Faye] You know how the museums have those self-guided tours, like art museums and stuff

[Gideon] Yeah, that would be great! If they could implement that into the parks and monuments, that would be better for everyone!

[Interviewer] And it would technologically be possible today?

[Gideon] Every person has a smartphone!

[Faye] Don't they have like a Washington Monument app or something? Like, the art gallery I went, the first time you just get their an app of the museum and you can like scan and click onto any of the rooms and you can see what it is. And it is so easy and I feel like it's also not invasive in like a weird way, you know what I mean? Because it's still respecting the integrity of a historical monument, it's not just like screens everywhere. It's like “you scan this thing if you want” and then you can ... (12 October, 2021)

Adding only QR codes and not entire informational panels could therefore help with the concerns of several visitors, quoted above, that more information might destroy the aesthetic value of the sites. Ashley told me, when I asked her how she felt about the information available at the MLK Memorial:

Those are great questions. I think that there could always be more information. However, I don't necessarily think it belongs at the monument. It could possibly be on a plaque with a link to a website for people to read more, listen to audio stories or clips of his speech, etc. like in a museum, but I honestly think the site is best left clean and simplistic. As a memorial, people visit to pay respects and already know a lot about the person. For those who don't, I think the aforementioned idea would bring more life to the history. (18 September 2020, Instagram interview)

To her, the MLK Memorial's simplicity was part of why she enjoyed it. She does, however, acknowledge that the need for information is not the same for all visitors and that, therefore, providing it in an unobstructive manner could be productive. Sophia Kelly similarly elaborated that adding information to a visit does not necessarily have to be done by adding informational signs on site:

There is a balance in providing information to visitors at a site, while also not cluttering the landscape with signage. People can access information in a variety of ways—on their phone, computer, interpretive tours, visiting a museum, etc. Depending on the information, sometimes non-signage options are better than installing a permanent marker. (21 October 2021)

According to Kelly, much of this information already exists for the visitors to consume, despite my participants saying that they think it is missing.

It is then through a digital addition of information to the physical space of the memorial that the advantages of both realms could be reaped most productively: The on-site, physical visit is necessary for experiential reasons. Visitors want to feel the magnitude of the memorial which is mostly communicated through architectural markers and requires the presence of the self in that context. The aura on site is what makes a visit valuable, unique, and memorable. However, what is missing from it is an element of learning. While not all visitors have the same need for learning, most do and a digital inclusion of informational material could add to the experience without taking away from the aesthetics or aura of the site. In fact, adding an educational aspect to the site can enhance both, the experience of the site as well as of the information: The site-visit becomes more meaningful because one walks away with a better understanding of the (parts of) history communicated there, while—at the same time—learning about (parts

of) history becomes more meaningful and memorable because it is attached to a location and a personal experience.

9.3.1 The Affordances Are Invisible

In my conversations with visitors, only one individual mentioned any of the additional resources provided by the memorial institutions. I consider these resources affordances:

The word affordance was coined by the perceptual psychologist J. J. Gibson ... to refer to the actionable properties between the world and an actor (a person or animal). To Gibson, affordances are relationships. They exist naturally: they do not have to be visible, known, or desirable. (Norman, 1999, p. 39)

The affordances which add information to the memorials are, when looking at my sample, almost invisible. Only one of my participants seemed to be aware of them. When I asked her if the information at the Lincoln Memorial was enough, Kate interrupted me, saying:

[Kate] Well, I think that there are visitor centers that, I think, have pamphlets. So, they do exist.

[Interviewer] *But for you, personally, you don't feel that you need more information?*

No, because it's *here!*

So, you actually use it?

Yeah, when I was in college, but during my internship. But I knew it was a thing, so I picked up a package. Maybe, it's like one of those things where it's like if you want it, if you look around, you can find it. But if you're not looking for it, then you don't care to find it. (12 October 2021)

The affordances are, however, hard to find; the bookstores are clearly marked as such, but easily missed because of their locations. The pamphlets only become discoverable once a visitor knows that they exist and where to find them. The websites are not referred to anywhere on site and the park rangers appear at seemingly random hours. As Don Norman writes in his seminal book *The Design of Everyday Things*:

Two of the most important characteristics of good design are discoverability and understanding discoverability: Is it possible to even figure out what actions are possible and where and how to perform them? Understanding: What does it all mean? How is the product supposed to be used? What do all the different controls and settings mean? (2013, p. 3)

This is the issue with the memorial sites: it is unclear to visitors that there is more information provided. While there are technically affordances with which visitors could enhance their visits, they are lacking signifiers: signals which make the affordances perceivable (Norman, 2013, p. 18). This is expressed differently for the different affordances.



Fig. 9.10 Park Rangers at the MLK Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)

The park rangers, for example, are clearly recognizable through their uniforms although it is unclear what their function really is, as they might also be security or maintenance staff (see Fig. 9.10). At the Lincoln Memorial, for example, they often yell at children who slide down the sides of the stairs. On the MLK Memorial website, it says: “Rangers are on duty at the sites to answer questions from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily and to provide interpretive programs throughout the day and upon request” (National Park Service, n.d.-f). However, during my many visits, I noticed that the rangers seemed to appear at random hours. As I learned

from one of them in the fall of 2022, they tend to be assigned to all the parks on the Mall and it appears that the hours listed are the same at all memorials while the rangers switch between them. One never knows when a ranger might be at a specific memorial. From my conversation with a ranger in 2022, I realize that they would be such great sources of information not necessarily because they have all the answers, as this particular ranger told me, but because of their enthusiasm for the sites. It is then no surprise when this ranger tells me how disappointed he is that visitors hardly ever come up to him to ask questions. He says the question he gets asked most frequently is “where are the bathrooms?” The existing resources are therefore practically invisible which might be why none of the visitors in my sample used them.

9.4 Conclusion

As the previous chapters discussing on-site experiences have shown: visitors want to have an experience they could not have while reading a textbook or watching a documentary. As Sharon MacDonald states, experience “is generally understood as going beyond that which people might verbally articulate to include, indeed, often to concentrate upon, bodily and sensory experience”(MacDonald, 2013, p. 82). They expect their visits to include both, tacit as well as explicit knowledge. The first can be experienced through the presence on site. As Nofal and colleagues explain,

more intangible or tacit meanings and values, such as the skills, ideas and experiences that the heritage represents, are typically more challenging to communicate to visitors due to their implicit and often abstract character. Yet such tacit knowledge is particularly important to understand the complexity and richness of heritage as an experiential and communal concept that is not necessarily declarative or definitive. (2018, p. 415)

This tacit knowledge, according to the authors, includes a site’s architecture, cultural values (e.g. the work has gained cultural significance), aesthetic features, and symbolic significance (Nofal et al., 2018, p. 415). Visitors’ appreciation of these aspects was shown in the previous two chapters: in these places of memory, history can be “breathed in,” to use Bernhard Tschofen’s term (2016, translated from German), resulting in a more tacit knowledge of what the site stands for. This experience, then, requires the “being in the space of the memorial.” According to many visitors, however, they also expect these sites to be sites of a traditional transfer of knowledge. Ideally, a memorial should overcome this dichotomy as the

experience of public memory appears to consist of both: a corporeal experience of the site as well as an explicit learning process.

One solution to enable visitors to have a more educational experience, while not taking away from the sensory value of the sites, would be to add information online with prompts on site (see also Hugentobler 2022a). This would be particularly productive if the information was more than pure text and also referred to the geographical environment. Whether that is through augmented reality or by adding photographs of what the space looked like some decades ago. It is through this reference that the “being in space” would add another productive layer to the informational aspect of the sites. Traditional knowledge could be acquired in combination with tacit knowledge, ideally making it more interesting as well as more memorable. The problem with the existing resources is not only that they are invisible on site, it is also that they are created for an audience that cannot visit the sites, thus not connecting the physical place and the additional resources.

These resources represent a digitization of cultural artefacts (see *The Culture White Paper*, 2016). This reflects much of current efforts to use the digital realm to make culture more accessible, as the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport states in its report on the Digital Culture Project: “With digital content, cultural organizations are able to reach and engage more people than could ever have physical access to culture through visits, opening up our nation’s cultural offering to all rather than only those living within travelling distance” (*Culture Is Digital*, 2018, p. 19). While this effort is not without its issues (underserved populations tend to also be underprivileged when it comes to internet access), it is an important task.⁵ However, currently, there appears to be less focus on how to make the experience on site more educational and valuable for those visitors who indeed are on site.

⁵ On this note, the report states: “However, simply making digital content available does not mean that audiences will automatically engage. Our expert advisor on research and evidence, Professor Simeon Yates, found a strong association between cultural exclusion (visiting a cultural venue) and digital exclusion (being online). Whilst some parts of the population are being ‘double served’ by physical and digital cultural offerings, others remain on the outside. This means that, at least for some, technology is not a way to drive cultural engagement” (*Culture Is Digital*, 2018, p. 21).

The websites and pamphlets available for the two memorials do not connect the information to the site. On the MLK Memorial website, for example, the quotes engraved at the memorial are simply reproduced as photographs, no additional context is given. When speaking about a few stages in King's life, none of the resources connect them to anything that can be experienced at the memorial. The Lincoln Memorial website only refers to the speech like this: "For almost a century, the Lincoln Memorial steps witnessed history-making moments such as the 'I Have a Dream' speech, the Marian Anderson concert and the daily secular pilgrimage of thousands" (*Lincoln Memorial: Memorial Features*, 2021). However, there is no indication that there is a marker to be found on site and no reference to what this place might have felt or looked like during the speech. This is despite existing media coverage of the event. As several visitors mentioned, a renowned speaker as King might be appropriately remembered by playing audios from his speeches. This would enable individuals on site to feel even more of that history, to not only breathe it in but to experience it with all their senses. Future research should consider the specific needs of visitors at different cultural sites and how institutions can best cater to those needs.⁶

⁶ Ellie King and colleagues have published one of the first studies which takes a user experience approach to studying the needs of museum visitors in regards to a specific exhibition (E. King et al., 2022).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Memorials and Photography

10

While much of visitors' mobile phone behavior—such as searching for information—cannot be grasped from the outside, the practice of photography is an obvious one, even when individuals do not use a traditional camera but a mobile phone. People put themselves in relation to the artefacts in a manner that enables the best angles, the best photographs. Photography does not simply “happen,” and it is a practice that is visible from the outside. In this chapter, I take a closer look at the practice of photography at the two memorials. This is important because, as Pearce and Moscardo argue, there exists a “dominant focus in the tourism literature on the content rather than the process of this phenomenon. There has been however, a shift in emphasis in discussions of tourist photography” (2015, p. 61). My study reflects this shift as I am interested in both, the actual photographs, and the practice of photography on site.

In this chapter, I will first describe and contextualize the practice of photography, how it impacts the tourist experience and why visitors take pictures. I combine my observations and photographs of photographic practices with visitor and expert interviews. I have already written about the practices of photography in a paper titled “No Incentives to Interact: A Case Study of Mobile Phone Interactions with Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials in Washington, DC” (Hugentobler, 2022a). I refer to the paper throughout this chapter when discussing findings already published there, but want to stress here that the paper was based only on fieldwork from 2019. The sample on which the following observations are based is therefore a larger one and its analyses focus on more questions.

Standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and trying to photograph the inscription on the floor, I get a little frustrated: people keep walking into my shot as they climb up the stairs. During my first visit I am here with two friends, and it takes our concerted efforts to hinder visitors from stepping into our frame. In the chamber, however, while more crowded, it feels like visitors are more aware

of each other, trying not to step into anybody else's frame. It might be because it is obvious what people want to photograph: Lincoln's statue. Similarly, at the MLK Memorial, the other visitors look and feel to me like they are aware of their surroundings; they tend to wait for others to take a shot, avoiding stepping into each other's frame (see Figs. 10.1 and 10.2). This seems counter-intuitive, as research has often stressed that the use of mobile phones, including for photography, results in a "distracted gaze" on site (see C. Lee et al., 2022). Tribe and Mkono (2017) even coined a term for this: *e-lienation*, which can be so extreme, particularly when taking a selfie, that it can lead to injury and death (Weiler et al., 2021). At the two memorials under study, visitors do not seem to be distracted by their photographic practices to a level where they become unaware of their surroundings. Instead, my observations support what Stylianou-Lambert discussed, regarding tourist etiquette: she found that visitors of the Rock of Aphrodite in Cyprus, while becoming absorbed in their own picture taking, were nevertheless conscious of other tourists present at the site and were careful not to infringe on their space (Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). While most of my photographs have other visitors in them, it is rare that someone steps right in front of my lens without noticing and apologizing profusely.

Fig. 10.1 Ducking Out of Someone Else's Picture Frame. (Note. Photograph by the author)



Fig. 10.2 Getting in Line to Take a Picture With King. (Note. Photograph by the author)



10.1 Why Visitors Take Pictures

My impression of the prevalence of photo-taking on site is confirmed in my interviews on site: I asked 68 individuals if they took a photograph or not. 65 visitors said they had taken a picture themselves and three stated that they had not, but another member of their party did it for them: “Not me, but you know my kids take pictures and then they send them to me” (Rita, 15 June 2019, MLK Memorial).¹ The visitors who did not take photographs are therefore still proxy users of tourism photographs of their trip.

¹ This woman was 72 years old and her hesitant use of technology might have kept her from taking a picture herself. However, another person who relied on someone else’s photographs was a 27-year-old visitor from England who was relying on her partner’s photographs.

10.1.1 Creating a Record

As I have written in a previous paper (Hugentobler, 2022a, p. 13), in my sample as well as in the literature, in its simplest form, travel photography serves to verify that a person in fact visited a specific location (Chalfen, 1987a; W. Hillman, 2007; Lo et al., 2011, p. 726). This can serve the purpose of creating a personal memento, as this visitor stated:

I took pictures of one of the quotes, one that sort of hit me the hardest. And then just so that I, not that I'm gonna forget, but that I have quote unquote proof of what is here. Because I don't think this was here when we were last here. (Tina, 14 October 2021, MLK Memorial) (see also Hugentobler, 2022a, p. 13)

Creating an image of the visit can also be motivated by wanting to share it with others, letting them know “been there, done that!” (Munir & Phillips, 2005, p. 1673). Both of these functions of personal photography reflect the traditional use of the postcard (Albers & James, 1988, pp. 138–139). The following visitor did both, “Showing them to my family and my friends. And my mom wants pictures [laughs] and it's something to remember it by, from the monument” (Ulises, 5 June 2019, MLK Memorial). While 16 visitors told me they took a photograph for themselves, fourteen said that they might (also) share it with somebody else. These types of sharing were always framed as interpersonal communication, letting a personal connection know one's location: “I've shared it with my son, I just sent it to him and he was like ‘Where are you? Are you in DC?’” (Jane, 4 June 2019, MLK Memorial).

Photographs are therefore mostly taken, according to my interviewees, to remember a trip by and to communicate that trip to others. Because these motivations are deeply engrained in tourist behavior, it is then no surprise that individuals would take a lot of photographs as it reflects their desire to collect as many sites as possible. This is a development that began with the invention of Kodak's first commercial roll film design in 1889, which made it exponentially easier to take a camera on vacation (*Chronology of Film: History of Film from 1989 to Present*, n.d.). The “mania of snapping pictures” (Chalfen, 1987a, p. 101) was thus encouraged by the ease of the process as well as

wider changes at the societal level, which saw the motivation behind taking a camera along on travels shifting from one centred on exploration and curiosity to a ritualistic one that is best captured in the popular phrase, ‘been there, done that.’ Kodak, through its ads, and together with transportation and communication technologies, facilitated the decline of the traveller and the rise of the tourist. (Munir & Phillips, 2005, p. 1673)

This further supports a claim made earlier, that technology helped change the travel experience; it allowed for a (significantly easier) collection of sites:

There is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera. This is as evident in the 19140s and the 1850s, photography's glorious first two decades, as in all the succeeding decades, during which technology made possible an ever increasing spread of that mentality which looks at the world as a set of potential photographs. ... From its start, photography implied the capture of the largest possible number of subjects. (Sontag, 1977, p. 7)

In other words: "Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs" (Chalfen, 1987b, p. 101). In fact, Kodak has often been blamed for having transformed "the nature of travel to a more superficial activity" (Munir & Phillips, 2005, cited in Lo et al., 2011, p. 725). This is true even of the *potential* of taking a photograph at an important site. As Forrest wrote about professional photographers in 2016:

Having spoken with numerous photographers over the course of many years, the common theme in each conversation was the transformative powers of carrying and using a camera every day, be that film, digital or on a mobile phone. They remarked on how they saw the world differently, markedly so from the others around them that did not habitually take photographs. They also noted that after prolonged use, even when they did not take a camera with them, they still saw potential photographs everywhere within their environment. (2016, p. 194)

This, I claim, is true of many tourists who own and use smartphones today. There is a certain habitus of photo taking in these individuals which can mean that they behave according to the logics of capturing a good picture even when they then do not end up taking and/or sharing it. The pure *possibility* of the photograph transforms their travel experience.

The ritualized act of taking tourist pictures harkens back to the idea of tourism to a memorial site as an act of pilgrimage. The latter often ends in visitors taking something of high significance home with them. Robinson and Picard describe it as follows:

Religious pilgrims visiting religious sites or shrines of important relics usually acquire small objects, medals or images, or decant drops of the Holy water in plastic bottles, which they would eventually take home and integrate into their home space living room shrines or use for other spiritual-therapeutic purposes. Something similar seems to happen when tourists take photographs and display them. (Robinson & Picard, 2009, p. 21)

The photograph, then, is the common souvenir from a pilgrimage to a memorial.

10.1.2 Photography as a Practice of Tourism

However, tourist photography is not only an action which results in a picture, but it is also a practice in itself. As previous tourism research has shown, taking photographs is the “most popular entertainment activity” which visitors conduct with their smartphones while at a tourism site (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2013b, p. 61). Photography then not only serves to document a trip, but it can also serve as a fun activity in its own right—in the moment (see Diehl et al., 2016; Gillet et al., 2013; C. Lee et al., 2022, p. 12).

In addition to photography being a fun aspect of a visit, it is also a requirement to “do tourism right.” In fact, Tim Edensor (2000) argues that people can only really experience tourism through the performance of tourism rituals, amongst which photography is the most visible one. This is to say that taking a picture on vacation is not simply a method to ensure one remembers the trip, but it is a practice that is essential to the experience in the moment: taking photographs is what tourists do (Robinson & Picard, 2009, p. 1). As Susan Sontag wrote in 1977: “it seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along” (Sontag, 1977, p. 9). Photography is therefore part of the practice of tourism.

This ritualized behavior is strikingly visible in my personal photographs from different memorial sites (see Fig. 10.3). As I have described before, during my first site-visits, I took my own tourist pictures, just as I would during a private visit, not pointing my camera purposely at other visitors. This nevertheless resulted in a collection of photographs showing other visitors photographing memorials. Their visible behavior is the same at every memorial site, showing the need for this behavior to “do tourism right.” In fact, photography is so deeply engrained in tourism behavior that many individuals cannot give a reason for why they took photographs, such as this visitor of the Lincoln Memorial: “I just took a picture to take a picture” (Daniel, 8 June 2019), reflecting the habitualized nature of tourist photography.



Fig. 10.3 Photographing DC Memorials. (*Note.* Photographs by the author)

10.1.3 Meaning Making Through Photography

Seeing visitors take photographs on site not only communicates that they are tourists (see Chalfen, 1987a, p. 101), but also shows what they think is worth photographing at any specific site. Visitors do not photograph everything they encounter on a trip. Instead, some visitors in my sample confirmed that they were trying to take a photograph of an imagery they had seen before:

I was telling him that! I was like, when I saw when we were standing over there I was like, I see these movies, and I can't believe it's real. So that's also why I'm kind of like taking [the picture], for my own memory like "yeah, I was there" like "yeah I saw that in a movie" so that I can mark that I was there! (Ivy, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial)

This reflects what tourism scholars have long claimed: that people "travel to see and photograph what they have already consumed in image form" (Larsen, 2005, p. 423). This goes as far back as the 1960s when, armed with the new Kodak cameras, tourists were beginning to visit sites with images of a place in their mind and then trying to find that same image in order to feel that their trip was complete (Boorstin, 1967). As Bourdieu states:

Although the field of the photographable may broaden, photographic practice does not become any more free, since one may only photograph what one must photograph, and since there are photographs which one must "take" just as there are sites and monuments which one must "do." (Bourdieu, 2003)

This means that tourists look for and take those photographs which reflect images that they have seen before and with which they have travelled to a site (Nikjoo & Bakhshi, 2019, p. 90; Sabre, 2016, p. 164; Urry, 2002, p. 129). This is reflected in a comment by the tour-guide of my Segway tour who told me:

On tour the sites where I feel like I see people take the most photos on their phones are the White House, Capitol, Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial. I definitely think this is because these are the iconic landmarks of DC. (Helen, 11 June 2019, email response)

This goes beyond wanting to photograph a specific memorial one has seen before but includes the desire to photograph sites that look like something one has seen before: impressive sites.

Fig. 10.4 Noticing Others Taking a Picture of the Inscription. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



While taking photographs of that which one deems important is a theme, it also works the other way around. By taking a photograph of a memorial, individuals can assign value to the site itself. “Most tourists feel compelled to put a camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable they encounter” (Chalfen, 1987b, p. 101). According to Stuart Hall (1982), photographs are the results of people’s attempts to make their surroundings more meaningful. By photographing objects, tourists make certain (aspects of) memorials more important because they select them for a picture. Consequently, they assign them value in the moment of photographing. When I enter a space and see people taking photographs, I am immediately aware that this is a snap-worthy site. Other people’s pointed phones draw my attention to specific aspects of a site. At the Lincoln Memorial, I often observe visitors take a photograph of the “I Have a Dream” inscription and others only noticing its existence because they notice someone taking a photograph. This makes them pay closer attention to their surroundings and try to find out what is so important that these people are crouching on the floor, phones raised (see Fig. 10.4).

10.1.4 Photographs of People

“Hey, can I ask you a favor? Would you take a picture of us, maybe with the water in the background?” (Tina, 14 October 2021), an interviewee asked me after our conversation at the MLK Memorial. Having one’s picture taken, whether by stranger, a friend, or one’s own outstretched selfie-arm, is a frequent occurrence at these memorials.

When asking individuals on site if they took pictures with themselves in it, a selfie or other, only six said yes, five of them at the Lincoln Memorial. A young visitor from Germany who had nannied in DC the year before told me, when I asked if she still takes pictures of the Lincoln Memorial: “Always! It’s just, now, that I am on my own, you ask people like ‘yeah, can you take my picture?’ And then it’s always just one photograph and you don’t always look good in it, oh well.” (Sarah, 17 June 2019). She stresses the importance of having one’s picture taken in front of a memorial even when this means having to approach a stranger. She also candidly mentions that one of the purposes of having one’s picture taken is to look good in the picture (see Burns, 2015; Senft & Baym, 2015). This touches on an aspect of self-representation that is a bit uncomfortable to discuss and one that might explain the low affirmative response rate to my question if people took a picture of themselves: vanity. However, taking a selfie during travel also helps to show proof of the visit. “The desire to show that one ‘was there’

as proof in tourist photography appears to be reason for many tourist photos in front of ‘mandatory’ sights” (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016, p. 133). It means a literal insertion of the tourist’s body into the photograph. These photograph therefore not only create proof that the site exists but also that the individual visited.

10.1.4.1 Claiming Space: Photographs at the MLK Memorial

At the MLK Memorial, this insertion of the tourist into the photographic space is particularly interesting. As I observe other visitors, I notice that it is mostly African American visitors who position themselves in front of the statue, either taking their own or somebody else’s picture (see Fig. 10.5). While I do witness some White visitors take a picture of themselves at the site, it is rare, and it is a topic some participants explicitly mention. After Alena told me that she had taken a selfie at the Lincoln Memorial, I asked her if she also took any at the MLK Memorial. She replied:

I almost did in front of the MLK Memorial, but paused and considered the fact that I’m not black. There were soooo many black folks doing so and it was beautiful. It’s kind of like participating in Black Lives Matter marches, the respectful protocol is to step aside and let black people lead. The only time you get in front of them is if they are facing danger, then you hold the line. I hope that makes sense. (22 September 2020, Instagram interview)

Ashley answered my question about selfie-taking at the MLK Memorial in a similar manner:

I didn’t take selfies at this memorial. I saw several others doing so, mostly from our black community. MLK is a symbol of hope and freedom for them. For me, as beautiful as it is, it’s a place for me to reflect and solemnly understand how there was a major turning point during the civil rights movement, but there is so much more to be done to make sure that MLK’s dream prevails. (18 September 2020, Instagram interview)

The two White women’s explanations for not taking selfies at the MLK Memorial illustrate two findings. First, they acknowledge that while the MLK Memorial is for everyone, its meaning differs depending on how visitors are personally affected by the injustices against which Dr. King fought. Ashley implicitly states that while for the Black community, King is a symbol of hope and freedom, for her—as a member of a privileged group—the memorial serves more as a reminder of past wrongdoings and a call for action to improve the future. Second, both women vocalize their awareness of taking a selfie in the physical space: it is not an invisible action.



Fig. 10.5 Taking a Photograph With King. (*Note.* Photographs by the author)

It is important to keep in mind that photography is a corporeal practice in physical space, an understanding which can often be forgotten when studies focus exclusively on artefacts (Hynnä-Granberg, 2022). Senft and Baym, in their introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Communication on the selfie*, write that the selfie is not only a photographic object but also “a gesture that can send (and is often intended to send) different messages to different individuals, communities, and audiences” (2015, p. 1589). Looking at the practices of selfie-taking I realize how visible this practice is. Even when conducted without a selfie-stick or a tripod, pointing one’s phone into the air, arranging one’s face, and often turning one’s back to the cultural artefact, a person taking a selfie cannot hide (see Figs. 10.6 and 10.7). While Frosh writes about the gesture of selfie-taking that it constructs “a deictic movement of the body that draws attention to the immediate context of image viewing and to the activity of a viewer” (Frosh, 2015, p. 1615), it also can draw the attention of onlookers in the physical space to the selfie taker. Taking a selfie positions the self into a spotlight of one’s own making, not just in the end product but also in the act of production (see Bareither, 2019). This is also true of photographs being taken of another person. Posing for a picture is a visible action and often affects others in the space as they perceive the line of the shot and walk around it. People taking a picture of themselves therefore take up space and attention.

Fig. 10.6 A Selfie With Lincoln. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



The MLK Memorial, however, is seen—by many—as a space where White visitors should remain in the background. As we know from previous research on photography, “[m]embers of the same culture tacitly come to agree on norms of inclusion and exclusion of picture content, on choices of appropriate and inappropriate camera use” (Chalfen, 1987a, p. 100). It therefore makes sense that I witness relatively few White visitors taking pictures of themselves in the middle of the memorial and that some of them explicitly tell me that their ethnic identity is the reason why they tried to remain in the background.

