PACKAGING POVERTY:
TOURISM, VIOLENCE, AND THE POLITICS OF SPACE IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Based on ethnographic field research with tourists, residents, and community activists in/of Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on participant-observation at Rio de Janeiro’s State Ministry of Tourism, and on critical analysis of popular discourse and of federal and state urban planning policies and programs, this dissertation explores the packaging of poverty in Rio de Janeiro. It examines how particular kinds of spaces are produced, maintained, and offered up for tourist consumption, and it interrogates the connections between macro-level decision-making and micro-level practices in order to understand how and why “poverty tourism” arose and flourishes in Brazil. I argue that “poverty tourism” is neither accidental nor inconsequential, but rather that the relegation of the urban poor to the status of tourist attraction is intimately tied to the operations of class exploitation, problematic, and segregationist, spatial management policies, violent racism, and a linguistically enacted politics of hierarchical othering.
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In many ways, this dissertation is the product of a fortuitous error I made during the summer of 2003—four years before I began the field research on which this project is based. Courtesy of a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship I received while a student at Vanderbilt University, I was spending a second summer studying Portuguese at the Instituto Brasil-Estados Unidos (IBEU) in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro. One afternoon in July, two American friends of mine and I left the Gâvea Shopping mall in Rio’s affluent Zona Sul, or South Zone, and went to catch a bus to Leblon, another affluent neighborhood in the south. Although we were all living either in Ipanema or Copacabana, the warm, sunny weather had prompted us to decide to ride only as far as Leblon and then to walk along the beach the rest of the way home. Had I possessed at the time a better understanding of Rio’s geography, I would have realized that we were standing on the wrong side of the street to catch a direct bus from Gâvea to Leblon, but I didn’t. As such, when a bus with “Leblon” listed as its destination stopped for us, we climbed aboard without hesitation. Only a few minutes later, we began climbing a steep hill through a part of Gâvea I had never seen; as we continued our climb, I began to suspect that we were heading not for Leblon, but for Rocinha—a neighborhood I had never visited, but about which I had heard plenty.

After sharing my suspicion with my friends, I decided to ask the cashier on the bus to confirm where we were going. “Pra garagem,” he replied. “To the garage.” The
bus, which normally did run between Gâvea and Leblon (via Rocinha), was to be parked in the garage, located in Rocinha, for the night and would not be continuing to Leblon. The cashier went on to assure us that we would have no trouble finding another bus or van to take us home. He also apologized that the display on the front of the bus had not been changed from “Leblon” to “Garagem” and for the confusion it had caused us.

Although I had been warned repeatedly both by my Brazilian hosts and by my Portuguese language instructors that favelas were dangerous places full of dangerous people, my first encounter with Rocinha suggested that their warnings were incorrect. Indeed, Rocinha seemed anything but dangerous. In fact, once my friends and I got off the bus—on a street I would later learn was called the Estrada da Gâvea—it took only a few moments for locals to begin offering to help us. I am not certain as to whether we looked confused, foreign, or simply out of place, but I was astounded by how many people asked if we were lost or needed anything. One woman even offered to walk with us to the van stop at the bottom of the hill and to make sure we got on the right one. Despite having been lost, map in hand, in various parts of the city on several occasions, I had never been offered so much assistance.¹

Ultimately, we found our way back to our temporary homes and shared our experiences with our hosts, who, without exception, suggested that we were lucky to have emerged from Rocinha alive and unscathed. Although not one of our hosts had any direct experience with any favela, let alone with Rocinha, they were universally adamant about their superior knowledge of favelas. My own host dismissed my early, positive assessments of Rocinha as “innocent” and as a result of my being an American. I

¹ I do not wish to suggest that Cariocas are not generally friendly or helpful; in my experience, they certainly are. Instead, I want to highlight how much more willing to help those I first met in Rocinha seemed to be.
continued my engagement with Brazil and conducted research elsewhere, but I never
forgot my first, brief encounter with Rocinha. In particular, the disjuncture between the
lively community and helpful residents I encountered, on the one hand, and the
frightening, dangerous place described by the middle-class Brazilians I knew, on the
other, stuck with me. It is, in part, this disjuncture that brought me back to Rocinha in
2005, to begin to investigate poverty tours, and that continues to shape my thinking about
Rocinha, specifically, and about favelas, generally.

If my interest in Rocinha and in the place of favelas in popular discourse and in
the urban landscape was piqued by my first, brief encounter in 2003, the present project
became possible when I returned to Rio de Janeiro to conduct pilot research on poverty
tours in 2005. I quickly became fascinated by the idea of touring a community in order to
view or encounter poverty, and I wanted to learn more. This dissertation, then,
constitutes my attempt to understand not only how poverty tours operate and how poverty
is treated on and through such tours, but also, and more importantly, why these tours
exist—and flourish—in the first place. This attempt at understanding has required me to
deviate considerably from my initial research design, which focused rather narrowly on
the tours themselves, as I failed to realize the extent to which I would need to engage
with broader questions of both poverty and violence. Further, a community-based
organization, Rocinha Tur (RT), was created less than one month before I returned for
dissertation field research in July 2007. Founded by Rocinha residents, Rocinha Tur’s
explicit goal was to effect change in the way tourism operates in the community; I did not
foresee the creation of the group, but it was most favorable for my project. That the
residents involved with RT allowed me to work closely with them has been the single most important element in shaping this project.

In this dissertation, I argue that a relatively new type of touristic practice—what I term “poverty tourism”—occupies a unique position where questions of space, inequality, class, violence, and poverty become intertwined and where the logic and consequences of both micro-level institutional policies and macro-level national and supranational decision-making are laid bare. Drawing on ethnographic field research with tourists and residents of Rio de Janeiro’s Rocinha slum, on participant-observation research at Rio de Janeiro’s State Ministry of Tourism, and on critical analysis of popular discourse and of federal and state urban planning policies and programs, I demonstrate that poverty tourism is not simply a novel or emergent form of tourism; rather, the practice is a logical—and even predictable—outcome of the conjunction of large-scale neoliberal capitalist policies, a history of violent racism, and a linguistically inflected politics of othering in urban Brazil. That community attempts to control or modify the practice of poverty tourism in Rocinha have failed spectacularly further attests to the fact that poverty tourism is not simply an inconsequential fad concocted to cater to the whims of a few “slumming” European or North American tourists. Rather, it is a practice embedded in resilient, and deeply entrenched, neoliberal ideologies, material inequalities, racial hierarchies, and spatial and linguistic modes of segregation.

Rocinha

Because this dissertation focuses on poverty, and on the intimately interconnected realms of segregation and violence, it might be too easy to get the impression that
Rocinha is, in fact, the violent, scary place it is often treated as on tours and in popular media. My own experiences of Rocinha, however, could not have been more different from these popular portrayals. In this section, then, I describe Rocinha as I experienced it; I do not claim to have comprehensive knowledge of the neighborhood, nor do I assert that my version of Rocinha is somehow closer to an objective “truth” of the community than are popular or touristic renderings. Given how different, and how positive, my experiences were, though, I believe it is important to provide a sense of the Rocinha I came to know and about which I have profoundly warm feelings. Indeed, had Rocinha residents not extended to me their assistance, patience, understanding, time, and insight, this project would not have been possible. Given this fact, I owe it to those who selflessly shared their lives with me to provide an alternative glimpse of their community.

My initial fortuitous—and accidental—encounter with Rocinha was merely the first of many positive experiences in the community and, in many ways, it foreshadowed my entry into Rocinha to begin my dissertation research. Just as I found myself lost and reliant on the benign attention of strangers on that first day in Rocinha, I often got lost during the first months of my fieldwork. Rocinha is an enormous community, with approximately 200,000 residents, and many of its streets are narrow and unmarked. I do not possess an especially good sense of direction, and I frequently became confused as I sought to meet with various residents and community leaders it had been suggested I meet. One rather amusing example will provide the reader with a sense of how these incidents tended to play out.

One afternoon in early August, my research assistant João and I set out to meet with Andrés, a community leader affiliated with Rocinha’s Casa da Cultura, or Cultural
Center. João, an aspiring actor, had an audition scheduled for later in the day, but had volunteered to walk with me to the Casa da Cultura to meet with Andrés. When we arrived, the center was closed and Andrés was not there. Rather than risking missing his audition, João left, and I decided to explore the area and to wait for Andrés. After nearly an hour, an elderly woman, who had been sitting outside in a chair, not far from the center, called me over. She introduced herself as Beatriz and asked me, as so many other community residents did, if I was lost. I introduced myself, told her that I was not lost and that I had a meeting scheduled with Andrés and was waiting for him to arrive. She told me that he had had to leave for the day, but that I should go to his house, which was not far from the center. I was initially hesitant about showing up at his house unannounced, but Beatriz convinced me that it would not be rude and told me how to get there.²

As I might have predicted, I did not have the easy time locating Andrés’s house that Beatriz had thought I would have. In fact, although I had been assured it would take me 10 minutes to find his home, I was still searching nearly 30 minutes later—and without seeing the landmarks for which Beatriz had told me to look. Just as I was about to give up and ask someone for directions back to the Casa da Cultura, a young boy came up to me and asked if I was the “gringa” who was looking for Andrés.³ I was stunned at first that people knew who I was and for whom I was looking, but then the boy, named Luiz, told me that Beatriz was his grandmother and that she had sent him to look for me and to accompany me to my destination; she had trouble getting around, or she would

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² Beatriz turned out to be correct, as Andrés did not seem to mind my unannounced visit in the least.
³ In Portuguese, the word “gringa,” or the masculine form “gringo,” does not carry the pejorative connotations sometimes associated with it in Spanish. It is used to designate foreigners and, in particular, foreigners from North America and Europe.
have come for me herself, he told me. After all, as Luiz pointed out, “She thought you might be lost” (“Pensou que talvez estaria perdida.”) He further told me that she had instructed him to wait for me while I talked to Andrés and then to take me to see another of her grandsons, who played guitar at a tourist hotel in Ipanema and sometimes invited tourists back to his house.

Luiz did as he was told, despite my protestations that he did not need to wait for me if it took too long or if he had something he would rather be doing. Both my interviews with Andrés and with Gabriel, Beatriz’s musician grandson, led to follow-up interviews and to additional contacts in the community that were integral to my understanding of Rocinha, and they were made possible by an unnecessarily helpful woman and her grandson. What is, perhaps, most remarkable about this incident is not Beatriz’s and Luiz’s generosity, but rather just how common this level of kindness was. For example, Mariana, a 23-year-old housewife and mother, invited me, on our first, unintended meeting outside a closed lanchonete (small cafeteria) to have lunch with her at her house, as neither of us was going to be able to eat what we had planned; Yasmín, who ran my favorite Internet café in Rocinha, allowed me to access the Internet without paying on my first visit to the café, as she could not break my R$20 bill; and the first time I met Gláucia, a woman in her 60s, she helped me get cleaned up and gave me some of her own clothes to wear after I slipped and fell into the mud near her home.

Aside from the dozens of wonderful people with whom I became acquainted in Rocinha, other highlights of the community for me included the delicious coxinhas (fried dough balls with chicken in them) and pastelinhos de queijo (fried cheese pastries) I ate
almost every day at a kiosk in the 99 district of Rocinha. Not only did I immensely enjoy these treats, I also enjoyed the gregarious owner, who often made fun of me for liking his wife’s cooking so much. In fact, he regularly joked that I was his best customer and that I liked his wife’s food better than he did.

Similarly, after getting off to a rather odd start, I came to treasure my bimonthly manicures and pedicures at Maria Hair & Nails and the lively banter and impromptu social analysis that came with them. Typing up notes in the evenings on my laptop was far more enjoyable at an outdoor table at my favorite pizza parlor on Largo do Boiadeiro than in my apartment, and the bar at Nosso Shopping was an ideal location for meeting with friends, particularly given its extensive menu of fried treats.

Although my experiences in Rocinha were profoundly positive, violent incidents did occur, at least during police raids on the community. In fact, the only times I ever felt unsafe in Rocinha were when the police invaded the neighborhood. Indeed, although I have spent more time in Rocinha than in any other Carioca neighborhood, I have never personally felt threatened and I never experienced any type of crime. The same cannot be said for my experiences in affluent Rio neighborhoods, as I was mugged at knifepoint while walking in Ipanema and at gunpoint while riding a bus in Laranjeiras. Overall,

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4 “Salgados,” or salty snacks, such as these are, of course, available outside of Rocinha, but these were by far the best I ate in Rio.

5 The owner, employees, and customers present on my first visit seemed to derive a good deal of joy from teasing me about my torn cuticles and inability to tolerate contact with the bottom of my feet. They also attempted, unsuccessfully, to convince me to let them bleach my hair blond, so that I would look more American. As one client told me, I had a “gringa” face, “gringa” eyes, and “gringa” clothes, so all I was lacking was “gringa” hair.

6 “Invasion” is the local term for referring to police entry into Rocinha, and its connotations of both military exploits and disease are not coincidental, as I discuss in Chapter Nine.

7 Although each of these incidents was troubling, I did not usually feel threatened or nervous in these neighborhoods, either.
then, my experiences of Rocinha were even more positive than my experiences of other neighborhoods in Rio, which also tended to be quite delightful.

Aside from noting the kinds of experiences that were typical my time in Rocinha, it is also important to discuss characteristics of the population that often get ignored or downplayed in both tours and popular discourse. First, despite Rocinha’s characterization as a “slum” or a poor “favela,” not all of Rocinha’s residents are members of the same class, nor are they all “poor.” There are, certainly, many working poor residents, but there are also members of the middle class living in Rocinha. From teachers to small business owners to dentists to social workers, Rocinha residents work in a wide variety of jobs, sometimes within Rocinha (especially in the case of professionals and small business owners). One family I knew, for example, owned a local market, a multi-story apartment building that generated rent, and a vacation home in Rio de Janeiro State’s Região dos Lagos. Others, by way of contrast, struggled to meet their basic subsistence needs.

Second, despite the association of favelas with poverty and poverty with being dark-skinned, Rocinha’s population is remarkably varied in terms of both professed heritage and phenotype. There is, quite simply, no coherent way to classify the entirety of Rocinha’s population in terms of “race”—unless, of course, “race” is ascribed based on residence in the neighborhood.

Finally, although, as I discuss throughout this project, it is profoundly problematic to treat Rocinha residents as criminal or as potentially criminal, there are “criminals” in the neighborhood. To deny this would be equally problematic. Most of the residents with whom I came into contact had absolutely nothing to do either with the drug traffic or
with other forms of illicit behavior. Even those residents involved with the drug traffic should not be reduced only to their illegal activities; indeed, while he should not be considered representative of drug gang members, the only “traficante” with whom I came into regular contact was jovial and polite, and he always asked me how my research was coming along.  

Rocinha, as already noted, is an enormous community, and its size and population density are among its most striking physical features. Rocinha’s location also marks the neighborhood as visually noteworthy. Not only is Rocinha sandwiched between two of Rio de Janeiro’s most affluent neighborhoods, but it is also built between two mountains, which results in very little flat space in the community. Aside from possessing a vertical component, some streets in Rocinha are unpaved and narrow enough to allow pedestrians to touch the walls on either side; others are, essentially, concrete staircases; still others are wide and paved, and sustain two-way vehicular traffic. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 provide a sense of Rio’s location in Rio de Janeiro State and of Rocinha’s location relative to other Carioca neighborhoods, while Figure 1.3 provides a view of Rocinha from above and gives a sense of the size of the neighborhood. (See Appendix A for a map of Brazil.)

Homes in Rocinha vary in terms of size, location, and luxury. Apartments near the bottom of the mountain, nearest Rocinha’s commercial district, and nearest São Conrado and the Atlantic Ocean, tend to be more expensive than those further up the mountain. Similarly, those who own apartments on the bottom floors of buildings are often able to generate income by renting their rooftops to others, who build their own homes on them. Many buildings in Rocinha are three stories tall, though some contain

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8 That he was always armed to the teeth made these exchanges, while verbally pleasant, quite disconcerting for me.
four or even five floors. My friends’ and informants’ homes varied dramatically in terms of size and amenities. One friend, for example, lived in a tiny, one-room apartment with a dirt floor; the apartment measured no more than six feet by 10 feet in size, and it contained only a twin bed and a stool as furnishings. Another friend, by way of contrast, owned a spacious two-bedroom apartment with a kitchen, dining room, living room with a comfortable fold-out couch, and a built-in barbeque on the roof.

Figure 1.1: Map of Rio de Janeiro State. Map from http://www.v-brazil.com/tourism/rio-de-janeiro/map-rio-de-janeiro.html
Organizational Overview

This dissertation is divided into three parts, each of which contains three or four chapters. Part One introduces the project, locates it with respect to a large body of literature on tourism and urban space, and provides a detailed discussion of my data-gathering techniques. After this introduction, I situate this project in relation to relevant, published social scientific scholarship in Chapter Two: Literature Review. Although I focus on anthropological work, I also indicate how this project has benefitted from scholarship in other disciplines, most especially in geography. Next, in Chapter Three, I describe the key research methods I employed during the length of my fieldwork in...
Rocinha, and note the strengths and weaknesses of both my strategies and my resultant understandings of the community.

Figure 1.3: Aerial photo of Rocinha, with the Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas in background (Anonymous; accessed at http://neglectedwar.com/blog/archive/4371).

Part Two: Spaces and Languages of Poverty addresses both the spatial and rhetorical production and maintenance of poverty in Rio de Janeiro. Chapter Four: Favelas in the Rio de Janeiro Landscape and Popular Imaginary engages with the history of favelas in Rio and with contemporary popular understandings of them. In this chapter, I contextualize the development of massive enclaves of urban poverty in terms of the larger structural forces that have created and shaped them. I also address the history of elite responses to the growth of favelas in Rio de Janeiro and show how this legacy has endured in current thinking about urban poverty.

Chapter Five: Urban Poverty as a Tourist Attraction describes and analyzes poverty tourism in Rocinha. I provide detailed accounts of tours offered by four different
tour companies, as well as a general sense of how these tours operate. Further, I discuss
touristic motivations for participating in poverty tours and interrogate the underlying
assumptions that guide the production of tour narratives. Finally, I suggest how poverty
tourism in Rio maintains rhetorical distance between middle-class neighborhoods and a
relatively well-off favela and explain why this is crucial, from the point of view of
affluent Cariocas, or residents of Rio, at a time of economic distress.

In Chapter Six: Of Slums and Neighborhoods: from Favela-Bairro to Erecting
Walls, I analyze recent governmental attempts to “fix” the “problem” of favelas. By
tracing the underlying assumptions of several of these key interventions, I show how
neoliberal ideology has combined with a truculent and typically disavowed racism. The
result is that contemporary urban management programs are, at best, doomed to fail to
achieve even their more modest purported goals. At worst, these programs constitute
attempts to impose harsher forms of spatial segregation on the city’s urban poor.

Chapter Seven: Poor People’s Portuguese: Surveying Speech and Space in
Rocinha, treats the ways in which poverty is constructed not only through forms of
spatial governance, but also, and perhaps more importantly, through de facto spatial
segregation. Further, I argue that the exclusionary politics of space are mirrored in an
exclusionary politics of language. Indeed, by examining the politics of “translation”
between “rich” and “poor” Portuguese, I demonstrate how the presumed
incommensurability—and inviolable boundedness—of “rich” space and “poor” space are
also played out in the realm of language.

Section Three: Violence and Poverty engages with the complicated and often
fraught questions of violence, both literal and symbolic, that this project raises. Chapter
Eight: Stories of Violence and the Violence of Stories examines narratives of violence within Rocinha and juxtaposes these with the violence of narratives about favelas that circulate in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil more generally. As I indicate with reference to an especially crucial set of narratives, stories of violence in Rocinha are, at least, triply violent: they are violent in content, they construct the residents of Rocinha as violent, and they actively ignore the structural roots of violence.

Chapter Nine: Thunderbolts of the Disenfranchised: Rethinking Crime and Justice in Rio de Janeiro takes up the issue of physical violence—rather than narrative violence—in Rio and its complicated relationship with notions of justice, popular or otherwise. By comparing the actions of police officers and gang members in Rio and by situating them in relation to a long history in Brazil of alternative, extralegal forms of justice, I show not only that violence and justice are not mutually exclusive, but also that which violent acts count as “criminal” and which as “just” is entirely a matter of context.

Finally, in Chapter Ten: Abdicating Authority, Authorizing Violence: Conspicuous Absences and the Neoliberal State, I summarize the consequences of the widespread adoption of neoliberal ideology and show how poverty tourism is neither anomalous nor inconsequential. Rather, it is the result of the same kinds of policies that have created, and that maintain, enclaves of urban poverty in Brazil and then keep their residents in their place through myriad forms of violence: rhetorical, physical, and structural. Ultimately, I suggest that the conspicuous absence of state policies to alleviate human misery implicitly authorizes violence against poor neighborhoods and those who inhabit them. Further, in such a context, it is unsurprising, and even predictable, that human misery itself can be converted into a saleable commodity.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: Tourism, Space, and Poverty

In this chapter, I first situate the current project in terms of anthropological approaches to tourism, and then locate this dissertation in relation to anthropological and geographical understandings of urban space. I conclude by reviewing relevant anthropological work on urban Brazil.

The Anthropology of Tourism

Beginning in the 1960s and expanding rapidly in the 1970s, critical studies of tourism, particularly within anthropology, started to emerge; these tended to engage in one of two broad modes of inquiry, regardless of the particular case or type of tourism under examination: unraveling the causes of tourism or examining tourism’s effects. By the 1980s and 1990s, however, scholars began to recognize and treat tourism as a complicated phenomenon not readily separable into “cause” and “effect.” Rather, as more recent works have indicated, tourism is best understood in broader social, historical, economic, and environmental context (Burns 1999, 2004; MacCannell 1992). In this section, I trace the development of critical analyses of tourism, and suggest that the most fruitful approaches to the study of tourism have taken into account not only the broader context in which it occurs, but also understand tourism as engendering encounters between embodied social actors and not simply between “groups,” as earlier analyses frequently posited.
In examining the most important approaches to the study of tourism, I also pay attention to the ways in which tourism has been defined and theorized in social scientific, and particularly in anthropological, literature. Further, I suggest that the typically negative portrayal of tourists in anthropological writing owes as much, if not more, to the (frequently disavowed) similarities between tourists and anthropologists than to any particular feature of tourists (Bruner 1989, 2005; Clifford 1997; Cohen 1991, 1995; Crick 1995; Redfoot 1984; Strain 2003). If, as James Ferguson has suggested, “development” is anthropology’s “evil twin,” then the tourist might well be considered the evil twin of the anthropologist herself (Ferguson 2005).

Anthropological and sociological investigations of the causes of tourism over the last few decades have typically focused on the tourists themselves and on their societies of origin (Graburn 1989 [1977]; MacCannell 1976; Nash 1989 [1977]; Urry 2002 [1990]). By way of contrast, studies of tourism’s impacts or effects have frequently examined tourist destinations and their local populations (Aerni 1972; Alexander 1953; Manning 1979; Ness 2003; Peck and Lepie 1989 [1977]; Wilson 1979). In either case, tourists, more often than not, have been considered unavoidable and perhaps even necessary evils: people who adversely influence the environment and/or culture of their destinations, even while potentially providing much needed economic stimulation (Bolles 1997; Bryden 1973; Green 1979; Hitchcock 1997; Levy and Lerch 1991; MacLeod 2004; Pearce 1989 [1981]; Pizam 1978; Reynoso y Valle and P. de Regt 1979; Robinson and Boniface 1999; V. Smith 1976; Terrio 1999). On the other hand, local populations may be conceptualized as helpless or, perhaps, as passive critics of processes largely beyond their control (Greenwood 1989 [1977]; Joseph and Kavoori 2001; O'Rourke 1987). At
worst, they may even be ridiculed or berated for actively inviting, as opposed to passively accepting, tourist exploitation (Kincaid 1988). Of course, local populations do not simply accept touristic renderings of themselves and their communities. Quite often, they have concrete ideas about how they would like to be seen and understood, and they actively promote these understandings, as Laura R. Graham (2005) makes clear in the case of Xavante activists in Brazil. Indeed, such populations may actively “stage” performances of their “culture” for touristic consumption, demonstrating that they are not passive objects of tourism, but rather active agents.

While contemporary anthropological analyses have paid significant attention to tourists, Amanda Stronza suggests, following Deirdre Evans-Pritchard, that they have paid insufficient attention to “the attitudes and ideas of local residents toward outsiders” (Evans-Pritchard 1989; Stronza 2001:272). While I agree generally with this assessment, neither Stronza nor Evans-Pritchard goes far enough in identifying the lacuna in anthropological treatments of tourism. Indeed, local perspectives on tourists and their activities are crucial for generating more holistic understandings of tourism. However, in recent works on tourism, particularly in those grounded in Marxist theory or in performance theory, the tourists are the ones who have been absent.

Further, as Erve Chambers has noted, “tourism is a mediated activity” (Chambers 1997:3). And mediation introduces yet another critical element into the analysis of tourist encounters. As such, Stronza’s claim that holistic understandings of tourism may be produced by studying the “two-way encounters between tourists and locals,” instead of just paying attention to the hosts or only to the guests, as has commonly been done, misses a crucial element in the production and interpretation of tourist encounters.
In other words, it is imperative not simply to pay attention to the interactions between tourists and those “locals” who play a role in tourism, but it is also important to consider touristic practices as mediated.

The critical, and variable, positions inhabited by the mediators of tourism ought to prevent anthropologists from examining host/guest relationships as arising from and complicated by only the relative positions of tourists and toured. Rather, attention must be turned to those who arrange and produce tourist encounters and to their positions and relationships with both tourists and toured, as well as with others who lie outside the tourist/toured binary. After all, as Jean-François Lyotard has pointed out, “Mediation does not only imply the alienation of elements as to their relation, it permits the modulation of that relation” (1991:6). Given, then, the ability of mediators to alter fundamentally the nature of the tourist-toured relationships and encounters, any discussion of these encounters as spontaneous or unmediated is suspect, at best. The mediators of tourist encounters, be they tour organizers, guide books, a select few locals in positions of relative power, travel writers (c.f. Almeida Santos 2004), or someone else, then, demand increased attention, as no understanding of tourism could hope to be complete without unraveling the role these mediators play with respect to tourist experiences. In the case of poverty tourism in Rocinha, tourism is mediated both through local and state officials and, at least as importantly, through mass media, which shape tourists’ and company owners’ ideas about poverty, violence, danger, and Rocinha.

Although investigations of the roles of mediators are still lacking in the anthropological literature, several recent anthropological studies to have addressed in detail the roles of mediators of tourist experiences merit mention. Richard Handler’s and
Eric Gable’s work on Colonial Williamsburg, for example, is exemplary both in its attention to the wider socio-political context in which history is produced, sold, and consumed and in its assessment of how donors, boards of directors, institutional constraints, and staff academics and managers together shape, although never totally, the interaction between tourists and live museum displays and (re)enactments (Gable and Handler 1993a, 1993b, 1996; Gable, et al. 1992; Handler and Gable 1997). Similarly, Sally Ann Ness sensitively interrogates the creation of tourist venues in the Philippines both by family-dynasties and by the Philippine government and traces the local level effects of producing touristic landscapes, although she does so at the expense of excluding tourists almost entirely from her discussion of tourism (Ness 2003, 2005). In essence, in anthropological literature mediators of tourism to date have garnered the most attention in studies of heritage tourism, as in Gable and Handler’s works, and in works dealing with “ethnic tourism,” as treated below (c.f. Chibnik 2003; Cohen 2001a).

Another problem in anthropological and other academic studies of tourism has been an over eagerness to dismiss tourist experiences as superficial or, perhaps, as “inauthentic.” Be they performances traditionally understood or staged encounters designed to appear “natural” or spontaneous, a number of scholars have delighted in exposing them as trite and “inauthentic.” Some, inspired by Erving Goffman’s work, have maintained that authenticity is something attainable, but that most tourists are incapable of penetrating into the “backstage” regions inhabited by their hosts where the really “real” takes place (MacCannell 1976). Others, with little connection to Goffman, reject the notion of “authentic” versus “inauthentic” encounters and delight in ridiculing tourists who insist on seeking “authenticity,” nonetheless (Castañeda 1996).
A Note on Terminology

In the academic and, in particular, in the anthropological literature on tourism, an agreement has yet to be reached on the optimal terminology to be used for designating those who are “tourists” and those who live, at least temporarily, in the areas frequented by tourists and who may or may not constitute a tourist attraction. While there is no general consensus regarding terminology, there are several pairs of terms that are widely utilized; the most prevalent of these include hosts/guests, tourists/toured, and tourists/locals. Anthropologists as a whole have paid scant attention to the implications of the terms they use to name the parties to tourist encounters, especially as compared with the effort spent constructing competing typologies of tourism. Many authors employ more than one term to designate the same individuals without pausing to explain (or perhaps reflect on) why. Far from simply a question of personal preference, the choice of any pair of terms has a number of consequences for understanding tourism and reveals something of the author’s position on the matter that may not be explicitly articulated. In this brief section, I interrogate the pairs of terms most commonly employed and outline a few of their consequences for writing about tourism.

The pair hosts/guests first came into wide usage with the publication of Valene Smith’s edited volume *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* in 1976. The use of the term “hosts” to designate the local population at a tourist destination is suggestive. First, the term “hosts” implies that the local population to which it refers has some not insignificant level of control over the influx of tourists and, perhaps, that the “hosts” may even have invited these “guests” into their homes. While the term is laudable in that the
agency of the local population is not erased, such word choice has the potential to
downplay the fact that the relationship (between “hosts” and “guests”) may be fraught
with power imbalances, not freely entered into, or even actively resisted. The “hosts”
and “guests” may not always behave graciously, but there is still the implication that the
relationship is basically consensual and not exploitative.

The terminological pair tourists/toured avoids the pitfalls of hosts/guests in that it
does not presume a consensual exchange between equals, but it, too, is problematic. Here
the difficulty is twofold: first, many who would be classified as “tourists” either do not
admit to being tourists or actively attempt to distance themselves from such a label. After
all, “[t]ourists dislike tourists” (MacCannell 1976:10). A second, and more pressing,
concern here is the rendering of the local population as passive objects—the “toured” to
be acted upon by the “tourists.” If hosts/guests preserved a sense of agency at the price
of assuming or implying equal footing, then tourists/toured highlights the inequality often
present in the relationship at a cost of virtually erasing the agency of the “toured.”

The tourists/locals pair suffers from the same drawbacks as tourists/toured—a
refusal to identify with/as “tourists” by those the term is intended to denote and the
positioning of activity and agency with the first, but not with the second, term. An
additional difficulty involves the term “locals,” however. The use of “locals” suggests at
least two things about those who inhabit the area surrounding a tourist destination that
may or may not be the case. First, it implies that “tourists” are not locals, which, in turn,
suggests that tourism requires travel; second, it implies that “locals” are actually from the
area being toured, rather than merely inhabiting it for a given length of time.
In an effort to avoid the major pitfalls associated with each of these terminological pairs, Sally Ann Ness has proposed tourists/tourate as an alternative means of designating the two groups (2003). Although her terms have yet to gain wide currency in critical studies of tourism, they avoid the problems with agency discussed above and they do not presuppose the geographic origins of the parties in a tourist interaction. A potential problem with the term “tourate,” aside from its being slightly awkward, is that Ness includes not only the population of a tourist destination, but also those involved in the hospitality industry, tour organizers and guides, and others whose concerns may have little to do with those of the people living at/near tourist destinations and who are not directly involved with tourism.

In this project, I employ the terms “tourists” and “toured” when I am discussing those who have, in the first case, paid to view/visit/explore a particular venue and those who, in the second case, serve—willingly or not—as part of the spectacle. While I am cognizant of the difficulties that arise with the usage of these terms, I believe it is more important to highlight the inequalities often present in tourist/toured encounters than it is to make tourism appear to be governed by rules of etiquette, as does the hosts/guests pair. When, however, I address members of the Rocinha community generally—who may or may not be present or visible during any one of the community’s frequent tours—I use the term “residents.” Although the term does little to distinguish between those it names and those it excludes, for the current purposes this is its greatest strength: it distinguishes only on the basis of residing in Rocinha.

Tourism Defined
Scholars have varied greatly in their definitions of tourism, often agreeing only that a universally acceptable definition is impossible. However, the conceptualization of tourism as a leisure activity, understood in opposition to work, has been critical for framing academic investigations of tourism, especially in anthropology and sociology, at least since the 1976 publication of Dean MacCannell’s *The Tourist*. In many such definitions, tourism as a leisure activity, generally, but not necessarily, involving some degree of travel, has been conceived as an intentional activity inextricably wrapped up with notions of modernity and industrial capitalism (Cohen 1988; MacCannell 1976; Nash 1989 [1977]; Smith 1997, 1989 [1977]-b). So wrapped up are understandings of tourism with ideas about modernity that, in an article recently published in honor of Edward Bruner’s work on tourism, it is proclaimed that “[a]s for modern societies it isn’t farfetched to say that everyone’s a tourist” (Gable and Handler 2005:124). The tourist, it seems, has not simply become possible on a wider scale with the advent of modernity, but rather has become a marker by which “modernity” is recognized. MacCannell echoes this understanding by arguing that “our first apprehension of modern civilization…emerges in the mind of the tourist” (1976:1).

Modernity, for MacCannell, Erik Cohen, and others, is intimately connected to the fragmentation of social life, the rigid separation of work and leisure, and the loss of a sense of authenticity in daily like. As such, tourism for these authors is often understood as driven by the search for authentic experience or, as MacCannell puts it, to “resolve the contradictions of modernity.” The biggest contradiction he associated with modernity was not one between classes, but instead was rooted in the turning of “man [sic] against himself” through the organization of work (1976:37).
It is worth noting that one cannot, despite a well-known film title proclaiming otherwise, be a tourist by accident; rather, in the academic literature, tourism is virtually always conceptualized as an intentional activity conducted during leisure time. Dennison Nash defines someone at leisure as someone who is temporarily, at least, “free from primary institutional obligations” (Nash 1978:135; Pearce 1989 [1981]). In other words, someone at leisure is someone who is not at work. As MacCannell puts it, leisure “exist[s] at a slight remove from the world of work in everyday life” (1976:34). More recently, anthropologists such as Peter van den Berghe and Erve Chambers have essentially echoed this notion of tourism as a leisure activity (Chambers 1997, 1999; van den Berghe 1994).

Leisure, too, as a central defining characteristic of tourism, is often linked explicitly to modernity and is identified as central to modern life. In fact, MacCannell believes that while work once occupied the privileged position at the center of people’s lives, it now appears that “[l]eisure is displacing work from the center of modern social arrangements” (1976:5). It is interesting to note, however, that even as he believes that leisure, especially in the form of tourism, is becoming increasingly central in the lives of those in “modern” societies, he also counts it as not part of “everyday life”—of work. The justification he provides for this, on the other hand, is that leisure activities are very often concentrated into vacations and other short “breaks” (ibid.). Indeed, it would be possible to argue that leisure has become increasingly central precisely because it has become increasingly scarce.

For other scholars, the key to defining tourism has hinged more explicitly on the importance of travel, “however temporary and fleeting” it may be (Bruner 2005:10). The
kinds of travel deemed most noteworthy in such works typically entail the traversing of national, if not continental, borders (Pearce 1989 [1981]). Tourism in these sorts of definitions is frequently understood as lying on a continuum with other sorts of voluntary migrations (Hall and Williams 2002; Nash 1989 [1977]; Williams and Hall 2002), and is closely identified, in particular, with religious pilgrimages (Bremer 2004; Ebron 1999; Turner and Turner 1978). In fact, in some versions of this kind of travel-oriented definition of tourism, tourism is understood, first and foremost, as a ritual that depends on travel, for achieving both separation and reintegration, for its success in transforming the tourist (Bruner 1991; Graburn 1989 [1977], 2001).

A third predominant way of conceptualizing tourism has focused less on tourism as leisure or travel—as something engaged in by individual human beings—and more on tourism as an industry. Although tourism is not an industry in the conventional sense of the term—it is not centrally produced, its products are often either not tangible or are part of the “natural” landscape, and consumers generally must travel to the products, rather than vice-versa, it certainly does generate billions of dollars and move millions of persons around the globe each year. It is in this sense that tourism has most often been treated in economics (c.f. Tisdell 2000), geography (c.f. Debbage and Daniels 1998; Hall and Page 2002 [1999]; Smith 1998a), and by environmentalists and others concerned with promoting sustainable development (c.f. Western 1993; Whelan 1990). While anthropologists have less frequently discussed tourism primarily as an industry, the global and local economics of tourism increasingly factor into sociological and anthropological and, in particular, into ethnographic treatments of tourism (Greenwood 1970, 1972; Stronza 2001; Urry 2002 [1990]).
Types of Tourism

Many anthropological studies of tourism have been less concerned with elaborating general theories of tourism than with defining and describing particular varieties of tourist phenomena or with generating typologies of tourism (Smith 1989 [1977]-b; Wickens 2002). Although competing typologies highlight different aspects of tourism, do not draw distinctions in precisely the same manner, and refer to similar practices with different labels, there are several types of tourism that authors tend to agree that merit attention. In this section, I examine those varieties of tourism most relevant to the current project and describe the kinds of analyses typically conducted with respect to them. The most crucial, and common, kinds of tourism addressed in the anthropological literature include the following, which I examine below: culture tourism, ethnic tourism, sex tourism, and heritage/historical tourism. Although these are by no means the only forms of tourism to be identified and to generate scholarly attention, nor are they always readily separable, they do seem to be the most relevant for anthropologists to date. Other varieties not examined here include ecotourism/environmental tourism (c.f. Allen and Brennan 2004; Burns and Howard 2003; Fennell 1999; Long 1999), space tourism (Rogers 1998; Smith 2000), literary tourism (DeLyser 2005), sport tourism (Standeven and De Knop 1999), gay/lesbian/queer tourism (Clift, et al. 2002; Howe 2001), and revolution/violence/warfare tourism (Babb 2004; Hoskins 2002; Schwenkel 2006; Smith 1998b).

Culture tourism
Recently, anthropologists and others have turned their attention to what has come to be known as “culture tourism.” This variety of tourism, as frequently defined, is preoccupied with presenting tourists with an opportunity to encounter other “cultures” that are, more often than not, understood as “functionally integrated homogeneous entities outside of time, space, and history” (Bruner 2005:4). That these other “cultures” are most often located outside of the continental United States and Western Europe and are composed of individuals who are not infrequently labeled as “primitive” is no coincidence and studies of culture tourism, as well as of ethnic tourism, have been the most explicit in treating the relationship of tourism and colonialism. Although culture tourism is not always easily distinguished—by readers or by authors—from “ethnic tourism,” authors are often quite explicit about where they believe their research fits, even when they have difficulty explaining why. For example, Bruner “explores cultural tourism” (2005:7) in an insightful collection of essays entitled Culture on Tour, but treats “ethnic tourism” in an essay, based on precisely the same field research, published elsewhere, without distinguishing between them (Bruner 2001).