10.1.4.2 The Memorial as Background: Photographs at the Lincoln Memorial

Because the Lincoln memorial is mostly read as a sign for itself and appreciated for its architectural beauty and magnitude, it might be the single most popular structure in DC to celebrate one’s own personal milestones. Weddings, graduations, milestone birthdays: all are celebrated at the Lincoln with (often professional) photo shoots (see Figs. 10.8 and 10.10). However, even when the occasion is more mundane, such as a vacation or a yoga practice (see Fig. 10.9), the memorial serves as a background (see also Di Giovine, 2009, p. 59). As

Fig. 10.7 Taking a Selfie at the Lincoln Memorial. *(Note. Photograph by the author)*



Fig. 10.8 Three Cameras, a Red Dress, and a Tiara: Photo Shoot on the Steps of the Lincoln. *(Note. Photograph by the author)*

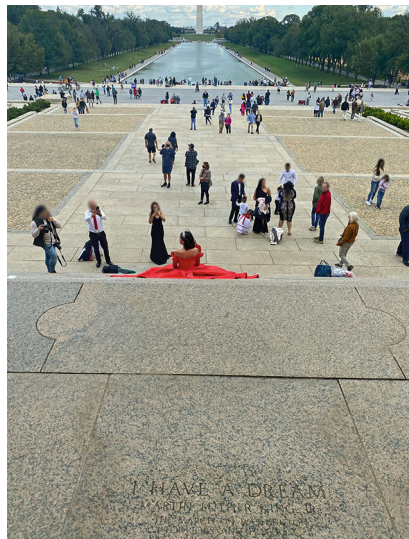


Fig. 10.9 Pillars to Stretch: Yoga Shoot at the Lincoln Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



such, it exudes magnitude and assigns it to the individual in the photograph. The structure is enormous and extraordinary. Placing oneself in its vicinity can have the effect of the structure's ambiance engulfing one's own purpose. Coming here to celebrate a graduation or an engagement feels grand and promising of a bright future. When people come here at night to enjoy the quiet and the view across the Mall, they do not come looking for an air of contemplation, of quiet remembrance of the past. They come to imagine their own vibrant future.

Using the Lincoln Memorial as a backdrop for one's photographs can work in two different manners. First, it is used as a prop in tourism photographs to communicate location. In this respect, the Lincoln Memorial draws value from being the prototypical memorial in a city of memorials and therefore works well to signal a visit to DC. Second, it is used to visually show magnitude. In the photograph, the magnitude of the memorial is transferred to the person visible in the photograph. This can also be seen in the Lincoln's use in the media, for example in an article titled "High Hopes," published in the September (2022) issue of fashion magazine *Vogue* about Supreme Court justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and her ascent to the Court (ImeIme, 2022). The article largely focuses



Fig. 10.10 Wedding Photography at the Lincoln Memorial. (*Note.* Photographs by the author)

on the obstacles Justice Jackson had to overcome and the importance of seeing an African American woman in this position for the first time.

Interestingly, the article is illustrated with two photographs of Justice Jackson at the Lincoln Memorial (see Figs. 10.11 and 10.12). The first image is a close-up of Justice Jackson with two columns of the Lincoln Memorial visible behind her and then stretching across the reflecting pond. The second shows Jackson leaning against a pillar in the chamber, Lincoln's statue visible in the background. The one large-print quote from the text reads "Justice Jackson's confirmation speaks to a deep-seated American desire to believe that we can transcend our past" (ImeIme, 2022, p. 307). It is interesting that the Lincoln Memorial was chosen to illustrate this portrait. The supreme court is also located in DC, and it looks similar to the Lincoln Memorial from the front, sporting eight Greek columns supporting the front of the building. In images focusing on the columns, the building might have been just as suitable. Additionally, there is no reference to King or the "I Have a Dream" speech in the article or the images. Instead, Jackson is shown in relation to Lincoln (probably also reflecting the narrative of a continuation of civil rights efforts in the path of Lincoln). This article serves as an illustration of how the Lincoln Memorial is not only used by tourists as a backdrop signifying importance, but it is equally used in this manner in the media.

Fig. 10.11 A New Day.
 (Note. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, photographed inside the Lincoln Memorial by Annie Leibovitz (Leibovitz, 2022a), published in *Vogue* (2022))



Fig. 10.12 Standing Tall.
 (Note. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, photographed at the Lincoln Memorial by Annie Leibovitz (Leibovitz, 2022b) published in *Vogue* (2022))



Seeing these types of images in the media, then, also increases their significance for visitors: they travel to the memorial in part because they have seen these impressive images before. As Hodalska has written about self-portraits at sites of dark heritage:

Self-portraits at horror sites are a link selfie-takers are trying to make to the media coverage of dramatic events, maybe in an attempt to become a part of a bigger narrative, a more important narrative than the stories they produce and show off on friend-networking sites every day. This is the way in which they want to participate in the (hi)story, they cry: “Here I am! I am just as important as the things in the background!” (2017, p. 419)

Taking a photograph of the self at the Lincoln Memorial can therefore assign value not only to the site but also the self:

When conceived as items to be ticked off a “bucket list,” landscapes are collected as signs buttressing the performance of individual status and desirability, serving as a badge decorating the branded self and as an aesthetic backdrop in the adroit execution of self-advertisement. (S. P. Smith, 2021, p. 620).

This is what taking a photograph of people at the Lincoln Memorial largely attempts: to transfer the site's magnitude and importance to the self.

10.2 Conclusion

By seeing other visitors take pictures (mostly of the most impressive aspects of a memorial), I noticed what they deemed important about the site. Collectively seeing many individuals photograph a memorial then made it seem valuable and special. This means that photography not only serves the person taking the picture but also those around them:

Tourists occasionally perform tourism reflexively, but much tourism life is conducted habitually. But following Goffman, I argue that performances —unlike practices— require audiences: real or imagined, now or later. We can now define performances as day-to-day cultural improvisations before an audience; performances are about “giving off” impressions. (Larsen, 2005, p. 421)

This means that the photo-taking on site, if we study it as a performance, has different audiences: One audience are the other visitors on site, and the second (potential) audience is that of the friend who stayed home, that of the Instagram follower: a future audience. Knowing about this potential audience impacts individuals' behavior in the moment. Photographs are in part taken so that visitors have something they can potentially perform for other audiences later.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Memorials and Instagram

11

The photographs taken by the visitors I spoke with on site are mainly used to create a memory for the visitor and/or communicate with specific friends or family-members—mostly in one-to-one communication. However, there were also a few individuals who shared their photographs to a social media platform with a broader audience in mind. Because sharing travel photographs online, especially on Instagram, can be part of a visitor’s site-experience, I wanted to know what images they share and how they talk about the site and their visit. I was also curious to see how they talked about the two memorials, potentially adding information about the sites or King which was absent at the memorials. As Lee and colleagues wrote in 2022: “the role of online photo-sharing in shaping or altering the on-site experience remains underexplored” (p. 3). In studying how individuals share about their visits on Instagram, I therefore not only account for their online practices but also how their (planned) sharing behavior might have impacted their on-site visit.

I begin this chapter by elaborating on visitors’ self-proclaimed motivations for sharing about the two memorials on Instagram and connect them to the literature (Subchapters 11.1 and 11.2). I focus on Instagram sharing here, specifically, because behavior is highly context-specific, and the use of a specific social media platform can be understood as the choice of a specific stage on which certain behavior is more accepted than others (see Erving Goffman’s (1959) “highly bounded regions”). While relying on individuals’ own statements about their behavior, in a next step, I supplement these insights with an analysis of the posts they shared (visuals and text). I introduce this part of the study by elaborating

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-48917-5_11.

on the sampling methods in Subchapters 11.3.1 and 11.3.2 before discussing the posts about the “I Have a Dream” speech in 11.4 and then posts about the MLK Memorial in 11.5. This combination of methods should ensure that I can access both: conscious behavior as well as subconscious behavior and the resulting artefacts. I then compare the posts from the two memorials in Subchapter 11.6 and draw out their similarities and differences before discussing their implications in 11.7.

11.1 Instagram: The Online Diary

Sharing an image from a memorial to one’s Instagram page can have several motivations. At its most simple, however, Instagram is an online diary: a platform for archiving personal memories (Cannelli & Musso, 2022; E. Lee et al., 2015; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). However, not all memories are archived. Even when the technological possibilities of the mobile phone and the social media platform no longer restrict the number of photographs one can take, save, or share, sharing them to social media still requires a selection. Teresa, when asked if she had posted on any platform, when sitting at the Lincoln Memorial answered: “not yet, I’ll wait until the end of the day, and figure out which pictures” (17 June 2019). When I prodded her a bit more, trying to find out how she makes that choice, she answered:

I am picky about it because there will be multiple pictures that we’ve taken at one place or whatnot but then collectively, a bunch. So, I’ll just do like from one from that specific place, one from the other, one from the other and make one post about it because Instagram only allows 10 pictures, so... You have to pick accordingly. (Teresa, 17 June 2019)

Visitors therefore do not deem every photograph they take share-worthy: those that are posted to social media must adhere to a high standard of selection criteria. Despite the platform technically allowing the sharing of several posts, there seems to be a convention that a trip should be summarized in one post. While the affordances therefore do not restrict the number of posts, platform conventions seemingly do.

Deciding which images to share is partly influenced by platform affordances including the preview being a square, which resulted in Alena telling me about her picture selection: “I chose the images I posted based on which ones actually fit within the frame” (15 September 2020, Instagram interview). However, the

aesthetic conventions on Instagram go beyond its technical affordances. When posting a photograph to one's Instagram Feed, it should represent the entirety of an experience in an aesthetically pleasing manner (Leaver et al., 2020). These archival posts are subject to much higher aesthetic standards than images primarily used for communication. This became clear when talking to visitors on site who stated that they were not posting in the moment but rather waiting until later because they wanted to "choose the most beautiful video" (Xiomara, 24 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial). The images which, in the end, make it to Instagram are therefore deemed to be the best ones. As George told me about how he selected his photograph: "I made the choice to take 2 pics because I appreciate the monument on how artistic it really is. Also I took one photo so you could see the quote on the side of it. It is visually pleasing" (26 July 2021, Instagram interview). Therefore, sharing about the two memorials on Instagram subscribes to common conventions of sharing beautiful images on the Instagram Feed (see Leaver et al., 2020, p. 16).

Wanting to select the best pictures was also part of the reason why visitors in my sample tended to not share to social media during their visits despite having mobile internet access (see Hugentobler, 2022a). Among the fifty-six visitors with whom I spoke about sharing images online during their visits, only five (9%) stated that they had done so, four on Snapchat (Luisa, Ophelia, Alexander and Xander) and one on Instagram Stories (Xiomara). This shows that, in my sample, when visitors shared in the moment on social media it was for similar reasons as those who shared through more traditional communication channels: interpersonal communication. When I asked Luisa, who had posted to Snapchat, if she was planning on sharing more, she replied: "Not really, no. Unless I get a good picture" (4 June 2019, MLK Memorial). Not posting in the moment does not have to mean that individuals do not post at all. On site, 13 visitors told me that they planned on sharing to social media after their trip. The tendency to share later was supported by the Instagram ethnography: among the twelve participants whom I asked when they had shared their post, none did so during their visit. In a city filled with memorials, visitors seem to wait until the end of the day to share the ones they find most impressive or the ones of which they have the best photographs.

This selection process often results in Instagram showing the "highlight reel" of someone's life (Wiederhold, 2018, p. 215). While this has implications for

how we study the content and also has consequences for viewers of said content,¹ it is important to acknowledge that diaries have long functioned in this manner: they were never a place where people recorded every single experience. They always required a selection (Humphreys, 2018, p. 19). After all, it would not only be humanly impossible to record everything that happens each day, but not every moment is “worth” being shared. This is particularly visible on Instagram, a social media platform focusing on the visual component, which has led to the coinage of the adjective “instagrammable:” a moment or object that is worthy to be posted on Instagram. This can go even further, represented by the colloquialism of “doing it for the gram,” which describes individuals creating “situations for their instagrammability rather than the experience and the inspirational or aspirational aesthetics of visual content performed for an audience” (Leaver et al., 2020, p. 65). Sharing the highlights of one’s life therefore not only implies choosing the best pictures from an aesthetic standpoint, but also sharing those which represent the ideal self in the best light.

One of the reasons why the self should be represented positively, is that Instagram is frequently used to create and negotiate an identity (e.g., Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Gibbs et al., 2015; Hu et al., 2014; E. Lee et al., 2015; O’Donnell, 2018; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). One popular way to do so is to show oneself as a traveler by sharing photographs from trips (e.g., Lo et al., 2011, p. 730; Lo & McKercher, 2015, p. 109). This is in part owed to the primacy of the visual in tourism as well as on the platform (see Scarles, 2014). In fact, for sharing travel photographs, Instagram appears to be the most popular social media platform (Siegel & Wang, 2019, p. 171). This association of photographs of memorials being used to show the self as a traveler became apparent in my conversation with a DC local who had brought his family, visiting from Chicago, to the MLK Memorial. He told me that he does not think he will post about the memorials they were visiting on social media, “just because I live here, so it’s more of like an everyday thing” (Yves, 5 June 2019). He also made an explicit reference to posting about memorials being a “tourist thing.” He elaborated saying that for his family “it’s a little different. It’s not something they are seeing every day, it’s not something that they have access to. So, it’s definitely cool for them” (Yves, 5 June 2019). For Yves, visiting and posting about memorials is therefore something that tourists do: They show themselves as travelers. This is also why people

¹ For only one example of how the positivity bias on these platforms can negatively impact its users, see studies analyzing the association between social media use and depression in young adults (e.g., Keles et al., 2020).

share their travel photographs instead of keeping them entirely private: to negotiate an identity on a specific platform (in this case, that of the traveler). This, however, is no new phenomenon. In fact, before modern diaries were equipped with locks in the nineteenth century, they were often written to be shared with others (Humphreys, 2018, p. 2), including sending them home from vacation (Humphreys, 2018, p. 30).

Sharing on Instagram therefore is mostly motivated by a need to archive personal experiences through beautiful photographs which show the self in a positive light and communicate a desired identity to an intended yet largely undefined audience. It is the modern version of the eighteenth-century diary, also reflecting a dominance of travel narratives.

11.2 Memorials and the Digital Realm

However, when photographs of memorials are shared online, they not only say something about the tourism experience but also about the narratives of public memory. Research on the possibilities of the online realm for the communication of public memory has thus far mostly been studied from the perspective of the sender. One positive impact of the online realm on the communication of public memory is that it can become accessible for more people than only those who can visit a memorial site. Analyzing an online U.S. war memorial, Nicholas Grider writes: “the object of a memorial should by necessity be accessible to the largest number of people possible” (2007, p. 267). This is an insight that many cultural institutions are trying to put into practice by using the internet (see, for example the 2018 report “Culture is Digital”). Valuable research has focused on the potential of the online realm to make cultural sites more accessible when institutions share them into new public spheres.²

However, it is not only official institutions that can expand their reach into the online realm, but cultural sites can be shared through visitors into their personal and public networks as well. As Castells wrote in 2007: “Appropriating the new forms of communication, people have built their own system of mass communication, via SMS, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, and the like” (pp. 246–247). With the increasing uptake of social media, this “mass self-communication” (Castells, 2007, p. 248) has only increased the possible visibility of an individual’s post. Social media can therefore be used by visitors to share cultural sites to

² For an example on museum communications and social media, see Drotner & Schröder (2014).

people who cannot visit themselves. In 2009, Robinson and Picard wrote about the power of tourist photographs in the following vein: “The millions of holiday snaps of peoples and places, while demonstrating the power of instantaneous capture are usually destined for dusty cupboards rather than any influential global circulation” (pp. 6–7). However, much has changed since. While travel blogs were already around in 2009, the proliferation of social media has changed the potential impact of travel photographs and travel stories. This justifies an interest in these images, as Robinson and Picard justified the lack of research interest at the beginning of the twenty-first century as follows:

Despite the incalculable number of such [vernacular tourist] photographs in existence, they are, by definition, located largely in the private rather than public sphere and consequently removed from scholarly consideration. Arguably, and linked to their public absence, their social impact is somewhat minimal; visibility being all. (2009, p. 9)

This lack of visibility is no longer a given when looking at Instagram posts shared on public profiles. Individuals are no longer limited to seeking out specific travel-related platforms but are confronted with travel content on the platforms they frequent every day. The prevalence of personal photographs is therefore a different one today: by posting photographs of memorials to their public Instagram Feeds, the individuals in my sample share it to a larger public sphere: “It’s about us taking pictures of our experience here and then the other half is, a lot of people haven’t been here” (Victor, 22 June 2019, MLK Memorial). Memorials can therefore reach more individuals online.

When individuals share a memorial and its narratives in the digital realm, it not only makes it more accessible, but it also allows individuals to (critically and publicly) engage with the narrative. This opens up the potential for counter-narratives. Counter-narratives are those narratives “that arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. The idea of ‘counter’ itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination” (Mora, 2014). While the use of the term counter-narratives often implies actions by marginalized individuals speaking for themselves (e.g., J. Assmann, 2018, pp. 83–84), I understand them as any narratives which take issue with the hegemonic narrative of public memory as told through the memorial, regardless of who voices them. Research studying the potential of the digital realm for counter-narratives to public memory has mostly focused on advances to challenge the very idea of representation altogether (Autry, 2017) or on officially sanctioned counter-narratives

published by organizations on stand-alone websites (e.g., Florini, 2016). Analyzing *The September 11 Digital Archive*, Ekaterina Haskins writes about the potential of online memorialization:

Instead of only official accounts disseminated by mainstream media and the government, all kinds of stories can now become part of an evolving patchwork of public memory. Formerly limited in time and space, ephemeral gestures can be preserved in still and moving images, ready to be viewed and replayed on demand. Previously banished to dark storage rooms, mementos left at memorial sites can be displayed for all to see. The boundaries between the official and the vernacular, the public and the private, the permanent and the evanescent will cease to matter, for all stories and images will be equally fit to represent and comment on the past. (2007, p. 405)

While Haskin claims that every story will be equally fit to represent the past, I maintain that officially sanctioned narratives of public memory still retain a different function, even in the digital age: Because they are exactly that, *officially* sanctioned stories, imbued with at least the expectation of a binding character for the society for and to whom they speak. However, Haskin's observation that the digital realm allows for countless possibilities to interact with said narratives is one that is at the core of this book. After all, "[s]ocial media has become a valuable instrument in political conflicts for those who are not in charge, for example, for non-elites or social movements" (Birkner & Donk, 2020, p. 368). Sharing about memorials and their narratives on social media could therefore present an opportunity to publicly engage with the narratives, particularly when one takes issue with them.

This project is interested in uncovering how sharing personal narratives about public memory online can potentially create what Castells names "counter-power" by which he understands "the capacity by social actors to challenge and eventually change the power relations institutionalized in society" (2007, p. 248). While the outcomes of individual engagements with narratives of public memory are not the topic of this study, I focus on potential counter-narratives under the assumption that they can matter, particularly when individual narratives (single Instagram posts) are aggregated to larger counter-narratives. This is particularly interesting for the two memorials under study because, as my on-site research has shown, (1) they provide hardly any information on site which might be added by individuals online, (2) the hegemonic narrative told by the memorial reduces the Civil Rights Movement to Dr. King and tokenizes King as a non-violent, passive person, and (3) the hegemonic narrative of national public memory is still largely homogenous (in that it mainly includes White men). Because research has found that tourist photography is not just about repeating what was seen but also used

to “embellish, privatize and transform the master narrative” (Bruner, 2005, p. 24), I want to know: How do visitors share about these memorials and their narratives on their personal Instagram profiles?

11.3 Sampling Methods

Because this project was interested in individuals’ engagement with the official narrative, I decided to study Instagram posts (visuals and captions) tagged at the two memorial sites.³ This ensures not only that the individuals are explicitly interacting with the site of memory, but also that I study narratives which were produced with a certain level of publicity in mind; they are shared on public Instagram profiles and by being tagged at the location can be found by other Instagram users, including the institutions behind the narratives. This sampling method also presents a solution to a common issue in tourism research: how to sample a disperse population when the researcher is interested in their activities and thoughts surrounding a physical site which they only visited briefly.⁴ By sampling through the “recent” tab for both locations, I ensured that the visitors had shared their post recently (usually the day prior to my contacting them) and therefore still had the experience of posting and often the travel experience fresh in their minds.⁵ In the following, I elaborate on the sampling methods for each memorial before explaining my analysis of the posts, which are combined with statements by some of the creators. I then discuss the findings regarding similarities and differences between posting from the two memorials, before discussing the findings’ implications.

³ I analyzed both, videos and photographs and treat them both as visual representations of the memorial sites. This is why I refer to “visuals” throughout this dissertation when speaking about findings that apply to visual components of both, videos and photographs.

⁴ Lo and colleagues (2011a), for example, also studied online photography from sites of tourism but sampled their participants through residence and therefore were unable to draw conclusions about photography from one specific site.

⁵ Lee and colleagues (2022), for example, interviewed individuals about their online sharing who had travelled in the last 12 months.

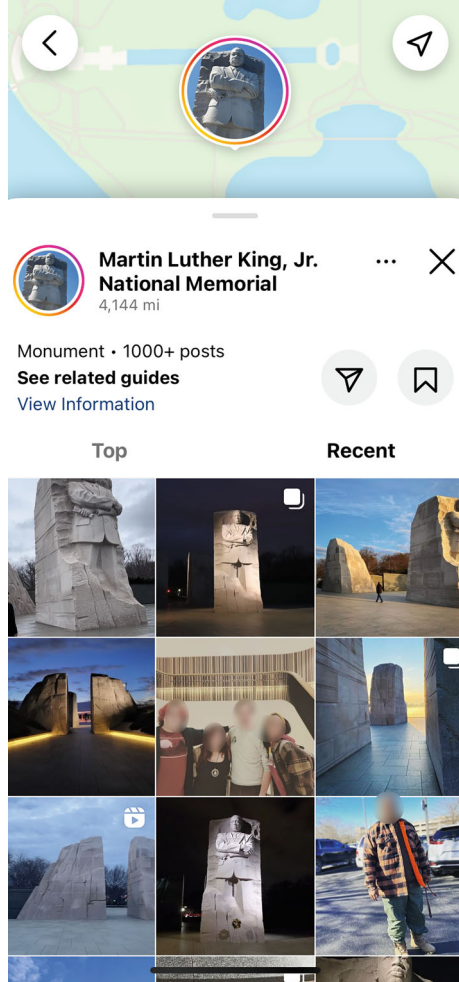
11.3.1 Sampling for the MLK Memorial⁶

Sampling for the MLK Memorial required finding posts that were (1) about the MLK National Memorial in DC, and (2) engaged with the official narrative. This was done by looking at posts tagged at the geographical location for the MLK Memorial (see Fig. 11.1). Looking at the “most recent” posts tagged at the MLK Memorial in reverse chronological order, I took a screenshot (or recording) of each post (and each separate photograph or video in a post) and saved them under unique ID numbers. I sampled on seven days between 26 July and 10 November 2020. The most recent post was shared on 3 November 2020 while the earliest post was published on 11 July 2020. Once I saved the post, I followed the person and sent them the recruitment message, conducting continuous sampling which—in this context—meant I kept contacting people until someone responded (for an elaboration on the recruitment message, see Hugentobler, 2022a, p. 252). Once one individual responded to my recruitment message, I paused contacting new users to ensure I had enough time to interview the person. Because some individuals took a few minutes to respond while others first messaged me several weeks after I had sent the initial message, I was sometimes leading several interviews simultaneously. While this has certain benefits, such as allowing for cross-fertilization between interviews (see Bampton & Cowton, 2014, p. 7), I tried to ensure I would not lead too many interviews at once. I stopped sampling once I reached saturation in both, my content analysis and my interviews (see Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Saturation for the content analysis was reached faster, but I continued sampling and adding posts and contacting all their creators until I found that the interviews no longer revealed anything new relevant to my research questions (see Saunders et al., 2018). This resulted in a sample of 119 profiles who shared 134 posts which included a total of 243 images and nine videos (252 visuals). Twenty of the 119 individuals agreed to talk to me (response rate of 17%).⁷

⁶ Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains additional content which can be accessed through the following link: Appendix 2.

⁷ For demographics, see Appendix 2.3.

Fig. 11.1 The Location Tag for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial on Instagram



While this response rate is rather low, it is higher than the email response rate during my first on-site fieldwork (17% vs. 5%),⁸ I consider this response rate sufficient because it allowed me to answer my research questions and because my

⁸ A possible explanation for this might be the ease of responding. Expectations for proper language use are higher in email communication and my email might even have gotten caught in a spam folder and never been seen.

study does not aim at a representative sample. Consequently, a small sample size does not have to be detrimental. In fact, as Donald Norman has written, referring to Jakob Nielsen, “three to five people will give you enough for most purposes. But they need to be real people, doing real activities” (1999, p. 41). Context is essential here: like much (traditional and online) ethnographic research, this study is not meant to be universally generalized, but rather aims at being deeply grounded in context (see Kozinets, 2010, p. 59). This is ensured by studying naturally occurring Instagram posts.

11.3.2 Sampling for the “I Have a Dream” Marker⁹

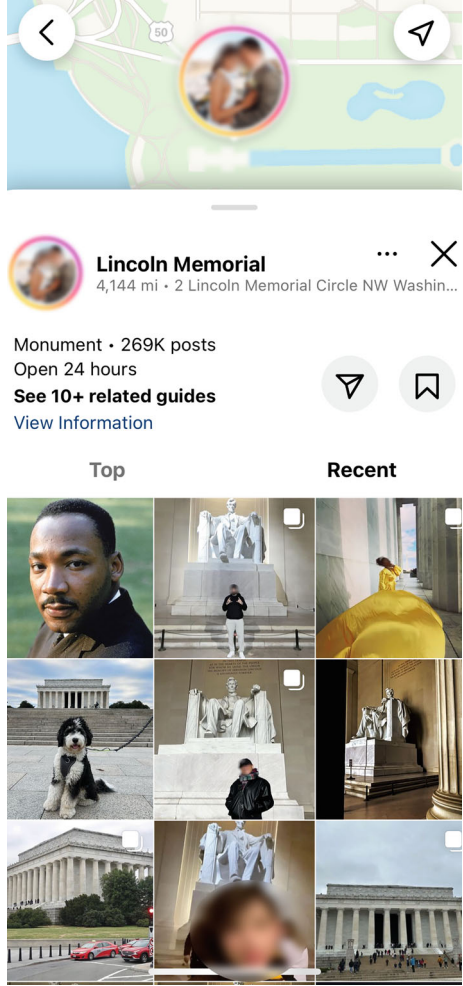
To find posts which engage with the “I Have a Dream” speech publicly on Instagram, I sampled through the location tag “Lincoln Memorial” (see Fig. 11.2).¹⁰ This was to find posts which place the speech in the physical location of the marker. Looking at the location tag through the “most recent” tab in reverse chronological order, I studied each post and saved those which made any visual or textual reference to the speech or King. Through the location tag, I sampled 1,709 posts between 29 March 2021 and 9 March 2022 tagged at the Lincoln Memorial. Amongst these posts were nineteen posts by nineteen Instagram users (including 33 photographs and one video) which included a reference to King or the speech. I contacted all nineteen users for an interview which resulted in conversations with six individuals (31% response rate).¹¹ Additionally, I also checked the profiles of the Instagram users whom I had already interviewed about their post from the MLK Memorial to see if they had posted about the Lincoln Memorial as well: four of them had, but only two referred to MLK textually or visually in the post. Together with these two additional posts, the sample includes twenty-one posts with thirty-six photographs and one video (shared between 30 August 2020 and 9 March 2022). Amongst these twenty-one posts, five referred to the speech only textually, five only visually, while eleven referred to it in both, image and text.

⁹ Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains additional content which can be accessed through the following link: Appendix 2.

¹⁰ There is no location tag for the inscription. I also tried sampling through the #ihaveadream but in addition to not locating the memorial in geographical space, this collection also included a majority of posts which are not about King’s speech.

¹¹ For a table with all participants, see Table 2.4 in the Appendix.

Fig. 11.2 The Location Tag for the Lincoln Memorial on Instagram



11.4 Instagram Posts Tagged at the Lincoln Memorial

Among the 1,709 posts tagged at the Lincoln Memorial between 29 March 2021 and 9 March 2022, only nineteen (about 1%) referred to the “I Have a Dream” speech or Dr. King. I included two additional posts to my sample which were posted by participants whom I had sampled through the MLK location tag (their posts from the Lincoln Memorial were published outside of my sampling time), bringing the total posts analyzed for this study to 21. The speech’s absence supports the findings from the on-site interviews where most visitors stated that they visited the Lincoln Memorial to see the memorial itself and not the speech. In the following, I discuss those posts that refer to the speech, first focusing on the visuals, and then on the accompanying narratives.



Fig. 11.3 Walking up the Stairs Past the Inscription. (Note. Screenshots from a video (8 min 25 s), published 8 March 2022)

In my sample, fourteen posts (including 14 photographs and one video) visually showed the “I Have a Dream” marker. One reason to explain this low volume of visuals could be through the invisibility of the marker on site. As my field research showed, many visitors do not realize that there is an inscription for the speech at all: those who do not see it cannot share it on social media (see Fig. 11.3 for screenshots from a video in which visitors walk up the stairs and past the inscription without looking at or filming it). This might also be reflected in the post by Parker who writes in his caption that King “stood here” giving his speech (30 August 2020, see Fig. 11.4): Parker is not in fact standing in the spot where King was standing. In his first photograph, he is standing on the chamber level while, in the second, he is standing on a lower level of the stairs. The combination of images and texts might reflect that he did not actually see the inscription or that the exact location did not matter to him.



Fig. 11.4 “Standing Where King Stood”. (Note. Post published by Parker on 30 August 2020)

The absence of the marker can also be explained by visitors’ reasons for posting to Instagram to showcase a tourism experience. As I have shown in Chapters 6 and 7, visiting DC means visiting memorials and collecting the most important ones. When visitors post on Instagram, they therefore showcase their trip to DC by selecting the images of sites that are aesthetically remarkable, reflecting “the tourist’s desire for the visually impressive” (Ryan, 2011, p. 12). The marker, in comparison to the Lincoln Memorial, is not aesthetically impressive. Furthermore, tourism images shared on Instagram must also be recognizable as “DC images.” Posting the marker would not visually indicate where the photograph was taken whereas a photograph of the Lincoln Memorial clearly marks the picture, and by extension the visitor, as being situated in DC.

To illustrate that certain memorials—including the Lincoln Memorial—work better to represent a trip to DC, I want to elaborate here on my discussions with a DC tour guide, which I also reference in a previously published paper (Hugentobler, 2022a, p. 16). When speaking about her own online engagement with DC memorials (see Figs. 11.5 and 11.6), Helen elaborated on her Instagram posting from memorial sites:

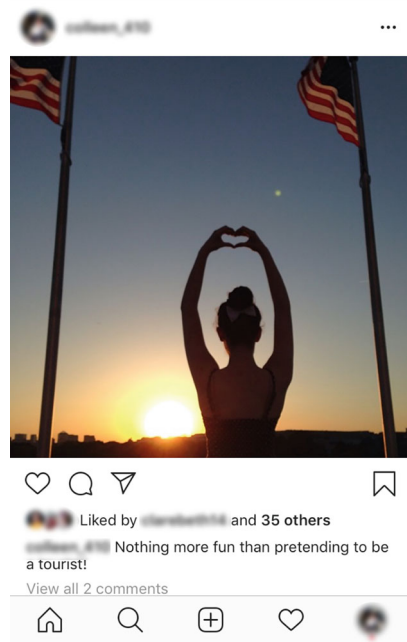
Fig. 11.5 “Told You I Was Being a Tourist...”. (Note. Shared with the author for publication, post published 28 July 2016)



I often Snapchat pictures of the Lincoln memorial to my friends while I am waiting for my tour group to return from exploring. I think partially this is because when I am at Lincoln that is the longest time that I have without the tour group during the tour, so I get bored. But I think I also probably do it because it is beautiful and everyone recognizes it so when they receive it they know I am on a tour. Going back through my Instagram, which I have had since 2012, I have 2 photos of me on the national mall. ... I never would have thought about it before this question, but it is very funny that my two photos are both in front of the Washington Monument and also both make reference to the fact that I am being/pretending to be a tourist in my own city. I know there are many other photos of me with memorials, but clearly no other ones that I chose to post. (11 June 2019, email response)

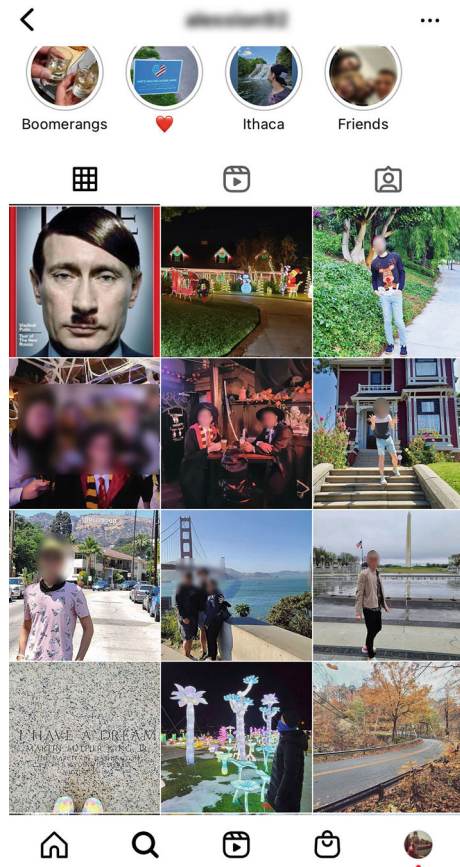
Helen mentions that people will recognize from her photographs of the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial that she is in DC. The photographs therefore communicate more than simply “I am at this memorial!” They also say: “I am in DC.” This is a statement the “I Have a Dream” marker cannot make as it is not recognizable enough. This is further represented in my sample by the lack of prominence of these images on visitors’ profiles. Among the fifteen visuals

Fig. 11.6 “Nothing More Fun Than Pretending to Be a Tourist”. (*Note.* Shared with the author for publication, post published in 2014)



that included the inscription, only three were posted as the first photograph in the set: the image which appears on the visitor’s Instagram profile (see Fig. 11.7 for an example: photograph on the bottom left), as well as when searching for the memorial’s location tag. The low frequency of the speech in my sample of posts tagged at the Lincoln Memorial can therefore be interpreted as those posts needing to signal a visit to the nation’s capital.

Fig. 11.7 The “I Have a Dream” Marker on a Visitor’s Instagram Feed



11.4.1 Visuals of the Inscription¹²

My sample of fifteen visuals showing the inscription included three types of visuals: Four pictures show a close-up in which only the inscription is visible. Five photographs and one video show the inscription with the view across the Reflecting Pond to the Washington Monument and another seven photographs

¹² Additional information: The electronic version of this chapter contains additional content which can be accessed through the following link: Appendix 3.

include a person (the latter two categories were not mutually exclusive).¹³ This means that, in this small sample, in only about one fourth of the images that showed the inscription, was it shown alone. This can be explained by those posts' limited "usefulness."

Images which only show the inscription do not provide any context. Aside from not helping future visitors find it, because it is often not clear if it is on the floor or on a wall, it also does not place the speech visibly at the Lincoln Memorial. Some visitors even include different locations in one post tagged at the Lincoln Memorial. This further increases the likelihood that someone seeing a close-up of the inscription will not realize where it can be found. This lack of information for future visitors is also reflected in my interviews; none of the visitors said they made the post to help others notice the inscription. While these visuals show the inscription best, they are not useful to locate it in space, a finding which stands in contrast with some of the previous research on motivations to post to travel blogs or travel communities such as TripAdvisor. This research has found that individuals' main motivation to post is to help other travelers (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2013b). These results have been supported by rare studies about visitor motivations to post about a trip on social media (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2020). However, to the best of my knowledge, at the time of writing, no study explicitly looked at travel posts on Instagram. Studies have, however, found that information sharing—generally, not specific to a trip—is the lowest rated motivation for sharing on Instagram (Alhabash & Ma, 2017, p. 5). The close-ups of the inscription therefore reflect a common type of Instagram post which focuses on the visual and is lacking information (see C. Lee et al., 2022).

To let others know where the inscription can be found, sharing the perspective across the Mall is more suitable. While the inscription would be even easier to find were it shot with the Lincoln Memorial in the background (replicating the walk up the stairs), these six visuals replicate the view King had while giving the speech and thereby show what several visitors mentioned as being so impressive: the view. The view is a visually impactful aspect of the site, making it suitable to share on Instagram. Furthermore, it presents a "look into the past." As one visitor said:

I did go [to the "I Have a Dream" inscription] and ended up taking a little Snapchat video of it. ... With it I tried to just capture where [King] stood and the view he had while giving the speech to share that part of history. (Alexander, 19 June 2019, email response)

¹³ For a full frequency table of all the visuals, see Table 3.1 in the Appendix.

These types of post are, then, better at communicating the magnitude the inscription is trying to activate: While the moment it commemorates was awe-inspiring, the marker itself is unimpressive. However, including the view from this spot helps communicate the magnitude of the event. This is also reflected in Ivanna's post including a historical shot across the Mall during the speech (see Fig. 11.8). Even without the historical image, the view across the Mall is a well-known one and one that, in combination with a reminder of the speech, can activate memories of the media coverage of that historic day: They thus visually apply the significance and magnitude of the historic event to this location.



Fig. 11.8 The View During the Speech: Today and in 1963. (*Note.* Post published by Ivanna on 26 June 2021)

Almost half (seven) of the few visuals in this sample show the inscription and a member of the visiting party (two of them including the view as well, see Fig. 11.9). Inserting a person into the picture is often supposed to communicate, very literally: “I am here” (see Christou and colleagues’ (2020) study on travel selfies). Interestingly, there are an additional ten visuals which included a person but only referred to the speech textually. This means that more visuals of a person did not include the speech than did. This shows that the importance of “being here” was really about being at the location of the Lincoln Memorial, not the inscription.



Fig. 11.9 “My Favorite Moment of the Day Was Seeing Where Dr King Stood”. (Note. Post published by Kimberly 13 June 2021)

Among the thirty-four visuals (thirty-three photographs, one video) tagged at the Lincoln Memorial and referring to the speech or Dr. King, people appeared in twenty-one of the visuals (twenty photographs, one video): The most frequent visual. For this study, I looked at all images which showed a person—at the center of the picture—actively looking into the camera and belonging to the visiting-party. This, thus, includes selfies as well as photographs of the self which someone else took, a visual which Christoph Bareither collectively calls “digital self-representation” (2020a). In my analysis, however, I also include images of members of the visiting party who are not the person uploading the photograph. This is because travel photographs with other group members can be used to highlight the person’s social importance (Groves & Timothy, 2001). This means that, when studying travel photographs on Instagram, those photographs showing members of one’s traveling party can be used to negotiate one’s identity and are therefore relevant to this project’s research questions.

Overall, in my sample, people appeared in 61% of all visuals which is a fairly high frequency when comparing it to other studies of pictures of people in tourism literature (e.g., 37% in Kijoo & Bakhshi’ Facebook study (2019, p. 92)). While Hu and colleagues (2014) found that photographs of the self and those

of friends tend to be balanced on Instagram, in my sample of photographs with people, 63% of images showed the self, while 50% showed another member of the travelling party.¹⁴ This means that, in this small sample, the frequency of people in photographs is higher than in previous studies of tourist photographs and the number of self-representations is slightly higher than the number of other-representations. In fact, only two individuals shared a photograph of another person. Among them, only one included photographs that exclusively showed other people: her four children and her husband. This means that, in this sample, digital self-representations were dominant for all but one Instagram user. These individuals therefore use their posts to show “I am here!”.

When looking at images with a person, we see that in 62% of the cases, the person is also the visual focus, by far the most frequent focus.¹⁵ This further stresses the importance of the person in these images and supports previous findings about tourist selfies which showed that individuals tend to shift the focus to themselves:

Obviously the focal point of a selfie is oneself. ... it seems that there is a shift from capturing others in travel photographs, such as locals and attractions—as in the past (Mahn, 2014)—towards having oneself as the sole (or primary) subject in a travel picture (selfie). (Christou et al., 2020, p. 292)

In my sample, this is true not only of selfies but of all images including a person tagged at the Lincoln Memorial and referring to the “I Have a Dream” speech either visually or textually: they tend to visually focus on the individual. The inscription for the speech is therefore crucial to mark the spot in the physical location, but the inscription itself is not what is meaningful, it is being there in person.

11.4.2 Narratives About the “I Have a Dream” Speech

When individuals included a reference to the speech in their captions, they mostly talked about Dr. King (87% explicitly and 13% implicitly) followed by narratives

¹⁴ The two categories are not mutually exclusive. See Table “Visuals” in Sect. 3.1 for a full frequency distribution.

¹⁵ This is followed by images without a focus at 19%. See Table “Visual Focus” in Sect. 3.1 in the Appendix for the full table.

about the visitors themselves (52%).¹⁶ Posts about King were mostly descriptive (71%) and emotional (54%).¹⁷ Six posts are purely descriptive while two are purely emotional. The descriptive posts mostly spoke about King and the inscription and they differed in the amount of information provided. Most of these posts repeated what the inscription states, describing the historical event such as: “On Aug. 28, 1963, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial” (Elijah, 26 June 2021, Instagram caption). These posts did not add any information which would help find the inscription or more information about the March on Washington. In fact, more posts in my sample referred to King and the visitor than did only King.¹⁸ The following caption shows references to King and the visitor and presents an exception of a post which included more information about both, the speech and the inscription:

In DC at the Lincoln Memorial... 18 steps from the top of the Lincoln Memorial... an inscription marks the spot where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood to give his “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963. I was standing on the very step where MLK stood to give his speech ... gave me goosebumps. The peaceful rally was the largest assembly for a redress of grievances that the capital had ever seen. ... His courage still inspires millions of people to this day. Today was awe inspiring and beyond humbling again. (Hannah, 19 July 2021, Instagram caption)

This caption, connecting the person to the event, also shows that emotional reactions on site were not about the inscription but about being there. This can also be seen in the following post:

This is the plaque where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his speech. It’s just crazy to be somewhere and stand where history happened and to imagine this place full of people it’s just awesome! (Ivanna, 26 June 2021)

Emotional reactions in these posts are therefore about being in a historical location, rather than appreciating the inscription itself. The captions’ focus on the visitor experiences on site was also dominant in those posts where no person was included in the photograph. This is the case, for example, in Luciana’s post where she explains: “As a descendant of slaves, it was very special for me to be at this

¹⁶ These themes were not mutually exclusive. For a full table of the frequency of themes see Table “Text Content” in Appendix 3.1.

¹⁷ See Table “Text Tone” in Appendix 3.1 for the frequencies of the different tones in each post.

¹⁸ See Table 3.1 in the Appendix.

place today” (Luciana, 20 June 2021, see Fig. 11.2 in Sect. 6.1): The experience stems from being in the (general) location where the speech happened.

These posts therefore evoke the experience on site which is also reflected in the verb tense in the captions: Posts are mostly about the time of the visit (62%). Second most frequent are references about the past (57%), but hardly any captions make a connection to the present moment (19%) or the future (10%).¹⁹ These posts therefore mostly speak about the tourism experience or evoke the history commemorated in this location but they do not make a connection between the history and the present of future moment. The site’s relevance as a site of public memory, communicating what is important to the nation today, is therefore not included in these posts as most Instagram users in the sample did not use the memorial or inscription to make a statement about ideals or values in the present or future.

In conclusion, the Instagram posts from the Lincoln Memorial which referred to Dr. King, or his speech, visually and/or textually reiterated the themes found in conversations with visitors: people do not share the inscription frequently because it is unspectacular as a visual artefact and cannot visually communicate a trip to DC. Additionally, their posts show that what they appreciate most and want to share on Instagram is being at the site in person, much more so than the inscription as such or the meaning of the historical event.

11.5 Instagram Posts Tagged at the MLK Memorial

In this chapter, I elaborate on the types of images shared under the MLK Memorial location tag, and then the accompanying captions before moving on to Subchapter 11.6 where I discuss the similarities and differences between posts and experiences from the two memorials, concluding with the implications of these findings in subchapter 11.7.

¹⁹ See Table “Chapter Verb Tense” in Appendix 3.1.

11.5.1 Visuals Tagged at the MLK Memorial

In posts tagged at the MLK Memorial, King's statue and visitors are the most frequent visuals: in this sample of 252 visuals, 54% included the statue of Dr. King, and 50% at least one person. These two categories are followed in frequency by visuals showing something other (22%, including other memorials or entirely unrelated visuals such as a magazine article), quotes (19%), an overview of the site (19%), walls of the memorial without quotes (13%), and the view across the Tidal Basin (5%).²⁰ In the following, I discuss the visuals of the three most frequent features of the site which are shared on Instagram: The statue, the visitors, and the quotes.

11.5.1.1 Statue

The feature of the memorial which appears most frequently in the Instagram posts in my sample is the statue (see Fig. 11.10). This means that the same images are repeatedly shared from the memorial site, reducing the site to a statue. The dominance of the statue in my sample is also reflected in those Instagram posts which include more than one photograph: 42 posts included more than one image. Furthermore, when an Instagram user shares a video, the first frame of the video appears as an automatic preview on their feed. I, therefore, treat the first frame of the six videos in my sample as the first image. Amongst these forty-eight first images in a collection, thirty-one (64%) showed the statue. The prevalence of the statue not only throughout the sample but also amongst the first pictures shows that this is the dominant image that is shared from the memorial site.

²⁰ The full frequency table can be found in Sect. 3.2 in the Appendix.

The statue is the most awe-inspiring on-site feature and visitors frequently mentioned how impressed they were by its magnitude, something that can be transported well in a photograph (see Ryan, 2011). As Stylianou-Lambert has observed: tourists in her study appeared to reproduce images they had seen on postcards, not necessarily because they wanted to recreate that image but because the affordances of the site encouraged it (2012, p. 1834). In her case, this meant that visitors used designated viewpoints while, in my case, this meant that individuals shared the statue because it is the only visually impressive aspect of the site. The statue is the most photogenic feature of the memorial, once again reiterating that tourism photography and, in this case, sharing on Instagram is a type of behavior that adheres to certain rules: individuals share beautiful, impressive, and recognizable visuals which, at this memorial, is the statue.

However, as many visitors told me, the MLK Memorial is not a site they had seen before. Therefore, they did not come here to see an image they were expecting and in sharing images from the site they also cannot rely on their image inserting their trip in a larger narrative of DC memorials (because the memorial is generally not well-known). Instead, by sharing the statue of King, these visitors are in the process of actively creating the shared imagery of the site (see Scarles, 2014). They are sharing *a type of* picture that looks like the images they saw before their trip.

Traveling is not only about seeing that which one has already seen, but also about seeing that which is *like* other things one has seen before. The statue is not a recognizable image in the sense that people see it and immediately know that this is the National Memorial to King in DC, but it is recognizable in that it looks like other DC memorials (see Figs. 11.11, 11.12, and 11.14 for other DC statues and Fig. 11.13 for the MLK statue). One visitor phrased it as follows: “placing the MLK Monument among some of the more traditionally esteemed ‘American Heroes’ acknowledges the importance of that history” (Xavier, email, 21 June 2019). This means that the memorial gains much of its meaning and importance from being part of a canon: it is not only the memorial itself which shows the importance of Dr. King but also the fact that looks like other important memorials in the capital.



Fig. 11.10 The Memorial Is the Statue. (Note. Screenshots From Instagram by the author)

Fig. 11.11 Lincoln's Statue. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



Fig. 11.12 One of Several Statues at the FDR Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



Fig. 11.13 King's Statue.
(*Note.* Photograph by the author)

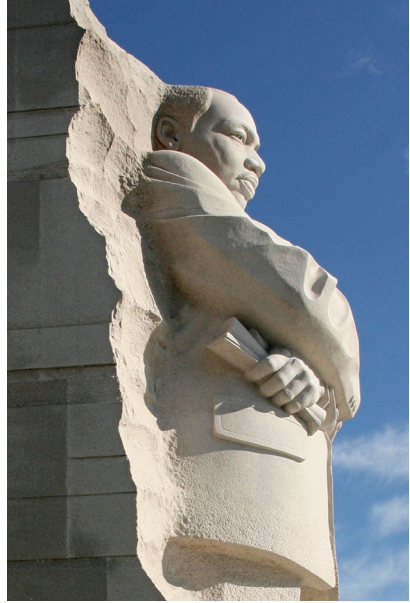
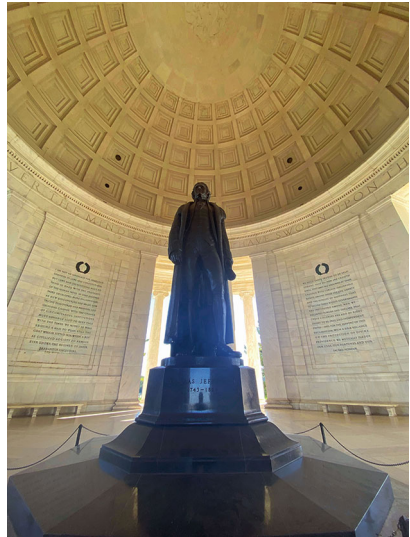


Fig. 11.14 The Thomas Jefferson Memorial.
(*Note.* Photograph by the author)



Despite all Instagram users in my sample tagging their posts at the MLK Memorial, thereby clearly signaling its physical location, the image itself still must make a comment about the tourism location. By selecting the image of the statue, visitors ensure that the image signifies more than Dr. King: a large statue of a man, cast in white stone. This is a recognizable image and visually places Dr. King in a canon of important men recognized in DC. As Helen, the tour guide, wrote in an email:

I do remember it being a topic [when the memorial opened] that it was a little ironic that the memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. was entirely white (considering he was fighting for equality for African Americans), but I also remember intellectually knowing why they designed it like that because it then fits in with DC memorials as a whole and therefore signifies that Martin Luther King Jr. is as important to US history as Abraham Lincoln. (11 June 2019)

While a tour guide has more in-depth knowledge of the memorials' symbolic meanings, this is in fact an aspect that many visitors picked up on, at least implicitly, as their sharing of the statue shows. It is important that the memorial looks and feels like the most famous memorials in DC because that is a way of attributing respect. This harkens back to visitors saying that they did not expect it to be as beautiful as it is. The statue assigns value to King and that is why it is shared. By sharing this impressive statue of King, visitors therefore not only use it to assign value to their trip—a trip to the nation's memorial capital—they also assign the memorial value: By sharing a photograph of the impressive statue, visitors increase its visibility and with it the representation of African American individuals in the canon of national heroes.

11.5.1.2 Visitors

In this sample of 252 visuals tagged at the MLK Memorial, 126 images/videos included a person (50%, shared by seventy-five individuals). Most frequent were images showing the person on whose account the image was shared. When a person was in the frame, 51% of visuals also focused on the person.²¹ This could mean that, in an image where the person is standing in front of the statue, the statue's head is cut off in favor of fitting the person into the frame better (e.g., Jayden, Fig. 11.15). This was followed by 37% of images which did not have a clear focus (e.g., Wiafe, Fig. 11.16). Therefore, amongst visuals including a person, the focus was most often either solely or also on the person. This finding

²¹ See Table “Visual Focus” in Appendix 3.2 for a distribution of the visual focus in posts tagged at the MLK Memorial.

stands in contrast to one of the few studies focusing on photographs of people at a cultural site. In her study on Instagram sharing from a museum exhibit, Kylie Budge found that, “posts that included people were only 9% of all images posted and all without exception included objects or exhibition props. That is, there were no images of visitors as the central or singular focus of a post” (2017, p. 78). My finding here could signal that visiting a memorial is different from visiting a museum and photographic behavior therefore differs as well. Centering the person in the picture focuses the visual narrative on their presence on site more than the actual artefact which corresponds to the value of the visit stemming from witnessing the site.



Fig. 11.15 Photograph Visually Focusing on the Person. (Note. Post published by Jayden on 9 September 2020)



Fig. 11.16 Photograph Without a Visual Focus. (Note. Post published by Wiafe on 5 September 2020)

While those images including a person strongly focused on the individual visually, across the entire sample, the dominance of people in photographs was not as strong: posts which have no visual focus and the statue appears in almost as many visuals as people do. Furthermore, even when visually centering the person, many images did not focus on the person's face. This can be seen, for example, in the forty-eight posts which show at least one person wearing a facemask (e.g., Figs. 11.17 and 11.18).



Fig. 11.17 Photograph With a Face Mask. (*Note.* Post published by Addison on 3 September 2020)

These images were all posted in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic when wearing hygienic masks outside became a common theme in the United States. However, it was not required outside and, in most of the photographs, the individuals photographed do not stand closely to other visitors. The fact that they nevertheless kept their masks on can, in addition to showing a high level of precaution, be read as the visibility of the visitor's face not being crucial for the photograph. This is further reflected in seven images in which the person photographed is turning their back to the camera (e.g., Figs. 11.19 and 11.20). These images of people therefore do not seem to focus on the individual—for example showing them in flattering light, as is typical for selfies (Abidin, 2016, p. 4)—but rather focus on their *presence* on site.

This corresponds to another function of the selfie: as previous research has found, selfies are commonly taken to show oneself witnessing a place, event or interaction (Abidin, 2016, p. 3). In their study of selfies shared from funerals, Gibbs and colleagues found that



Fig. 11.18 A Picture With King and a Face Mask. (Note. Post published by Benjamin on 24 August 2020)

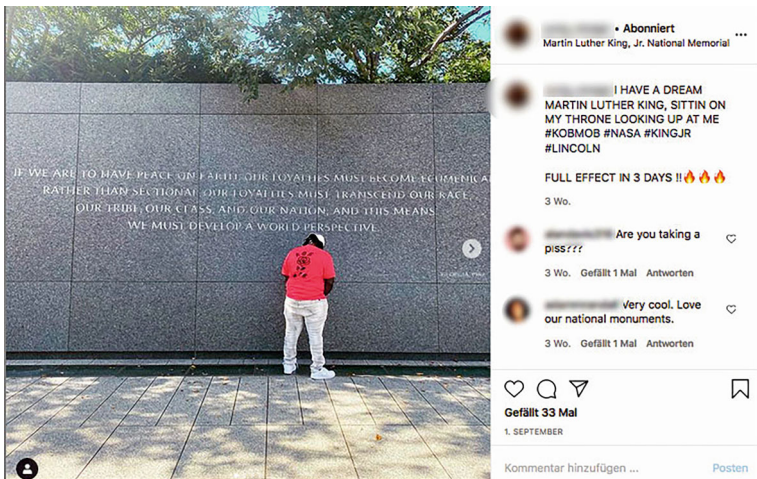


Fig. 11.19 Turning Away from the Camera. (Note. Post published by Cameron on 1 September 2020)



Fig. 11.20 Facing King. (Note. Post published by Xaii on 1 September 2020)



Fig. 11.21 Paying Respect to King. (Note. Post published by Khloe on 23 August 2020)

[m]any appear to be an attempt to share the experience of grief, placing emphasis on the significance of the context in which the image was taken through the message in the accompanying text, rather than the significance of the people in the photograph. (2015, p. 263)

Inserting the self into a photograph is therefore less about the person but rather the context. In her study of selfies from dark heritage sites, Kate Douglas showed that they are mostly used to show the self as witnessing these sites (2020). Or, as Bareither writes of shared selfies from the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, they “can constitute complex practices of emotional engagement with the past” (2020a, p. 12). This function of inserting a person to illustrate witnessing and emotional engagement can be observed in the post by Khloe (see Fig. 11.21) which is captioned with “went and paid respect to Dr. King.” It shows visual proof that the person took time out of their day and visited the site because it means something to them.