If those most noted for their works on these varieties of tourism seem to be making arbitrary distinctions between them, how are they to be reliably distinguished? Or, perhaps more importantly, what does such a difficulty in distinguishing them reveal about these kinds of tourism and about the inadequacy of current attempts to create durable typologies? If anything, it seems that efforts to categorize varieties of tourism that do not take into account the slippage between types are not especially useful. For example, Smith’s suggestion that “cultural tourism” has to do with the display of “peasants,” while “ethnic tourism” displays “indigenous and often exotic peoples,” does
not resonate with the bulk of ethnographic and other research carried out under the these labels (Smith 1989 [1977]-b:4; Smith and Brent 2001).

On the other hand, the often-subtle distinctions authors make between types may serve to highlight different analytic stresses. Taking Bruner as an example, once again, in discussing “cultural tourism,” he makes a case for recognizing this variety of tourism as distinct from other types with reference to its function; according to Bruner, the purpose of culture tourism is to “recreate…idealized colonial images and other representations of the past” in accord with pre-existing tourist expectations (2005:76). Although Bruner does not agree with MacCannell’s interpretations of tourism, MacCannell’s assertion that tourists want to experience authenticity dovetails quite nicely with Bruner’s claim that culture tourism attempts to recreate culture(s) in line with tourists’ beliefs about them. In other words, it seems as if the success of performances of culture, as examined by Bruner, may in fact hinge on their ability to simulate tourists’ pre-conceived notions of what constitutes an “authentic” cultural experience, despite Bruner’s claims that “authenticity” is not what tourists are after.

Those who have engaged in analyses of culture tourism have tended to engage critically with questions of power—who has the power to tour whom (Bruner 2005), how “cultures” and “cultural” artifacts are marked and distinguished as worth seeing—both “live” and in museum displays (Adams 1995; Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; Cohen 1993; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), whose bodies are put on display and how, who consumes them, and to what ends (Desmond 1999), and who is being exploited by whom and to what ends (MacCannell 1992). Also crucial to investigations of cultural tourism within anthropology and sociology, especially, are questions of the “authenticity” of the
experiences presented, although there is considerable disagreement over whether experiences can be separated into “authentic” and “inauthentic” and as to whether such a distinction has any utility or is the right question to be asking (Bruner 2005; Duggan 1997; Gable and Handler 2005; MacCannell 1992, 2001).

Scholars of culture tourism, even when they tend to agree on the kinds of questions that ought to be asked—such as questions of power, of the effects of tourism on tourists and on those whose “cultures” are on display for tourists—differ greatly in their responses. Some argue that tourism offers an opportunity for the preservation and revitalization of cultural practices that might disappear without tourist interest (Cohen 1988; Swain 1989), while others passionately claim that tourism leads to radical and undesirable changes in the lifeways of the toured (Greenwood 1989 [1977]; Nash 1989 [1977]). However, both of these positions, whatever their individual merits, ignore the motivations and experiences of tourists, as well as the role(s) of mediators of tourism.

Ethnic Tourism

As suggested above, any attempt to demarcate ethnic tourism from culture tourism must be considered provisional and potentially problematic. Nonetheless, it is necessary to outline something of a definition of ethnic tourism in order to address those works that seek to understand it. While it has been suggested that the crucial ingredient in the promotion and practice of ethnic tourism is the “cultural exoticism” of the toured population and procurement of their “artifacts” (van den Berghe and Keyes 1984), this understanding does little to differentiate ethnic tourism from cultural tourism. According to Cohen, ethnic tourism, among other things, “targets groups that do not fully belong,
culturally, socially, or politically to the majority (national) population of the state within whose boundaries they live” (Cohen 2001a:27-8). While interesting, this definition, too, does little to distinguish “ethnic” tourism from “culture” tourism, as one of the key questions in studies of both involves power, marginality, and belonging.

Another way of attempting to define ethnic tourism revolves around examining the ways in which the toured group is presented to and understood by tourists. Unlike “culture” tourism, in ethnic tourism the appeal of the toured populations usually hinges, to some extent, on their (presumed) proximity to “nature.” As such, “ethnic tourism” may be “located in the conceptual space between ‘nature tourism’ and ‘culture tourism’” and, consequently, those being toured may even be presented as lying somewhere on a continuum between the natural environment and human beings (Cohen 2001a:32). Whereas in culture tourism toured populations are presented, however problematically, as belonging to timeless “cultures,” the objects of ethnic tourism come closer to being presented as inhabiting the realm of “nature.” Even when the humanity of those being toured is explicitly affirmed, they are often treated as childlike and as existing in communion with nature.

Researchers who have investigated ethnic tourism have tended to focus their analyses on two facets of the phenomenon: on the representation of “ethnic” groups to tourists and the creation and utilization of ethnic stereotypes (Cohen 1993; Desmond 1999; Picard 1997; Stanton 1989 [1977]; Volkman 1990; Wood 1997) and on the importance played by the procurement of artifacts in the tourist experience (Smith 1989 [1977]-b; van den Berghe and Keyes 1984). Recent works have focused, too, not simply
on the importance of “ethnic” artifacts for tourists, but on the potential of such artifacts to alter dramatically the household economies of their producers (Chibnik 2003).

As I have suggested with respect to culture tourism, and to studies of tourism generally, analyses of ethnic tourism, too, frequently fail to address what it is that motivates tourists to engage in ethnic tourism and how they experience it. Rather, most scholars have tended to focus on the motivations, often gauged in economic terms, of the toured for engaging in and promoting tourism. On the other hand, while studies dealing with tourism’s intermediaries are still lacking, there are studies of ethnic tourism that have begun to examine their roles. For example, Chibnik’s treatment of the roles of intermediaries in the resale of Oaxacan woodcarvings is admirable and Desmond’s analysis of tourist industry bulletins, postcards, newspapers, and the like is exemplary in this respect (Chibnik 2003; Desmond 1999).

Although the kind of tourism I examine in this dissertation does not fit neatly into existing typologies of tourism, studies of both “culture” tourism and “ethnic” tourism are useful for thinking about what I have termed “poverty tourism.”9 For example, the focus on power and exploitation and on how particular sites are marked as worth seeing that has emerged in studies of “culture” tourism, on the one hand, and questions about how toured populations are (or are not) conceptualized with respect to “nature” in “ethnic” tourism, on the other, have both proven especially relevant for the current project.

Tourism Theorized

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9 Although I have designated the kind of tourism I investigate here with a new term, I do not find the creation of typologies of tourism particularly compelling.
General theories of tourism have been quite recent to emerge and have tended to lag behind empirical studies. While this is certainly due, in part, to the newness of critical studies of tourism generally, it also has to do with an intellectual division of labor that has plagued, and continues to plague, serious work on tourism. This rift is particularly egregious in anthropology and is closely correlated with the division between “academic” anthropology and “applied” anthropology, with the former assigned the task of generating sophisticated (and, some in “applied” anthropology would argue, devoid of practical applicability) theories of tourism. The latter, “applied” side, on the other hand, has been designated to produce empirical data through case studies and to attempt to alter tourist practices for the better. Scholarship on tourism in anthropology has grown much more quickly and has been—and, to some degree, continues to be—taken more seriously by “applied” anthropologists than by “academic” anthropologists, explaining, in part, the lag of anthropological theories of tourism behind empirical studies.

Those who consider themselves “applied” anthropologists, for example, have often been quite forthcoming with criticisms of “academics” and with praises for applied anthropology. Tim Wallace, for example, draws a sort of line in the sand between “academic anthropologists” and “applied anthropologists” and asserts that it is the applied anthropologists who have a more “nuanced view of tourism” and that only they understand that tourism is “one kind of strategy for change that can have both positive and negative consequences” (Wallace 2005:10). He argues that academic anthropologists, on the other hand, “are more attracted to [a] negative perspective” on tourism and, as such, fail to engage seriously with the subtleties of tourism in practice (op. cit.:9). Others, such as Valene Smith, argue that work in “the travel industry might
be viewed as ‘real world’ anthropology,” reinforcing the notion that “academic” work is somehow located outside the “real” world (Smith 2005:252). While not all “applied” anthropologists are quite as outspoken as Wallace and Smith, there does tend to be a frustration with “academics” expressed in applied anthropological writings on tourism (c.f. Chambers 1997, 1999).

If “applied” anthropologists have been quick to criticize “academic” anthropologists for their purported negativity with respect to tourism, there, too, has been little love lost on the part of “academic” anthropologists, who have been quite slow to accept tourism as a legitimate area for anthropological study. As recently as 1994, van den Berghe complained that “most social scientists do not take tourism seriously” and claimed that “most of [his] colleagues strongly imply that a professed interest in tourism constitutes little more than a clever ploy to pass off one’s vacations as work” (1994:3; see also Burns 2004). Some, such as Malcolm Crick, suggest that the resistance to engaging in critical studies of tourism is rooted primarily in anthropologists’ snobbery and in their embarrassment to be associated with, and perhaps confused with, tourists (Bruner 1989; Crick 1995). Both tourists and anthropologists, after all, frequently find themselves inhabiting, at least temporarily, unfamiliar places for personal benefit—be it measured in terms of pleasure, career advancement, or something else.

It seems, however, that there is a more plausible explanation for the reluctance with which “academic” anthropologists have accepted tourism as an object of study: discomfort and, perhaps, distress at being forced to engage explicitly, not only with tourists and tourism, but also with the activities of anthropologists in the “field.” Just as anthropologists have been forced to grapple with anthropology’s uneasy relationship with
colonialism, they, too, have begun, albeit hesitantly at times, to grapple with anthropologists’ relationship with tourists, which, as I suggested earlier, is more often one of degree than of kind (c.f. Stronza 2001). Some anthropologists, in fact, have explicitly connected colonialism and tourism, arguing that tourism is simply a continuation of colonialism in modified form (Nash 1989 [1977]; Turner and Ash 1976).

The first scholar to propose a polished general theory of tourism was sociologist Dean MacCannell. MacCannell, drawing heavily both on Marx and Lévi-Strauss, sought to draw attention to modern tourism as occurring as a result of the “discontinuities of modernity,” including, most importantly, the alienation he perceived as operative in the workplace—which he most often discussed as a factory. This alienation, according to MacCannell, drives “modern” people to seek authentic (not alienated) experiences elsewhere, during their leisure time. MacCannell’s theory proves excellent for discerning tourists’ evaluations of tourist attractions and has proven remarkably resilient, as recent studies continue to affirm its validity (c.f. Gable and Handler 2005). What MacCannell is less concerned to address are those “moderns” for whom leisure travel is unavailable as a means of securing “authentic” experiences, whether for economic or other factors. Similarly, his rigid modern/primitive binary, aside from striking contemporary readers as dated and arrogant, is unable to address the experiences of the “primitives” as they are toured and is even less suited to addressing the rising frequency with which so-called “primitives” themselves are becoming tourists (Ghimire 2001).

While alienation and authenticity as themes are explicit in The Tourist, they become considerably less so in MacCannell’s later Empty Meeting Grounds (1992). Here MacCannell becomes less concerned with alienation and authenticity and more concerned
with exposing and critiquing the exploitation he sees as occurring with the “hosts” or “toured,” as they are forced to sell themselves, as commodities, to tourists, who form part of an international, privileged “leisure class.” This aspect of MacCannell’s work has been considerably less influential than his contention that tourists seek authentic experiences or, at least, reasonable facsimiles thereof. However, MacCannell may be closer to the mark in his more recent work; as I discuss later, one of the key complaints voiced by critical residents of Rocinha about tourism was precisely the offering of their community, homes, and, to a lesser extent, selves for sale to affluent tourists.

In fact, the question of authenticity as a driving force behind modern tourism has been, perhaps, the most debated issue in the scholarly literature. The debate continues to draw attention, with noted scholars such as Edward Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett arguing that authenticity is not, and should not be, a central concern of studies of tourism and is not, in fact, what tourists seek, and with scholars such as Richard Handler and Eric Gabler defending a MacCannell-esque position. The division has been particularly notable between scholars who treat tourism from a perspective rooted in performance theory versus those who engage more explicitly with structural constraints in the production of tourist sites. Not all structural approaches, however, ignore the performative aspects of tourism. For example, Denise Brennan’s work combines an emphasis on performance with an analysis of larger structural factors that shape the international sex tourism trade (Brennan 2004).

Marxist-inspired interpretations of tourism, while once rather popular, have fallen out of favor in recent years. These approaches have proven excellent for examining exploitation and alienation, but, according to some, they have generally been too eager to
find them everywhere. Similarly, Marxist theories of tourism have too often treated both tourists and toured as entirely driven by forces beyond their control and apprehension (c.f. MacCannell 1976, 2001) and have seldom paused to consider the possibility that the toured may benefit, in non-economic ways, from their participation in tourism. Individual experiences of tourism have also tended to be overlooked in favor of examining groups or classes. Despite their lack of popularity, Marxist-rooted approaches, such as those of MacCannell, Handler, and Gable, are best able to apprehend the exploitative dimensions of tourism, and they need not do so at the expense of neglecting individual experiences. Further, even as critics suggest that toured populations may benefit in non-economic ways from the practice of tourism, it is just as important, if not more so, to remember that toured populations might suffer in non-economic ways, as well.

One recent work in this vein that deserves mention is Mark Anderson’s study of Garifuna tourism in Honduras. Of particular interest is his discussion of the value of Garifuna culture and its role in the production of ethic difference. As he notes, “The use of ethnic imagery in tourism involves the consolidation and deployment of culture and authenticity as a kind of collective symbolic capital” (in press:349). However, tourism in such a context privileges not the Garifuna, who “produce” the “symbolic capital,” but rather outsiders who profit from Garifuna production (ibid.). While the context of Rocinha is markedly different, in that poverty tourism is characterized, in part, by its lack of focus on culture or ethnicity, his example is illustrative of the exploitative nature of tourism, especially when those being toured do not reap material benefits, as is the case in Rocinha.
Another particularly influential way of theorizing tourism during the last 15 years has posited the existence of “tourist gazes.” This kind of interpretation, first popularized by John Urry (2002 [1990]), borrows heavily from Michel Foucault’s concept of the medical gaze as developed in *The Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault 1976). Urry, in particular, seeks to draw attention to the fundamentally visual character of contemporary mass tourism and argues that tourist gazes serve to define and regulate difference through their implicit contrast with non-tourist gazes (Urry 2002 [1990]). Urry’s approach has been particularly useful for theorizing not only the ability of tourist gazes to determine what is seen and unseen, what is, in Urry’s terms, “ordinary” and “extraordinary,” but also for thinking about the economic consequences of tourism for those employed in the service and hospitality industries. What Urry’s account is less able to apprehend are the experiences of individual tourists and hosts; nor is his notion of tourist gazes especially amenable to theorizing the centrality of consumption in much tourism. The question of the role of consumption in tourism, as I discuss later, is one that contemporary analysts have begun to take much more seriously.

Another key approach to theorizing tourism has been rooted in understanding tourism as a modern ritual (c.f. Bremer 2004; Turner and Turner 1978). Tourism in such analyses is generally conceptualized as involving “liminoid situations” (Turner and Turner 1978) during which the tourists’ everyday obligations are reversed or no longer apply. Such approaches have been very good at addressing not only tourists’ motivations for engaging in tourism, but also tourists’ experiences of tourism. Tourism in these approaches is seldom treated as frivolous or as exploitative, as compared with other theorizations, and, as such, a central element of contemporary tourism is typically left
unexamined. Indeed, understandings of tourism as a transformative ritual have tended to be less concerned with addressing the economic aspects of tourism. As such, ritual theories of tourism tend to produce partial analyses that ignore the socio-economic realities of the toured.

Closely related to interpretations of tourism as a secular ritual are interpretations that are rooted in performance. Both ritual and performance approaches, after all, are heavily indebted to the dramaturgically inflected works of Erving Goffman and Victor Turner. And, while few recent analyses of tourism have proceeded primarily from a ritual perspective, performance theories have increasingly been utilized in critical studies of tourism. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, one of the best-known scholars of tourism to use a performance approach, has suggested that the strengths of such approaches are that they “place a premium on the particularities of human action” and “resist stripping the observed behavior of contingency in order to formulate norms” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:75). In other words, such approaches are excellent for examining seriously the minutiae of the packaging and performing of “culture.” In fact, approaches grounded in performance theory have provided, perhaps, the best means of interrogating the representational strategies employed at tourist sites (c.f. Bruner 2005; Desmond 1999).

On the other hand, studies of tourism reliant on performance theories generally, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s work specifically, are lacking when it comes to understanding how tourists, or consumers of “culture” productions, interpret and experience what they encounter. As Rosalind Morris argues in her critique of performance theory in anthropology, performance theory as a whole “is characterized by a concern with the productive force rather than [with] the meaning of discourse” (Morris
1995:567). While addressing the production of tourist events and “culture” displays and their contexts is crucial, so, too, are the meanings ascribed to them. It is here that ethnography, which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, among others (c.f. Strain 2003), criticizes so harshly, has something special to offer.

More recently there has been a shift in theories of tourism to examining the importance of place and of consumption. Sally Ann Ness, for example, has investigated the “darker side” of consumption-oriented touristic landscapes, using a particular Philippine resort as a sort of ethnographic case study. She convincingly argues that the “disemplacement” of local forms of meaning that occurs through the production and marketing of such spaces may lead to local terrorist attacks or, at the very least, multiply the likelihood of the occurrence of violent responses from “displaced” populations (i.e. those who have lost access to locally meaningful sites) (Ness 2005). While Ness draws much needed attention both to the production of tourist spaces and to the consequences of such production, her analysis does little to treat either the experiences of loss of place on the part of the local population or “tourate,” in her terminology, or the experiences of the newly produced touristic landscape on the part of the tourists. In fact, tourists themselves are markedly absent from Ness’s analysis both here and in earlier works (Ness 2003, 2005).

The ability of tourist development to provoke violent responses and even “terrorist” attacks, especially when the local population is perceived as being threatened or as not benefiting, has been analyzed by others, as well. Michael Grosspietsch, for example, has recently argued that the violent attacks on tourist destinations in Egypt in the 1990s stemmed, in part, from the attackers’ beliefs that tourism’s valuation of
consumption was a threat to local culture that brought few, if any, economic benefits to the local population (Grosspietsch 2005).

While it is still too early to tell for certain, these works seem to indicate a move toward evaluating the importance of consumption in tourist practices and the importance of loss of place for locals of the “tourate.” Such analyses, provided they do not ignore the experiences of both tourists and toured, may constitute an improvement over earlier analyses, which seldom engage explicitly with questions of consumption and place. However, they also run the risk of downplaying the exploitation that often occurs during the production of tourism.

Before turning to my own positioning relative to contemporary debates on tourism, it is necessary to address the second crucial body of literature with which I wish to enter into dialogue: that on urban space. As such, section addresses those recent theorizations of urban space most germane for the current project.