While these posts differ from the ones Bareither studied in a lack of focus on the visitor’s face and therefore less clarity of the facial expressions conveying emotions, these images still show a person’s engagement with the site. These digital self-representations fulfill the role of documenting the visit as well as portraying the visitor as somebody who engages with the history represented through the memorial, and as somebody who cares, just as the visitors to the Holocaust memorial did. As Bareither writes:

If memorials to atrocities serve as a reminder of particular pasts that affect us through our knowing and feeling bodies, then digital technologies can become media for relating to the past through one’s own body and making these particular relationships publicly visible. (Bareither, 2020a, p. 12)

In these posts from the MLK Memorial, this was mostly done by showing people who had travelled to the site.

11.5.1.2.1 Visual Representations of Visitors and Ethnicity

In my sample, photographs from the MLK Memorial showed a dominance of Black individuals (91% of individuals in the posts were identified as Black).²² Without wanting to essentialize ethnic identities, I find it crucial to look at who appears in these self-representations because the relative distribution of ethnic groups is striking. When identifying individuals' ethnicities, I only focused on those clearly identifiable as Black, assuming that these individuals have the strongest ties to the memorial site since they are members of the group it represents, something that repeatedly appeared in my interviews.²³ Everyone else, including those whose ethnicity I could not determine, were coded as "other."²⁴

When differentiating the types of photographs, we see Black individuals in one of two stances: while twenty visuals showed them with a raised fist, eighty-six showed them in a more passive stance such as with folded arms. The latter pose reflects a copying of the statue's stance (see, for example Fig. 11.22), but also reminds us that photography is a corporeal practice. It is possible that the relative absence of raised fists in these photographs was in part impacted by not wanting to make such a forceful statement on site. This would be further supported by the fact that, among those visuals taken at the 2020 March on Washington, 10% show a visitor with a raised fist, while this was only true of 5% of posts which were not from the march. This finding can be interpreted as the space of the memorial being understood differently depending on context. When the memorial is a stop during a political march, political statements seem appropriate, and the memorial is used as a place for public assembly. On the other hand, visiting the memorial at one's leisure, it is understood less as a political space and potential encounters with other visitors on site are deemed more important and a pleasant visit without confrontations might be a priority.

²² At the Lincoln Memorial, there was no significant difference between ethnicities. See Table "Ethnicities in Photographs" in Appendix 3.2 for the full table of frequencies of self- and other-representations by ethnicity at the MLK Memorial.

²³ While Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement fought for the elimination of all types of racial discrimination, King's own ethnic identity marks him as Black and he became an important figure for African American civil rights endeavors.

²⁴ It is not possible to determine nationality from an image. This is why I coded for Black individuals, assuming that even if the individual's identity is not African American, their connection to the memorial might still be heightened since King represents a discriminated group to which they belong, based on the color of their skin. They are therefore—to this day—exposed to a type of discrimination against which the Civil Rights Movement fought. This fight is—one part of—what the memorial represents and its relevance therefore can be considered heightened for individuals who suffer discrimination based on the color of their skin.



Fig. 11.22 Crossed Arms Like King. (*Note.* Post published by Lavone on 2 September 2020)

Photography's manifestation as a corporeal practice might also explain the relatively high frequency of visuals showing Black individuals compared to other ethnic groups. As I have elaborated on in Chapter 10, picture-taking on site is a visible practice and several White individuals told me that they wanted to stay in the background, which might be reflected in the low volume of digital self-representations of White visitors. Additionally, the presence of Black visitors in these photographs can be explained by the desire to insert oneself into a space, particularly one in which one is not expected or has historically been absent. For a group whose freedom of movement has so long been restricted, having a photograph of themselves in a place of tourism can be significant. As Dilleite and colleagues found in their study of the Black travel experience on Twitter:

Through narratives, tweets, forum posts, videos, blog posts, photos and other media, Black travelers can show each other, as well as the world, how important the Black travel movement is. Karia Talley, a contributor on Blavity, writes about using Black travel on social media as a form of resistance against doubts and oppressions, "It's saying I can take on and explore the world without anyone controlling my body, my freedom of movement nor my freedom of choice to go wherever I please" (2017). (2019, p. 1369)

As I explained above, much of the value of visiting the MLK memorial comes from witnessing the site, a factor possibly even more significant for this group. Selfies are “a genre of personal reflexivity” (Frosh, 2015, p. 1621) and the photographs of visitors, more broadly, can be read as individuals reflecting of the magnitude of their own—and their travel companions’—presence in the space of the memorial.

However, sharing a photograph of themselves in this site of tourism is not only a statement about Black tourism, it is a statement about personally witnessing a significant cultural site. These posts are not only about “I cannot believe I got to see this!” but also “Look: Here’s a statue to a man who looks like me!” As Sage Davinci told me: “Seeing it again was very meaningful to see a black man who looks like me was an ice breaker” (29 September 2020, Instagram interview). Visual representations of the visitors at the memorial, therefore, serve to show the magnitude of being at a memorial to an African American man in DC. As Leo told me about his picture choice: “That picture meant the most and I felt like the picture didn’t need a caption it speaks volumes without one so I didn’t add a caption” (22 September, 2020, Instagram interview, see Fig. 11.23 for post). He is visible in this picture, leaning against the statue, wearing a hoodie and a baseball cap. To him, this picture “speaks volumes” from which we can infer that whatever it says is visible in the photograph: a Black man (in a hoodie) standing in front of a magnificent statue of Dr. King in Washington, DC.

It is therefore a different type of “I am here” than at the Lincoln Memorial. While at the latter, it is a statement of tourism, here, it is a statement of defiance: It is not just MLK who is a rarity in this white space of DC memorials, but also the visitor associating themselves with a narrative of tourism as well as a narrative of celebration of the lives of African Americans.

Seeing this unique memorial and capturing themselves standing in this meaningful space therefore once again reflects the importance of visibility. Tying it back to the quote with which I began this book, in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, upon exiting the subway and laying eyes on New York City for the first time, the narrator recalls his impression as follows: “I had never seen so many black people against a background of brick buildings, neon signs, plate glass and roaring traffic ...” (Ellison, 1952/2001, p. 154). Seeing marginalized groups in spaces where they supposedly do not belong can be a powerful act of defiance. Inserting the self into the photograph shows this witnessing as well as one’s own act of defiance.



Fig. 11.23 One Image Speaking Volumes. (Note. Post published by Leo on 20 September 2020)

11.5.1.3 Quotes

While the memorial includes fourteen quotes, it is mostly the same one that visitors share. Throughout the entire sample, forty-eight visuals (19%) shared by thirty-one individuals show a quotation in a legible manner. The most often shared quotation is the one on the side of the statue ($n = 25$, 47%). Second most frequent with a large gap, is “the ultimate measure of man” which appears in four images and one video (9%). Then—with four posts each—visitors share “the arch of the universe” and “the audacity to believe,” followed by “injustice anywhere” and “unarmed truth” with three posts each. Because of their relative frequency, I only elaborate here on posts showing the quote on the statue.

The most-shared quote is a fragment from King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Interestingly, few people seem to be aware of this: among the twenty-five Instagram posts which legibly show the quote, not one mentions the “I Have a Dream” speech.²⁵ This means the posts are most often not about the quote and even less so the speech from which it came. Instead, the quote seems to just happen to be in the photograph. This makes sense in terms of the statue’s design: looking at it from the side on which the quote is engraved it is one of the most beautiful and

²⁵ Seven of the posts have no caption at all.

impactful perspectives, as Tim mentioned. He is a private tour guide in DC and said about how he chose which photograph to post: “I was noting the landscape design features that form a vista (or viewpoint) from the memorial statue through to the Washington Monument in the background; creating a reference point to link the different points of power each person held” (Tim Wright, 6 September 2020, Instagram interview).

The quote just happens to be in the frame because it is carved into the side of the statue: the memorial’s focal point and the side from which most people appear to walk around the statue (see, for example, Fig. 11.3 in Chapter 13). Both, the memorial’s design as well as Instagram’s platform conventions therefore might be the reason why this quote appears most frequently in my sample. It is possible that, “[i]n the pursuit of photos, tourists capture anticipated images without looking at what is actually being photographed, therefore never knowing or learning what they have reproduced through their cameras (Bourdieu, 1990)” (C. Lee et al., 2022, p. 5). The photograph is about the statue more than it is the quote: the statue as the most popular photographic object on site—which makes sense why it is shared on Instagram, as it is visually impressive and communicates a visit to the nation’s memorial capital.

11.5.2 Narratives

Among the 131 posts, the captions contained references to different themes (one caption could contain multiple themes).²⁶ In the following, I discuss the four most frequent themes in reverse order of frequency, beginning with the least frequent one: the visitor, the memorial, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and what I coded as *Black Lives Matter*.²⁷

20% of the posts in my sample talk about the visitor in their captions. While less dominant than in posts about the inscription at the Lincoln Memorial (52%), the manner in which these visitors refer to themselves is similar: they talk about how they were experiencing the site and what it meant to them, such as Mateo who captioned his post: “the one monument that I actually cared about visiting” (1 September 2020). However, in contrast to posts about the inscription, these individuals also frequently refer to themselves to make statements about how they feel about the cause represented by the memorial. In her caption, accompanying

²⁶ 13 posts had no caption.

²⁷ See Table “Text Content” in Appendix 3.2 for all themes.

a photograph of King's statue, Ashley writes about how visiting the memorial brought up a lot of emotions, elaborating on them:

Honoring the soldiers who fought in wars abroad, remembering the history of our nation, and ultimately visualizing the change we want to see at home in the future. This monument of Martin Luther King Jr. stands tall alongside the water in D.C. as a stoic reminder that the work is not done. We all have a part to play in shaping a better tomorrow for future generations. Be the change you want to see in the world. (14 September 2020)

These narratives about the self are therefore often about the visitors' reactions to the memorial, not only concerning the structure itself but also what it represents: making them posts about the individual experience more so than the structure.

Almost as frequently as narratives about the self were captions that included discussions of the memorial (21%), such as: "Bucket List ✓ I have wanted to visit this monument since 2011 when it was built. It is more amazing than I ever imagined... and right on the water... my new Favorite Spot! 🌟" (Naomi, 31 August 2020). This example shows that these types of posts were rarely neutral in tone (only 32% were).²⁸ When they were, they were merely descriptions of the site, such as: "MLK Memorial Washington D.C." (Owen, 2 September 2020), helping locate the site in physical space. More frequently than neutral statements about the memorial were posts in which individuals made positive references to the site (42%) and/or statements of feeling empowered by the memorial (23%) such as: "'Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope'—MLK Memorial. I'm glad I walked around the MLK Memorial today because these words gave me some encouragement in the midst of all of this despair" (Paige, 22 October 2020). As this last caption shows, the memorial is frequently brought into relation with the visitor and not purely described as a structure that exists in the world. Instead, the (personal) relevance of the memorial is explicitly stated.

The focus on Dr. King, who was a topic in 23% of posts, reflects what visitors claimed was their reason for travelling to the memorial: it was about Dr. King (see Sect. 7.1.3). These posts were often descriptive (35%), such as: "'We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice' he said that in 1968 in DC" (Rose, 9 September 2020), or included an opinion (28%), such as: "Martin had a dream and it's our job to keep pushing forward to make it a reality" (Silas, 1 September 2020). When speaking about

²⁸ See Table "Tone in Posts About the Memorial" in Sect. 15.3 in the Appendix for a full table showing the relative frequency of the different tones.

King in their captions, these visitors were never neutral.²⁹ Instead, 55% of captions referring to King are positive while 26% are (also) empowering. 13% of posts which talk about King, however, also include negative emotions such as the following caption:

As people still fight civil rights to this very day, I am reminded of #mlk and all of the work he has done. The bravery and striving inspired a county to be better. But there is still work to be done. And we will do it. (Elijah, 10 October 2020)

When captions referring to King included negative emotions, those were not directed at King himself or the memorial but at the current situation in the country. These posts show that visitors make a connection to the present, based on the story the memorial commemorates. They do not simply read the memorial as a reminder of history but as a communicator of public memory, making a statement about what is valued today. This leads me to the most frequent theme in Instagram posts tagged at the MLK Memorial: The Black Lives Matter Movement.

References to the Black Lives Matter movement or any reference made to the continuation of the fight for civil rights appeared in 27% of posts. This is often done by vague references to the current political or social climate, such as: “So much more to be done so many years later” (Taylor 1 September 2020). However, many posts include an explicit reference to Black Lives Matter, such as this caption:

... Martin Luther King Jr did not just leave behind words to learn from and repeat, but a movement to keep fighting for. Racism has to end. Black Lives Matter. You don't have to be black to understand that. We who want change, we who are sick of our black friends and families being targeted, murdered with no justice to answer for the wrongdoings happening everyday know what we must do next. We as a collective have a huge duty. (Uma, 1 September 2020)

These posts, while not explicitly mentioning the unfinished look of the statue, take up the narrative that, only because Dr. King is now a national hero, his—and the movement's—work is not done, and racism is not an issue of the past.

Among the posts referring to the Black Lives Matter Movement, 28 posts (78%) by 23 individuals were posted from the March on Washington 2020. The march, “devised in part to build on the passion for racial justice that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. summoned when he delivered his ‘I Have a Dream’ address on that same spot 57 years ago” (see Wines & Kavi, 2020),

²⁹ See Table “Tone in Posts About Dr. King” in Appendix 3.2.

also passed through the MLK Memorial. The dominance of march posts at the MLK Memorial is interesting because my sampling time at the Lincoln Memorial also included the time of the march, yet none of the posts tagged at the Lincoln Memorial referred to the march. This might imply that the MLK Memorial, for these Instagram users, works better to communicate the fight for equality in its representation and honoring of King, than the Lincoln Memorial does, as the location of the March on Washington and the “I Have a Dream” speech.

However, even when excluding visits as part of a political march, Black Lives Matter is still the dominant topic in this sample: 106 posts by ninety-five individuals were not posted from the march. Among these posts, 28% included a textual reference to the Black Lives Matter Movement, such as: “Years later, we’re still fighting 🦊” (Valentina, 7 September 2020). The use of the fist emoji further references the fight against racism, as the symbol has been used for decades as a symbol of fighting oppression. As a National Geographic article elaborates:

The raised fist has been a staple of protests across the United States as the country continues to grapple with systemic racism. Demonstrators use it People have spray painted it on sidewalks and the sides of buildings. There are even emojis. (Stout, 2020)

The fist emoji appears in fifteen posts (six from the march, nine not from the march), sometimes as the only caption content. The prevalence of the fist emoji in post which were not about the march shows that for some visitors, the Instagram post alone is considered a political statement. While making a fist on site as part of a personal visit might be considered too forceful or have the potential for conflict, posting a fist emoji on an Instagram post can be used to show an allegiance with a cause in a safer environment.

Furthermore, references to the continuation of the fight were not only visible in mentions of the Black Lives Matter Movement but more generally in the use of verb tenses in the captions: While 14% of posts which were not about the march referred to the past—including King and the movement—only six (40%) did so exclusively. 19% of posts (also) referred to the present moment while 11% made a comment about the future.³⁰ By doing so, even when not referring to the Black Lives Matter movement or other ongoing civil rights endeavors explicitly, these visitors show that they do not understand the memorial as a pure reminder of the past but also as a reminder of a nation’s current values and ideals for the future:

³⁰ See Appendix 3.2 for a frequency table with all verb tenses.

This monument of Martin Luther King Jr. stands tall alongside the water in D.C. as a stoic reminder that the work is not done. We all have a part to play in shaping a better tomorrow for future generations. Be the change you want to see in the world. (Ashley, 1 September 2020)

The relatively high frequency of references to a continuation of King's and the Civil Rights Movement's goals show that visitors understand this memorial as a communicator of public memory, and not purely a site of history.

11.6 Discussion

While Instagram posts from the two memorials differed in several regards, they also exhibited commonalities. While post tagged at the "I Have a Dream" inscription were more about the individual's presence in the location and not so much about the marker itself, posts tagged at the MLK Memorial largely focused on the statue. However, those latter posts did not purely refer to the memorial but rather made a connection to current events. I will further elaborate on the differences between the two memorial experiences in Chapter 12, but want to first discuss the similarities of the posts in the following two subchapters: posts tagged at both memorials were largely non-critical and served to show visual allegiance with implicit narratives.

11.6.1 Non-Critical Posts

Throughout the Instagram ethnography, it became clear that—in this sample—posts about both memorials were overwhelmingly positive (62% of posts at the MLK Memorial, 70% at the Lincoln Memorial). While there was criticism of the current political situation, and explicit references to racism in the United States, there was no criticism of the memorials and no criticism of the narratives they tell. This is despite, as I have elaborated in Sect. 9.1, an absence of information at both sites including the atrocities King and the movement faced, and despite visitors to both memorials having critical opinions of the sites. This was particularly true for the MLK Memorial where visitors criticized an absence of historical facts. Ashley answered my question how she feels about the information provided at the memorial as follows:

We have a lot of modern day MLKs rising up to fight for equality and they are all labeled as “thugs” or “trouble makers” and honestly, it’s disturbing. BLM is a great organization that reaches out to black communities, helps impoverished people with fundraisers and gaining access to better services, and yet even the president of the United States is calling it a terrorist organization. It’s absolutely insane. I think it is really telling that they don’t talk about how hated MLK was during his time. They paint him as a hero, as they should, but don’t talk about all the adversity nearly as much as they should. (26 October 2020)

However, in her Instagram caption—which is atypically long and full of explicit opinions—she does not voice that criticism.

The absence of public criticism on Instagram users’ profiles reflects what Lisa Benton-Short wrote about in 2006 after the dedication of DC’s World War II Memorial:

Despite scathing reviews from art and architectural critics, my own informal survey (of 100 people taken over the three days of dedication weekend) indicates that most of the visitors were overwhelmingly positive about the memorial. I suspect that this may emanate more from a conviction that this memorial was long overdue and less about whether it “spoke” to them. I found it nearly impossible to engage visitors in a discussion about whether the memorial is in the appropriate location: to question the design or the location of the memorial today is to be unpatriotic. (p. 323)

Focusing on the positive only, when finally witnessing a long-overdue memorial could also be reflected in the uncritical Instagram posts from the memorials: “Because there is so little African American history in our schools and our public square, any bit that makes it becomes precious” (Theoharis, 2018, p. 17). Criticizing these rare sites, then, would dim their light.

While the location of the MLK Memorial was one of the topics visitors willingly discussed with me in a critical manner (see Sect. 7.1.3), they nevertheless often made sure to not dwell on the negative. When speaking with me at the MLK Memorial, a group of previously quoted African American visitors told me:

[Derek] It’s amazing to have a black man up there like that, in this country.

[Charlotte] in Washington DC. In his own, private, area.

[Derek] But they kind of did put him in the back.

[Frank] Can we keep this positive? (3 June 2019)

These visitors conduct a negotiated reading of the memorial (see Hall, 1980): they understand the narratives the memorial is supposed to transmit, but they do not agree with them entirely in their reading. While Derek makes it clear that the placement of the memorial can be critically reflected, Frank immediately takes over the conversation and tries to ensure I do not get the impression that they think badly of the memorial. This reflects not only a desire to focus on the positive aspects of the memorial but also a response to me as a White woman from Europe leading the interview. It is possible that visitors reacted to my questions in part as a reaction to a White academic and thereby changed their answers to appear socially desirable. If an African American visitor complains about the site, for example, they could be perceived by the dominant culture—which I, as a White woman, represent—as being ungrateful. The interviewer’s ethnicity, in this case, could have led to a social desirability bias in responses, particularly by African American visitors (for more on this limitation, see Sect. 12.6).

However, the absence of criticism in Instagram posts not only reflects visitors being thankful that anything at all exists. It also reflects that by posting about the sites in a positive manner, the post assigns value to the visit as well as the memorial. As Leo described:

I believe it gives off positive energy because he was positive. His movement was positive! The Memorial itself is positive and just to be in that atmosphere with other human beings all coming for the same reasons ideally, left me with positive energy and showing me that anyone can make a difference. (22 September 2020, Instagram interview)

Sharing about one’s tourism experience is an inherently positive act of communication. While tourists do voice their disappointments on reviewing sites, on their Instagram profiles they tend to showcase the positive experiences during their trips, reflecting the expectation that the platform represents a “highlight reel” of one’s life. The platform’s positivity bias (see Humphreys, 2018, p. 18) therefore encourages uncritical posts. Criticizing the memorial—the destination of one’s visit—would diminish one’s experience of it. Furthermore, sharing about the memorials in a critical manner could devalue the sites as sites of public memory. If the sites are not framed as successful communicators of public memory, the narratives they represent could be seen as unworthy of appropriate commemoration. This is reflected not only in the un-critical nature of the posts but also in their focus on the visually magnificent (the statue at the MLK Memorial and the view from the “I Have a Dream” inscription): they assign the memorialized narratives value.

11.6.2 Showing Visual Allegiance

The visual components of the memorials therefore largely impact how they are shared on Instagram and the platform's focus on the visually impressive results in a user strategy of showing "visual allegiance." In my conversation in 2021 with a visitor at the MLK Memorial, we had an interesting discussion about the purpose of sharing about a memorial. She had been living in DC for several years and when I asked her if she still shares about memorials she said yes but mentioned that she had not posted about the MLK Memorial before, "but [she] probably will this time around" (Sabrina, 14 October 2021). Having told me before that, being at the memorial on this day, she felt "sad and frustrated ... about the world we live in," I asked her what she would then write on a post from this site: would she share her frustrations with her network? She answered:

I use my social media less to make a point, only because I'm a government employee. And, so, I have to be careful as to what gets posted and what doesn't. ... I try to find ways that get my point across without directly bringing in politics. Because I'm allowed to say things, ... I just can't endorse a certain political candidate or a party or things like that. And so, I try to find ways to get the message across without being so overt about that. (14 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

When I explicitly asked her if she thought that she had to add some context when sharing a photograph from the site so that her audience would understand that message, she responded: "I think some of it speaks for itself, honestly" (14 October 2021, MLK Memorial). This example shows that in using an image from the memorial she can make an implicit comment about the current political climate and her personal, political beliefs without explicitly talking about them.

Using posts that are not explicitly critical can therefore nevertheless be used to make a critical statement. George told me that he had visited the MLK memorial a year before but felt compelled to post about it in July, 2021, because he wanted to make a statement:

I decided to post [the pictures] because they signify the equal right to all blacks no segregation. Also, it's a very important [em]powering Monument. ... This was back in 2019/ And decided to post this year because I still have hope. (26 July 2021, Instagram interview)

Once again, however, this post did not include any critical comments in its caption, which read: "Heres 2 photos I took from 2019 of the MLK Jr. Memorial 😊." In our conversation, George explained his post as follows:

So, MLK Jr was a civil rights activist. He lead the March of many African Americans who wanted change. They [were] furious of how whites and blacks couldn't get along so you started the Civil Rights Movement to prove a point that we as a society need to grow stronger together and not far apart. I posted about the memorial because it's such a marvelous peace in history. What I've learned about the Memorial is that it means that there's unfinished business to attend to in the minority communities. (George, 26 July 2021, Instagram interview)

None of these interpretations were explicit in his post. The Instagram users I spoke with largely appear to think that a memorial can “speak for itself.” However, when asked what it is supposed to “say,” most individuals do not have a clear idea: “[I was] trying not to inject too much of my own view/voice in the images. Let it speak for itself” (Wiafe, 17 October 2020, Instagram interview). What we can learn from these Instagram posts and the creators’ self-proclaimed motivations for sharing them is that they consider a photograph from a memorial to be a statement of allegiance on its own.

By sharing the memorial experience, these Instagram users make a statement about the sites that communicates their importance to them personally. For an Instagram user, their profile is not necessarily a separate online entity but one aspect of their personality—not separated through the online / offline gap but entailing both modalities and spanning across them. Since only the highlights of one’s life appear on one’s Instagram feed, sharing a photograph from one of the memorials communicates to the implied audience that the site was a highlight for the person who visited. The digital realm is in this case necessary to single out this site from a larger trip. The fact that the images are rarely accompanied by captions, in which the posters voice their opinions, reflects both, the platform logic, and the assumed power of images and the memorials: they are assumed to be understood without additional information, in that they honor the commemorated individual and that the visitor themselves stands behind the memorialized individuals and causes which the sites represent.

11.7 Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, visitors share about the two Dr. King memorials in DC in manners that adhere to Instagram conventions: they select visuals that are impressive, and which can make an intelligible statement about the tourism experience. The visual primacy not only impacts the selection but also how the posts are used as identity markers: By simply posting a photograph of a memorial, visitors say something about themselves without having to make an explicit

statement. This works particularly well since travel photographs are often used to communicate one's desired identity (e.g., N. Bond & Falk, 2013). In the case of memorials, this goes beyond the self as a traveler: The posts show a visual allegiance with the ideals and causes that seem to be commemorated by the memorials. By sharing an Instagram post from a Dr. King Memorial, visitors thus show their allegiance with the man and the cause for which he stands, without having to make any explicit statements themselves. While the consequences of sharing on Instagram were not a topic of investigation in this project, future research should examine the impact of non-critical Instagram posts from the two memorials. Whether they indeed succeed in making a statement to others or whether this remains an unfulfilled wish by those who shared, remains open to investigation.

11.7.1 The Potential of Social Media to Transform Memorials

When we understand DC memorials as both sites of public memory, and sites of tourism, we also must account for this double function when studying (offline and online) engagement with the sites. Cultural heritage sites have different functions: "Heritage can be viewed as a political, economic, cultural or psychological resource. ... As an economic resource, heritage refers primarily to the packaging of a heritage site for the tourist trade, in essence treating it as a commodity ..." (Glantz & Figueroa, 1997, p. 359). If individuals should travel to memorial sites, those sites must also be interesting sites of tourism. In today's digital age, for many—albeit not all—tourists, a social media draw can be a motivating factor to visit a site (C. Lee et al., 2022; Sigala, 2016). If we assume, then, that a successful memorial is also a successful tourism location, we must take into account the importance of social media to tourism. The increasing prevalence of travelling *for* social media posts has been the subject of recent research:

There is some evidence to suggest that tourism, long noted as potentially narcissistic (MacCannell, 2002; Wheeler, 2005), might be becoming increasingly so. ... Trends in tourism being used for exhibitionist purposes of producing, curating and sharing identities online (Lo et al., 2011; Lyu, 2016) somewhat mirrors those regarding the use and influence of social media on cultural narcissism more broadly (i.e. Rosen et al., 2013; Weiser, 2015). (Canavan, 2017, pp. 1331–1332)

This motivation to visit a site in order to be able to share about it later was made explicit by Wendy in our conversation about the value of seeing a site such as

the MLK Memorial in person. I had first asked her what the value is of being there in person to which she answered:

I think there's the personal value of seeing this memorial and knowing how long it took for it to get funded and built but I think also from a very selfish social perspective. The social media aspect is definitely a huge draw. (5 June 2019)

When I asked her to elaborate on this, she said: "To take an Instagram photo at the monument. I think, as our age group it's so much Instagram, there is so much currency in social media. So, it's worth it to be somewhere in person and to have pictures" (Wendy, 5 June, 2019, MLK Memorial). Catering to an audience who wants to engage with a cultural site through their social media is a development that institutions must at least consider and many have begun to do so:

The impact and influence of Instagram has extended from social media and bled into the physical spaces of "real life." Dozens of museums, gallery spaces and pop-up spaces catering specifically for visitors to use as Instagram backdrops and props have emerged since the mid-2010s. These spaces, which visitors usually have to purchase exclusive tickets to enter, have transformed the act of "taking a photograph [into] an experience itself" (Bereznak 2017). (Leaver et al., 2020, pp. 159–160)

It has then become part of an experience, for some individuals, to interact with a physical site with the intention to share the interaction online: often through the taking and sharing of photographs.