**Urban Space**

The last 100 years have witnessed profound alterations in the lifeways of the vast majority of humanity. While advances in technology, dramatic changes in warfare, and the end of the colonial age have contributed significantly to the character of these alterations, it is, according to Eric Hobsbawm, the dramatic growth of urbanism, and the companion decline of the peasantry, that supersedes all of these changes (Hobsbawm 1994). In fact, most people no longer reside in the countryside, but rather in cities. And, despite the recent warnings of some commentators on “postmodernity” that “the city itself” has “disintegrated” (Jameson 1984:76) or that “the virtual space of the
telecommunications era is gearing up to take over [the city] from the geography of nations” (Virilio 1997:84), the city, as a geographical entity, still proves an invaluable focus of analysis and scholars in a variety of disciplines are increasingly turning their attention to the study of urban spatial and social arrangements, especially as these are related to late capitalism and ideas about modernity. Because this project attempts to utilize tourism as a way of examining the production and consumption of urban space, as well as using the production and consumption of urban space to reflect on tourism, it is important to review some of the most relevant extant work on urban space. In this section, then, I turn to the key modes of thinking about urban spatial arrangements that have shaped this project.

Just as studies of urban spatial arrangements, their causes, and their consequences have proliferated in recent decades, so, too, have the ways such arrangements have been theorized. Even so, the motivations of those who study urban space can be roughly divided into two groups: those who envision their research as potentially useful for the implementation of development and planning projects (Agyeman, et al. 2003; Herzog 2006; Sanyal 2005) and those whose intent is to assist in the democratization of urban space and in fights for increased social justice, however defined (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Crang 2000; Gotham 2003; Harvey 1973, 2000; Holston 2006; Merrifield and Swyngedouw 1997; Mitchell 2003; Raco 2003; N. Smith 1996; Uzun 2003; Wilson 1995). While the majority of those in the former group are institutionally affiliated with urban planning and architecture programs, the majority of anthropologists, historians, and, especially, geographers who study urban space falls into the latter grouping.
More particularly, recent examinations of urban spatial arrangements in cities around the world, conducted within both anthropology and geography, as well as within other social-scientific disciplines, have often relied heavily on concepts from political economy in attempting to theorize the causes and consequences of different uses of urban space. While anthropologists, for the most part, have only recently begun to take seriously the potential fruitfulness of interpreting urban space from perspectives routed in political economy, political and urban geographers, especially, have long utilized insights from political economy not only to make sense of the consequences and causes of certain kinds of urban spatial patterning, but also, and especially, to imagine alternative spatial arrangements that might create more livable, and more egalitarian, cities (Buchwald 2003; Dawson 2004; Harvey 1973; Smith 1990).

In this section, I interrogate the uses to which political economic concepts, such as capital, production, exchange and consumption, labor, social class, and colonization, among others, have been put in anthropological, geographical, and historical analyses of urban space and discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. Specifically, the approaches I focus on have employed explanations rooted in Marxist traditions, as opposed to utilizing theories grounded in liberal thought. My motive for such a focus is relatively straightforward: while liberal and neo-liberal theories still enjoy wide currency in fields such as economics and within a variety of non- and supra-governmental development agencies, most scholars affiliated with or operating within the disciplines of anthropology, geography, and history who have turned their attention to urban space have seldom employed liberal, or neo-liberal, explanations of urban spatial arrangements, except to critique them. Instead, where political economic concepts have
been utilized by such scholars to investigate and explain urban spatial patterns, they have been grounded, even if loosely, in Marxist thought.

The most useful and sophisticated treatments of space have been produced within the discipline of geography and by a handful of sociologists; the best of such treatments have explored the active and constitutive roles of space, rather than using space as a backdrop against which other activities take place, as has often occurred in history. Ultimately, while the most interesting theoretical work on space has been undertaken by geographers and sociologists, most notably David Harvey, Manuel Castells, and Henri Lefebvre, the most compelling treatments of urban space as experienced and understood have come in the form of detailed ethnographies written by anthropologists. As such, I argue for an approach to understanding urban space that combines the political economic insights so current in recent geographical explorations of space with the micro-level analyses of experiences of urban space and of the regulatory mechanisms operative therein that have become rather popular in recent anthropology.

Despite a number of recent lackluster analyses, several sociologists who have taken on questions of urban spatial arrangements directly, including most notably Löic Wacquant, Manuel Castells, Sharon Zukin, and Pierre Bourdieu, have made enduring contributions to understanding such arrangements, often through political economic analysis, that go well beyond any disciplinary boundaries (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Castells 1978 [1972], 1989; Hannerz 1969; Wacquant 1998; Zukin 1991, 1998). In the

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10 Within sociology, studies whose primary focus is the examination of urban space are still relatively few, though a number of recent works by sociologists have dealt tangentially with questions of space (Anderson 1999; Duneier 1992; Greene 1999; Newman 1999). However, these works have tended to be shallow, repetitive, and have rehashed stereotypes of urban poverty, rather than attempting to render sensitively the complexities of life under such conditions or to unravel the causes of urban spatial segregation by class. In fact, according to Wacquant, who is extremely critical of recent trends in the sociology of urban life, such works have been little more than trite “bifurcated ethnographies of sameness” that proceed by separating...
following paragraphs, then, I outline some of the most crucial scholarship on urban space to have emerged from sociology—that of Manuel Castells—and discuss its most important conceptual contributions to the study of urban space.

Manuel Castells, since his *Imperialismo e Urbanización en América Latina* (1973), has taken a self-described “radical” Marxist approach to understanding urban space that focuses on questions of power and the state and posits the existence of two planes of space. Castells conceptualizes the first type of space—that of place—as produced through a conjunction of the built environment and local economic history, while the second type—that of “flows”—is produced by the circulation of information and capital (Castells 1989). With reference to the workings of these two kinds of space, he suggests the emergence in recent history of a kind of dual or two-tiered city in which the pulling apart of the two kinds of formerly integrated spaces results in an inescapable tension. Given this growing tension, Castells foresees escalating struggles on the part of local populations to retain a territorially bound sense of identity in the face of an increasingly deterritorialized flow of information and capital. He suggests that, “regardless of [their] economic and functional dependency on the space of flows,” territorially identified cities and places may, through the “symbolic marking of places, the preservation of symbols or recognition, [and] the expression of collective memory,” retain and strengthen their identities in spite of enormous change (Castells 1989:351).

Due in part, then, to the ability of his theorizations to grapple with the vagaries of globalization, Castells’ ideas have been, and continue to be, influential, especially for the “good” poor from the “bad” poor and then demonstrating that the “good” poor are “just like you and me,” with “you and me” understood as middle class, white, and moral (Wacquant 2002: 1521). On the other hand, the “bad” poor are everything they have been stereotyped to be: lazy, violent, immoral, unambitious, and, more often than not, non-white (ibid.).
anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists and his notion of the dual city has served as a starting point for a number of attempts to work through the contradictions of contemporary urban life (Dawson 2004; Feldman 2001). Of further importance is the separation of place and space, which permits both analysis of the specificities of a certain locale (e.g. place) and the production of generalizable theories of space.

Castells’ work is especially evocative of Saskia Sassen’s understandings of “global cities,” which, while located in specific places, become divorced from their local and regional contexts (Sassen 1998). A key difference, however, is that, while Sassen sees these “global cities” as extending and exercising their control over their geographical regions as a result of the flows of information and capital directed through them, Castells posits the massive influx of information as potentially debilitating for such cities, especially if local cultural identities are eroded or diluted.

Sassen’s work shares much in common, too, with Felix Guattari’s theorization of cities and space (Guattari 1992). Where Sassen suggests that “global cities” serve as focal points in the global economy, however, Guattari points to an “archipelago of cities” that are “connected by telematic means…One might say that the world-city of contemporary capitalism has been deterritorialized, that its various components have been scattered over the surface of a multipolar urban rhizome” (1992:124). Whether one prefers Guattari’s somewhat eccentric rhizome metaphor or Sassen’s more straightforward concept of global cities, both scholars, along with Castells, make an important point about the ways in which increasing informational flows have altered the experience of inhabiting cities and have cast doubt upon the relationships between cities and the regions in which they are located.
In terms of thinking about Rio de Janeiro, such analyses provide a fruitful way of understanding the global and local political economic processes that have shaped both the city’s landscape and its policies toward the poor. Although not a global city identified by Sassen, Rio’s position as Brazil’s capital until 1960, as a long-time destination for international elites, and, more recently, as the seat of international and global events, such as 2007’s Pan American Games, 2014’s World Cup, and 2016’s Olympic games, have helped uproot the city from its local context. This history, combined with the World Bank- and International Monetary Fund-backed structural adjustment policies of the 1980s, has shaped the urban landscape in ways not always sanctioned or envisioned by local leaders and residents. The tension resulting from such circumstances is precisely the pulling apart of place and space to which Castells directed attention nearly 40 years ago.

*The Geography of Urban Space*

While there have been a number of excellent examinations of space in political geography in recent years (Boyer 2005; Delaney and Leitner 1997; Fujita, et al. 1999; Herbert and Thomas 1997; Smith 2002; Storper 1997; Tajbakhsh 2001), the most famous and influential geographer to examine urban spatial arrangements in this vein is indisputably David Harvey. Harvey, since the early 1970s, has promulgated a version of political geography in which the production of urban space is understood as inextricably linked to the global circulation of capital, to social exclusion, to the machinations of class power, and to the possibility, or impossibility, of successful, collective movements for social justice. Harvey’s work has been so critical in shaping the discipline of geography,
in fact, that Quaini, as early as 1974, recognized his *Social Justice and the City* (1973), along with the radical geographical journal *Antipode*, as the two indispensable resources for “Marxist-oriented student[s] of geography” (Quaini 1982 [1974]:177).

More specifically, Harvey’s work attempts to situate analyses of urban spatial arrangements within sustained critiques of the operations of industrial capitalism. Harvey contends that the internal contradictions of capitalism as a political economic system, “coupled with the uneven insertion of different territories and social formations into the capitalist world market[, have] created a global historical geography of capital accumulation” (Harvey 2001:369). In other words, according to Harvey, there is no space, urban or otherwise, that is not bound up with and produced by the geo-historical workings of capital. Of special importance for Harvey, and for those who have been influenced by him, is the radical separation of producers from the conditions of production that characterizes contemporary capitalism.

In terms of explaining urban spatial patterns—including not only human geography, but also the ever-important geography of resources—Harvey, while careful to situate his analyses with reference to the global “geography of class power,” also always urges that local social and historical context be taken seriously. After all, the globe is “an intensely variegated surface, ecologically, politically, socially and culturally differentiated” and, as he points out, such differences ought not to be treated casually, but ought rather to serve as starting points for more nuanced investigations (op. cit.:377).

In order to apply his approach, Harvey has engaged in a dazzling variety of investigations and treatises, focusing primarily on cities in the United States and Western Europe. Given the breadth and depth of Harvey’s analyses of urban space, and given
their enduring influence on scholars in a wide range of disciplines, it is worth examining in some detail Harvey’s central ideas, particularly as they relate to “space.” Throughout his career, Harvey has urged scholars to eschew any understanding of space as existing prior to the social processes that produce it and the social meanings attributed to it by those who experience it. Indeed, “space” is not, according to Harvey, definable in terms of specific attributes that hold across societies and across time, nor is it exactly the same thing to different scholars, even those who inhabit the same place and time. As he puts it, “space becomes whatever we make of it during the process of analysis rather than prior to it” (Harvey 1973:13). This does not mean, of course, that Harvey believes space to be anything and everything any particular commentator decides or that Harvey thinks every understanding of space is as good as any other; rather, what he is attempting to draw attention to are the ways in which the different framings of analyses of space lead to the obfuscation of certain attributes and to the highlighting of others.

To better to comprehend different framings of space, Harvey elaborated a tripartite division: absolute, relative, and relational. The most important of these, and the one Harvey urged others to study, is relational space; relational space is not an absolute, but rather emerges as a characteristic of objects in relation with one another (Harvey 1973). This sort of thinking about space has shaped a wide variety of thinking about space, not only within geography, but within anthropology, as well (c.f. Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

Aside from advocating a particular conceptualization of space, Harvey, too, believes particular kinds of analyses to be more useful and appropriate for understanding space than others. The most important things to keep in mind, according to Harvey, in
interrogating space are the forces that produce it—including the globalization of capital, new forms of geographical and economic imperialism, the “irrationality and awful destructive power inherent in the capitalist mode of production,” and the exploitation and alienation it engenders among the popular classes, as well as efforts to resist such exploitation (Harvey 2001:310). While such forces are crucial for Harvey, he also recognizes the importance of evaluating the specifics of the built environment, particularly in seeking to understand urban space and the experiences that both engender it and are engendered by it (Harvey 1989).

With respect to the current project, following Harvey, I understand the efforts of Rocinha Tur as one example of popular organization in the face of capitalist exploitation. Further, I describe Rocinha’s built environment and attempt to unravel the forces that have shaped favelas in Rio de Janeiro. As I discuss in Chapter Four, favelas in Rio de Janeiro have been produced and controlled through exclusionary state policies which emerged in a context of global and state capitalist expansion.

Notably, Harvey’s emphasis is on social classes, defined in terms of their relationships both to the state and to the means of production, and never on individual human actors. Harvey, in fact, has been critiqued in recent years for his exclusive focus on class and group struggles, to the exclusion of individual experiences of space and of the possibility of individual, instead of class, agency (Low 1996b). Given this project’s focus on an organization founded and operated by a handful of individual actors, I seek to be attentive to individual agency, along with the forces that delimit it, without losing sight of the more pressing concerns of state and class oppression.
Another incredibly influential theorist of space, particularly within urban
geography and cultural studies, whose work is relevant for the current project is Henri
Lefebvre. Although both Lefebvre and Harvey reject the notion of space as something
calculable, as it is understood in philosophies of space rooted in Cartesian thought and by
technocrats and planners the world over, although both theorists are explicitly Marxist in
their orientation toward the production of space, and although both have proposed
comprehending space through a tripartite schema, the two are most certainly not
interchangeable. In particular, it is worth differentiating Harvey’s insistence that space
be understood as produced through and by social and economic processes from
Lefebvre’s contention that space is best apprehended when treated as something
experienced—not only by individuals, but also by economic classes and other groups. To
put it rather crudely, if Harvey is obsessed with the forces that produce space, Lefebvre,
while not blind to the importance of such forces, is concerned with the ways in which
individuals “consume” space.

Lefebvre, especially in *The Production of Space*, draws, like Harvey, on Marx’s
notion of alienation to discuss life in cities under industrial capitalism; unlike Harvey,
however, he amplifies the concept of alienation and applies it to everyday life as a way of
interpreting experiences of urban space and of explaining spatial arrangements (Lefebvre
1991 [1974]). Importantly, Lefebvre insists not only that urban space be examined as
produced by capitalist economic processes, but also that space be understood as
productive of such processes; it is not, in his words, “prior to whatever ends up filling it,”
but rather a productive force in its own right (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]:15). Indeed, such an
insight might be useful for understanding, in part, why tourism emerged in Rocinha,
rather than in another favela, and why it has taken on the form it has. Further, Lefebvre’s concepts of “perceived” and “lived” space are particularly useful for this project.

According to Lefebvre, “perceived” space is predominantly visual and seeks to ask questions about what kinds of cues are “legible” in the physical environment, how these cues are interpreted, and how such cues become, or do not become, a basis for action. In Chapter Five, I pay particular attention to the kinds of cues noted by tour guides in Rocinha, as well as to how these cues are interpreted by both guides and tourists. “Lived” space, which has been the version of space most utilized by anthropologists and geographers, is concerned with highlighting the experience of inhabiting a particular locale and for thinking about the capacity of individuals to act upon their surroundings. In calling attention to community residents’ experience of Rocinha, as well as to their efforts to change it, I am focusing on “lived” space.\footnote{“Perceived” and “lived” space are two parts of Lefebvre’s “trialectic” of space. The third type, “conceived” space, draws attention to the planned aspects of space and has been particularly helpful for historians and other scholars grappling with planned settlements, company towns, and other kinds of “total design” (Reiff 2000).}

While “space,” then, has been treated extensively by urban and political geographers during the last century, geographers of urban space have, perhaps ironically, been less concerned with the specificities of place—with understanding the features of specific built and natural environments rooted in local geo-historical context. Space in such treatments is often read as general, if not as universal, and similarities in spatial patterning in cities around the world end up being taken as markers of sameness. While scholars such as Harvey and Cox have been at pains to point out that global economic forces, such as the international flows of capital and migrants and their concentration in particular centers, produce space differently in different locales (Cox 1973, 1997; Harvey
1973, 1985), geographers to date have seldom sufficiently grounded their accounts of the workings of these global forces in specific places. If fact, it is not uncommon for “space” and “place” to be used interchangeably, with “place” designating, perhaps, only a more humanized “space” (Taylor and Flint 2000). Neil Smith, however, is a notable exception to this trend. His work, while drawing heavily on the work of his mentor and occasional co-author, David Harvey, is also rooted in interrogating the specific, local effects of global forces on human lives (Smith 1990; Smith 1996).

Such an oversight has been noted by anthropologists, in particular, who have attempted to differentiate and theorize both place and space. Key among them are Setha M. Low, whose work on urban public space in Costa Rica has been crucial in promoting the serious study of space in anthropology, and James Holston and Teresa Caldeira, both of whose works on urban space in Brasilia and São Paulo, respectively, serve as models for interrogating space in a way that takes global forces into account in concrete local settings. It is to such investigations that I turn in the next section.

*The Anthropology of Urban Space*

Political economic approaches to urban space have, until recently, been relatively rare in anthropology, but then, so, too, have studies of urban life, generally. Resistance to urban anthropology likely stems in part from a sort of disciplinary division of labor that has allotted the study of “primitives,” peasants, and the rural to anthropology and the study of urban life or “civilization” to sociology and political science (Low 1996a).

Studies of urban space in anthropology may be provisionally divided into those that take a primarily Foucauldian tack and those grounded in political economy, although
the two strategies are not always employed separately. Those that draw heavily on Foucault, particularly in *Discipline and Punish*, tend to focus on the regulatory mechanisms operative in urban space (technologies of surveillance, security, etc.) and on the move from disciplining offenses to removing the potentially offensive from sight and have become increasingly common in anthropology (Caldeira 2000; Foucault 1995 [1975]; Holston 1989; Low 2006; Merry 2001). These analyses, however, do not exclude political economic concerns, as even the use of such strategies of spatial control is available only to those who have the means to deploy them (the wealthy) and are employed to remove those who do not (the poor).

As mentioned above, one of the best-known anthropological writers on urban space to date is Setha Low. In her 2000 *On the Plaza*, a combination of previously published essays, translated short stories and poems by Costa Rican authors, and a handful of new chapters, Low asserts that the Spanish American or Latin American plaza, as the exemplar of public space, is the *sine qua non* of participatory democracy, at least in Spanish America/Latin America (Low 2000). Despite her admirably straightforward and sweeping suggestions, Low does little to support her contentions. Her analysis, here as elsewhere (c.f. Low 1996, 2006), is incapable of demonstrating connections between her local observations and her interpretations of them; further, it is grossly under-theorized. In fact, her analyses are often overly simplistic and imprecise, as concepts such as space and place are not delineated. As such, her work is primarily useful for its exemplary attention to detail, especially with respect to movement through particular spaces.

Teresa Caldeira’s work, however, suffers from none of the flaws I discuss with respect to Low. Her work is, in my opinion, the best example to date of the study of
urban space in anthropology. By investigating trends in crime rates in metropolitan São Paulo and popular beliefs about crime rates, Caldeira (2000) is able to dissect the growing Paulistano “culture of fear” and link such fear to the contours of urban space in the city. Her wide-ranging analysis draws not only on long-term participant-observation fieldwork in the city, but also on research on popular media accounts of crime, police reports, patterns of criminalization, especially of nonviolent crimes, changes in housing construction and preferences, and court documents. In so doing, she is able to document and theorize the growing privatization of public space, including plazas, sidewalks, and even streets, and the increasing use of surveillance technology to police spaces still technically open to the public. Further, her analysis avoids the conflation of space and place all too common in other works.

More recently, some anthropologists have begun to think about space as divorced from landscape or place. Alberto Corsín Jiménez, for example, advocates understanding space as “the capacity of social relationships,” which is rooted not in the place where such relationships are unfolding, but in people’s social imaginations (Jiménez 2003:137). His thinking about space, as entirely disconnected, or detachable, from place, is particularly useful for thinking about social relationships that unfold in places that have “no values, no memories, no history” for those who inhabit them (ibid.), such as communities of forced or voluntary migrants, but is not especially applicable in places like Rocinha.

Another interesting way in which space and place are being fruitfully disentwined is precisely the opposite of the previous case. Rather than considering the kinds of space(s) that are constructed in “meaningless” landscapes, Sally Ann Ness has explored
what she terms the “darker side of place” (Ness 2005). Such a side emerges when socially meaningful places become, temporarily or permanently, inaccessible to those for whom they hold meaning. Ness situates her analysis of such a place in the Philippines with respect to questions of colonialism and class, as the ability to pay to access a certain kind of space becomes interchangeable with the right to dwell in particular places. Ness’s insights into the politics of class and space are particularly useful for the present project.

While such investigations have proven insightful, perhaps the most important area of research for anthropologists concerned with urban spatial arrangements has been in understanding the control of urban space. Whether investigating the privatization of public space, the dramatic rise in the number of gated communities in cities around the world, or the strategies of control over urban space exercised in particular contexts, anthropologists, along with other scholars, are increasingly examining surveillance technologies, border patrols, and public fear (Caldeira 2000; Kupfinger 2004; Levy 1997; Lewinson 1998; Low 2001; Waldrop 2004).

In this project, I investigate the production and consumption of urban space as a way of rethinking tourism and tourism as a way to rethink questions of urban space. In geography, there has been and continues to be a significant emphasis on landscapes, both naturally occurring and human-made, and on the material environment. While people are not altogether absent from these analyses, the experience of space—and the experiences different kinds of space engender for the people who inhabit them—tends to receive less attention, as I have addressed. On the other hand, in anthropology and, to a lesser extent, sociology, most thinking about space focuses on the social construction of space and on
the experiences of actual human beings in space, with less focus on the built
environment—and, more importantly, on the policies that shape(d) the landscape. My
own approach, rooted in a radical Marxist political economy, draws on both the
geographical and anthropological traditions and attempts to take seriously not only the
idea that lived experiences in particular spatial-temporal locations are crucial for
understanding large-scale economic policies and practices, but also the idea that
interrogating the political economic context in which touristic (and other) encounters can
and do take place is necessary for a complete understanding of the practice of tourism—
of poverty or otherwise.

More significantly, in the present analysis, a political economic investigation of
poverty tourism serves as a lens through which the state and supranational policies that
make such a practice not only possible, but also desirable, can be examined. Such
policies—and the spaces they engender—locate the urban poor at a physical, social,
economic, and moral remove from the middle and upper classes, foreclosing certain
possibilities and virtually dictating others.

Further, political economy provides a fruitful way of considering another
recurring theme of this project: violence. The violence I address here is not only of
crass, capitalistic decision-making, but also of rhetoric, of a particular kind of looking, of
language, and of bodies. Indeed, although I did not seek to investigate violence when I
initially conceived of this project, to ignore violence in its myriad forms would be to
misunderstand willfully both the practice of poverty tourism and the kinds of spaces in
which such tourism can and cannot occur and the kinds of policies that create both the
space and the tourism I discuss here. It would also shear a terrible, but omnipresent,
dimension from the lives of those whose residences, streets, and bodies are offered up for both touristic consumption and state surveillance.

Another question this project addresses is that of privatization, and it is intimately connected both to questions of space and to questions of violence. In an era defined in part by the erosion of public goods—from education to healthcare to entire neighborhoods—poverty tourism, at least on the surface, provides a troubling counterpoint. Rather than exemplifying the privatization of public space, such a practice points to the publicization of ostensibly private spaces, including individual homes. That these processes operate in contrary directions does not, of course, indicate that those served are separate groups. In fact, as I discuss later, rather than demonstrating a move away from neoliberal privatization, the making public of certain kinds of homes and neighborhoods—of particular kinds of spaces—is part and parcel of the same project. Ultimately, the right to inhabit space—public or otherwise—is for sale.

Urban Brazil Analyzed

While anthropology in/of Brazil is anything but rare, few scholars have engaged seriously, or primarily, with questions of urban space. Perhaps the earliest notable investigation of space in urban Brazil is Janice Perlman’s seminal work on shantytowns in Rio de Janeiro, *The Myth of Marginality* (Perlman 1976). Challenging decades of stereotypes about urban slums, or favelas, as chaotic and unplanned and about favela residents as little more than “parasites” on the local and national economy, Perlman demonstrates not only that favelas operate based on an internal logic, but also that they are products of a good deal of planning—both by their inhabitants, whose innovative use
of limited resources shapes them, and by politicians and planners, whose policy decisions shape the larger economy and urbanization in Brazil. In fact, it is the great triumph of Perlman’s work to show exactly how interconnected the policy decisions of high-level bureaucrats and politicians and the everyday experiences of misery of the urban poor actually are. Far from politically and economically “marginal,” residents of urban shantytowns are intimately integrated in the urban economy—they are neither “parasitic” nor “parochial,” to use Perlman’s terms (1976:152-155). Aside from her own contribution, Perlman’s ability to debunk the “myth of marginality” in Brazil and her strategy of demonstrating how the lives of the urban poor are intimately shaped by larger structural forces have been influential on more recent scholarship, as well (Caldeira 2000; Goldstein 2003; Waterston 1993).

While Perlman is quite good at harnessing the political economic insights of theorists such as Saul David Alinsky, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Manuel Castells, and Andre Gunder Frank to understand the proliferation of urban slums in Brazil, what remains under-theorized in her work is urban space itself (Alinsky 1946; Cardoso 1969; Cardoso and Falleto 1973; Castells 1973; Frank 1967). Although she examines both the causes (e.g. primarily underdevelopment in Brazil and a seemingly inescapable foreign debt) and consequences (e.g. production of a host of problematic and demeaning stereotypes about those who inhabit favelas, which, in turn, further limit the already few possibilities for escaping urban poverty) of spatial arrangements in Rio de Janeiro and, by way of extension, in all major Brazilian cities, she leaves questions of “space,” and of the experiences of it, open. As such, her analysis, while useful, is ultimately less than satisfying. On the other hand, her suggestions about the connections between
governmental decisions, especially with respect to fiscal austerity, and the increasing numbers of the urban poor have proven prescient, as the harsh, IMF-mandated structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated. Her recent restudy of the communities and residents with whom she initially engaged four decades ago further traces these consequences and demonstrates, once again, both the resilience and inadequacy of the “myth” of marginality (Perlman 2011).

Another relatively influential work to focus on urban space in Brazil is anthropologist Roberto da Matta’s *A Casa e a Rua* (1987). In this work, which unfortunately has yet to be published in English translation, da Matta investigates the kinds of sociality engendered by and productive of the strict division between public space and private space in Brazilian cities and applies a structuralist-Marxist framework to interpret his observations. He contends that “it is necessary to explain how [spatial] separations are created and how they are legitimated and accepted” under capitalism, with its strict segmentation of time and space (da Matta 1987:35, author trans.). Such an understanding, then, must be combined with the study of experiences of public space, in particular.

Da Matta suggests, quite persuasively, that the dichotomy between public and private space in Brazil, with the former associated with conviviality, openness, and moral license and the latter associated with guarded morality, rules, and carefully monitored behavior, mirrors and serves to mask the incredible, and more important, dichotomy between public space for wealthy men and public space for everyone else. He carefully traces the connections among urban spatial patterns, widely held beliefs about moral and social virtue, and economic inequalities and ultimately discovers and defends the
applicability of the equation “center [of cities] = inside [of house] = social [and moral] superiority,” all of which are under the exclusive control of elite men (da Matta 1987:34, author trans.). Da Matta then connects his observation to the possibility of being a citizen in Brazil and to the impossibility of the figure of the “universal” citizen who has neither color nor race, neither sex nor class (1987:75). Ultimately, although da Matta’s work is beautifully written and argued, he leaves up for question the extent to which his arguments apply to all Brazilian cities and what, if any, role is played by local and regional histories. Further, he does not provide any description or analysis of different lived experiences of urban space, though he assures the reader that such differences are rampant and crucial.

Finally, da Matta pays scant attention to the built environment and, instead, espouses an understanding of space as produced almost entirely by the political-economic relationships that occur there. More specifically, it is class relations that are productive of space—and, especially, of urban space, but not vice versa. As such, space for da Matta becomes a setting in which individuals act, but upon which they do not act, at least not as individuals. Da Matta, then, endorses a version of space rather evocative of Harvey’s theorization, although he never explicitly refers to Harvey.

Another important contribution to the study of urban spatial arrangements and, in particular, to the study of urban poverty in Brazil is Donna Goldstein’s *Laughter Out of Place* (2003). Like Perlman, Goldstein seeks to debunk, once again, the still-circulating “myth of marginality” and to explore “how [power relations] are experienced by the poor” (Goldstein 2003:5). Unlike Perlman, however, Goldstein focuses her analysis not on economic and political marginalization specifically, but rather on the dark humor her
informants, poor shantytown residents, employ to cope with continual vulnerability. Most relevant in Goldstein’s work for the present purposes is her brief analysis of the class dynamics that shape private and public space in Brazil and their role in perpetuating social inequality. According to Goldstein, “an ossified class division” operates not only in the tightly surveilled public spaces treated by Caldeira, but, perhaps even more importantly, in the very architecture of the middle- and upper-class homes in which so many poor Brazilians perform menial labor (Goldstein 2003:80). She argues convincingly that the complete separation, and consistently rudimentary conditions, of the space open to servants in such households reifies and repeatedly re-enacts a centuries-old race/class hierarchy that even the progressive architecture of Niemeyer’s Brasília was incapable of challenging (ibid.; see also Holston 1989).

Further, Goldstein successfully, even if partially, interrogates the workings of race and class in urban Brazil. Like many other scholars and commentators on race in Brazil, Goldstein is highly, and rightly, critical of the popular notion of Brazil as a “racial democracy” or as displaying a “racial harmony.” In fact, although such notions have been defended by some anthropologists and historians (c.f. Harris 1970; Harris and Kottack 1963; Skidmore 1974), few scholars today would defend them. Goldstein further suggests that a willingness to speak openly about class allows the operations of race, and racism, to remain unquestioned. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, Brazilian scholars who have commented on urban spatial arrangements and on class, such as da Matta, have seldom attempt to separate, analytically, race and class in their analyses.

In a notable exception to the rule, Cecilia McCallum has recently argued for understanding the embodied production of racialization with reference to urban space
(McCallum 2005). In so doing, she refuses both essentialized notions of race and over-hasty dismissals of its importance; rather, she insists on attempting to understand the workings of race in practice in a variety of urban contexts. As she argues, following Robin E. Sheriff, the use, on the part of favela residents in Salvador da Bahia, of the “opposition between ‘us’ as negro (black) and ‘them’ as branco (white)” enables discussion of class, which all too often is treated as natural, and naturalized (McCallum 2005:101; Sheriff 2001). Ultimately, McCallum argues for understanding race and class as embodied in practice with reference both to the structures that govern such enactments and to the possibilities of individual agency.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide an overview of the most important theoretical and ethnographic work on tourism and urban space, as well as on contemporary, urban Brazil, that has guided my thinking in this project. While much work in the anthropology of tourism has moved away from understanding tourism through concepts such as alienation, exploitation, commodification, and value, and toward performance- or consumption-oriented approaches, I believe this is a mistake. I do not dismiss performance as irrelevant, but it ultimately reveals little about how and why tourists might pay to look at a poor neighborhood, and it explains even less about how and why that neighborhood came to be “poor” in the first place.

Similarly, in trying to understand urban space in Rio de Janeiro, David Harvey’s emphasis on the local-level workings of global capital is exemplary, as it helps explain why state interventions in enclaves of urban poverty have stopped short of total removal.
After all, a cheap, accessible, and generally compliant (thanks to the police and other agents of state repression) workforce in mandatory for the workings of capitalism—however “unattractive” the spaces inhabited by that workforce might be.

Finally, recent work on urban Brazil continues to highlight the complicated questions of race and class that have occupied scholars for decades. Although it is beyond the scope of the present project to dwell at length on the operations of race in Brazil, the works of scholars such as Caldeira, Goldstein, MacCallum, and Sheriff have been instrumental in shaping my own understandings of the relationship between class and race in Brazil. Indeed, following the work of these scholars, in drawing attention to the violent racism that has operated in Rio de Janeiro since Portuguese colonization, I am simultaneously attentive to both class hierarchies and spatial segregation.
CHAPTER THREE
Description of Research Methods

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the field methods I employed in my research in Rio de Janeiro. Given that my experience in and of Rio began several years before I started the research on which the present project is based, this chapter also contextualizes this project in terms of these earlier experiences. I next discuss how I first became acquainted with poverty tourism, before describing my initial and subsequent field encounters with the phenomenon. After describing and discussing my strategies and encounters with the various groups with whom I conducted research, I point to both weaknesses and strengths in my data and suggest how these limited and shaped the final outcome of this dissertation.

First Encounters with Poverty Tourism

My initial encounter with poverty tourism in Rio came during the course of master’s field research with O Movimento Lésbico de Campinas (Mo.Le.Ca./The Lesbian Movement of Campinas; see Castle 2008, 2011). In February of 2004, I accompanied a group of my friends and informants from Campinas to Rio de Janeiro, approximately 275 miles or 8 hours on a bus, in order to attend Carnaval. During that week-long visit, I had the opportunity to play hostess in the city, despite my foreign-ness, given that I had already spent two summers studying Portuguese in Rio. One afternoon, as we visited an
Internet café in Rio’s Lapa district, we saw a flyer advertising a “favela tour.” The flyer offered, in English, to take tourists on a journey to see the “real Brazil” of Rocinha—a place of seductive danger and extreme poverty. This flyer, and the existence of the tours it proffered, stunned and intrigued me and sparked my initial interest in poverty tourism. My friends and I did not take the tour during our stay, as my friends were unwilling to spend the 50 reais (about $20 at the time) to see a poor neighborhood. In fact, they suggested that my interest in taking such a tour was both odd and “American.” As suggested by the language of the flyer and confirmed during my subsequent research, my friends were not the target audience for such tours. This flyer, in tandem with my previous serendipitous visit to Rocinha, planted the seeds for what was to become my dissertation research.

Preliminary Fieldwork—2005

The flyer in the Internet café stayed with me as I began to envision what my dissertation project would entail. As such, in the summer of 2005, I returned to Rio to begin a preliminary investigation of the phenomenon of poverty tourism and to assess whether or not such a project would be viable for my dissertation. During this first phase of research, I focused primarily on the production and consumption of the so-called “favela” tours, rather than on community reception of the tours. My decision to focus on the tours and tourists was made largely on the basis of accessibility: the tours were marketed to the public and could be purchased with relative ease, but I had no contacts in Rocinha at the time. This early contact with Rocinha also provided me with the

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12 Lapa is located near the Center district of Rio and is famous for its Roman-style aqueducts, known as the Arcos do Lapa, as well as for its nightclubs, such as Carioca da Gema. It is not among the most touristic neighborhoods in Rio, except during Carnaval, when it plays host to a number of enormous street parties.
opportunity to familiarize myself with the layout of the neighborhood, its key streets and sections, and the public transportation routes that serviced the neighborhood.

Similarly, during this pilot research, I had quite limited contact with the owners of the tour companies that provided “favela” tours. Despite spending little time interacting with company owners—most contact took place over the phone, I was pleased that they seemed so receptive to my project. In fact, one company owner suggested that my findings about tourists’ impressions of the tours might be useful for crafting a better, and more profitable, product. The fact that my initial pilot research was a relatively short-term project, lasting just under two months, and the fact that I paid to participate in the tours likely facilitated the warmth and receptivity I initially experienced from the company owners.

I began my pilot research by participating alongside tourists on tours offered by each of the four companies offering tours of Rocinha. I almost always paid for the tours on which I participated, but eventually two guides, each working for a different company, permitted me to participate in the tours for free, as I had already taken their tours as a paying participant at least once. Although there were four official, licensed tour companies providing tours of Rocinha, during this period I also became aware of the operation of so-called “camel” tours of Rocinha. “Camel tours” is the name given to those tours that are not licensed by the Ministry of Tourism and are generally given by people who are not affiliated with a licensed company. Those who operate “camel tours” generally have no formal guide training, although licensed tour guides may moonlight as “camel tour” operators to bolster their income. Essentially, “camel tours” are operated by entrepreneurially-minded residents of Rio. Given that these tours operate outside the
official tourism apparatus, it was impossible for me to get a sense of how many of these
tours took place or of how many different “guides” provided these services. In fact, it
was often extremely difficult to identify a “camel tour” in progress, as they might contain
only two or three tourists and the “guide,” and, as such, they looked like a small group of
friends walking together. The only way to identify them with certainty was to overhear
them taking place.

During the course of my preliminary research, I participated on 13 total tours.
These tours were divided among the four tour companies as follows: Carioca Tours (2),
Jungle Tours (5), Rio Slum Tours (3), and Urban Safari Tours (3). As I mentioned
previously, I spent little time conversing with tour company owners during this summer
and I did not conduct formal interviews with any of the company owners. Instead, by
focusing on the tours themselves, I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the
various companies’ scripts and to evaluate their similarities and differences. Further, I
was able to get a general sense of how Rocinha was portrayed on poverty tours and to
take note of any deviations from the typical portrayal.

Through participating in tours, I not only noted how Rocinha, and by way of
extension poverty, was presented, but I also observed who consumed these tours and how
the tourists behaved during their visits to Rocinha. Further, after participating in tours, I
spent a significant amount of time meeting, interviewing, and hanging out with the
tourists who purchased tours of Rocinha. This allowed me to probe tourists’
understandings of what they had seen, as well as to find out what had prompted them to
undertake the tour in the first place. To gain better insight into tourists’ preferences and
understandings, I conducted informal, semi-structured interviews with 23 tourists. These
interviews were almost always conducted in restaurants or bars, and over half of them (13) were conducted in groups of two or more.

As I began to learn quite well during the course of this early research, conducting research with people who are on vacation has significant pitfalls. In the first case, tourists are often uninterested in spending a portion of their vacation being interviewed. As engaging as I found my questions, tourists did not always agree that reflecting on poverty, Rocinha, Rio, Brazil, or Latin America was the best way to make use of their time in Rio. This particular problem was one I would encounter in my later fieldwork, and it was one that I found both frustrating and understandable.