Magnificent memorials make the on-site experience more impressive by inspiring awe and helping the visitors not only understand but *feel* the celebration of the commemorated individual or event. Additionally, visitors only share on Instagram that which is visually impressive. This is not to say that future memorials should be built according to the logic of social media, to be made more "instagrammable." Nevertheless, as the previous chapter has shown, individuals share memorials only when the photographs or videos they take correspond to the platform logic: Instagram is for the visually impressive, which means that only those narratives of public memory reach a wider audience, which are communicated through structures that correspond to those visual demands. Impressive structures or viewpoints also increase the likelihood that the memorial is shared online and thereby avoids the doom of all memorials as claimed by Robert Musil: being invisible (2006 pp. 64–65). Memorials become visible—not only in the physical but also in the online space—when they are impressive and exude magnitude.

Increasing the likelihood that individuals might share a photograph on Instagram not only benefits memorials as sites of tourism but also as sites of public memory by making them more known and accessible. Traveling to DC is a privilege which requires resources such as time and money. Consequently, memorials which stand in public space and are technically open to everybody, are in practice out of reach for most. Sharing experiences from the two memorials on their personal Instagram profiles, visitors can therefore help share them into different public spheres. As Stephen said in the voiceover of his video in which he walks through the MLK Memorial: “For people who will never get the opportunity to see this in person.” (7 September 2020). His post does not have a caption and he does not add any information about the site in his voiceover or stop long enough at one of the quotes, so it becomes legible. He told me in our conversation: “Well, I live in Georgia, state that is, and I know many of my friends and [acquaintances] may never be fortunate to visit these places themselves. I try to share experiences, that mean something to me, with others” (29 September 2020, Instagram interview). Stephen’s video is therefore not so much about sharing a specific quote but about sharing the *existence* of the site and his experience of it. In this sense, while nothing can beat experience such a site in person—as the participants in this study repeatedly insisted—seeing the national, public celebration of Dr. King through the screen of one’s smartphone can have a significant impact because, despite the memorial only appearing to these non-visitors in a digital space, the sites’ impact is understood to span across space and time.

Future research should study the reception of these types of Instagram posts, particularly the King Memorials in DC. This is because the potential of sharing memorials online and thereby participating in their narratives of public memories has thus far remained unexplored: we do not know the impact these posts have on their viewers. Based on the literature, we can assume that seeing posts of these memorials on Instagram, in our quotidian lives, without explicitly seeking out historical or political content can increase their power because, as I have shown to be particularly true for the MLK Memorial, their pure existence makes a statement about a nation’s values and ideals. Despite the majority of Americans not being able to travel to DC to personally see the memorials, knowing that they exist can already make a difference. The sharing of tourism photographs to personal Instagram profiles might contribute to this effect.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Part III
Discussions and Conclusion



To understand visitors' experiences with the two Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials in Washington, DC, we must examine them in their full complexity. What might at first seem like superficial tourist trips, upon closer inspection, turn out to also be (an attempt at) personal engagements with public memory. And while looking at the visible behaviors on site might lead to conclusions about people either swiftly moving through the memorials or escaping them by looking at their phones and being transported elsewhere, visitor experiences in fact bridge the offline / online chasm, utilizing the two realms in manners that allow individuals to personally and meaningfully engage with the site—during their visits and after, in the physical space and online.

The entanglement between experiences of tourism and public memory becomes visible in the hashtags which visitors to both sites use: There is no clear dominance of either hashtags about MLK or tourism (and, at the MLK Memorial, BLM).¹ Hashtags are used to insert an individual's post into a larger conversation and make it findable. 75% of posts tagged at the Lincoln Memorial and 60% of posts tagged at the MLK Memorial included at least one hashtag. The relative frequency of those hashtags showed that the posts were made findable for both, those looking for King or Black Lives Matter as well as those looking for tourism hashtags.

Therefore, on-site reports as well as Instagram sharing behavior suggest that visiting a memorial is embedded in narratives of public memory *and* narratives of tourism. To function as one, memorials in DC must thus function as both: places of tourism and places of public memory. Tourism can elevate a site of memory by increasing its function as a communicator of public memory: being known by more people increases its communicative power as the pure awareness

¹ See Appendices 3.1 and 3.2 for the distribution of all hashtags at both memorials.

that a specific person or event is honored in the capital can impact individuals' understanding of a nation's public memory. Similarly, a visit to a site of tourism tends to be successful if it is extraordinary and important: Something which an impressive statue with historical and / or cultural significance communicates well. In this sense, being a maker of public memory makes the site more interesting as a site of tourism, particularly in the context of DC.

The aspect that makes a visit to a cultural site successful when it is used as, both, a site of memory as well as a site of tourism is the *experience*. This is one of the main reasons why people travel, but it is also a crucial part of a successful "communication" of public memory. It is only through a personal engagement with the narratives that public memory becomes part of a person's life, and thereby meaningful. Increasing the experiential nature of memorials by making them attractive sites of tourism therefore helps increase the possibility to "breathe in history" on site and build tacit knowledge of the events and individuals commemorated and, particularly their status in the nation (see Tschofen (2016), quoted in Bareither, (2021, p. 350)). This is where the importance of the aesthetics comes in: only if a site looks and feels magnificent, is it read as assigning the commemorated person or event value. This magnitude can stem from the physical environs (particularly when these are historically significant), such as a view, which in itself carries meaning for a visitor who has seen its mediated image, or the memorial structure itself (particularly when the geographical location is neither significant nor especially impressive). The more the physical site helps visitors experience emotions, the more impactful they consider their visit. The importance of the on-site experience to build an emotional connection to the narratives appeared in conversations about both memorials. However, the experiences at the two sites differed.

At the Lincoln Memorial, visitors often told me, and showed through their Instagram posts, that standing in the location of the speech and imagining what it looked like in 1963 made their experience meaningful. The value of their experience therefore came from "looking into history." At the MLK Memorial, what gave a trip meaning instead was seeing with one's own eyes how King is honored in the nation's capital *today*. As interviewee Xaai wrote:

I think the real reason why the impact that the monument had on me was so powerful wasn't because of the connotation or the context of his particular story. But rather how it related to mine what I was going through like where I was in my life. ... And I think I was kind of educating myself and I think that that's empowering. When I got there, I was able to make my own connection: was able to connect to my *own* experiences, based on how I related to him, to the monument.

And I think we [must] find a way to get kids or get people access to the impact and understanding of the impact and the *weight of it all*, as well as giving them access to the visual and the experience of going there and seeing it or interacting with it in some way ... (20 October 2020, Instagram interview, transcribed from audio)

This elaboration of the impact of the on-site experience shows, once again, that public memory is not simply a retelling of history. Instead, it is a *meaningful* narrative and to make it meaningful to his own life, this individual had to visit the site. The experience at the MLK Memorial, then, is one of witnessing a current, official, appreciation of a figure from the past. King’s impact becomes all the more palpable and significant because of contemporary society’s creation and upkeep of this impressive memorial. These memorials therefore overcome the boundaries of space and time. I claim that the two memorials in this project do so differently. The MLK Memorial communicates a narrative about someone from history and signals his relevance today. The “I Have a Dream” inscription, on the other hand, transports the visitor to a different place.

12.1 The “I Have a Dream” Inscription as a Marker of History

As a memorial to a historical event, the “I Have a Dream” marker’s main function—according to the individuals I spoke with—is to remind visitors of the event. The marker itself does not matter so much as many of the interviews as well as photographic practices showed. Instead, what matters to visitors is standing in the spot where King gave his historic speech. This was voiced by Xavier who emailed me after I had spoken to him at the MLK Memorial:

Dr. King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech was given during the March on Washington in 1963, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. I was able to stand on those steps ... I’m not spiritual or religious, but I think the easiest way to say it would be to say that there’s just “something in the air” there. There’s a “spirit” or an “energy.” (21 June 2019)

He explains that standing in that location made him reflect on the historic speech which occurred there, but he did not mention the inscription itself. In fact, he later told me: “but I quite frankly did not even notice the engraving (I did just look it up)” (21 June 2019, email). Xavier, therefore, did not need the inscription on the ground to be reminded of the event. Furthermore, his enjoyment of being in that location did not come from the memorial—the inscription—itsself, but

from standing in the historically significant location: reflecting the importance of heritage sites' power to make the past's presence felt (see Tschofen, 2007, p. 29). This is the value of the marker for the visitors I spoke with: the marker itself is not impressive nor does it communicate more than "this is where X happened."

However, because the speech is such a well-known, mediated, event from history, some visitors are able to make that past present without much more help than looking out on the Mall. Future research should examine interactions with memorials for historic events which have seen a different level of mediatization, as their success in transporting the visitor back into history might rely on more than the pure landscape itself.

The insignificance of the marker was explicitly voiced by Denaise during our commented walk through the Lincoln Memorial. I want to quote here at length from our conversation during our walk up the steps as the conversation beautifully illustrates the invisibility of the marker and Denaise's expectation and opinion of it:

[Interviewer] [Last time you were here.] did you see the inscription for the speech?

[Denaise] [shakes head]

Let's go look at it!

So, it's there?

It's there, and I ...

[interrupts] When did they put it there?

It has been more than a decade [it was dedicated in 2003]

Because I thought, now, how would she be so far off on that one? Like, she knows [the MLK Memorial and the location of the speech] are in two different areas. And I even googled because I said to you before: what does it say? And it says "Emancipation Proclamation."

Yes, you're totally right. You'll see in just a second what it actually says

You got notebooks and binders and this is the first time I've visited so I googled: what's inscribed? And I don't know for sure. See now I'm actually curious where the stage was, where he was actually standing. Do you know?

I know where!

Oh, is there a spot? Oh, it was that far up? Oh wow [searching for it, taking pictures] And there was the Million Men March since then! These [steps] are steeper than I thought! [sees marker] Uhm, this is not the inscription you're talking about!

This is it!

But that’s a marker! That’s not, that’s a *marker*. I thought you said the speech was there! It’s just a *marker*. (25 October 2021, Washington, DC)

Denaise, who had visited the Lincoln Memorial before and has a wealth of knowledge about the Civil Rights Movement (not only but also because she attended Howard University, a HBCU), did not know there was a marker on the steps and did not realize quite exactly where King stood for his speech. However, having heard me say that there was an inscription in the location of the speech, she expected the speech to be there and was visibly disappointed when it was only an indication of when it happened.

Fig. 12.1 Denaise at the Lincoln Memorial. (*Note.* Photograph by the author, published with permission)



This disappointment in the marker itself is also reflected in the photographs we took in this location (see Figs. 12.1 and 12.2). I took Denaise’s picture in this significant spot and for the first picture, she wanted the Lincoln Memorial in the background: framed like King and the other speakers during the March on Washington. It was difficult for me to take the picture because I wanted to include the inscription but it was practically illegible from this angle. Denaise then took over her camera and asked me where I would like to have my picture

Fig. 12.2 The Author at the Lincoln Memorial. (Note. Photographed by Denaise, 25 October 2021, published with permission)



taken. I said I would prefer it with me next to the inscription and the Mall in the background. I felt like this was the best option for the picture: it would show the marker, myself, and the view Dr. King had across the Mall. Denaise then proceeded to take five photographs of me in the location of the speech, all of which completely cut out the inscription. This implicitly shows that the marker is not that important to Denaise, an emotion she later made explicit:

[Denaise] I came here knowing that I know what I know, and I think you'd supply me with a few facts, it was the *marker*. You just misspoke. That's just a *marker*. It's like the Eiffel Tower: IT'S JUST A MARKER! [laughs] ...

[Interviewer] Right, I sit there so often, and I look at the marker and I see people walking over it without seeing it and I know it's nobody's fault! But, if we are supposed to memorialize anything, is it not a significant location?

No, it wasn't that spot. It's not the stairs. It's not the speech. It's those that stopped, changed, rescheduled their lives to be there. They didn't know what he was going to say. But they knew the reasons he had for saying it.

I love what you said last, that it wasn't about the speech even.

Exactly, because nobody knew what they were going to say. They didn't come for the speech. It was also the people's march, it was people who were in trouble, they were hungry, they were beaten, and bitten by dogs. (25 October, 2021)

Denaise stresses that the marker itself does not matter but that what mattered was the movement. This sentiment illustrates what appeared throughout my conversations with many visitors: that those who know that the event happened there do not need the marker. Standing in that location, thinking about the historic moment and its significance is what makes the experience valuable.

This experience could be heightened by adding online components to the site, such as augmented reality features which would allow visitors to stand in the location and look out on the Mall seeing what King and the other speakers would have seen on that historic day. Being able to feel the weight of the history in that moment in the physical space, could be a powerful experience. By adding possibilities of seeing consequences of that historical event while in this significant location, its magnitude and relevance today could be stressed, particularly for individuals who do not realize that this is where the speech occurred or the direct and indirect consequences it had. The more time passes since the event, the less its mediated images might be engrained in visitors' memories and a reminder on site therefore all the more necessary. This would transform the site from a pure marker to a memorial of public memory: by not simply commemorating the historical event but also spotlighting its significance and relevance to today. However, for those who do not realize that this is where the speech occurred, today, the minimal marker contributes to the speech remaining invisible within that physical space.

12.2 The MLK Memorial as a Statement of Public Memory

As a memorial to a historical person, the MLK Memorial's main function—in the eyes of the visitors I spoke with as well as the institutions involved in its construction—is not so much about commemorating history but to honor the man. This is why visitors' appreciation of the site largely stems from its grandeur: Because it makes visible the official appreciation of the man and what he stood for. The fact that the memorial is placed in a historically insignificant location is practically irrelevant here because its symbolic location is so significant. As Bernhard Tschofen (2017) writes, social space is not absolute or an abstract concept, or a container which surrounds a terminable reality. Instead, space as a cultural

order (he calls it *spatiality*) is constituted only in relation to other spaces: space is therefore relational (Tschofen, 2017, p. 13).

It is, therefore, not only the magnitude of the MLK Memorial itself which visitors value, but also its positioning on the National Mall, in relation to the other important memorials. The MLK Memorial's location and architecture therefore not only make it a worthy tourist destination, they also attribute value to King. However, again, the location of the memorial makes it so that it is only discoverable to those who look for it. What the two memorials have in common, then, and how they are lacking in communicating public memory appropriately, is that they are only discoverable for those in the know. While placed on the nation's prime site for public memory, they still mainly speak to a niche audience.

A significant difference to the "I Have a Dream" inscription is the MLK Memorial's communication of more than a past event. It speaks volumes about the present through the sheer fact that it exists, here and now, and what this means in terms of the nation's values and ideals. Based on the responses of the participants in this study, I argue that this is the most valuable aspect of their visit. As Branden stated: "The memorial was just my place because of historical significance, at the time there's not another monument of its size dedicated to someone who looked like me" (10 January 2022, Instagram interview). Throughout the project, visitors of the MLK Memorial showed that their understanding of public memory corresponds to its textbook definition: it is not just a memory of the past, it is a statement about a nation's idealized present and future. In order to see this connection, however, the visitors seem to require a personal experience with the narrative, instead of reading about it in a textbook which—according to them—would make it "pure history." Visitors repeatedly stated that the MLK Memorial is more than a site at which one should think about history:

Well, I think it brings it to life and it brings it into perspective. And when you read the quotes on the wall and you think that you're here in DC, you just hope that those congressmen, those senators will actually come and read the quotes. ... Because, there's so much that's going on in the world today, if they would take some of these quotes and put them into practice it would mean much, much more. (Deborah, 26 June 2019, MLK Memorial)

The MLK Memorial seemed to activate this impression more than the "I Have a Dream" marker. The latter was mostly seen as a reminder of a past event while the MLK Memorial was read as a reminder of what the nation values. It appears that the use of a person, in this specific case, is better suited for this task: despite all the disadvantages that can come from honoring only specific individuals. I

have repeatedly stressed the peril of celebrating a specific figure as a representation for an entire movement. However, it appears that having individuals with whom people can identify helps make their relevance more palpable. It creates a positive role-model, even if the historical person was not perfect. The solution, then, seems to be to include more celebrations of members of marginalized communities so that visitors can celebrate public memory without reducing it to a slim selection of individuals. This could also help alleviate some of the complex feelings visitors had about the MLK Memorial as they found that, in honoring King, others were denied their due.

What we can learn from visitors' experiences at the MLK Memorial, then, is that seeing individuals celebrated today for the impact of their past actions, can be deeply felt and appreciated by visitors. This is especially true when the individual commemorated is part of a marginalized community which has been denied the respect and appreciation it has long been due. While seeing more of these celebrations in the nation's memorial capital is crucial, the study suggests that seeing celebrations of such figures in other, symbolically significant places, can also contribute to individuals' identification with them. Placing such statues in front of City Halls or public parks can also honor the individual and, at the same time, make it possible for more visitors to see the statues personally. In these instances, it is crucial that the memorials themselves are visually impressive as this communicates their value to the onlooker.

The aesthetic attributes of memorials are not only crucial to assign the honored individuals value but they are also essential for individuals' to share about them online. As I have established, online sharing is one of the few manners in which individuals can personally engage with the sites. They do so by taking photographs and, for some individuals, to share those to their personal Instagram profiles, thereby making the trip part of their online persona and framing it as something important to their identity: they do so by sharing about experiences of tourism as well as public memory.

12.3 Image Sharing as an Act of Tourism

The presence of narratives of tourism and narratives of public memory in the Instagram posts in this project showed that sharing the memorials to a person's public Instagram profile can help the visitor show themselves as a traveler but also as someone who cares about a specific aspect of U.S. American history. In doing so, memorials spread to different public spheres online and can thusly become more accessible. As the Instagram ethnography has shown, however, in

order to be shared to Instagram, a memorial must fulfill certain standards that are expected of sites of tourism. This particularly includes a certain magnitude of the site that makes it feel and look important and worth visiting.

What we can further learn from this project is that, for some visitors, sharing about the memorials after their visit can be an integral part of the experience. It is crucial, then, to not think of the tourist experience as limited to the moments on location. While research has long conceptualized tourism as including the preparatory and post-travel moments (e.g., Clawson, 1966), this project showed that, for those individuals who share on Instagram after their trip, the post-trip online engagement with the site is in fact part of the experience itself.

This becomes particularly palpable when individuals claim that part of the reason why they travelled to a specific site was to capture a photograph that can be shared on social media (see Wendy's statement in Sect. 11.7.1). Sharing on Instagram can not only be a fun addition to a trip, but indeed one of the motivating factors to take the trip in the first place, reflecting an increasingly common travel motivation (e.g., C. Lee et al., 2022). Even when taking a photograph for Instagram is not a motive for travel, sharing about the visit online can be a part of the experience that visitors enjoy greatly, supporting previous findings from Suess' study of visitors to an art gallery which found that "many respondents described how using Instagram extended their aesthetic experience beyond the space and time of being present at the exhibition location" (2018, p. 113). Lee and colleagues similarly found that

[t]he inability to share was also linked to a reduced sense of completion, with respondents describing feelings of being cheated or robbed of their enjoyment. Such feelings imply that present-day tourists view online photo-sharing as a right or entitlement that comes with travel. (2022, p. 10)

The idea that social media sharing can be part of an experience is also reflected in Wee-Kheng Tan's study on smartphone use by tourists at "nature-based" sites, including national parks. He found that the tourist experience is "no longer bounded by the physical limits imposed and the actors being physically present within the destination," creating a physical-virtual space at the tourism location (2017, p. 615).

However, while Tan focused on how the online space can be brought into the offline space of a tourist destination, the online space can also prolong a visitor's engagement with the physical site. This is no new phenomenon as visitors have been known to look at their photographs from a trip before the advent of

digital technologies (see Chalfen, 1987b). However, in the case of sharing photographs on social media, the post-visit engagement has become more active. Participants in the Instagram ethnography showed that they actively engaged with the memorials and—sometimes—their narratives, even after they had left the site by selecting, editing and sharing photographs and, often, adding narratives to those images. This means that, if we want to study visitors' experiences with memorial sites, we must account for those individuals for whom the visit is not finished once they leave the site. The experience of visiting a memorial should be studied in its entirety, including post-visit aspects of the experience.

12.4 Sharing About Sites of Public Memory

The experience on site is not only crucial to a successful visit from a tourism perspective but also in terms of engaging with public memory: because what is important about a memorial visit is the personal experience with the site. Currently, taking a photograph of a site and sharing it (through interpersonal communication or more broadly to a social media profile) is the only manner in which visitors can actively engage with the sites. This social media engagement can be productive to a personal engagement with the narratives told (e.g., Bareither, 2020a), but in order for visitors to engage with a site on social media, it must conform to certain standards. In the context of Instagram, a site popular for travel photographs, this especially means that there must be visually impressive features to the site which make the site “share-worthy:” “Memorable travel experiences increase the likelihood and the variety of content that travellers are willing to publish on social media (Minazzi and Mauri, 2015, cited in Tanti and Buhalis, 2016, p. 33), demonstrating further implications on destination marketing” (C. Lee et al., 2022, p. 14). Furthermore, to work as places of public memory, they must also be extraordinary because this assigns them value. To illustrate this double-function, I quote Michael Di Giovine who writes, in his book *The Heritage-Scape: UNESCO, World Heritage, and Tourism*:

The title “World Heritage site” ... is also a compelling statement of value about the site itself, one that is intended to “raise awareness” of the site’s existence, and to pique the interest of potential tourists. Yet these monuments cannot accomplish this alone; they are made “viable,” Kirshenblatt-Gimblett remarks, “as re-presentations of themselves.” That is, while on the interactive level, the monument serves to render material an immaterial social community, and thus mediates between touristic individuals in the tangible world of conflictual geopolitics and the imaginary world of the heritage-scape, to be effective in this awareness-raising endeavor they must also allow

for the dissemination of their own self-images, which mediate between the potential tourist and themselves. Thus, to raise awareness of the heritage-scape, discrete World Heritage sites are forced to perform a double mediation: the World Heritage site first acts as a medium between the potential tourist and itself through its image form, and then, through in situ interaction with the tourist, the authentic monument can mediate between the individual and the heritage-scape. (2009, pp. 58–59; citing Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 151)

This excerpt shows that heritage sites, including memorials, must manage the split between being sites of tourism and sites of heritage in order to be able to attract those individuals who will then gain meaning from their historical significance. By being a site that is interesting to experience, for example by being aesthetically pleasing and allowing for photographic practices, it becomes a site that individuals want to visit in order to learn about and experience the past in an environment which starkly differs from reading about a historical figure in a book. This means that, while memorials should not be built with social media engagement in mind, if the goal is to have visitors meaningfully interact with them, make their narratives relevant to their own lives, and possibly share them to additional publics through their personal and public networks, memorials should be built with an awareness of what makes visitors engage.

We should therefore not shy away from allowing the experience of public memory to be combined with experiences of tourism. Claiming that tourism is always exclusively a frivolous activity falls short of actual experiences. Furthermore, *experiencing* history implies a more playful encounter with those narratives. It then only makes sense that sites of public memory would be valuable sites of tourism.

12.5 Integrating Memorials Into People's Everyday Lives

As I have established, the visitors I spoke with at the two DC memorials made public memory relevant to their own lives by travelling to the site and then, frequently, by engaging with them explicitly, mostly by photographing them. However, there is another way of making public memory relevant to individuals' personal lives: by bringing them into the quotidian. In these cases, large statues are neither practical nor desirable, as they often become invisible when they are not sought out as a tourism destination. As a solution to this issue, we can take inspiration from the "stumbling blocks" in Berlin, which are "small

memorial stones that commemorate individual victims of the Holocaust at their former homes and businesses” (Cook & van Riemsdijk, 2014, p. 138).

One of the strengths of these stones is that they force individuals who stumble upon them to think about the historical event and the people affected by it, eliciting unexpected emotional reactions (Cook & van Riemsdijk, 2014, p. 147). I would argue that integrating such unassuming memorials in everyday locations can also help make the relevance of the historical event more palpable. Additionally, the Civil Rights Movement and its (many!) members could be commemorated in places where its effects are still palpable today. By placing small QR codes at lunch counters, for example, we could be reminded of what it took for us to sit here together today. A little code to scan on public transport could show us the sacrifices of countless individuals who made it possible that we can all ride together.

By utilizing the advantages of both, the online and offline realms, these types of memorials could benefit from the corporeal experience in physical space as well as an explanation of its meaning: Not only the past events but also their relevance today. The latter could be provided online not only because it would ensure a wealth of information to be available without “cluttering” the space and the narratives remaining relatively open to change, but also because it could profit from technological possibilities such as augmented reality, which could help bring the past into the present visually. Integrating the past into the present through different technologies beyond thinking about a past event while standing in its historical location could then even increase the experience of that event by creating more of a feeling of “standing in the past” through the integration of several senses. However, importantly, if these types of memorials stand in quotidian places, the connection to today—so crucial to narratives of public memory—would be particularly palpable as the past quite literally would make its way into people’s everyday lives.

In this sense, then, the memorial landscape can be expanded by adding memorials with different functions in order to fully achieve the purpose of public memory: to commemorate, celebrate, and show what is important to a nation in the here and now. This also means that we should keep diversifying the memorial landscape of DC: as it exists as *the* canon of U.S. American public memory, it is crucial that it become more diverse / representative of actual history in what and whom we value today. But in order to make public memory relevant to more individuals, we must also bring it to where they are. Connecting the embodied experience with the knowledge of history can then be done by catching people in a physical place and telling them why their experience of it is historically significant.

12.6 Limitations

This current project represents a four-year project conducted on offline as well as online field sites. Its objective was to create an in-depth look at visitor experiences with two DC Memorials from which we could draw conclusions for other memorial sites. The project's conclusions, but especially its claims at generalizations, must be considered keeping its limitations in mind.

First, exclusively focusing on Instagram to study visitors' sharing behavior from the sites creates a systematic bias in excluding posts on all other platforms. However, only including Instagram users, when we are interested in that specific platform and how individuals engage with cultural sites there, is productive and should not be considered a limitation. It does, however, mean that we cannot generalize from this study to other platform users. Future research might want to expand the method to different platforms with different conventions to see if the engagement with the sites differs based on which platform is used.

While Twitter is seen as the platform for voicing one's (political) opinion (Humphreys, 2018, p. xi), Instagram does not have this function.² However, with the global spread of the Black Lives Matter movement and, particularly, its social media strategies, Instagram has become more political since the beginning of this project in 2019. In the wake of the 2020 murder of George Floyd, the #BlackLivesMatter saw a significant uptick. This was also true for Instagram, where a trend in June led to so much confusion that the #BlackLivesMatter, used to communicate about the movement and provide resources, was flooded by posts of black squares, supposedly showing "support of black lives" (Wellman, 2022). Discussions about performative allyship ensued: "Ultimately, influencers participated in performative allyship on an already performative platform, within an industry thriving through performativity" (Wellman, 2022, p. 8). While posting a black square to show support of Black lives as part of a "trend" and sharing a photograph from a Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial to which one has travelled cannot be considered the same, we must keep in mind the nature of the platform under study: Sharing political or politically inspired content on Instagram is a more recent phenomenon (especially when comparing it to Twitter) and its manifestation—mostly due to the primacy of the visual—is unique to the platform. We should therefore refrain from generalizing from Instagram posts of memorials to potential posts from the same locations on other platforms.

² See, for example, the report analyzing BlackLivesMatter hashtags on Twitter by Freelon et al. (2016).

A second limitation inherent in the Instagram ethnography is that it only considered posts from public profiles. This means that those individuals were structurally excluded from this study and it follows that conclusions are only possible about the content shared on public profiles. This is not a relevant bias for the study's research questions, as the goal was to study Instagram posts which participate in the narrative of public memory and therefore, by definition, needed to be public. It is, however, a limitation that must be addressed in future research. Studying how individuals share about memorial sites on their private Instagram profiles could bring valuable insights into how visitors privately engage with narratives of public memory without the intention of publicly contributing to it.