To make encounters with tourists more pleasant, if not stimulating or exciting, we often established a form of quid pro quo: tourists would hang out with me and participate in casual conversations or semi-structured interviews if I could introduce them to new sites or venues in Rio that they might not have visited or of which they might not have been aware. For example, I introduced several tourists to the delightful Academia da Cachaça in Leblon, where we relaxed and discussed their impressions of the tour and Rocinha, while sampling a wide variety of caipirinhas. Other locales to which I introduced tourists during this period also included the Garota de Ipanema and Bofetada bars, both located in Ipanema, the Asa Branca in Lapa, and Amarelinho in Cinelândia.

The length of my exchanges with tourists varied greatly. The shortest conversations lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, while other exchanges lasted for four hours. Of course, these conversations were not focused exclusively on poverty tours or impressions of the city; however, these encounters did offer illuminating insights into tourists’ impression of Rio and their expectations and motivations for visiting. In several
instances, I met with the same tourists on more than one occasion and was able to gauge if and how their opinions about Rio changed during their stay. As I discovered, they seldom changed in any discernable way.

During my encounters with tourists, they tended to frame their visits to Rocinha alongside their visits to other touristic sites. Indeed, most of the tourists with whom I came into contact positioned their consumption of the poverty tours as just one among many tours they took of Rio’s various attractions. For instance, several tourists explicitly listed Rocinha alongside the other attractions they had visited: the Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer) statue/Corcovado, the downtown historical district/Centro, and the Botanical Gardens. For these tourists, Rocinha was, essentially, just another noteworthy site in the Rio de Janeiro landscape. Others, however, pointed out that visiting Rocinha was an excellent alternative to spending a cloudy day indoors.\textsuperscript{13} Just as I had initially learned of poverty tourism from a flyer in an Internet café, tourists tended to learn about the tours from pamphlets or brochures in their hotel or hostel lobbies, though a few tourists indicated that they had initially heard of the tours while researching activities and tours in Rio online, usually prior to their visits.

While the tourists might have had some initial interest in poverty or in seeing something like the “real” Brazil, for most of the tourists I met during this phase of research visiting Rocinha seemed to be less about Rocinha or poverty, per se, and more about participating in a broad range of tours or finding something to do when the weather was uncooperative with their preferred way of spending the day. During my later field

\textsuperscript{13} Summer in the Northern Hemisphere is, obviously, winter in the Southern Hemisphere and July and August, along with March, are generally the “worst” months for visiting Rio for a beach vacation. Although the weather never gets cold—winter temperatures may even drop into the lower 60s at night, the winter months are typically cloudier and less ideal for sunbathing and swimming than other times of the year.
research, this was not at all the case; instead, the tourists with whom I interacted during my dissertation fieldwork often had quite concrete reasons for wanting to take a “slum” tour. Indeed, interviews with tourists during this later period were ripe with references to poverty and violence and to popular cultural portrayals of favelas. I am not sure why this was the case, but I suspect the younger age of the tourists with whom I interacted during my pilot research may be in part responsible for the disparity.

This brief initial research was instructive to me in several ways. First, I realized that research with the tourists themselves, while interesting, offered only limited research possibilities. The brevity of their stays, coupled with their general focus on fun and relaxation, made serious, sustained interactions with them difficult at best. Further, these initial interviews suggested to me that the tourists were often not especially self-reflexive about their experiences touring Rocinha or about their motivations for having done so. Indeed, they did not always have a conscious reason for having taken the tour; as such, I realized that understanding this phenomenon would require both a significantly more comprehensive approach and familiarity with other actors both directly and indirectly involved in poverty tourism.

Dissertation Fieldwork—2007-2008

Just as I participated in tours during my preliminary field research, I continued to do so during my primary dissertation field research. Given that I describe the tours on which I participated in great detail in Chapter Five: Urban Poverty as a Tourist Attraction, I focus here on my conversations and interviews with those involved in producing, consuming, and critiquing the tours, rather than on the tours themselves. The
key poverty-tour-related groups with whom I spent time include tour company owners, tour guides, tourists, members of the Rocinha-based non-governmental organization Rocinha Tour, and employees at the State Ministry of Tourism, RioTur. In the following sections, I describe my work with each of these groups in turn.

Tour Company Owners

Of all of the groups with whom I conducted research, tour company owners were the least willing to engage in extended conversations with me about tourism in Rocinha. With one exception, owners were generally guarded in their interactions with me, and most of them repeatedly attempted to avoid meeting with me privately, though they engaged with me readily during group meetings in Rocinha. I typically contacted company owners by calling them, though I exchanged emails with two of them, and I never visited one of the owners at her/his home, as I was never invited.14

I initially contacted all of the owners by phone after having received their phone numbers through Rocinha Tur, an organization founded by Rocinha residents to try to reshape tourism in the community, which I discuss in further detail below. I explained to each of them, or, in the case of the multi-owner company, to the owner with whom I spoke, that I was an anthropologist who was deeply interested in favela tourism and who was “assisting” at the Rocinha Tur headquarters. As a meeting had already been scheduled between Rocinha Tur and all of the company owners for the last week of July 2007, the owners suggested that we meet for the first time at this meeting.

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14 One company owner invited me out to dinner, but as I suspected his motivations had little to do with my project, I declined his offer.
It is worth noting that several company owners had agreed to participate in this group meeting only after Leandro, the head of Rocinha Tour, had scheduled an initial interview with me at the same time as a meeting he had scheduled with one of the company owners. Rather than introducing me to her directly when I arrived at the Rocinha Tour headquarters, he told her that I was an American there to interview him about tourism in the community and that I would be writing about his views of the practice. While this was technically true, Leandro expertly manipulated this owner into thinking I was an international journalist and that I might do damage to her company if she did not cooperate. The ruse worked well, as she informed me that she was eager to attend the meeting with Rocinha Tour representatives and that she would be happy to assist in securing the attendance of the other company owners. She was true to her word, and whatever conversations she had with the other company owners must have been compelling, as no one missed the meeting.

Although no owner ever told me directly that they were displeased with Leandro’s maneuver or with my complicity in it, I suspect that they were. In fact, at the initial meeting with company owners, which I describe in Chapter Seven, once I made clear that I was an anthropologist rather than a journalist, several of the owners seemed to relax and later took little care in voicing their objections to Rocinha Tours’ plans to make tourism profitable for Rocinha residents.

Immediately following this initial meeting, I made plans to meet individually with two of the company owners and exchanged contact information for later interviews with the other owners. Ultimately, I only formally interviewed two company owners, though I had regular conversations with a third, who was far more willing to answer my questions
and seemed to enjoy our exchanges. The owners/guides of the fourth tour company refused to meet with me and, in fact, banned me from participating further in their tours, after I witnessed a rather unpleasant exchange between one of the owners and a small child (see chapter five).

Although my association with Rocinha Tur was integral to the completion of this project, in some ways I believe it hindered my ability to establish rapport with tour company owners. It is likely that this would have been a somewhat difficult task under any circumstances, given my views on the practice of poverty tourism, which are less than positive. Indeed, although I found a variety of ways to exculpate both tourists and tour guides for their roles in exploiting the “poverty” of Rocinha and its residents, I found it remarkably difficult to do so for tour company owners. However, despite keeping my thoughts about company owners to myself, assisting Rocinha Tour in its efforts to help bring concrete benefits to the community essentially declared my support of such a project and, consequently, put tour company owners on the defensive. On the other hand, I also suspect that if I had been unaffiliated with any community group, several of the tour owners might have dismissed my research out of hand and viewed me as someone with whom they did not need to contend.

Aside from phone conversations, casual face-to-face conversations, and two formal interviews, I was able to talk with and observe four of the six company owners during and immediately after tours. Three of the owners also served as tour guides, while a fourth occasionally rode to Rocinha with his tours, though he did not take the tours. Within Rocinha, I was able not only to observe these owners’ interactions with tourists and their responses to tourist inquiries, but also to observe how the owners interacted
with and behaved toward residents of Rocinha. This was, perhaps, the most useful data I gathered in my encounters with tour company owners. The three owners who also served as tour guides refused to meet me outside of the context of the tours, but they were willing, if not eager, to answer questions while tourists browsed the merchandise for sale at the beginning of the tours (see Chapter Five for discussion of the tour trajectories).

As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five, tour company owners are all residents of middle and upper class neighborhoods in Rio, and none of them has ever resided in Rocinha or in another slum. They are all white; four of the six owners are men; and they ranged in age from their mid 20s to their mid 50s. Despite the professed good, even if paternalistic, intentions of two of the guides, who publically frame their tours as efforts to “help” Rocinha, all of the company owners live off of the income generated by their companies. Only one of the four companies, however, exclusively specializes in poverty tourism; the other three also offer other types of tours in Rio.

Tour Guides

Just as there was considerable variation in my encounters with tour company owners, my interactions with tour guides varied, as well, though tour guides typically were more willing to engage with me than company owners. Because the guides of one of the four companies were also its owners, my discussion of guides in this section excludes them and focuses, instead, on the (non-owner) guides from the other three companies.

Tour guides from the other three companies demonstrated, on the whole, a willingness to engage with me, to answer my questions, and to offer their opinions on a
wide variety of topics. My interactions with tour guides, as well as with van/bus/jeep drivers, included conversations during breaks in the tours and informal and semi-structured interviews. These exchanges and interviews typically happened while the tour guides and drivers had free time between conducting tours, as guides were generally reluctant or unwilling to meet with me to discuss the tours before beginning work or after they got off of work, or on their days off. The exceptions to this trend were two of the three guides I interviewed from Jungle Tours, as I discuss below. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, and they almost always took place over lunch—usually at an ao kilo (or by-the-kilo) restaurant. 

My interviews with guides focused on the guides’ professional trajectories and their motivations for becoming guides. I asked about how they learned English and about what made them want to lead this type of tour. Most of the guides had not set out to lead any particular type of tour and, with one exception, no one told me that touring a favela had even occurred to them before they were offered the opportunity to take tourists to Rocinha. Only Renato, the guide from Rocinha, had set out to become a tour guide in order to introduce tourists to a favela. Indeed, the guides I interviewed, with the exception of Renato, had never even visited Rocinha before becoming involved with tourism, and they had learned what they knew about Rocinha from the script of the tours and from popular media.

The guides made it clear that, while they were able to improvise portions of the tour, each tour company had a script that had to be followed. They also made clear that

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15 Ao kilo, buffet-style restaurants are usually less expensive than traditional restaurants with menus, making them especially popular choices for a workday lunch.

16 One tour guide, a part-time employee of Jungle Tours, had been a history major in college and specialized in leading tours of Rio’s historic downtown. Her work in Rocinha was not her focus, but rather a way of making ends meet.
they had little to no input on the script, and that scripts were produced by company owners and, in Mauricio’s words, “god knows who” (“deus sabe quem”). Although no guides were willing to tell me that they objected to the scripts or to their content in their entirety, the frequency of their emphasis on having little input in the production of the scripts is telling.

During the course of interviews with the guides and drivers, I asked about their impressions of the tourists, the community, and of favelas more generally. Similarly, I asked them to describe a “typical” tourist in Rocinha and a “typical” tourist in Rio. True to the script of the tours, guides often singled out Rocinha tourists as more interested in getting to know Brazil than other Rio tourists. Whether the guides would have made such an assessment if tours did not emphasize the uniqueness of those tourists who participated in favela tours is difficult to say; however, drivers, who rarely spoke any English and, as such, were not exposed to the tour narrative, seldom made any distinction whatsoever between Rocinha tourists and tourists more generally.

In discussions with guides, I also asked them why they thought foreign tourists might pay for a tour of a favela and why they thought that Brazilians did not. Guides, with the exception, again, of Renato, told me that, prior to their experience offering favela tours, they had never considered favelas a tourist attraction. I also questioned guides about their reception in Rocinha and they were unanimous in believing themselves to be well received by community residents.

One of the most interesting points to emerge in my conversations with tour guides was whether or not touring Rocinha had prompted the guides to reevaluate their ideas about favelas generally. After all, my research with tourists suggests that tourists take
Rocinha to be virtually interchangeable with other favelas in Rio, Brazil, and even Latin America, and that, as such, their perceptions of favelas are often (re)shaped in light of the tours. Guides, however, did not demonstrate this tendency. Instead, what tourists took to be representative of favelas generally, guides took to be indicative only of life in Rocinha. In these conversations, guides often pointed to concrete features of Rocinha that cause it to stand out from other impoverished communities, including its size, its affluence relative to other favelas, its infrastructure, and its location in the Zona Sul.

While drivers participated in most of my interviews with guides, they typically had much less to say about the tours, as they waited with the van/jeep/bus while the tours were conducted and they typically spoke little to no English. They were willing to share their opinions of tourists and tourism with me, but were quick to note that these opinions were highly speculative, as they had little direct knowledge of either.

The guides with whom I had the most contact were those who were willing to meet with me outside of the breaks between tours. These three guides, unlike the six others with whom I regularly came into contact, were all employed by Jungle Tours. Given how extraordinarily cooperative the owner of this company was, I suspect that his encouragement might have played a part in their willingness to engage with me, but no guide ever told me that he or she had been instructed to be cooperative. Two of these guides were male, full-time employees of Jungle Tours, and one of these, Renato, was from Rocinha. The other tour guide, Dilma, was female and was a part-time employee. Both Renato and Dilma seemed happy to meet with me outside of their work schedule, and I met with Dilma on four occasions and with Renato on six. My time with Renato was particularly useful, as he lived in Rocinha and was able to introduce me to people I
might not have met otherwise. His grandmother, whose home was featured on Renato’s tours, was an especially wonderful contact, and she was kind enough to spend time discussing her thoughts about tourists and tourism, from the position of one toured, with me.

In addition to conducting interviews and engaging in informal conversations with guides, I also closely observed the ways in which they conducted their tours. Not only did I pay attention to guides’ performances of the tour script, but I also observed their encounters with tourists and with community residents, if any.

Tourists

Of all of the groups with which I interacted during the course of my field research, tourists posed, by far, the greatest degree of difficulty for me. This difficulty can be divided into two types: overcoming tourists’ general tendency to want to enjoy their vacations, rather than be interviewed by an anthropologist, and keeping the tourists on topic, once interviews were underway. As in my preliminary fieldwork, the tourists with whom I spent time typically wanted to hang out and have a drink while being interviewed, so many of my interviews took place in restaurants, cafes, or bars. Other interviews took place on the beaches of Copacabana or Ipanema, while still others were conducted in hotel lobbies or while shopping. Interviews ranged in duration from fewer than 30 minutes to over four hours, though the typical interviews lasted between one and two hours.

Given that only a few of the tourists I encountered and interviewed were traveling alone, and given that tourists traveling with companions were reluctant to be separated
from them in order to be interviewed, most interviews involved more than one tourist at the same time. This presented both an opportunity to enhance the nature of the insight I gained from tourists and a hindrance to the interview process. On the one hand, tourists would often engage each other in conversation about the tour, resulting in a fuller explication of their experiences than might otherwise have occurred. On the other hand, interviews in tandem ran the risk of becoming, in essence, one-person interviews, as those tourists who more forcefully articulated their opinions often spoke over or on behalf of their friends.

As part of my research, I attempted to be the first person picked up by the tour company jeeps or vans. This not only provided me with an opportunity to introduce myself to the guide and driver, but it also allowed me to introduce myself to tourists as they boarded. As tourists were picked up at their hotels, I explained who I was, what I was doing, and requested their permission to record the tour. No one ever denied me permission to do so. As a result of typically being the first aboard the tour company vehicle, tourists were aware that a researcher was present and that their tour, as well as any commentary they shared with the group, would be recorded. I also provided tourists with IRB consent forms to sign, which informed them that their identities would remain confidential and that any references made to their participation on the tours, as well as any direct quotations used in this project, would be made with pseudonyms and without the inclusion of any information that could be used to identify them. Although I was prepared to explain how I intended to maintain confidentiality to any tourist who asked or seemed concerned, no one ever indicated any degree of discomfort with the research process or with their own privacy.
After the end of the tours, I had typically established more of a rapport with some tourists than with others, and these were the tourists who most often accepted my invitation to participate in an interview. Some tourists, unsurprisingly, simply wanted to return to their rooms after the tour, while others demonstrated more flexibility with their time. I generally voiced the possibility of hanging out and chatting with any tourists who seemed remotely interested. In order to seem more appealing, I highlighted the fact that I had lived in Rio for some time and that I was, as such, aware of good place to eat, dance, or drink. Some tourists took me up on the offer to introduce them to such locations, while others invited me to join them on their already-planned visits to a restaurant or bar after the tour. Still others declined my offer.

My conversations with tourists were virtually always in English. I interviewed one woman from Colombia in Spanish, but this was the only exception to the English-only rule. As we began our exchanges, tourists often asked me to explain what exactly “anthropology” was, or, at the very least, to explain how my interviews with them fit into my research. During the course of our conversations, I asked them what had prompted them to visit Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, and Rocinha, and to describe their general impressions of these locales. I was interested to see if and how their impressions and experiences of Rio de Janeiro, on the one hand, and Rocinha, on the other differed or were similar. I also prompted tourists to draw connections or distinctions between Rocinha and their hometowns. I asked tourists, too, if they had ever participated in any type of poverty tour prior to their visits to Rocinha, or if they had visited impoverished neighborhoods or regions of their home countries. For example, I asked several South African tourists with whom I spoke if they had ever gone on a township tour, and I asked
tourists from the U.S. if they had toured any American ghettos. Tourists almost universally told me that they had not. The only group of tourists that had had any significant prior experiences with poverty tourism was Australian backpackers, who tended to be quite young; their experiences with poverty tourism typically consisted of having participated in township tours in South Africa.

I was keenly interested in if or how touring Rocinha changed or crafted tourists’ perception of Rio, Brazil, and even Latin America. For the most part, any shifts in perception were relatively small, at least as reported by the tourists. Tourists were, however, likely to embrace Rocinha as representative of all Brazilian or Latin American poverty. If tourists’ views on poverty changed during the course of their tour, they reported that they had left Rocinha with the idea that poverty in Brazil/Latin America was not nearly as bad as it was popularly depicted. In discussing their perceptions of Rocinha, I was able to discern that they contextualized what they encountered in Rocinha in terms of two distinct frames of reference: what they had seen in films or on television and what they had seen from their taxis on the way from the airport to their hotels. In moments such as these, I was able to begin developing an understanding of tourists’ interpretations of Rio’s social geography.

My research with tourists was not limited to interviews and casual conversations; rather, it also involved observing them closely while they were participation on the tours. For instance, I noted what they photographed and did not photograph, what they touched, and what they found exciting, by paying attention to what they looked at and how they talking about it. I chronicled their gestures and, insofar as possible, their comments. I also observed them as they shopped, and I kept track of what they bought or did not buy.
The guest books kept by one of the tour companies were another useful resource for understanding tourists and their perceptions of the tours. The tour company, Rio Slum Tours, permitted me to access their guest books, and I was able to examine and chart tourists’ comments, as well as their nationalities. What tourists did not write was probably as revealing as what they did write. Most tourists, for example, left comments such as “I had a wonderful time,” “interesting place,” “great tour,” or “I learned so much.” The comments were always positive and never, as far as I saw, reflected on the politics of purchasing a tour of poverty, nor did they comment on, let alone critique, the tour’s narrative of neighborhood. The guest books provided an excellent source of demographic data, and I noted nationalities in them that I never encountered on an actual tour (e.g. Swiss, Finnish, Danish).

The State Ministry of Tourism

In addition to my research with tourists and tour company personnel, I also observed employees of the State Ministry of Tourism during meetings and other encounters with Rocinha residents. These employees ranged in rank from a secretary to mid- and high-ranking figures to the Minister of Tourism himself. Only one of the five employees with whom I came into contact was a woman, and only two of these employees agreed to be interviewed. Due to the low number of employees at the Ministry, the possibility of identifying those with whom I met would be relatively easy. As such, when I refer to meeting with or interviewing a Ministry official, I do not describe the person in any way.
Rocinha Residents

I met residents of Rocinha in a plethora of ways, which were, as often as not, unintentional or unplanned. As I discussed in the introduction, I met a number of residents simply by virtue of the fact that, upon seeing me for the first time, they judged me to be lost and offered to assist me. Others I met by visiting local establishments, such as an Internet café, beauty salon, pizza parlor, lunch stand, and copy shop. Those I met often introduced me to friends or family members, or to acquaintances they thought might have insight to offer me into tourism in the community. No community resident with whom I came into contact ever attempted to dissuade me from working in the community, nor, in marked contrast with my experiences working with tourists, did anyone ever refuse to talk with me.

When I first began work in Rocinha, I contacted community leaders, such as the president of the residents’ association (Associação de Moradores) and the president of the neighborhood association for Rocinha’s most affluent neighborhood, Bairro Barcelos. Both of these men were willing to be interviewed and to direct me to other important community members—sometimes calling them in my presence to make certain that they would meet with me. They both approved of my project and offered to provide additional assistance as needed.

Similarly, as my project began, I contacted, usually in person, local non-governmental organizations to begin to meet residents (and non-residents) who were focused on some type of community change. For example, I met my research assistant after talking with members of a local theater group that focused on staging community-relevant performances with local actors. Members of these organizations often directed
me to other local activists, as well as to prominent community members, such as those actively involved in producing Rocinha’s television and radio programs. Most of the people I met in this way were incredibly cooperative and willing to discuss their thoughts on a variety of issues, including, but not limited to, poverty, tourism, class, and urban segregation. In total, I met with and interviewed over two dozen community leaders in this way, and I had informal conversations with at least 30 others.

Rocinha Tur

It was through contacts at Radio Brisa, one of Rocinha’s local radio stations, that I came into contact with Leandro, the president and co-founder of Rocinha Tur, and my most important ally and collaborator during this project. Through Leandro, I met the other members of Rocinha Tur, interested community residents who were not officially involved with Rocinha Tur, local business leaders, local tour guides, the owners and operators of poverty tour companies, and officials at the State Ministry of Tourism (TurisRio). It would be impossible to overstate the importance of Leandro and his contacts for this project.

When I was not following tour groups or interviewing tourists, I spent my days with members Rocinha Tur, in their offices, in meetings with state officials and/or tour company owners, or in their homes. In addition to participating in all of the group’s activities, I formally interviewed each of the seven members of the group (both the active and relatively inactive members) on at least two occasions. I interviewed six of the members at least three times and four of the members at least six times over the course of my time in Rocinha. Aside from formal interviews, I engaged in countless conversations
with group members, their friends, and their families about topics ranging from tourism, class, and race to the latest events on popular telenovelas, the politics of repressive policing (especially during the 2007 Pan-American Games), and the drug traffic; and I participated in and observed their interactions with outsiders during meetings with tour company representatives and with state officials.

I often, but not always, recorded my interviews and conversations with Rocinha Tur members and friends, and several members of the group became so accustomed to my penchant for recording that they would indicate to me whether or not what they were planning to discuss constituted an “important” or “unimportant” topic. Leandro, in particular, liked to tell me to be sure to record what he was about to say, and he sometimes used my recordings as a way to produce drafts of letters orally, rather than sitting down to type them. He would then listen to himself, usually in my presence, and engage in meta-analysis of his original assertions, during which he would clarify, modify, or endorse his position. These moments often proved especially illuminating for me, as I was able to hear him reflect on and critique his own ideas and assertions. Others, rather than noting when they had something important to say, would indicate that they were about to gossip or to discuss what they believed to be trivial topics. This was particularly true of the two active women in Rocinha Tur, who often seemed to believe that their contributions might not be “recording-worthy.”

In total, there were three female members of Rocinha Tur (RT), two of whom regularly participated in group activities. Both of these women, Tânia and Simone, were in their early 20s, and one (Simone) was a history major at the Federal University of Rio
The other four members of RT were men, three of whom were over the age of 40 and one of whom, Ricardo, was in his mid 20s. While each of them participated regularly, Leandro, Francisco, and Pedro—the oldest three members—participated much more frequently than Ricardo. Leandro a relatively new, and relatively unsuccessful, consulting/marketing operation for local businesses, despite having had no formal training in the field. Francisco worked in an upscale ice cream parlor, while Ricardo worked odd jobs when he could find them. Pedro, unique among the male participants in RT in that he had finished high school, had been trained as a bookkeeper, at which we has employed.

The only member of RT consistently to identify as “negra” was Tânia, who was adamant that her identification was a political act expressing her solidarity with an oppressed people. On the other hand, only Pedro uniformly referred to himself as “branco” (or “white”). Leandro, perhaps, demonstrated the most fascinating deployment of racial categories; when I asked him to describe how he thought of himself in terms of race, he drew a distinction between how he “was” and how “they,” meaning people outside of Rocinha or middle class Brazilians, thought of him. He “was” a “mulato,” but

17 It is no small feat that Simone managed to get accepted to UFRJ, which is, by any accounting, among the best universities in Brazil.
“they” thought of him as “negro” because, according to Leandro’s understanding, he was “poor” and a “slum-dweller.” As such, Leandro invoked race and racial categories as a way of commenting on class and classism, in much the same way as both Sheriff (2001) and MacCallum (2005) have suggested occurs.

Limitations of the Data

Given my broad interests in feminist analysis, the most troubling limitation of my data involves gender. While my conversations with tourists were relatively evenly divided along gender lines and included those with varying gendered performances, my work with community residents, and particularly with Rocinha Tur, was not so varied in terms of gender. In fact, most of my time in Rocinha was spent with heterosexual men. As such, I can offer very little in terms of understanding any gendered difference(s) that might exist in terms of community residents’ perceptions of and responses to tourism or other topics.

A similar potential axis of difference to which I cannot attend involves age. Because the most active members of Rocinha Tur were not only male but also between 40 and 55 years old, I cannot comment with great certainty on generational differences in perceptions of tourism, violence, and the like. Because my key collaborators were middle-aged men, I suspect that they may have been less than forthcoming with me about the difficulties they faced in order to undertake their work with Rocinha Tur. Specifically, they seldom referenced directly their struggles to make ends meet; instead, I often heard about their economic circumstances from their common law wives. For instance, it was not until I had been working with Leandro for nearly five months that he
complained about the financial burden of canceled meetings at TurisRio.\textsuperscript{18} However, his wife had made me aware of their situation months earlier, when she told me that their phone had been cut off due to lack of payment. Although they never said so directly, the men with whom I worked were much more self-conscious about our different class positions than the women with whom I came into contact, and they often tried to minimize any discomfort that these different positions might cause (to either of us) by ignoring these differences.

A further area of potential difficulty relates to the use of interviews. My interviews with Rocinha Tur (RT) members took place in a variety of settings, including members’ homes, the RT offices, and local bars or cafés. Much like my interviews with other community residents and with tour guides, these conversations always took place in Portuguese. Although I have achieved linguistic competency in Portuguese, I cannot state categorically that I never missed something or misunderstood an interviewee’s point. Similarly, because I suffer from hearing loss, I sometimes had to ask people to speak up or to repeat themselves. Although audio recordings helped alleviate problems with volume when I returned to the interviews later, they did not guarantee that I heard correctly everything my interviewees were saying at the time they said it.

Formal interviews with RT members varied widely in length, from approximately 30 minutes to over three hours, and were often punctuated by other activities or conversations. For example, during one especially lengthy interview with Pedro at the bar in Nosso Shopping, we paused three separate times to chat with friends and acquaintances who were also in the bar. During interviews, I asked interviewees to

\textsuperscript{18} As I discuss later, canceled meeting posed a financial burden as they required us to return to TurisRio on another day, which meant that we had to pay bus fare more than once.
reflect not only on tourism generally and in Rocinha specifically, but also on the spatial management policies being implemented in Rocinha, on current events, on recent or planned meetings, on the difficulties Rocinha residents faced in finding adequate employment, on the role of police in the community, on their experiences outside of Rocinha, and on other topics of interest. Although I seldom asked directly, discussion of the drug traffic and of drug-related violence in the community was not absent from these interviews, especially when they were conducted in the interviewee’s home. I also often asked interviewees to elaborate on comments made during previous interviews or during other conversations, in order to gauge if/how their ideas had changed. Ultimately, I attempted to provide interviewees with the opportunity to reflect on issues and ideas that mattered to them.

Despite my best intentions, as Charles L. Briggs (1983) has made clear, even the most carefully planned interviews, conducted by linguistically competent and theoretically informed interviewers, may be rife with problems. Most importantly, he notes how in interviews “the purposeful, goal-directed uses of language”—for example, those during which interviewees are directly responding questions—may be highlighted “at the expense of creative, indexical functions” (1983:255). Due to this and a host of other potential problems, he recommends that anthropologists “replace our present, largely unquestioned faith in the interview as a means of obtaining exegesis with a critical understanding of the process and its results” (1983:256).

Another issue worth considering here is my own position of relative privilege vis-à-vis my informants and friends in Rocinha. While no one ever admitted to helping me because I looked like I came from a privileged background, I suspect that this way, in
part, the case. Typically, when my race or class came up, they were discussed indirectly; for instance, I was frequently told that I looked “American,” like a “gringa,” or, perhaps, like someone from Southern Brazil. All of these were subtle ways of indexing both my class and race, and, more particularly, of situating me with respect to others in Rocinha or Rio. Although I do not believe my relative privilege was sufficient to coerce people into speaking with me, it is quite possible that people felt obligated to talk with me or to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. In reflecting on how often people assumed I was lost and offered to help me, for example, it is highly unlikely that, had I not been “white,” they would have made the same assumption.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the key groups with whom I conducted research, such as tour guides, tourists, state and local officials, residents of Rocinha, and members of the Rocinha Tour organization. Further, I have described the methods I employed to generate my data. I have also highlighted several of the potential limitations of my data, related both to scope and to methods. Ultimately, despite a number of potential limitations, I believe that sufficient evidence exists to support the claims I make in this dissertation.
When I entered the arrivals area at Rio de Janeiro’s Galeão International Airport on July 11, 2007, I was greeted with rose petals and a band playing the “Star-Spangled Banner.” Like many of those on United flight #861 from Chicago, I was not sure what to make of the too-enthusiastic welcome; in fact, it was tempting to think I might still be asleep. It was not until a few minutes later that someone explained to me that a large contingent of the United States’ delegation to the Pan-American games had been on my flight and that this was the welcome the City was giving to arriving athletes from each country. Had this been my first arrival in Rio—or had I not been able to converse with one of the women selling taxi vouchers—I’m sure I would have been quite astounded, if not flabbergasted, by the city’s exceptionally warm reception of incoming foreign flights.

After such a surreal arrival at the airport, the familiar roadside view as my bus made its way from the Ilha do Governador toward the Zona Sul was all too real: dozens upon dozens of shacks pieced together from cardboard, plastic, and scraps of wood; clothes hanging on haphazardly-strung lines; stray dogs and horses; debris strewn about;

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19 Athletes were greeted with rose petals and a rendition of their country’s national anthem, then ushered onto air conditioned luxury busses, which received a police escort to their destination. During the Games and the weeks leading up to them, one lane of traffic on all of the main routes traveled by arriving athletes had been re-painted and designated for official Pan-American Game traffic only, further exacerbating an already problematic traffic situation in the city and providing many residents with whom I came into contact with an endless, and understandable, cause for consternation and complaint.

20 Rio, specifically, and Brazil, generally, are open to and welcoming of foreign tourism; in fact, international flight arrivals in Rio are typically greeted by employees of Rio’s State Ministry of Tourism (TurisRio), who provide visitors with free guides and colorful maps of attractions.
and brightly-colored billboards welcoming visitors, in both Portuguese and English, to Rio de Janeiro and to the Pan-American Games. Given my research interests in both tourism and favelas, I tried to imagine how I might comprehend what I was seeing if I were seeing it as a tourist and for the first time. I admit that this exercise in imagination was more comfortable for me than was gazing at what Cariocas call “miséria,” or misery, from my privileged vantage point. I imagined that this first, on-the-ground view of Rio might shape how I thought about urban poverty and favelas, or even about how I thought about Latin America, generally.

As I came to find out over the course of my work, I was not incorrect in thinking that first impressions do, in fact, color the understandings many tourists have of Rio de Janeiro and of poverty. Indeed, tourists did find their trips from the airport to their hotels memorable. For example, as one middle-aged German woman, who was visiting Rio with her husband for the second time, discussed how seeing the poverty surrounding the airport made her feel, she told me, “that’s when you know you’re in a different world.” In other words, the international airport could be an international airport anywhere, but the visual indicators of extreme poverty surrounding the airport made it clear, more than the multi-hour, transatlantic plane ride, that she was not in Germany any more. This brush with poverty did not generally cause tourists undue stress; in fact, I was told more than a few times by tourists that “that”—meaning the settlements they saw from their bus or taxi windows en route to their hotels—was what they expected, or even wanted, to experience when they signed up for a tour of a “favela.” In other words, as I also heard dozens of times, many, if not most, of the tourists I met on tours of Rocinha, wanted an experience with the “real” Brazil—the Brazil behind what they perceived to be the façade
of luxury accommodations, chic cafes, and trendy shopping centers, a Brazil defined for them by the desperate living conditions of some of its poorest inhabitants. It is worth noting that this desire to experience an “authentic” Brazil (c.f. MacCannell 1976, 2001) was predicated on twin assumptions: first, that luxury is, at least in Brazil, inauthentic, and second, that poverty is, at least in Brazil, authentic.

It is worth noting that tourists often referred to what they saw as “that,” or, while on tours of Rocinha, as “this,” suggesting that they were either at a loss for precisely the right noun to name what they saw or, perhaps that they did not wish to name it. Whether the use of “that” was intended to serve as a kind of verbal distancing of the speaker from the spoken about is unclear; however, that the effect of such a speech pattern was to do so is clear. Similarly, I am not certain that the tourists I heard use “that” to refer to Rocinha or to poverty intended to create social distance from those who lived “there”; I am also uncertain as to whether or not tourists generally gave much, if any, conscious consideration to their word choice. Those I asked about their usage of “that” were, or, at least, claimed to be, unaware that they had used the term until I brought it up. Perhaps, ultimately, it is irrelevant whether or not tourists made conscious choices to distance themselves from impoverished communities and their residents. After all, regardless of their intentions, the effect is the same.

Despite professing the aforementioned expectations or desires, these same tourists expressed satisfaction with their tours of Rocinha. Even though Rocinha bears almost no physical, not to mention socio-economic, resemblance to the roadside settlements tourists recalled seeing, tourists virtually always articulated contentment with their incursions.

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21 Of course, these same tourists more often than not frequented such cafes, clubs, and shopping centers, dined in expensive restaurants at least a couple of times on their trips, and stayed in nice hotels.
into Rocinha and they also claimed that they believed that they better understood “Rio,” “Brazil,” “South America,” “Latin America,” or, occasionally, “the Third World.” That tourists used all of these terms to refer to the geographic entity about which they believed themselves to have gained insight is also revealing: in a sense, Rocinha could be any favela in the city/state/nation/continent/region the tourists named. It is tempting to argue, then, that Rocinha is, for many tourists, as much a symbol of urban suffering and cultural “otherness” as it is a specific place, located in a specific geo-historical context. There is something of an irony in many tourists’ “a favela is a favela is a favela” approach to understanding Rocinha and other favelas in Rio and elsewhere. The same tourists who explicitly or implicitly treated Rocinha and other “slums” as interchangeable also were often adamant that I not confuse the hotel at which they were staying with another, presumably less desirable, hotel. In other words, a slum might be a slum, but a tourist hotel is most certainly not just any tourist hotel. I can only speculate on what their reactions might have been had I treated all European cities, for example, as interchangeable. Ultimately, that Rocinha and the squatter settlements visible on the way from Galeão to the Zona Sul shared in common little more than the designation of “favela,” and the history it entails, seemed irrelevant, then, in terms of satisfying those interested in encountering the “different world” of urban poverty.

**Urban Poverty around the World**

Despite one tourist’s assertion that the shacks near Rio’s international airport indicate that Rio—or, perhaps, Brazil, Latin America, or even the “Third World”—is part of a “different” world from the one she is accustomed to inhabiting, the presence of large
pockets of urban misery indicate, instead, that Brazil is very much a part of the same world. In fact, according to the United Nations, nearly one-sixth of the world’s inhabitants reside in slums surrounding the cities of the global South. From Mexico City to Manila, Johannesburg to Mumbai, and Cairo to Caracas, slums are the rule of, and not the exception to, the new urban order. While squatter settlements in and around different cities in different national and regional contexts have their own particular histories, they share a number of features in common that are worth noting. First, many of today’s “slums,” for lack of a better, more coherent term, originated with or exploded after the implementation of the World Bank-promoted Import Substitution-Industrialization policies of the 1950s and 1960s, as I discuss below with respect to Rio. Broadly speaking, these policies acted as a magnet drawing people from the countryside to large, urban centers in search of employment in the burgeoning manufacturing industries.

Second, slums in cities around the world have typically been, and largely continue to be, met first and foremost with removal or eradication efforts. For example, as early as 1950 Hong Kong forcibly removed over 100,000 slum residents, while over 750,000 were removed from Harare in 2005 alone (Davis 2006:102). Only later, and often as a last resort, have city and state governments approached the “problem” of slums with renovation or “rehabilitation” efforts by local and state governments.

Third, slums in or near city centers have proven particularly resilient (i.e. difficult to remove) due to their proximity to sources of income for their residents, who usually work in low-level industrial or service sector positions. Fourth, slums have dramatically higher population densities than non-slum neighborhoods in the same cities, meaning, at

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22 Although these figures are astounding, the record for largest slum eviction belongs to Rangoon, which, from 1995-1996, removed nearly 1,000,000 slum residents (Davis 2006:102).
the very least, that slums are far less likely than other, non-slum neighborhoods to contain open or green spaces. In “slums” such as Rocinha, which has extremely limited open public space, the streets themselves become the primary centers of sociality. Fifth, residents of slums often have dramatically reduced life expectancies, literacy rates, and access to health care, food, and potable water relative to non-slum residents of the same cities.

Despite these extremely important similarities, understanding favelas in Brazil generally and in Rio de Janeiro, specifically, requires an examination of their particular histories. While it is outside the scope of this project to address the history of the growth of favelas in great detail, some understanding of the historical context in which favelas were produced is critical for examining and comprehending the current place of favelas in the Brazilian social imaginary and both state and popular responses to the “problem” of favelas. It is to a brief history of “favelas” in Rio de Janeiro and, specifically to Rocinha, then, that I now turn.