Third, interviewing individuals through the direct messaging function on Instagram might have created a bias in the sample in that only fairly proficient Instagram users participated in the study (see also Sect. 5.2.3). However, while this bias must be accounted for, I argue that the advantages of the Instagram interviews were more significant than its pitfalls (for this study). This was because talking to visitors through the platform appeared to be natural and conducive to intimate conversations not only about the posts but also about individuals' experiences and opinions of public memory.

This might be because the platform is so engrained in some users' everyday lives that it is no longer conceived as an online tool to talk about an offline experience. Instead, it is part of people's everyday lives: what they experience offline might end up on their profiles, what they see online might impact what they do offline, and they talk about posts they have seen over a real cup of coffee while that cup of coffee might again end up online in a photograph and then be talked about with other friends through the platform. Instagram therefore bridges the gap between online and offline spaces and can be used as a platform to not only sample artefacts created about memorials but also as the platform through which to interview the creators (Hugentobler, 2022b).

However, the method is biased in giving voice to individuals who are proficient platform users, thereby systematically excluding a large portion of Instagram users. This must be kept in mind when generalizing from the findings in this study. When the study focus is on proficient users, this method is productive but to study less frequent or proficient users, interviews should be led off the platform. In these cases, Instagram can still be used as the site for sampling and recruiting participants. One way this study tried to alleviate this bias was to encourage individuals to respond via voice notes, allowing them to avoid typing lengthy messages on their phones.

Lastly, I want to reiterate the impact of the researcher in a project such as this one, discussing questions of identity, particularly when interacting with visitors

in the physical space. The researcher's visible identity markers must be considered as they might have impacted participants' responses (see also Sect. 5.4). I am a White woman who came from Europe to study the memorialization of a marginalized group in the United States: I have an outsider status. What is more, I am a member of a privileged group. This brings several limitations, especially when speaking to non-White individuals. It is possible that their responses were colored by my ethnicity as interviewees might not have been as critical as they wanted to be. Indeed, I am an outsider on several levels, as I am not a U.S. American citizen and do not live in the United States. While this removes me by yet another layer from the national public memory of the United States, it also gives me critical distance: something, that I often felt, helped participants be open with me, particularly when they were critical of the current memorial landscape and culture of public memory. When they were criticizing the dominant culture, they were not criticizing me.

Furthermore, studying a marginalized group as an outsider is inherently problematic, particularly as groups who consider themselves disempowered tend to "resist the 'intrusions' of researchers from outside their own community" (Bridges, 2003, p. 133). This is an argument I take seriously, particularly as we must avoid "exoticizing" communities of which we are not members: something which can—but does not have to—occur when an outsider studies the particularities of a group.

While this is a limitation of the current project, I argue that it is one that, while needing to be discussed, is not detrimental. And this is, mainly, due to the fact that I do not focus on the African American community as *objects* of my study, analyzing specifically their needs and opinions as African Americans and speaking for them through this text. Indeed, I claim strongly that African American history is (or should be) part of American history and that society—and within it particularly privileged groups with power—has a responsibility to increase the visibility of marginalized individuals and stories. I therefore argue that studying the inclusion, or rather lack thereof, of marginalized individuals into the national public memory, can very well be done by an outsider and / or a member of a privileged group. In fact, some of the burden of creating more inclusive and accurate narratives of public memory should indeed fall on the privileged group who has long been over-represented in those narratives.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.





Conclusion

13

The two Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials in Washington, DC are still important and valuable today, in an age in which we can find information and images about any historical figure or event and about any place of tourism online, any time we want. It is in fact all the more crucial to have physical memorials in physical space because they create a meaningful place for political activism, because they increase the assigned value of the commemorated narratives, and—maybe most importantly—because they allow visitors to make the narratives relevant to their own lives by being present at the site and actively engaging with it. Online additions to these sites should, then, not be created with the intention of purely digitizing the sites because this does not add any supplementary value to the visitor (although it can be useful for individuals who are not able to personally visit). When adding to a physical site online, the intention should be to provide visitors with more options to personally engage with the site, stressing the narrative’s relevance for the present moment—without taking away from the physical, corporeal experience. Finally, when discussing the importance of physical memorials today, we must expand the discussion to include *celebratory* memorials, particularly when looking at memorials to marginalized communities.

13.1 Place Matters

Physical memorial sites continue to matter in the digital age because they create a place which is symbolically charged and can be utilized as a public space for political activism. This function is particularly palpable in this project in the Lincoln Memorial’s significant role in national protests. It has, however, also appeared in the few Instagram posts created at the 2020 March on Washington which stopped at both memorials: the posts in this sample were mostly from

the MLK Memorial. By sharing protest imagery from a celebratory memorial to a member of a marginalized community, movements can profit from these positive and impressive memorial sites: not only might media coverage of the protest increase by providing a visually and symbolically impressive image, which caters to the logic of news production, but also might they invite more types of protests. Protesting in front of a racist statue against racism can help create visually impactful statements. However, so can protesting for respectful treatment in front of a celebratory statue. A celebratory memorial can then be used to support demands for equal treatment of marginalized communities by showing, quite literally: we are important!

Furthermore, by sharing images from the memorials on public Instagram profiles, or other “mass self-communication” channels (see Castells, 2007, p. 248), individuals can use online platforms for political statements that are still attached to symbolic places, increasing their magnitude. This project showed that participants often did this through the use of showing visual allegiance with a cause without making explicitly political statements. Whether or not this type of online activism is productive (or if it should even be called that) should be the subject of future research, also taking account of the potential of online echo chambers and the limited reach of posts intended to be fully “public.” Looking specifically at social media posts from memorials with a political message and studying their reach and effect could help us understand if the ambition to change minds through social media posts about memorials—an intention voiced by some visitors in this project—is successful and, if so, under which circumstances.

Place is not only important to political activism but also to increasing the value of narratives of public memory more broadly, mostly due to the permanent and symbolic nature of place. Both memorials in this study are located in the symbolic space of DC’s National Mall. The Mall’s symbolic power is unbroken, even in this digital age. As Samuel said about the MLK Memorial: “There is a level of gravitas it gets from being in DC” (5 June 2019, MLK Memorial). Furthermore, physical structures show visitors that what they stand for not only mattered in the past, but also is considered to still matter in the future:

When I come see my kids in DC ... , I need a touch of the historical reality of the past of this country and so, as an American citizen, I need to physically come to these places to be reminded. Because, in the media, the fake news crap out there, it’s absolutely mind-blowing. ... But just to read what Abraham Lincoln said, and I mean it’s in the stone there. There is no denying it. So, to come to see these words etched in stone, it’s so much more permanent. (Ella, 7 October 2021, MLK Memorial)

These visitors stress the importance of the structures because they stand in DC and because they are “permanent.” The latter reflects the goal of places of public memory, As Aleida Assmann states:

Not only do [memory places] stabilize and certify memories, by anchoring them locally in the ground, but also do they embody a continuity of the duration which goes beyond the relatively short memory of individuals, eras and cultures, which is concretized in the artefacts. (2009, p. 299, my translation)

Seeing a physical memorial located in a symbolically charged place confirms for the visitors that what the memorial stands for is anchored in the national identity and meant to last. In this sense, the medium is the message (see McLuhan, 1964). It states: “this is important to our nation in the present and the future!” This is why it is important that physical memorials, especially in Washington, DC continue to be built and—crucially—diversified. If only certain parts of history and only certain types of historical figures are commemorated, they are solely attributed importance. This not only denies the impact of marginalized communities on the country’s “successes”, it also fails to provide a narrative for members of those communities to identify with the national identity; to see themselves represented as valued and important members of society.

Lastly, physical memorials are crucial because individuals must *experience* public memory in order for the narratives to become part of their lives: a requirement to make public memory feel personally relevant. This is one of the differences between history and public memory, after all. While history is an attempt to objectively take note of past events, public memory explicitly selects and frames certain events as instructive for the future and as a narrative with which to identify. In order to do so, this study has shown, visitors must be more than simply exposed to a statue: they must be able to experience the narrative. This can occur on site as well as online, but most often the two experiential modes are intertwined. The physical situatedness of the visitor in a (historically or symbolically) significant place is crucial for the embodied and emotional understanding of history, while in order to engage with the site and its narratives, another modality is required. Currently, this is mostly achieved through photography and the subsequent sharing on social media. In the future, a more creative use of the online realm could help engage visitors of memorial sites in other ways. When pursuing this effort, it is important to keep in mind that the online realm should not be used as a pure immaterial storage site to include information about the site in the manner we are used to from analogue additions. Only adding written text, for example, will not enhance the experience because there

is very little that feels experiential about reading an online text while standing in a cultural site. Future research should examine how different online additions to offline sites can best increase the experience of said site and make the public memory communicated relevant to visitors' lives: something the visitors in this study strongly desired.

The large volume of photography at the two sites under study and the sharing of such photographs on Instagram has shown that visitors feel an urge to actively engage with the sites in order to make them and their narratives relevant to their personal lives. Photography and personal sharing online is currently the only manner to do so, but future research should uncover more creative manners in which individuals could be encouraged to engage with the narratives on site, spread them to their private circles, and add to the narratives of public memory in a manner that allows them to be aggregated and findable by others, thereby truly allowing memorials to be places of public memory instead of places of history: by creating the structures for the narratives to remain open and changeable.

While this study has therefore made a claim that physical memorial sites continue to matter (particularly in the context of DC), it has also shown that they must be updated to ensure they are successful communicators of public memory. It appears that memorials to historical events and figures must allow for different types of engagements. Memorials to historical events should activate the past, when they are situated in the historically significant location. This can be done through online additions, allowing visitors to feel rooted in the historically significant location while bringing in the images and sounds of the past. This allows visitors to feel transported back to a historically significant moment while also being strongly rooted in the here and now: the place and time which the historical event has impacted. Memorials to individuals, on the other hand, must honor the person which is, in part, done through an impressive structure, often a statue of the person. In this case, valuable online additions could communicate the impact of the individual on today's society and embed them in a larger context, thereby allowing the celebration of a single, extraordinary, individual, while also acknowledging the larger movements of which they were a part. In both cases, it is crucial to allow visitors of memorials to experience both: the historical events as well as their impacts on today and, ideally, the visitor's personal life.

13.2 Positive Representation Matters

As I have claimed in the introduction, with the help of Ellison's *Invisible Man*, seeing oneself reflected in positive ways in the world presents a particular struggle for members of marginalized communities who are often kept invisible or only associated with the atrocities they and/ or their ancestors had to survive. Farris elaborated on the struggle of these violent representations beautifully when she told me about her first visit to the EJI Museum in Montgomery, Alabama:

I just barely got past the holograms: the holograms are right at the beginning of the museum, and it is some women who are singing. They have been separated from their children and they are singing, you know, some kind of a spiritual. And then, the children: you see them in another, it's like this window, and the children are saying "Mama? Have you seen my momma?" You know, in a very plaintive kind of a cry ... So, the first time when I went to it, which was the opening event, that's as far as I got. I had to leave and I was extremely upset, and I just went outside and sat by myself a little while. And then I went again later and I could get through it. (10 July 2019, Montgomery, Alabama)

Despite these visits making individuals—especially members of the represented community—feel upset, these types of heritage sites nevertheless remain crucial, as the EJI states on its website: "Until we confront our history of racial injustice and its legacy, we cannot overcome the racial bias that exists today" (*On This Day*, n.d.). However, what is also true is that if marginalized communities are only commemorated through dark heritage, exclusively seeing themselves represented in such a manner can have detrimental effects on individuals' sense of identity. Not only does it not allow for a positive self-image, it also does not allow for identification with the larger group: If members of marginalized communities are not framed as valuable parts of society, how can they truly identify with a group which excludes them?

This is by no means a new desire but one that has gained more public attention in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. Philosopher Christopher J. Lebron writes:

The three words themselves, as distinct from the particular strategies and agents of the movement, indicated a sentiment that was as old as the desire to be free from slavery. From the point of view of my own professional training, "black lives matter" represents a civic desire for equality and a human desire for respect. (2017, p. xiii)

The movement, in essence, is about "one urgent claim: that black Americans are humans, too" (Lebron, 2017, p. xiii). This project confirmed that, according to

the visitors of two Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials in DC, this type of positive representation in public space matters. The MLK Memorial in DC is certainly a special case, gaining much of its significance from being located in the nation's most symbolically charged space. As one visitor phrased it:

I said to [my friend] earlier that this is kind of the base of the United States and when internationals and diplomats come, they see that this is American culture. Like when you go to other countries and you see their heritage, their history. (Julio, 12 October 2021, Lincoln Memorial)

The memorials in DC therefore have the special power to speak for the entire nation. This is crucial as the positive representation of members of marginalized groups is not only important for group members but also for the larger nation and, particularly, the dominant group as it shows a more accurate retelling of history by honoring individuals from whose efforts the entire nation has profited.

However, despite the special status of memorials in DC and the need for more diverse representation in the nation's capital, encountering celebratory memorials to members of marginalized groups across the nation would help increase their visibility and, possibly, their impact. As this project has shown, memorials to figures from history must not necessarily stand in a historically significant location. Placing them in a symbolic location such as a town square or in front of a city hall can equally assign the commemorated narratives value. As Luciana told me: "It just occurred to me, why should these memorials be in DC only and not in other cities?" (2 September 2021, Instagram interview). Sage Davinci similarly wrote: "I feel like these types of statues are very honorary and soo realistic to feel close and a part of history of those individuals celebrated, they should continue to be built. I think statues work in regular towns as well" (6 October 2020, Instagram interview). Farris also made a case for having more celebratory memorials to members of marginalized communities outside of the capital in an email:

We should not honor people who participated in and supported slavery, people who showed violence against my ancestors. We should not honor those who showed nothing but hatred to us. There are schools here in my town, as well as many other towns in America, named after avowed racists. Those schools here in Montgomery are now predominately Black. Those Black children should not be put in the position of having to celebrate these people every time they cheer for their schools. All this while we are still waiting to get a full sized statue of Dr. Martin Luther King in Montgomery! (29 August 2019)

Mirroring the need for these celebratory statues in places other than the capitol, Xaii told me: “Where are the statues of the local legends. Every town has them. But you don’t know unless a native to that city or town gives you the history, or you spend hours locked in the library!” (6 October 2020, Instagram interview). He elaborated:

Knowing why the statue exists and why it matters and then having one that not only matters on that grand scheme or grand scale but also matters on a very personal and relatable and local level can, I think, make a lot of difference in how kids see that part of their history, and part of their past.

Like, for example, LeBron James is from Acron Ohio, right? So, to basketball fans everywhere, young kids everywhere, he’s the goat [greatest of all time]. . . . But to a little kid in Acron, Ohio, he is so much more than just LeBron James the Basketball player. He is LeBron James, the guy who grew up in the same town, went to the same school I went to, lived on some of the same streets I lived on and still made it to be this world-renowned legendary person. And I can do it too. It just has that double-entendre, I guess, it has that extra effect. And when you have a monument to show that, . . . now I can tangibly wake up and see that every day. (6 October 2020, Instagram interview)

Building more celebratory memorials to more members of marginalized communities all over the country, in symbolically but not necessarily historically significant places, therefore can help make them more accessible and enable more individuals to have a personal experience with them, which is crucial to feel their impact. Future research should be conducted on the impact of such memorials. As important as knowing that Dr. King is honored in the nation’s capital is, having an up-close and personal experience with a public memorial celebrating a member of one’s own community seems to be, according to the visitors in this project, what makes the memorial meaningful to them (see Fig. 13.1, Fig. 13.2 and Fig. 13.3 for images of visitors at the MLK Memorial).

This project therefore showed that celebratory, stand-alone memorials to a member of a marginalized group can matter greatly. Granted, the present project only focused on visitors who indeed made the trip to see the site which is why future research should also highlight the role these memorials play in the lives of individuals who have never visited. However, for this specific sample of visitors, representation through positive memorials matters, as one conversation with three generations of women from an African American family visiting the MLK Memorial showed:

Fig. 13.1 Standing With King. (Note. Photograph by the author)



Fig. 13.2 A Photograph With King. (Note. Photograph by the author)



[Interviewer] Speaking of the quotes: you could read them online or in books too. Is there something that's different about being here?

[Deborah, to her granddaughter] Just tell her what you told us on the way over here. The history lesson that you were just talking about.

[Frances] Oh how I told my history teacher about it? Well, she doesn't really understand things. She likes to see it, I don't know, in person. So, I think this would help her more. Because I grew up on these words, but she didn't. So, this will help people who didn't grow up on these or living by these words.

Do you think this would help?

Fig. 13.3 “Out of the Mountain of Despair, a Stone of Hope”. (*Note.* Photograph by the author)



[Frances] Some people are visual learners.

[Deborah] And then you also spoke about your class, how you told them how there were memorials to whites, she, ...

[Frances] [shakes head timidly]

[Deborah] That's what you were just saying!

[Frances] Well, my history teacher was wondering why it was so important for black people to have monuments like this. And I was like: “Do you realize that 90% of history books is for white people?” It is important to have this thing for minorities so everybody can see that you are important in this nation. (26 June 2019, MLK Memorial)

Frances summarized the importance of these sites succinctly when saying that celebratory memorials are not only important for the group-members themselves, but they are also important as a broader statement of appreciation. While celebratory memorials of marginalized communities will not defeat racism (just as the NAACP's culture campaign did not), they can help change the larger narrative into one of appreciation. By showing members of the African American community not as victims but as heroes who significantly contributed to the success of the nation, celebratory memorials therefore go one step further than the literal meaning of Black Lives Matter and correspond to the intention behind the movement: it is not just about survival, it is about celebration.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.



Works Cited

- 338 23rd St NW, Washington, D.C., District of Columbia. (2021). [Map]. Google Maps. 2019 Visitor statistics Washington, DC. (n.d.). Destination DC.
- Abidin, C. (2016). "Aren't these just young, rich women doing vain things online?": Influencer selfies as subversive frivolity. *Social Media + Society*, 2(2), 205630511 6641342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641342>
- About. (n.d.). TikTok. Retrieved November 9, 2022, from <https://www.tiktok.com/about?lang=en>
- About the Equal Justice Initiative. (n.d.). Equal Justice Initiative. Retrieved January 21, 2023, from <https://eji.org/about/>
- Aden, R. C. (2017). Public memory. In M. Allen (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of communication research methods* (pp. 1–6). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Adriaansen, R.-J. (2022). Smiling in Auschwitz: Instagram selfies and historical representation at the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial and museum. In M. Haake & P. Juskiewicz (Eds.), *Image, History and Memory*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003264460-11>
- Albers, P. C., & James, W. R. (1988). Travel photography: A methodological approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15(1), 134–158. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(88\)90076-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(88)90076-X)
- Alderman, D. H. (2006). Street names as memorial arenas: The reputational politics of commemorating martin luther king jr. in a georgia county. In R. C. Romano & L. Raiford (Eds.), *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (pp. 67–95). University of Georgia Press.
- Alhabash, S., & Ma, M. (2017). A tale of four platforms: Motivations and uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students? *Social Media + Society*, 3(1), 2056305117691544. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117691544>
- Altmann, M.-N. (2011). *User Generated Content im Social Web: Warum werden Rezipienten zu Partizipanten?* (1., Aufl. Edition). LIT.
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Amirou, R. (1995). *L'imaginaire touristique*. CNRS Editions. <https://journals.openedition.org/lectures/8328>
- Annals of Congress, 6th Cong., 2nd sess.* (1800). Annals of Congress. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage>

- Arita-Kikutani, H., & Sakamoto, K. (2007). Using a mobile phone tour to visit the Ueno zoological gardens and the national science museum in Tokyo, Japan. *Journal of Museum Education*, 32(1), 35–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2007.11510556>
- Armada, B. J. (2010). Memory's Execution: (Dis)placing the dissident body. In G. Dickinson, C. Blair, & B. L. Ott (Eds.), *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (pp. 216–237). The University of Alabama Press.
- Artz, L., & Murphy, B. O. (2000). *Cultural Hegemony in the United States*. SAGE.
- Ashuri, T. (2011). Joint Memory: ICT and the rise of moral mnemonic agents. In M. Neiger, O. Meyers, & Z. Eyal (Eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (pp. 104–113). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Assmann, A. (2009). *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. C.H.Beck.
- Assmann, J. (1995). Erinnern, um dazuzugehören. Kulturelles Gedächtnis, Zugehörigkeitsstruktur und normative Vergangenheit. In K. Platt & M. Dabag (Eds.), *Generation und Gedächtnis: Erinnerungen und kollektive Identitäten* (pp. 51–75). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-95972-0_3
- Assmann, J. (2002). *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (4th ed.). C.H.Beck.
- Assmann, J. (2018). *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (8th ed.). C.H.Beck.
- Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique*, 65, 125–133. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>
- Atkinson, P. (2006). Rescuing autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), 400–404. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241606286980>
- Atkinson, P. (2017). *Thinking ethnographically*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473982741>
- Atkinson, P., & Coffey, A. (2003). Revisiting the relationship between participant observation and interviewing. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside Interviewing: New Lenses, New Concerns* (pp. 415–428). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984492.n20>
- Atkinson, R. (1998). *The life story interview*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986205>
- Autry, R. (2017). *Desegregating the past: The public life of memory in the United States and South Africa*. Columbia University Press.
- Auxier, B., & Erson, M. (2021, April 7). *Social media use in 2021*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/>
- Ayeh, J. K. (2018). Distracted gaze: Problematic use of mobile technologies in vacation contexts. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, 31–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.01.002>
- Baldwin, L. V., & Burrow Jr., R. (Eds.). (2013). *The Domestication of Martin Luther King Jr*. Cascade Books.
- Bampton, R., & Cowton, C. J. (2014). The e-interview. In M. David & P. Millward (Eds.), *Researching Society Online: Online Data Collection Methods* (Vol. 3, pp. 3–14). Sage reference.

- Bareither, C. (2019). Doing emotion through digital media: An ethnographic perspective on media practices and emotional affordances. *Ethnologia Europaea*, 49(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.16995/ee.822>
- Bareither, C. (2020a). Difficult heritage and digital media: “Selfie culture” and emotional practices at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 1–16.
- Bareither, C. (2020b). Gedenkendes Erinnern — Ästhetisches Vergnügen. Digitale Medienpraktiken und touristisches Erleben an Heritage Sites in Berlin. In C. Bareither & I. Tomkowiak (Eds.), *Mediated Pasts — Popular Pleasures. Medien und Praktiken populärkulturellen Erinnerns* (Vol. 5, pp. 75–92). Verlag Königshausen.
- Bareither, C. (2021). Gefühlswissen gestalten. Digitale Kuratierpraktiken am "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas in Berlin. *Hamburger Journal für Kulturanthropologie (HJK)*, 13, Article 13. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-8-17570>
- Bellafante, G. (2019, January 17). Is a planned monument to women’s rights racist? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/nyregion/is-a-planned-monument-to-womens-rights-racist.html>
- Benjamin, W. (1968). The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. In *Illuminations*. Fontana.
- Ben-Rafael, E. (2001). Sociology of Ethnicity. In N.J. Smelser & P.P. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 4838–4842). Pergamon.
- Benton-Short, L. (2006). Politics, public space, and memorials: The brawl on the Mall. *Urban Geography*, 27(4), 297–329. <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.27.4.297>
- Bergman, T., & Duquette Smith, C. (2010). You were on Indian land: Alcatraz Island as recalcitrant memory space. In G. Dickinson, C. Blair, & B. L. Ott (Eds.), *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (pp. 160–190). The University of Alabama Press.
- Berlant, L. (1997). *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. Duke University Press.
- Bethlehem, J. (2010). Selection bias in web surveys. *International Statistical Review*, 78(2), 161–188. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-5823.2010.00112.x>
- Bikales, J. (2020, June 12). *Here are the Confederate statues in the Capitol*. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/502521-here-are-the-confederate-statues-in-the-capitol/>
- Bilgihan, A., Barreda, A., Okumus, F., & Nusair, K. (2016). Consumer perception of knowledge-sharing in travel-related online social Networks. *Tourism Management*, 52, 287–296. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.07.002>
- Biran, A., Poria, Y., & Oren, G. (2011). Sought experiences at (dark) heritage sites. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), 820–841. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.12.001>
- Bird, S. E. (2011). Reclaiming Asaba: Old media, new media, and the construction of memory. In M. Neiger, O. Meyers, & Z. Eyal (Eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (pp. 88–103). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Birkner, T., & Donk, A. (2020). Collective memory and social media: Fostering a new historical consciousness in the digital age? *Memory Studies*, 13(4), 367–383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017750012>
- Bodnar, J. (2010). Bad dreams about the good war: Bataan. In G. Dickinson, C. Blair, & B. L. Ott (Eds.), *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (pp. 139–159). The University of Alabama Press.

- Bogner, A., & Menz, W. (2005). Expertenwissen und Forschungspraxis: Die modernisierungstheoretische und die methodische Debatte um die Experten: Zur Einführung in ein unübersichtliches Problemfeld. In A. Bogner, B. Littig, & W. Menz (Eds.), *Das Experteninterview: Theorie, Methode, Anwendung* (2nd ed., pp. 7–30). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Bond, L. (2016). *Frames of memory after 9/11: Culture, criticism, politics, and law*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137440099>
- Bond, N., & Falk, J. (2013). Tourism and identity-related motivations: Why am I here (and not there)? *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 15(5), 430–442. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.1886>
- Boorstin, D. J. (1967). *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (Vintage Books Edition). Atheneum.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*.
- Bourdieu, P, Boltanski, L., Castel, R., Chamboredon, J.-C, & Schnapper, D. (1990). *Photography: A middle-brow art* (S. Whiteside, Trans). Polity Press. (Original work published 1965)
- Bourdieu, P, Boltanski, L., Castel, R., Chamboredon, J.-C, & Schnapper, D. (2003). *Photography: A middle-brow art* (S. Whiteside, Trans). Polity Press. (Original work published 1965)
- Bowman, M. S. (2010). Tracing Mary Queen of Scots. In G. Dickinson, C. Blair, & B. L. Ott (Eds.), *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (pp. 191–215). The University of Alabama Press.
- Boxill, B. R. (2020). W.E.B. DuBois and William James on Double Consciousness. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 0(0), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12329>
- Branch, T. (1988). *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954–63*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.
- Brauer, J., & Assmann, A. (2011). Bilder, Gefühle, Erwartungen. Über die emotionale Dimension von Gedenkstätten und den Umgang von Jugendlichen mit dem Holocaust. *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft*, 37(1), 72–103.
- Braun, C. (2014). The Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial: Promoting (in)justice? In S. Buckley-Zistel & S. Schaefer (Eds.), *Memorials in Times of Transition* (pp. 173–198). Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2433096>
- Brett, S., Bickford, L., Sevchenko, L., & Rios, M. (2007). *Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action*.
- Bridges, D. (2003). ‘Nothing about us without us’: The ethics of outsider research. In *Fiction Written Under Oath? Essays in Philosophy and Educational Research*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Britannica, T. E. of E. (2021). *March on Washington: United States History* [1963]. In Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/March-on-Washington>
- Brockell, G. (2022, July 13). Capitol Statue Collection Gets First Black American, Replacing Confederate. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/07/13/mary-mcleod-bethune-stature-capitol/>
- Bronner, F., & de Hoog, R. (2011). Vacationers and eWOM: Who posts, and why, where, and what? *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(1), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287509355324>

- Brown, K. (2014). Manicured nails but shackled hands? The representation of women in Northern Ireland's post-conflict memory. In S. Buckley-Zistel & S. Schaefer (Eds.), *Memorials in Times of Transition* (pp. 149–172). Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2433096>
- Bruner, E. M. (2005). *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*. University Of Chicago Press.
- Bruyneel, K. (2014). The King's body: The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the politics of collective memory. *History and Memory*, 26(1), 75–108. <https://doi.org/10.2979/hismemo.26.1.75>
- Buckley-Zistel, S. (2014). Detained in the Memorial Hohenschönhausen: Heterotopias, Narratives, and Transitions from the Stasi Past in Germany. In S. Buckley-Zistel & S. Schaefer (Eds.), *Memorials in Times of Transition* (pp. 97–124). Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2433096>
- Buckley-Zistel, S., & Schaefer, S. (2014). *Introduction: Memorials in Times of Transition*. Intersentia Publishing Ltd. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2433096>
- Budge, K. (2017). Objects in Focus: Museum Visitors and Instagram. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 60(1), 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12183>
- Budge, K. (2020). Visually imagining place: Museum visitors, Instagram, and the city. *Journal of Urban Technology*, 27(2), 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10630732.2020.1731672>
- Burns, A. (2015). Selfies | self(ie)-discipline: Social Regulation as enacted through the discussion of photographic practice. *International Journal of Communication*, 9.
- Butler, D. L., Carter, P. L., & Dwyer, O. J. (2008). Imagining plantations: Slavery, dominant narratives, and the foreign born. *Southeastern Geographer*, 48(3), 288–302.
- Canavan, B. (2017). Narcissism normalisation: Tourism influences and sustainability implications. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(9), 1322–1337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1263309>
- Cannelli, B., & Musso, M. (2022). Social media as part of personal digital archives: Exploring users' practices and service providers' policies regarding the preservation of digital memories. *Archival Science*, 22(2), 259–283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-021-09379-8>
- Carbado, D.W., & Weise, D. (2004). The Civil Rights identity of Bayard Rustin. *Texas Law Review*, 82(5), 1133–1195.
- Carroll, A. E. (2005). *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance*. Indiana University Press.
- Carroll, B., & Landry, K. (2010). Logging on and letting out: Using online social networks to grieve and to mourn. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30(5), 341–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610380006>
- Castells, M. (2007). Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International Journal of Communication*, 1(1).
- Chalfen, R. (1987a). *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Bowling Green State University Press.
- Chalfen, R. (1987b). *Snapshot Versions of Life*. University of Wisconsin Press. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/8704>
- Chang, S. E., & Shen, W.-C. (2018). Exploring smartphone social networking services for mobile tourism. *International Journal of Mobile Communications*, 16(1), 63–81. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMC.2018.088273>
- Carbado, D.V. & Weise, D. (2004). The Civil Rights identity of Bayard Rustin. *Texas Law Review*, 82(5), 1133–1195.

- Charmaz, K., & Mitchell, R. G. (2001). *Handbook of Ethnography* (P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland, Eds.). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608337>
- Christou, P., Farmaki, A., Saveriades, A., & Georgiou, M. (2020). Travel selfies on social networks, narcissism and the “attraction-shading effect.” *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 43, 289–293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.01.014>
- Chronology of Film: History of Film from 1989 to present*. (n.d.). Kodak. Retrieved December 14, 2022, from <https://www.kodak.com/en/motion/page/chronology-of-film/>
- Cicero, M. T. (1977). *De Oratore*. Harvard University Press.
- Clawson, M. (1966). *Economics of Outdoor Recreation*. The Johns Hopkins Press.
- Clement, J. (2020). *Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of July 2020, by gender*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/802776/distribution-of-users-on-instagram-worldwide-gender/>
- Confederate and Columbus statues toppled by US protesters*. (2020, June 11). BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53005243>
- Conroy, J. B. (2020, January 28). *Slavery’s mark on Lincoln’s White House*. The White House Historical Association. <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/slaverys-mark-on-lincolns-white-house>
- Cook, M. & van Riemsdijk, M. (2014). Agents of memorialization: Gunter Demnig’s Stolpersteine and the individual (re-)creation of a Holocaust landscape in Berlin. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 43. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305748813000996>
- Couldry, N. (2004). Theorising media as practice. *Social Semiotics*, 14(2), 115–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1035033042000238295>
- Couldry, N. (2005). On the actual street. In D. Crouch, R. Jackson, & F. Thompson (Eds.), *The Media and the Tourist Imagination* (pp. 60–75). Routledge.
- Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Polity.
- Cox, C., Burgess, S., Sellitto, C., & Buultjens, J. (2009). The role of user-generated content in tourists’ travel planning behavior. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(8), 743–764. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368620903235753>
- Cresswell, T. (2014). *Place: An Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Cros, H. du, & McKercher, B. (2002). *Cultural tourism: The partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management*. The Haworth Hospitality Press.
- Cros, H. du, & McKercher, B. (2020). *Cultural Tourism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Crowley, J. (2007). Constructing famine memory: The role of monuments. In N. Moore & Y. Whelan (Eds.), *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity* (pp. 55–67). Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Culture is Digital*. (2018). Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.
- Current Numbers*. (n.d.). Center for American Women and Politics. Retrieved July 5, 2022, from <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/current-numbers>
- Dahlin, E. (2021). Email Interviews: A Guide to research design and implementation. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 16094069211025452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211025453>

- Daxböck, J., Dulbecco, M. L., Kursite, S., Nilsen, T. K., Rus, A. D., Yu, J., & Egger, R. (2021). The implicit and explicit motivations of tourist behaviour in sharing travel photographs on Instagram: A path and cluster analysis. In W. Wörndl, C. Koo, & J. L. Stienmetz (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2021* (pp. 244–255). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65785-7_22
- De Fina, A. (2006). Group identity, narrative and self-representations. In A. De Fina, D. D’Emilio, J. (2003). *Lost prophet: The life and times of Bayard Rustin*. Simon & Schuster.
- Derrida, J. (1994). *Spectres of Marx*. Routledge.
- Di Giovine, M. A. (2009). *The heritage-scape: Unesco, World Heritage, and tourism*. Lexington Books.
- Dickinson, G., Blair, C., & Ott, B. L. (2010). *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. University of Alabama Press.
- Diehl, K., Zauberman, G., & Barasch, A. (2016). How taking photos increases enjoyment of experiences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 111, 119–140. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000055>
- Dillette, A. K., Benjamin, S., & Carpenter, C. (2019). Tweeting the Black travel experience: Social media counternarrative stories as innovative insight on #TravelingWhileBlack. *Journal of Travel Research*, 58(8), 1357–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287518802087>
- Dinhopl, A., & Gretzel, U. (2016). Selfie-taking as touristic looking. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 57, 126–139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2015.12.015>
- Donavan, B. (2019, April 17). *Indigenous tribes of Washington, D.C.* About ALA. <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/indigenous-tribes-washington-dc>
- Douglas, K. (2020). Youth, trauma and memorialisation: The selfie as witnessing. *Memory Studies*, 13(4), 384–399. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017714838>
- Drotner, K., & Schröder, K. C. (2014). *Museum communication and social media: The connected museum*. Routledge.
- DuBois, W. E. B. (1997a). Of our spiritual strivings. In D. Blight & R. Gooding-Williams (Eds.), *The Souls of Black Folk*. Bedford Books.
- DuBois, W. E. B. (1997b). The conservation of races. In D. Blight & R. Gooding-Williams (Eds.), *The Souls of Black Folk*. Bedford Books.
- Durkheim, E. (1973). The principles of 1789 and sociology. In R. N. Bellah (Ed.), *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*. University Of Chicago Press.
- Dwyer, O. J. (2006). Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement: Contradiction, confirmation, and the cultural landscape. In R. C. Romano & L. Raiford (Eds.), *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (pp. 5–27). University of Georgia Press.
- Dwyer, O. J., & Alderman, D. H. (2008). *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory*. University of Georgia Press.
- Edensor, T. (2000). Staging tourism: Tourists as performers. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(2), 322–344. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00082-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00082-1)
- Eichstedt, J. L., & Small, S. (2002). *Representations of slavery: Race and ideology in southern plantation museums*. Smithsonian Books.
- Eig, Jonathan (2023). *King: The life of Martin Luther King*. Simon & Schuster.
- Eisenegger, M., & Udris, L. (2019). Eine öffentlichkeitssoziologische Theorie des sozialen Wandels in der digitalen Gesellschaft. In M. Eisenegger, L. Udris, & P. Ettinger (Eds.),

- Wandel der Öffentlichkeit und der Gesellschaft: Gedenkschrift für Kurt Imhof* (pp. 3–28). Springer Fachmedien. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27711-6_1
- Ellicott, A. (1792) *Plan of the city of Washington in the territory of Columbia: ceded by the states of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America, and by them established as the seat of their government after the year MDCCC*. [Perth, Scotland?: s.n., ?] [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/98689552/>.
- Ellison, R. (2001). *Invisible Man*. Penguin Books. (Original work published 1952)
- Emancipation Memorial*. (n.d.). National Park Service. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/places/000/emancipation-memorial.htm>
- Eriksson, M. (2016). Managing collective trauma on social media: The role of Twitter after the 2011 Norway attacks. *Media, Culture & Society*, 38(3), 365–380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715608259>
- Etkind, A. (2009). Post-soviet hauntology: Cultural memory of the Soviet terror. *Constellations*, 16(1), 182–200.
- Evans, J., & Jones, P. (2011). The walking interview: Methodology, mobility and place. *Applied Geography*, 31(2), 849–858. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2010.09.005>
- Everett, E. (1879). The circumstances favorable to the progress of literature in America. In *Orations and Speeches on Various Occasions* (Vol. 1, pp. 38–39).
- Eyerman, R. (2016). Social movements and memory. In A. L. Tota & T. Hagen (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (pp. 79–83). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203762844>
- Fairclough, A. (2013). Foreword. In L. V. Baldwin & R. Burrow Jr. (Eds.), *The domestication of Martin Luther King Jr.* (pp. xiii–xviii). Cascade Books.
- Fejge, M. (2002). Introduction: Rethinking Israeli Memory and Identity. *Israel Studies*, 7(2), v–xiv.
- Fischer, M. (2009). *Qualitative Mediennutzungsforschung: Offline- und Online-Methoden im Vergleich* [Master of Arts]. <https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/11226/>
- Florini, S. (2016). Disrupting the past, reframing the present: Websites, alternative histories and petit récits as bBack nationalist politics. In A. Hajek, C. Lohmeier, & C. Pentzold (Eds.), *Memory in a Mediated World: Remembrance and Reconstruction* (pp. 113–128). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137470119>
- Fogle, J. M. (2021a). Washington, D.C.: Monuments and memorials. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Washington-DC>
- Fogle, J. M. (2021b). Washington, D.C. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Washington-DC/History>
- Forrest, E. (2016). Exploring everyday photographic routines through the habit of noticing. In E. Gómez Cruz & A. Lehmuskallio (Eds.), *Digital Photography and Everyday Life: Empirical Studies on Material Visual Practices* (pp. 193–208). Routledge.
- Fortes, M. (2018). *The dynamics of clanship among the Tallensi: Being the first part of an analysis of the social structure of a trans-volta tribe*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429490231>
- Freelon, D., McIlwain, C. D., & Clark, M. (2016). *Beyond the hashtags: #Ferguson, #Black-livesmatter, and the online struggle for offline justice* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2747066). Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2747066>

- Friedman, M. P. (2008). Memory and the contest for hegemony in politics. In H.-J. Grabbe & S. Schindler (Eds.), *The Merits of Memory: Concepts, Contexts, Debates* (Vol. 143, pp. 135–148). Universitätsverlag WINTER.
- Friedman, U. (2011, August 26). *The many problems people have with the MLK Memorial*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/08/many-problems-people-have-mlk-memorial/338640/>
- Friedrichs, J., & Wolf, C. (1990). Die Methode der Passantenbefragung. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 19(1), 46–56. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfsoz-1990-0104>
- Frosh, P. (2015). The gestural image: The selfie, photography theory, and kinesthetic sociability. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 1607–1628.
- Gallagher, V. J., & LaWare, M. R. (2010). Sparring with public memory: The rhetorical embodiment of race, power, and conflict in the monument to Joe Louis. In G. Dickinson, C. Blair, & B. L. Ott (Eds.), *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (pp. 87–112). The University of Alabama Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, Inc.
- Geisler, M. E. (2005). Introduction. In M. E. Geisler (Ed.), *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*. University Press of New England.
- Gerhards, J., & Neidhardt, F. (1991). Strukturen und Funktionen moderner Öffentlichkeit: Fragestellungen und Ansätze. In S. Müller-Doohm & K. Neumann-Braun (Eds.), *Öffentlichkeit, Kultur, Massenkommunikation: Beiträge zur Medien- und Kommunikationssoziologie* (pp. 31–89). Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg.
- Gibbs, M., Meese, J., Arnold, M., Nansen, B., & Carter, M. (2015). #Funeral and Instagram: Death, social media, and platform vernacular. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(3), 255–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.987152>
- Gibson, M., & Carden, C. (2018). *Living and dying in a virtual world: Digital kinships, nostalgia, and mourning in second life*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783319760988>
- Gillet, S., Schmitz, P., & Mitas, O. (2013). *The snap-happy tourist: The effects of photographing behavior on tourists' happiness*. 40(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1096348013491606>
- Given, L. (2008). Grand Narrative. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 373–373). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>
- Glantz, M. H., & Figueroa, R. M. (1997). Does the Aral sea merit heritage status? *Global Environmental Change*, 7(4), 357–380. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-3780\(97\)00017-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-3780(97)00017-4)
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1999). *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203793206>
- Glassberg, D. (2008). What is “American” about American lieux de mémoire? In H.-J. Grabbe & S. Schindler (Eds.), *The Merits of Memory: Concepts, Contexts, Debates* (Vol. 143, pp. 63–77). Universitätsverlag WINTER.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor Books.
- Goffman, E. (1989). On Fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18(2), 123–132.
- Gold, R. L. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces*, 36(3), 217–223.
- Google Maps. (2023). *1964 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20003, United States* [Map].
- Gretzel, U. (2007). *Online travel review study: role & impact of online travel reviews*. TripAdvisor.

- Gretzel, U. (2010). Travel in the network: Redirected gazes, ubiquitous connections and new frontiers. *Faculty of Commerce - Papers (Archive)*, 41–58.
- Gretzel, U., & Yoo, K. H. (2008). Use and impact of online travel reviews. In *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008* (pp. 35–46). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-211-77280-5_4
- Grider, N. (2007). 'Faces of the fallen' and the dematerialization of US war memorials. *Visual Communication*, 6(3), 265–279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357207081000>
- Griffin, J. (2016). American relationships with places. In K. Conwill (Ed.), *Dream a World Anew: The African American Experience and the Shaping of America*. Smithsonian Books.
- Groves, D. L., & Timothy, D. J. (2001). Photographic techniques and the measurement of impact and importance attributes on trip design: A case study. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, 24(1), 311–317. <https://doi.org/10.7202/000172ar>
- Grovier, K. (2020, June 12). *Black Lives Matter protests: Why are statues so powerful?* BBC: Culture. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200612-black-lives-matter-protests-why-are-statues-so-powerful>
- Gurler, E. E., & Ozer, B. (2013). The effects of public memorials on social memory and urban identity. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 82, 858–863. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.361>
- Habermas, J. (2018). *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Suhrkamp.
- Hajli, N., Wang, Y., & Tajvidi, M. (2018). Travel envy on social networking sites. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 73, 184–189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2018.05.006>
- Halbwachs, M. (1925). *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire*. PUF.
- Halbwachs, M. (1980). *The collective memory* (M. Douglas, Ed.). Harper and Row.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Ed. & Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/Decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Love, & Willis Paul (Eds.), *Culture, Media, Language* (pp. 128–138). Hutchinson.
- Han, E. L. (2016). *Micro-blogging memories: Weibo and collective remembering in contemporary China*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137598806>
- Han, E. L. (2020). Journalism and mnemonic practices in Chinese social media: Remembering catastrophic events on Weibo. *Memory Studies*, 13(2), 162–175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017714833>
- Harth, D. (2008). The invention of cultural memory. In A. Erll (Ed.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook*. (pp. 85–96) (Vol. 8). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.2.85>
- Harvey, D. C. (2008). The history of heritage. In B. Graham & P. Howard (Eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (pp. 19–36). Ashgate.
- Haskins, E. (2007). Between archive and participation: Public memory in a digital age. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 37(4), 401–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940601086794>
- Hertel, G., Schroer, J., Batinic, B., & Naumann, S. (2008). Do shy people prefer to send e-mail?: Personality effects on communication media preferences in threatening and non-threatening situations. *Social Psychology*, 39(4), 231–243. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335.39.4.231>

- Hillman, T., Weilenmann, A., Jungselius, B., & Lindell, T. L. (2016). Traces of engagement: Narrative-Making practices with smartphones on a museum field trip. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 41(2), 351–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2015.1064443>
- Hillman, W. (2007). Travel authenticated?: Postcards, tourist brochures, and travel photography. *Tourism Analysis*, 12(3), 135–148. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354207781626811>
- Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual Ethnography*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020277>
- Hirschman, C. (1983). America's melting pot reconsidered. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, 397–423.
- Hirst, W. (2020). Remembering COVID-19. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 87(2), 251–252. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2020.0028>
- History.com Editors. (2020, October 30). *D.C. residents cast first presidential votes*. HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/d-c-residents-cast-first-presidential-votes>
- Hjorth, L., & Pink, S. (2014). New visualities and the digital wayfarer: Reconceptualizing camera phone photography and locative media. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 2(1), 40–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157913505257>
- Hodalska, M. (2017). Selfies at horror sites: Dark tourism, ghoulish souvenirs and digital narcissism. *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, 60(2 (230)). <https://doi.org/10.4467/22996362PZ.17.026.7306>
- Holland, J. (2007). *Black men built the Capitol: Discovering African-American history in and around Washington, D.C.* Rowman & Littlefield.
- Houdek, M., & Phillips, K. R. (2017). Public Memory. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.181>
- Hovland, B. (2020). *Members of AIM Twin Cities and other Native community residents topple the statue of Christopher Columbus located on the Minnesota State Capitol grounds in St. Paul on Wednesday* [Photograph].
- Hu, Y., Manikonda, L., & Kambhampati, S. (2014, May 16). What we Instagram: A first analysis of Instagram photo content and user types. *Eighth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*. <https://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM14/paper/view/8118>
- Huang, W.-J., & Lee, B. C. (2009). Capital city tourism: Online destination image of Washington, DC. In W. Höpken, U. Gretzel, & R. Law (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2009* (pp. 355–367). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-211-93971-0_30
- Hugentobler, L. (2022a). No incentives to interact: A case study of mobile phone interactions with Martin Luther King Jr. Memorials in Washington, DC. *Information & Culture*, 57(1), 6–26. <https://doi.org/10.7660/IC57102>
- Hugentobler, L. (2022b). The Instagram interview: Talking to people about travel experiences across online and offline spaces. *Media and Communication*, 10(3), 247–260. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i3.5340>
- Hugentobler, L. & Tanja Rüedy (2023). Capturing a crisis: Exploring individuals' Instagram use during the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Studies in Communication and Media*, 2(1), 7–47. <https://doi.org/10.5771/2192-4007-2023-1-7>

- Hughes, K., & Moscardo, G. (2017). Connecting with new audiences: Exploring the impact of mobile communication devices on the experiences of young adults in museums. *Visitor Studies*, 20(1), 33–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10645578.2017.1297128>
- Humphreys, L. (2018). *The qualified self: Social media and the accounting of everyday life*. MIT Press.
- Huyssen, A. (2003). *Present pasts: Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. Stanford University Press.
- Hynnä-Granberg, K. (2022). “Why can’t I take a full-shot of myself? Of course I can!” Studying selfies as socio-technological affective practices. *Feminist Media Studies*, 22(6), 1363–1378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1886139>
- ImeIme, U. (2022). High hopes. *Vogue*, 304–307/352.
- Imhof, K. (1996). Strukturwandel der Politik durch den Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. In K. Imhof & G. Romano (Eds.), *Die Diskontinuität der Moderne: Zur Theorie des sozialen Wandels* (pp. 200–292). Campus.
- Irwin-Zarecka, I. (1994). *Frames of remembrance: The dynamics of collective memory*. Transcript.
- Isaac, R. K., Nawijn, J., van Liempt, A., & Gridnevskiy, K. (2019). Understanding Dutch visitors’ motivations to concentration camp memorials. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(7), 747–762. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2017.1310190>
- Jamal, T., & Lelo, L. (2011). Exploring the conceptual and analytical framing of dark tourism: From darkness to intentionality. In R. Sharpley & P. R. Stone (Eds.), *Tourist Experience: Contemporary Perspectives* (pp. 29–42). Routledge.
- Jensen, D. (2008). Grand Narrative. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (p. 373). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>
- Johnson, C. (2007, January 14). *Too many memorials in D.C.?* CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/too-many-memorials-in-dc/>
- Jones, P., Bunce, G., Evans, J., Gibbs, H., & Hein, J. R. (2008). Exploring space and place with walking interviews. *Journal of Research Practice*, 4(2). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ827010>
- Kammen, M. (1993). *Mystic chords of memory: The transformation of tradition in American culture* (Reprint Edition). Vintage.
- Kansteiner, W. (2002). Finding meaning in memory: A methodological critique of collective memory studies. *History and Theory*, 41(2), 179–197. JSTOR.
- Katriel, T., & Shavit, N. (2011). Between moral activism and archival memory: The testimonial project of “breaking the silence.” In M. Neiger, O. Meyers, & Z. Eyal (Eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (pp. 77–103). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Katz, E. (1959). Mass communications research and the study of popular culture: An editorial note on a possible future for this journal. *Studies in Public Communication*, 2, 1–6.
- Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851>

- King, E., Smith, M. P., Wilson, P. F., Stott, J., & Williams, M. A. (2022). Creating meaningful museums: A model for museum exhibition user experience. *Visitor Studies*, 0(0), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10645578.2022.2129944>
- King, M.L. (1998). *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (C. Carson, Ed.). Grand Central Publishing.
- King, N. (n.d.). Building the memorial. *National Park Service*. Retrieved July 31, 2019, from <https://www.nps.gov/mlkm/learn/building-the-memorial.htm>
- Kinney, P. (2017). Walking interviews. *Social Research Update*, 67, 1–4.
- Kirk, J.A. (2004). Martin Luther King, Jr. *Journal of American Studies*, 38 (2), 329–347. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875804008461>
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1998). *Destination culture*. University of California Press.
- Klenner, J. (2008). Spontaneous spaces of memory: Revisiting our Milieux de Mémoire. In H.-J. Grabbe & S. Schindler (Eds.), *The Merits of Memory: Concepts, Contexts, Debates* (pp. 17–34). Universitätsverlag WINTER.
- Knudsen, B. T., & Stage, C. (2013). Online war memorials: YouTube as a democratic space of commemoration exemplified through video tributes to fallen Danish soldiers. *Memory Studies*, 6(4), 418–436. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698012458309>
- Kosciejew, M. (2022). Remembering COVID-19; or, a duty to document the Coronavirus pandemic. *IFLA Journal*, 48(1), 20–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03400352211023786>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. SAGE.
- Kramer, R., Modsching, M., Hagen, K.t., & Gretzel, U. (2007). Behavioural impacts of mobile tour guides. In M. Sigala, L. Mich, & J. Murphy (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2007* (pp. 109–118). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-211-69566-1_11
- Kuhn, A. (2010). Memory texts and memory work: Performances of memory in and with visual media. *Memory Studies*, 3(4), 298–313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698010370034>
- Kusenbach, M. (2003). Street phenomenology: The go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography*, 4(3), 455–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146613810343007>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Larsen, J. (2005). Families seen sightseeing: Performativity of tourist photography. *Space and Culture*, 8(4), 416–434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331205279354>
- Lasswell, H. D. (1948). The structure and function of communication in society. In B. Lyman (Ed.), *The Communication of Ideas* (pp. 37–52). Harper and Row.
- Layeb, S., & Salem, M. B. H. (2014). Commented walk, segmented walk: An exploratory study on the relationship between urban space and sound stress. *Invisible Places*. 849–858. <http://invisibleplaces.org/2014/pdf/ip2014-layeb.pdf>
- Leaver, T., Highfield, T., & Abidin, C. (2020). *Instagram*. Polity Press.
- Lebron, C. J. (2017). *The making of Black Lives Matter: A brief history of an idea*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, C., Richardson, S., Goh, E., & Presbury, R. (2022). Exploring the selfie and distracted gaze of the tourist experience through the lens of online photo-sharing: Where to from here? *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667221113079>

- Lee, E., Lee, J.-A., Moon, J. H., & Sung, Y. (2015). Pictures speak louder than words: Motivations for using Instagram. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18(9), 552–556. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2015.0157>
- Lefrak, M. (2020, January 15). *Most D.C. statues depict white men, but a bill to diversify them is making headway*. DCist. <https://dcist.com/story/20/01/15/most-d-c-statues-depict-white-men-but-a-bill-to-diversify-them-is-making-headway/>
- Leibovitz, A. (2022a). *A New Day* [Photograph]. <https://www.vogue.com/article/ketanji-brown-jackson-supreme-court>
- Leibovitz, A. (2022b). *Standing tall* [Photograph]. <https://www.vogue.com/article/ketanji-brown-jackson-supreme-court>
- Levine, D. (1999). *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement*. Rutgers University Press.
- Lewis, B. (1975). *History: Remembered, recovered, invented*. Simon and Schuster.
- Lewis, T. (2015). *Washington: A history of our national city*. Basic Books.
- Lincoln, A. (1953–1955). *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. (Roy Basler, Ed.). Rutgers University Press.
- Lincoln, M., & Lincoln, B. (2015). Toward a critical hauntology: Bare afterlife and the ghosts of Ba Chúc. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57(1), 191–220. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417514000644>
- Lincoln Memorial: Memorial Features*. (2021, May 18). National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/linc/learn/historyculture/memorial-features.htm>
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2019). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (Fourth). Sage.
- Llobera, J. R. (1995). Halbwachs, Nora and “History” versus “Collective Memory”: A research note. *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes*, 1, 35–44.
- Lo, I. S., & McKercher, B. (2015). Ideal image in process: Online tourist photography and impression management. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 52, 104–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2015.02.019>
- Lo, I. S., McKercher, B., Lo, A., Cheung, C., & Law, R. (2011). Tourism and online photography. *Tourism Management*, 32(4), 725–731. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.06.001>
- Loewen, J. W. (2018). *Lies my history teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. The New Press.
- Love, B. L., & Tosolt, B. (2010). Reality or rhetoric? Barack Obama and post-racial America. *Race, Gender & Class*, 17(3/4), 19–37.
- Lovelace, V. L. (2021). The rememory and re-membering of Nat Turner: Black Feminist hauntology in the geography of Southampton County, VA. *Southeastern Geographer*, 61(2), 130–145. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sgo.2021.0010>
- Low, S. M. (2004). The memorialization of September 11: Dominant and local discourses on the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site. *American Ethnologist*, 31(3), 326–339.
- Lowenthal, D. (2015). *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139024884>
- Macdonald, S. (2006). Expanding museum studies. In *A Companion to Museum Studies* (pp. 1–12). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996836.ch1>
- Macdonald, S. (2008). *Difficult heritage: Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and beyond*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203888667>
- Macdonald, S. (2013). *Memorylands: Heritage and identity in Europe today*. Routledge.

- MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1997). Pictorial element of destination in image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(3), 537–565. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(97\)00011-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00011-X)
- Maddrell, A. (2012). Online memorials: The virtual as the new vernacular. *Bereavement Care*, 31(2), 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02682621.2012.710491>
- Madianou, M., & Miller, D. (2012). Polymedia: Towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16(2), 169–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877912452486>
- Major King Events Chronology: 1929–1968*. (2014, July 7). The Martin Luther King, Jr., research and education institute. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-resources/major-king-events-chronology-1929-1968>
- Malanski, D., Kohe, G., & Kondlatsch, R. (2022). Remembering Brazil @Mexico1970: social media & collective memory making in times of COVID-19. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 39(6), 609–630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095233672022.2088735>.
- Mandel, S. (2008, February 3). The Lincoln conspirator. *The Washington Post*. [http:// https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/29/AR2008012904014.html](http://https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/29/AR2008012904014.html)
- Manzanas, A. M., & Sanchez, J. B. (2011). *Cities, borders and spaces in intercultural American literature and film*. Routledge.
- March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*. (n.d.). National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/march-on-washington.htm>
- March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963: Lincoln Memorial Program*. (1963). National Museum of American History: Behring Center. https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1000943#:~:text=August%2028%2C%201963%2C%20was%20a,to%20petition%20for%20racial%20equality.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial: Environmental assessment*. (2009). National Park Service.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial: Quotations*. (n.d.). National Parks Service. Retrieved May 12, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/mlkm/learn/quotations.html>
- Mayring, P. (2010). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken* (12th ed.). Beltz.
- McDowell, S. (2008). Heritage, memory and identity. In B. Graham & P. Howard (Eds.), *The Ashgate research companion to heritage and identity* (pp. 37–53). Ashgate.
- McGreevy, N. (2020, August 26). *Why the first monument of real women in central park matters — And why it's controversial*. Smithsonian Magazine. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/monument-controversy-women-pioneer-central-park-180975662/>
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. Sphere Books Limited.
- Minazzi, R. & Mauri A. (2015). Mobile technologies effects on travel behaviours and experiences: A preliminary analysis. In: *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2015: Proceedings of the International Conference in Lugano, Switzerland* (pp.507–21).
- Mitchell, D. (1995). The end of public space? People's park, definitions of the public, and democracy. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85(1), 108–133.
- Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). (2017). In *King encyclopedia*. Stanford University. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/montgomery-improvement-association-mia>
- Moore, N., & Whelan, Y. (Eds.). (2007). *Heritage, memory and the politics of identity*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315586694>

- Mora, R. A. (2014). Counter-Narrative. *Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue* 36. <https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.org/2014/10/13/key-concept-36-counter-narrative-by-raul-a-mora/>
- Mowatt, R. A., & Chancellor, C. H. (2011). Visiting death and life: Dark tourism and slave castles. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4), 1410–1434. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.03.012>
- Munar, A. M., & Jacobsen, J. Kr. S. (2014). Motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media. *Tourism Management*, 43, 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.01.012>
- Munir, K. A., & Phillips, N. (2005). The birth of the “Kodak moment”: Institutional entrepreneurship and the adoption of new technologies. *Organization Studies*, 26(11), 1665–1687. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840605056395>
- Musil, R. (2006). *Posthumous papers of a living author* (P. Wortsman, Trans.). Archipelago Books.
- Muslimah, N. F., & Keumala, S. R. (2018). Planning in the digital era: Films and social media as information sources for tourism planning. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 158(1), 012048. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/158/1/012048>
- National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC). (n.d.). National Park Service: (PEPC) Planning, Environment & Public Comment. Retrieved August 29, 2022, from <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=44217>
- National Capital Planning Commission. (n.d.). *24 Steps to Establishing a Memorial*.
- National Capital Planning Commission, National Park Service, & U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. (2012). *Memorial trends & practice in Washington, DC*. National Capital Planning Commission.
- National monument audit*. (2021). Monument Lab.
- National Park Service. (n.d.-a). *100 Years of the Lincoln Memorial*. Lincoln Memorial. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/linc/linc100.htm>
- National Park Service. (n.d.-b). *Features of the Lincoln Memorial*. Lincoln Memorial. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/linc/learn/historyculture/memorial-features.htm>
- National Park Service. (n.d.-c). *Foundation statement for the National Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue national historic park*.
- National Park Service. (n.d.-d). *Lincoln Memorial important individuals*. Lincoln Memorial. Retrieved August 15, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/linc/learn/historyculture/lincoln-memorial-important-individuals.htm>
- National Park Service. (n.d.-e). *Lincoln Memorial inscriptions*. Lincoln Memorial. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/linc/learn/historyculture/inscriptions.htm>
- National Park Service. (n.d.-f). *Operating hours & seasons*. National Mall and Memorial Parks. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/nama/planyourvisit/hours.htm>
- National Park Service. (2007, February 1). *National Park Service press release (U.S. National Park Service)*. <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/release.htm?id=720>
- National Park Service. (2013). *High resolution map of the Park System of the Nation’s Capital and Environs under Jurisdiction of National Capital Region—National Park Service United States Department of Interior (NPS 869/80,251-1), November 2008* [Map].

- National Park Service (2018, March 13). *Two Memorials and the cherry blossoms*. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/two-memorials-and-the-cherry-blossoms.htm>
- National Park Service. (2020, May 8). *Frequently Asked Questions*. National Mall and Memorial Parks. <https://www.nps.gov/nama/faqs.htm>
- National Park Service & U.S. Department of the Interior. (n.d.). *Office of communications fact sheet*.
- National Park Service. (2005). *Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Washington, DC: Environmental assessment: Chapter 1, purpose and need*. National Park Service.
- National Park Service & Department of the Interior. (n.d.). *Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. Native Peoples of Washington, DC*. (n.d.). National Park Service. Retrieved August 29, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/articles/native-peoples-of-washington-dc.htm>
- Neiger, M., Meyers, O., & Eyal, Z. (Eds.). (2011). *On media memory: Collective memory in a new media age*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230307070>
- Neuberger, C. (2017). Die Rückkehr der Masse: Kollektivphänomene im Internet aus Sicht der Massen- und Komplexitätstheorie. *M&K Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 65(3), 500–572. <https://doi.org/10.5771/1615-634X-2017-3-550>
- Nikjoo, A., & Bakhshi, H. (2019). The presence of tourists and residents in shared travel photos. *Tourism Management*, 70, 89–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.08.005>
- Nofal, E., Reffat, R. M., Boschloos, V., Hameeuw, H., & Moere, A. V. (2018). The Role of tangible interaction to communicate tacit knowledge of built heritage. *Heritage*, 1(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage1020028>
- Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, 26, 7–24.
- Nora, P. (1990). *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis* (U. Raulff, Ed.; W. Kaiser, Trans.; Vol. 16). Wagenbach.
- Norman, D. (2013). *The design of everyday things*. Basic Books.
- Norman, D. (1999). Affordance, conventions, and design. *Interactions*, 6(3), 38–43. <https://doi.org/10.1145/301153.301168>
- Norman, D. (2017). *The psychology of everyday things*. Basic Books.
- Nuernbergk, C. (2020). Öffentlichkeitskonzepte – Öffentlichkeitstheorie. In J. Krone & T. Pellegrini (Eds.), *Handbuch Medienökonomie* (pp. 1061–1084). Springer Fachmedien. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-09560-4_55
- Obrist, H. U. (2022, September 24). Kann Kunst Wunden heilen? *Das Magazin*, 38.
- O'Donnell, N. H. (2018). Storied lives on Instagram: Factors associated with the need for personal-visual identity. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 25(3), 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2018.1490186>
- O'Keefe, T. (2007). Landscape and memory: Historiography, theory, methodology. In N. Moore & Y. Whelan (Eds.), *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity* (pp. 3–18). Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Oliveira, T., Araujo, B., & Tam, C. (2020). Why do people share their travel experiences on social media? *Tourism Management*, 78, 104041. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104041>
- On this day*. (n.d.). EJI: A history of racial injustice. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/dec/16>
- Öner, S., Watson, L. A., Adigüzel, Z., Ergen, İ., Bilgin, E., Curci, A., Cole, S., de la Mata, M. L., Janssen, S. M. J., Lanciano, T., Markostamou, I., Nourkova, V., Santamaría, A.,

- Taylor, A., Barzykowski, K., Bascón, M., Bermeitinger, C., Cubero-Pérez, R., Dessenberger, S., ... Uner, O. (2022). Collective remembering and future forecasting during the COVID-19 pandemic: How the impact of COVID-19 affected the themes and phenomenology of global and national memories across 15 countries. *Memory & Cognition*. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-022-01329-8>
- O'Reilly, K. (2005). *Ethnographic methods*. Routledge.
- Ortiz, A., & Diaz, J. (2020, June 3). *George Floyd protests reignite debate over confederate statues*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/us/confederate-statues-george-floyd.html>
- Osborne, B. S. (2001). Landscapes, memory, monuments, and commemoration: Putting identity in its place. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 33(3), 39–77.
- Oxford Reference. (n.d.) Dominant culture. In *Oxford Reference*. Retrieved January 31st 2025 from <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095725838>
- Papailias, P. (2016). Witnessing in the age of the database: Viral memorials, affective publics, and the assemblage of mourning. *Memory Studies*, 9(4), 437–454. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698015622058>
- Parks, M. (2017, August 20). Confederate Statues were built to further a “white supremacist future.” *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/20/544266880/confederate-statues-were-built-to-further-a-white-supremacist-future>
- Parr, M., & Obe, S. W. (1995). *Oxford* (Illustrated edition). Oxford University Press.
- Paul, H. (2014). *The myths that made America: An introduction to American studies*. Transcript.
- Pearce, J., & Moscardo, G. (2015). *Social representations of tourist selves: New challenges for sustainable tourism* (R. Hay, Ed.; pp. 59–73). James Cook University. <https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/40604/>
- Pierroux, P., Krange, I., & Sem, I. (2011). Bridging contexts and interpretations: Mobile blogging on art museum field trips. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 27(50). <https://doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v27i50.2997>
- Pink, S. (2001). More visualising, more methodologies: On video, reflexivity and qualitative research. *The Sociological Review*, 49(4), 586–599. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00349>
- Polletta, F. (2003). Legacies and liabilities of an insurgent past: Remembering Martin Luther King Jr. On the House and Senate floor. In J. K. Olick (Ed.), *States of memory: continuities, conflicts, and transformations in national retrospection* (pp. 193–226). Duke University Press.
- Presidential historians survey 2021*. (2021). C-SPAN. <https://www.c-span.org/presidentsurvey2021/?page=overall>
- Prus, R. C. (1996). *Symbolic interaction and ethnographic research: Intersubjectivity and the study of human lived experience*. State University of New York Press.
- Merriam-Webster. Public. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster*. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/public>
- Quick facts: District of Columbia*. (2021). United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/DC>

- Quinn, K. (2016). Why we share: A Uses and Gratifications approach to privacy regulation in social media use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 60(1), 61–86. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2015.1127245>
- Reeves, R. (1982). *American journey: Traveling with Tocqueville in search of democracy in America*. Simon & Schuster.
- Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness*. Pion.
- Rhodes, J. (2007). *Framing the Black Panthers: The spectacular rise of a Black power icon*. University of Illinois Press.
- Riegl, A. (1903). *Der moderne Denkmalkultus: Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung*. W. Braumüller.
- Rigney, A. (2016). *Cultural memory studies: Mediation, narrative, and the aesthetic* (A. L. Tota & T. Hagen, Eds.; pp. 65–76). Routledge.
- Robertson, I. J. M. (2008). Heritage from below: Class, social protest and resistance. In B. Graham & P. Howard (Eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (pp. 143–158). Ashgate.
- Robinson, M., & Picard, D. (Eds.). (2009). *The framed world: Tourism, tourists and photography*. Ashgate.
- Romano, R. C., & Raiford, L. (Eds.). (2006). *The Civil Rights movement in American memory*. The University of Georgia Press.
- Rosenzweig, R., & Thelen, D. P. (1998). *The presence of the past: Popular uses of history in American life*. Columbia University Press.
- Russell, N. (2006). Collective memory before and after Halbwachs. *The French Review*, 79(4), 792–804.
- Russo, A., Watkins, J., Kelly, L., & Chan, S. (2008). Participatory communication with social media. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 51(1), 21–31.
- Rutten, E., & Zvereva, V. (2013). Introduction: old conflicts, new media: Post-Socialist digital memories. In E. Rutten, J. Fedor, & V. Zvereva (Eds.), *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States* (pp. 1–18). Routledge.
- Ryan, C. (2011). Ways of conceptualising the tourist experience: A review of literature. In R. Sharpley & P. R. Stone (Eds.), *Tourist Experience: Contemporary Perspectives* (pp. 9–20). Routledge.
- Sabre, C. (2016). Holidaying in Japan, falling in love with Japan: From pop culture to tourism imaginary. In M. Gravari-Barbas & N. Graburn (Eds.), *Tourism Imaginaries at the Disciplinary Crossroads: Place, Practice, Media* (pp. 163–180). Routledge.
- Sánchez-Carretero, C., & Ortiz, C. (2011). Grassroots memorials as sites of heritage creation. In H. Anheier & Y. R. Isar (Eds.), *Heritage, Memory & Identity*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446250839>
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s1135-017-0574-8>
- Savage, K. (2007). *History, memory, and monuments: An overview of the scholarly literature on commemoration*. National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/resedu/savage.htm>
- Savage, K. (2009). *Monument wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the transformation of the memorial landscape*. University of California Press.

- Scarles, C. (2009). Becoming tourist: Renegotiating the visual in the tourist experience. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27(3), 465–488. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d1707>
- Scarles, C. (2014). Tourism and the visual. In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Tourism* (pp. 325–335). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118474648.ch26>
- Schaeffer, K. (2021, January 28). *Racial, ethnic diversity increases yet again with the 117th Congress*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/28/racial-ethnic-diversity-increases-yet-again-with-the-117th-congress/>
- Schiffirin, & M. Bamberg (Eds.), *Discourse and Identity* (Vol. 23, pp. 351–375). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511584459>
- Schindler, S., & Grabbe, H.-J. (2008). Introduction. In H.-J. Grabbe & S. Schindler (Eds.), *The Merits of Memory: Concepts, Contexts, Debates*. Universitätsverlag WINTER.
- Schudson, M. (2014). Journalism as a vehicle of non-commemorative cultural memory. In B. Zelizer & K. Tenenboim-Weinblatt (Eds.), *Journalism and Memory* (pp. 85–96). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137263940_6
- Schwaiger, L. (2022). *Gegen die Öffentlichkeit: Alternative Nachrichtenmedien im deutschsprachigen Raum* (1st ed., Vol. 46). transcript Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839461211>
- Schwartz, B. (2000). *Abraham Lincoln and the forge of national memory*. The University of Chicago Press. <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/A/bo3640324.html>
- Schwartz, B. (2016). Rethinking the concept of collective memory. In A. L. Tota & T. Hagen (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (pp. 9–21). Routledge.
- Schwarz-Bierschenk, J. (2008). Tri-Cultural myths, bi-cultural memories? Reformulating a hispanic identity in the wake of New Mexico's Cuartocentenario. In H.-J. Grabbe & S. Schindler (Eds.), *The Merits of Memory: Concepts, Contexts, Debates* (Vol. 143, pp. 35–61). Universitätsverlag WINTER.
- Schwengel, F. (1963). *A Report to Mr. Lincoln*. Congressional Record, June 8, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 10172–73.
- Senft, T. M., & Baym, N. K. (2015). *What does the selfie say? Investigating a global phenomenon: Introduction*. International Journal of Communication, 9, 1588–1606.
- Seta, G. de. (2020). Three lies of digital ethnography. *Journal of Digital Social Research*, 2(1), 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.33621/jdsr.v2i1.24>
- Sheldon, P., & Bryant, K. (2016). Instagram: Motives for its use and relationship to narcissism and contextual age. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 58, 89–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.059>
- Shepherd, N. (2013). Ruin memory: A hauntology of Cape Town. In A. González-Ruibal (Ed.), *Memorials in Times of Transition* (pp. 249–259). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203068632-28>
- Shepherd, R. J. (2015). Why Heidegger did not travel: Existential angst, authenticity, and tourist experiences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 52, 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2015.02.018>
- Shipler, D. K. (1998). *A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America* (VINTAGE BOOKS edition). Vintage.
- Siegel, L. A., & Wang, D. (2019). Keeping up with the Joneses: Emergence of travel as a form of social comparison among millennials. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 36(2), 159–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.14995797>

- Sigala, M. (2016). Social media and the co-creation of tourism experiences. In M. Sotiriadis & D. Gursoy (Eds.), *The Handbook of Managing and Marketing Tourism Experiences* (pp. 85–111). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78635-290-320161033>
- Sit-ins. (2017, June 12). The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/sit-ins>
- Smith, M. (2021, July 27). *The most and least popular US presidents, according to Americans* | YouGov. YouGov. <https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2021/07/27/most-and-least-popular-us-presidents-according-ame>
- Smith, S. P. (2021). Landscapes for “likes”: Capitalizing on travel with Instagram. *Social Semiotics*, 31(4), 604–624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2019.1664579>
- Snape, S. (2007). Walking in Memphis: Tourism in Ancient Egypt. In *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sobel, R. (2009). Connecting cultural identity and place through tourist photography: American Jewish youth on a first trip to Israel. In M. Robinson & D. Picard (Eds.), *The Framed World: Tourism, Tourists and Photography* (pp. 229–238). Ashgate.
- Sonnevend, J. (2016). *Stories Without Borders: The Berlin Wall and the Making of a Global Iconic Event*. Oxford University Press.
- Sontag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. Delta Books.
- Stevens, Q. (2015). Masterplanning public memorials: An historical comparison of Washington, Ottawa and Canberra. *Planning Perspectives*, 30(1), 39–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2013.874956>
- Stout, J. (2020, July 31). *The History of the Raise Fist, a Global Symbol of Fighting Oppression*. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/history-of-raised-fist-global-symbol-fighting-oppression>
- Strakosch, E. (2014). Stories of Beginnings and Endings: Settler Colonial Memorials in Australia. In S. Buckley-Zistel & S. Schaefer (Eds.), *Memorials in Times of Transition* (pp. 125–148). Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2433096>
- Straus, J. R. (2021). *Commemorative works in the district of columbia: background and practice* (No. R41658). Congressional Research Service.
- Sturken, M. (1997). *Tangled memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the politics of remembering*. University of California Press.
- Sturken, M. (2007). *Tourists of history: Memory, kitsch, and consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Duke University Press.
- Sturken, M. (2008). Memory, consumerism and media: Reflections on the emergence of the field. *Memory Studies*, 1(1), 73–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083890>
- Stylianou-Lambert, T. (2012). Tourists with cameras: Reproducing or producing? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(4), 1817–1838. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2012.05.004>
- Su, C., & Gibson, P. L. (2016). Digitizing the memorial: Institutional and vernacular remembrances of the Taiwanese 921 earthquake and typhoon Morakot. In A. Hajek, C. Lohmeier, & C. Pentzold, *Memory in a Mediated World: Remembrance and Reconstruction*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137470119>
- Suess, A. (2018). Instagram and art gallery visitors: Aesthetic experience, space, sharing and implications for educators. *Australian Art Education*, 39(1), 107–122. <https://doi.org/10.3316/ielapa.625892895569659>

- Tan, W.-K. (2017). The relationship between smartphone usage, tourist experience and trip satisfaction in the context of a nature-based destination. *Telematics and Informatics*, 2(34), 614–627. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.10.004>
- Tanti, A., & Buhalis, D. (2016). Connectivity and the consequences of being (dis)connected. *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism*, 31–44. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28231-2_3
- Tavernise, S. (2011, August 22). A dream fulfilled, Martin Luther King Memorial opens. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/23/us/23mlk.html>
- Taylor, A. (2020, July 2). The statues brought down since the George Floyd protests began. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2020/07/photos-statues-removed-george-floyd-protests-began/613774/>
- Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. (2013). Bridging collective memories and public agendas: Toward a theory of mediated prospective memory. *Communication Theory*, 23(2), 91–111. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12006>
- The culture white paper*. (2016). Department for Culture, Media & Sport. www.gov.uk/government/publications
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). Mason-Dixon Line. In *Britannica*. Retrieved July 12, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mason-and-Dixon-Line>
- The historical legacy of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*. (n.d.). National Museum of African American History & Culture. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/historical-legacy-march-washington>
- The monuments project: Our commemorative landscape*. (n.d.). Mellon Foundation. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <https://mellon.org/initiatives/monuments/>
- The nation's capital has hosted some of the most influential protests in the country's history*. (n.d.). Washington DC. <https://washington.org/dei/historic-demonstrations-washington-dc>
- Thelen, D. P. (1989). Memory and American history. *Journal of American History*, 75(4), 1117–1129.
- Theoharis, J. (2018). *A more beautiful and terrible history: The uses and misuses of Civil Rights history*. Beacon Press.
- Thomas, S., Herva, V.-P., Seitsonen, O., & Koskinen-Koivisto, E. (2019). Dark heritage. In *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology* (pp. 1–11). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51726-1_3197-1
- Thwaites, T., Davis, L., & Mules, W. (1994). *Tools for Cultural Studies: An introduction*. Macmillan Education.
- Tribe, J., & Mkono, M. (2017). Not Such Smart Tourism? The Concept of e-Lienation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 66, 105–115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2017.07.001>
- Tschofen, B. (2007). Antreten, ablehnen, verwalten? Was der Heritage-Boom den Kulturwissenschaften aufträgt. In D. Hemme, M. Tauschek, & R. Bendix (Eds.), *Prädikat "Heritage". Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen* (pp. 19–32). LIT.
- Tschofen, B. (2016). «Eingeatmete Geschichtsträchtigkeit»: Konzepte des Erlebens in der Geschichtskultur. In S. Willner, G. Koch, & S. Samida (Eds.), *Doing History: Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur* (pp. 137–150). Waxmann Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-126402>
- Tschofen, B. (2017). Vom Erleben der Kultur. *Schweizer Archiv Für Volkskunde*, 113(1), 7–20.

- Urbanik, M.-M., & Roks, R. A. (2020). GangstaLife: Fusing urban ethnography with netnography in gang studies. *Qualitative Sociology*, 43(2), 213–233. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s1133-020-09445-0>
- Urry, J. (2002). *Consuming places*. Routledge.
- Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Villaespesa, E., & Wowkowych, S. (2020). Ephemeral storytelling with social media: Snapchat and Instagram stories at the Brooklyn Museum. *Social Media + Society*, 6(1), 2056305119898776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119898776>
- Vincent, C. H., Bermejo, L. F., & Hanson, L. A. (2020). *Federal land ownership: Overview and data*.
- Vinitzky-Seroussi, V. (2011). “Round up the unusual suspects”: Banal commemoration and the role of the media. In M. Neiger, O. Meyers, & Z. Eyal (Eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (pp. 48–61). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Visitation numbers. (n.d.). National Park Service. Retrieved September 20, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/visitation-numbers.htm>
- Vogels, E. A., Gelles-Watnick, R., & Massarat, N. (2022). *Teens, social media and technology 2022*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>
- Wachtel, N. (1986). Introduction. *History and Anthropology*, 2(2), 207–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.1986.9960766>
- Wang, D., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2013a). Transforming the travel experience: The use of smartphones for travel. In L. Cantoni & Z. (Phil) Xiang (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2013: Proceedings of the International Conference in Innsbruck, Austria* (pp. 58–69). Springer.
- Wang, D., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2013b). Transforming the travel experience: The use of smartphones for travel. In L. Cantoni & Z. (Phil) Xiang (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2013* (pp. 58–69). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-36309-2_6
- Wang, D., Xiang, Z., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2016). Smartphone use in everyday life and travel. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(1), 52–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287514535847>
- Washington, DC Visitor Research. (n.d.). Washington DC. Retrieved November 14, 2022, from <https://washington.org/research/washington-dc-visitor-research>
- Weilenmann, A., Hillman, T., & Jungselius, B. (2013). Instagram at the museum: Communicating the museum experience through social photo sharing. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1843–1852. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2470654.2466243>
- Weiler, B., Gstaettner, A. M., & Scherrer, P. (2021). Selfies to die for: A review of research on self-photography associated with injury/death in tourism and recreation. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 37, 100778. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100778>
- Weinberger, S. (2011). The Birth of a Nation and the making of the NAACP. *Journal of American Studies*, 45(1), 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875809991459>
- Wellman, M. L. (2022). Black squares for Black lives? Performative allyship as credibility maintenance for social media influencers on Instagram. *Social Media + Society*, 8(1), 20563051221080470. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221080470>

- Wendt, B. (2014). *The allure of the selfie: Instagram and the new self-portrait*. Inst. of Network Cultures. https://networkcultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/The_Allure_of_Selfie_ios.pdf
- Wertsch, J. V., & Billingsley, D. M. (2011). The role of narratives in commemoration: Remembering as Mediated Action. In H. Anheier & Y. Raj Isar (Eds.), *Heritage, Memory & Identity* (25–39). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446250839.n2>
- What we do*. (n.d.). National Park Service. Retrieved August 29, 2022, from <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>
- Whelan, Y. (2002). The construction and destruction of a colonial landscape: Monuments to British monarchs in Dublin before and after independence. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28(4), 508–533. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2002.0441>
- Whelan, Y. (2003). *Reinventing modern Dublin: Streetscape, iconography and the politics of identity*. University College Dublin Press.
- Wiederhold, B. K. (2018). The tenuous relationship between Instagram and teen self-identity. *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*, 21(4), 215–216.
- Willems, H. (2004). Erving Goffman. In U. Flick, E. von Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), & B. Jenner (Trans.), *A Companion to Qualitative Research* (pp. 24–28). SAGE Publications.
- Williams, E. C. (2020a, June 22). D.C. has more than one Confederate statue. Nearly a dozen more stand in the Capitol. *NPR.Org*. <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/06/22/881624108/d-c-has-more-than-one-confederate-statue-nearly-a-dozen-more-stand-in-the-capitol>
- Williams, E. C. (2020b, December 21). Reports that the “only confederate statue” in D.C. came down missed a whole lot at the U.S. Capitol. *DCist*. <https://dcist.com/story/20/06/20/confederate-statues-us-capitol-dc-albert-pike-there-are-so-many/>
- Wines, M., & Kavi, A. (2020, August 28). March on Washington 2020: Protesters hope to rekindle spirit of 1963. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/us/march-on-washington-2020.html>
- Wolfe, C.G. (Director). (2023). *Rustin* [Film]. Higher Ground; Bold Choices.
- Woodley, J. (2014). *Art for equality: The NAACP’s cultural campaign for civil rights*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Woodley, J. (2017). “Ma is in the park”: Memory, identity, and the Bethune Memorial. *Journal of American Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000536>
- Yampolsky, M. (1995). In the shadow of monuments. In N. Condee (Ed.), *Soviet Hieroglyphics. Visual Culture in Late Twentieth-Century Russia* (Vol. 55, pp. 93–112). Indiana University Press.
- Yan, B.-J., Zhang, J., Zhang, H.-L., Lu, S.-J., & Guo, Y.-R. (2016). Investigating the motivation–experience relationship in a dark tourism space: A case study of the Beichuan earthquake relics, China. *Tourism Management*, 53, 108–121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.09.014>
- Yates, F. A. (1966). *The art of memory*. Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD.
- Yoshida, T. (2004). Whom should we remember? *Journal of Museum Education*, 29(2–3), 16–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2004.11510504>
- Zapata, C. (2021, February 19). D.C. Delegate reintroduces bill to remove Emancipation Memorial from Lincoln Park. *NPR.Org*. <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2021/02/19/969419030/d-c-delegate-reintroduces-bill-to-remove-emancipation-memorial-from-lincoln-park>

-
- Zelizer, B. (1995). Reading the past against the grain: The shape of memory studies. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12.
- Zumthurn, T., & Krebs, S. (2022). COVID-19 digital memory banks: Challenges and opportunities for historians of education. *Paedagogica Historica*, 0(0), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2021.2017987>