Favelas in Rio de Janeiro

Today, over 700 favelas dot the Rio de Janeiro landscape, making Rio the Brazilian city with the second-highest number of favelas. The city of São Paulo, with nearly 3 times Rio’s population, currently counts over 900 favelas. While most favelas fall somewhere in the middle, favelas in Rio range in size from a few hundred inhabitants to estimates of nearly 200,000 inhabitants, in the case of Rocinha. Similarly, favelas vary widely in terms of infrastructure, housing construction, and the economic circumstances of their population. On one extreme are those favelas with virtually no infrastructure
whose residents live primarily in shacks constructed from plastic, scrap wood, and scrap metal; on the other are communities like Rocinha which boast electricity, paved roads, running water, and multi-story apartment buildings, some of which include balconies and mosaic tile façades. Despite significant variation in their size and structure, favelas have most often originated as squatter settlements or land “invasions,” which later become regularized through, among other things, the establishment of legal land tenure; their inhabitants often have limited (or no) access to education, health care, and/or police services; and they are all too often dominated by a narco-traffic gang, though this was not always the case.

In fact, although the rapid growth of favelas, in both number and size, is a 20th century phenomenon, favelas in Rio de Janeiro have a history that dates at least to the late 19th century. Without examining the growth of favelas in Rio de Janeiro and the responses of government officials and city elites to it, it is impossible to understand how favelas have and do fit into the city’s landscape and imaginary. In this chapter, then, I trace the rise of favelas in Rio from the earliest “Morro da Favela” to the present and I address popular reactions to favelas from eradication/relocation efforts to the most recent municipal and state programs aimed at integrating/upgrading favelas. Here I suggest that, even while contemporary attempts to “improve” favelas constitute a considerable improvement on earlier forced-relocation strategies, the same basic understanding of favelas and those who inhabit them underpins both types of responses to the presence of large, visible enclaves of urban poverty in Rio de Janeiro.
Slavery, Abolition, and Hilltop Settlements

Before the abolition of slavery in 1888, Rio de Janeiro was home to a greater number of slaves than any other city in Brazil: nearly 300,000 in the 1870s (Graham 1970, cited in Sheriff 2001). While this figure alone is startling, only about 40 percent of people of color in Rio at the time of abolition were slaves; 60 percent of people of color were freedmen [sic], suggesting a freedmen population of approximately 450,000 by 1888 [ibid.]. Given the extremely precarious position in which they found themselves, it is not surprising that many freed slaves, as well as escaped slaves, made their homes atop the rugged, forested mountains that dot Rio’s landscape. Their physical proximity to the city, but virtually inaccessible location, made these communities ideal for those who wished or needed to remain outside the grasp of the authorities below. Although these settlements were not technically “favelas,” as the word had not yet come into common usage, they evoked similar fears in the hearts of better-off Cariocas, as they were associated with lawlessness, danger, and dark skin, which itself was, and to some extent continues to be, associated with savagery.

While there are marked differences between the 19th century quilombos, or settlements of escaped slaves, and communities of freedmen and contemporary favelas, several similarities bear mentioning. First, both settlements of freed and escaped slaves, on the one hand, and modern day favelas, on the other, have been defined in part by their precarious relationship with legality. Both earlier settlements and favelas, as I discuss below, were usually constructed on land not owned by those who built on it and occupied

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23 Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery.
It is the “irregular” nature of these communities that has long made them vulnerable to a variety of eradication efforts, as residents have not had legal claim to the land on which they lived and, as such, have had no judicial recourse through which to challenge favela removal programs.

Second, just as the hilltop locations chosen by escaped and freed slaves were considered to be places of crime and danger by elite Cariocas of the 19th century, favelas today bear a strikingly similar stigma of criminality. In fact, this association of favelas with crime and danger is one of the key ingredients both of media treatments of favelas and of tourists’ fascination with favelas. Of course, part of what makes the association of favelas with criminality and danger so alluring to tourists is that the danger is actually quite low. Indeed, it is the safe approximation of crime, violence, and danger that partly drives poverty tourism. After all, if tourists wanted a more direct encounter with violence or danger, they might visit a war zone, rather than an urban slum. Finally, the association of former and escaped slaves, and the communities that inhabited, with illegality and criminality has informed the character of racism in Brazil today.

The Canudos War and the First “Favela”

The Canudos War of 1897 ranks as likely the most important and memorable event of Brazilian President Prudente de Morais’ term in office. The rebellion involved thousands of rural Bahians, led by the charismatic Antônio Conselheiro (or “Counselor”) and living in a settlement known as Canudos, who essentially refused to accept the rule of local or national leaders. While local politicians initially attempted to negotiate with Canudos, ultimately, almost all of the settlers were annihilated by the Brazilian army.
The Canudos rebellion and its leader became legendary in Brazil and have been memorialized in songs, poems, and novels such as Euclides da Cunha’s *Os Sertões*, 1902, translated into English as *Rebellion in the Backlands*, and Mario Vargas Llosa’s *The War of the End of the World* (1985). Not only did the Canudos War, in the interior of the Northeastern state of Bahia, end in the vicious repression of Conselheiro’s Canudos settlement, it also served as a victory, however small, of republicans over so-called “monarchist” holdouts.\(^2\)

At the end of the months-long Canudos War, Morais stationed Bahian soldiers in the center of the nascent Republic’s capital, Rio de Janeiro, luring them with the promise of housing. His site of choice, the centrally-located “Morro da Providência,” which came to be called “Morro da Favela” or “Favela Hill.” The location was a visible one, likely chosen, at least in part, to intimidate Jacobin radicals living in and around the capital and to remind them of Conselheiro’s defeat in Bahia. Given the plodding pace of construction of housing for the soldiers, the soldiers were forced to construct their own dwellings on the hillside. Many, if not most, of these soldiers remained in their auto-constructed homes permanently.

This first hilltop “favelas,” with its highly visible auto-constructed homes, generated an outcry on the part of the city’s affluent residents, in large part because they believed the “favela” to be an eyesore.\(^2\) A second, and likely more compelling reason for elites’ fear, however, was the history of hilltop occupation by escaped and, later, freed

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\(^2\) Whether Conselheiro and his followers were “monarchists,” “religious fanatics,” “communitarians,” or “socialists,” or some combination thereof, or whether they were simply seeking food, shelter, and to avoid taxation by the newly-created Republic, varies with author sympathy. What does not vary is the brutality with which Canudos was destroyed by the military.

\(^2\) Although most scholars agree that Morro da Providência was the first “favela,” there is some disagreement; Morro do Castelo and Morro de Santo Antônio are also suggested as possible first favelas. Like Morro da Providência, both of these favelas are located in Rio de Janeiro’s Centro neighborhood.
slaves. Despite a good deal of popular disapproval, the “favela” remained and, during the next few decades, dozens of others began to appear across the city, concentrated primarily in the city’s populous and affluent central and south-east zones. Like the first “favela” and like the slave and ex-slave settlements before it, these settlements tended to arouse the fear and ire of better-off Cariocas; however, unlike the furor surrounding Morro da Favela, which was primarily phrased in terms of aesthetics, objections to these settlements increasingly became couched in moral and/or hygienic terms.27

“Favelas,” it was speculated, were breeding grounds for pestilence of the mind and body—for disease, crime, promiscuity, and moral turpitude. For example, a prominent Carioca physician, in a speech to the Rio de Janeiro Rotary Club in 1926, explained the “problem of favelas” as follows:

“The favelas are not...purely a ruthless crime against aesthetics. They are a particularly serious and permanent threat to public tranquility and health. Built in opposition to all precepts of hygiene...they are like large filthy latrines covered with excrement and other waste of the human existence...Devoid of any type of policing...freed from the need to pay any taxes...they are an excellent stimulus to indolence, an attractive appeal to tramps, a stronghold of loafers, a nest of thieves bringing insecurity and restlessness to all corners of the city by multiplying robbery and larceny” (Pimenta 1926, quoted in Queiroz Ribeiro and Corrêa do Lago 2001:39).

The shift from an objection to favelas grounded primarily in aesthetic concerns to one grounded chiefly in moral and hygienic terms is significant. It indicates not only a shift to an arguably more hysterical reaction on the part of urban elites, but, more importantly, it demonstrates a transformation in understandings of what is “wrong” with favelas.

27 Although there is considerable disagreement, the term “favela” most likely comes from the Latin and originally meant “little fava bean.”
Favelas are no longer a problem largely because the dwellings within them are physically unappealing and they disrupt the lovely views from middle and upper middle class homes, although this, too, is problematic from the point of view of urban elites. Instead, under the newer logic, favelas are a problem primarily because the residents of favelas are now characterized as dirty, lazy, and dangerous. The move away from a focus on unattractive or, in contemporary terminology, “disorganized” dwellings to a focus on those who dwell within them is crucial, as it continues to shape the ways in which favelas and those who reside in them are popularly viewed today. To put it simply, the focus on the “lack” of the dwelling that characterized outrage in the 19th century was replaced by a focus on the “lack” of the dwellers themselves in popular outcries in the early 20th century. In other words, what needs to be controlled, monitored, and removed from sight is no longer the poor community or poor dwelling, but rather the body of the poor person her/himself.

Such rhetoric is limited neither to Rio de Janeiro nor to Brazil, but rather is characteristic of understandings of enclaves of urban poverty in Latin America generally. As Daniel Goldstein explains, writing about Bolivia, those who reside in favelas and other impoverished communities are treated as “marginals,” and they are most often portrayed in popular discourse as “backward, aggressive, and primitive or uncivilized in nature, qualities that their geographical position on the urban periphery supposedly reflects” (2004:12). This type of framing of the “problem” of favelas as existing within the bodies of the urban poor is unsurprising, given the requirements of capitalist production and the role of the state in controlling the necessary labor force (c.f. Harvey 2001, 1976). Both the gradual expansion of industrial production in southeastern Brazil
in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the shift away from slavery shaped elite and state efforts to ensure a readily accessible, compliant, and, ultimately, disposable workforce. This was carried out by shifting from slum-removal programs to programs designed to shape and control the working poor themselves. Favelas might still be an eyesore from the point of view of elites, but they were also a necessary one from the point of view of capital.

Regardless of the urban elite’s continuing, vociferous objections to the growth of favelas, favelas continued to expand in Rio de Janeiro and, indeed, provided homes to many of the city’s unskilled laborers. These favelas continued to thrive in the city center and on hilltops flanking the city’s more affluent neighborhoods. During the depression of the 1930s, vast numbers of migrants from rural Rio de Janeiro and from other states, drawn to the capital and its largely unfulfilled promise of work, found themselves unable to afford housing outside of favelas; as such, the 1930s saw the first large-scale increase in favela size and number in Rio de Janeiro. Several favelas founded during this period are today among the city’s oldest continually-inhabited favelas.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Brazilian economy was characterized by the export of agricultural products, the most important of which was coffee. The world depression of the 1930s, and the consequent substantial drop in coffee prices, had, therefore, a profound effect on the Brazilian economy. As a result, after World War II, the Brazilian Federal Government, like many governments in Latin America, shifted to a policy of Import Substitution Industrialization (or ISI), as advocated by the newly created World Bank. The goal of ISI was to foster the growth of industry within Brazil (and in other countries, as well) to reduce Brazilian dependence on imports and “expand the
national market…by attracting foreign capital, providing state incentives, and giving the state a central economic role” (Caldeira 2000:41); the results of such policies, which continued through the 1970s, included rapid economic growth and a companion increase in urbanization. As such, the implementation of ISI policies successfully achieved some of the goals for which they were initially devised and enacted. However, although Brazil experienced economic growth during the ISI period, it is important to note that such growth was not evenly distributed. Instead, there was a simultaneous growth in economic inequality during this period.

While the depression had catalyzed migration from the countryside to the cities and had resulted in the expansion of favelas, the end of the depression did little to staunch the flow of migrants to the city. On the contrary, the growth in Rio de Janeiro of a booming industrial sector, thanks largely to World War II and to the adoption of ISI policies, attracted ever-increasing numbers of migrants from the interior of Rio and from the Northeast to the capital in search of work.\textsuperscript{28} The new migrants to cities were not always, or even usually, involved in industrial work, however; instead, many migrants remained unemployed and a substantial number of those who did locate employment, particularly those from the Northeast, became involved in service sector work—both formal and informal. With little, if any, financial resources, these migrants found themselves living in tenements, suburbs, or in auto-constructed shacks in favelas. The proximity of many favelas to the more affluent zones of the city made them preferable to

\textsuperscript{28} The Northeast region comprises the Brazilian states of Pernambuco, Bahia, Sergipe, and Alagoas. It is a much poorer region than the South and Southeast, of which Rio is a part.
the suburbs for many migrants; a lack of cheap, reliable public transportation made living near one’s place of employment virtually mandatory for the working poor. 29, 30

As the number and size of favelas in Rio grew—housing an estimated 17 percent of the city’s population by 1949 (Sheriff 2001:15), favelas began to occupy an ever-larger place in the popular imaginary. According to da Cunha, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, “[t]he favela [had become] a visible index of estrangement, an image of the city and its codes of conduct” (2004:186). The favela, present in news reporting since the first “Morro da Favela,” made its first film appearances during the 1950s, as well. The most notable of these was Marcel Camus’ *Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)*, the Cannes Palme d’Or winner for 1959. These popular portrayals of favela life tended to walk a fine line between exoticizing the danger of favelas and highlighting the romantic appeal of favela residents, who were usually young, black, semi-criminal, physically attractive, and depicted as misunderstood by the larger society. As I previously noted with respect to popular 19th and early 20th century depictions of favelas, this enduring, imagined connection between favelas and danger, particularly the danger of violence and crime, but also of the sexuality of dark-skinned youth, continues to form part of the basis for poverty tourism. Those who participate in tours are not just paying for the opportunity to look at or experience “poverty” but also for a (safe) brush with physical danger or crime.

29 “Suburbs” has a connotation in Portuguese that is markedly different from the sprawling, middle-class settlements it evokes in U.S. English. “Suburbs” tend to be remarkably similar to favelas in terms of infrastructure and population; the key difference is that suburbs are located on the outskirts of the city and, as such, draw less ire from affluent city-dwellers and the municipal government. Suburbs are commonly referred to as the “periphery” and this designation, based on their physical location (relative to the city center), has become a way of thinking about suburban residents and their relationship to the city: they, and their concerns, are “peripheral.”

30 Affordable, reliable transportation is still a major concern for the working class and working poor of Rio. Workers who reside in the Zona Norte or the Zona Oeste of the city continue to have to spend much more time—sometimes several hours each way—commuting to work in the Zona Sul than residents of Zona Sul favelas (like Rocinha).
After the military coup of 1964, the growth of favelas continued, as did state policies mandating favela eradication and favela-resident relocation, where possible, and, occasionally, favela-improvement. There were two major shifts with respect to favelas during the military dictatorship; the first, had to do with popular portrayals of favelas, while the second involved government resettlement programs, to which I turn below. Under the military dictatorship, the “favela” became a symbolic locus of resistance, foreshadowing its later romanticization as the land of “community-based heroes and Robin-Hoods” (da Cunha 2004:187) in popular films such as City of God. Despite the arguably positive shift in the tenor of popular portrayals of favelas during the dictatorship, the underlying understanding of favelas residents actually varied very little. Favelas might be home to modern “Robin Hoods,” but these Robin Hoods were still the semi-criminal and potentially dangerous characters that inhabited earlier discussions of favelas. It was not, then, the case that the dictatorship inadvertently forced the Brazilian middle classes to reevaluate their understandings of favelas and favelas residents. Rather, the understandings remained the same; only the valuation of these understandings shifted—and temporarily, at that.

Both the industrialization of the 1950s-1980s and the subsequent reversal of ISI policies were shaped by global market forces and supra-national institutions such as the World Bank. Both ISI and neoliberal policies, too, served to alter the landscape of cities throughout Brazil and, indeed, throughout the global South: first, under ISI, by encouraging workers to migrate to cities in search of industrial and service jobs unavailable in the countryside and then, during the reversal of ISI, by forcing both the

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31 By 1970, it is estimated that the dictatorship had forcibly relocated over 100,000 favela residents (c.f. Perlman 2003).
newly unemployed industrial and service workers and the newly arriving migrants from the Northeast into squatter settlements on the outskirts of formal cities. The rapid expansion of slums in Brazilian cities, then, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, was a direct result of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies that “encouraged” the Brazilian government to reverse its investment in industrialization and prohibited it from engaging in “excessive” public spending—including spending on provision of the most basic public services for Brazil’s most disadvantaged inhabitants.

Industrial and service-sector workers were especially vulnerable during the economic crisis of the 1980s. During the 1980s, economists and politicians decided that ISI policies could no longer be sustained and that Brazil was unable to pay its foreign debt. Since the 1980s, Brazil, also under the direction of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, had adopted neoliberal policies that include the privatization of publicly owned enterprises, a curtailing of public spending on “non-necessary” expenses, such as public welfare programs, and a reduction or elimination of protective tariffs. The result of such policies was not simply a reduction in inflation and management of foreign debt; instead, those most vulnerable were disproportionately, and quite adversely, affected. Not only did urban, service-sector workers find themselves unemployed and without a safety net, rural workers, too, particularly in the Northeast, found themselves without employment and without relief during the frequent cycles of drought that characterize the region.

Beginning in the 1970s, but taking off during the 1980s and 1990s, was another incredibly significant shift in the character of favelas in Rio: the shift from a low-level drug trafficking presence to the arrival of large-scale, organized, and often-imperialistic
drug-trafficking gangs. The kinds of gangs now operative in many Brazilian favelas are more akin to the stereotyped Italian Mafia or to the kinds of cartels operative in Mexico in terms of scale and organization than to the kinds of street thugs evoked by the term “gang” in English. A number of these gangs, such as the national Commando Vermelho (the Red Command) and the smaller, but still formidable Amigos dos Amigos (Friends of Friends, operative in Rocinha), now “own” favelas, or, at least, the drug traffic inside them, not only in Rio, but also in cities from São Paulo to Salvador and Fortaleza.33 Even some relatively new gangs, such as the Primeiro Commando do Capital (PCC/First Command of the Capital) in São Paulo, have managed to capture national attention, and a significant portion of the drug traffic, in recent years with their organized attacks on police stations and city busses.34 These groups also possess, in additional to massive arsenals, their own airstrips and, in several cases, even own their own planes for the importation of drugs from outside of Brazil.

The struggle to consolidate power and territory has, not surprisingly, been a violent one, as no gang has been willing simply to relinquish power over the drug traffic in its community to another gang. As with much warring between rival groups (gangs, armies, etc.), casualties have by no means been limited to the warring parties; in fact, residents of the communities in which the fighting has taken, and continues to take, place bear much of the burden for the fighting. Not only do residents of favelas dominated by a narco-traffic gang have to contend with fighting among gang members for leadership positions or between rival gangs, but they also must contend with fighting between gang members and the police, which is certainly not infrequent.

33 For discussion of the Commando Vermelho and its tactics for achieving and maintaining power, see Penglase 2008.
34 For further discussion of gang violence, see the Chapter 9.
The recent domination of favelas by drug gangs has added to the already negative stereotypes many Brazilians have about favelas: now, they are not only places of dirt and danger, but they are also places of great acts of violence. This violence has been, like other aspects of favela life in earlier decades, the subject of a variety of pop culture treatments from films such as the wildly popular *City of God* (2004) and *Trope de Elite* (2007), as well as of the Globo network’s 2007 *novela Duas Caras*, which was set in a fictionalized version of Niterói’s Rio das Pedras favela. These films and programs tend to focus primarily or exclusively on drug traffickers, which gives the impression that those are the only people who live in favelas. At best, other community members are portrayed as tolerating the traffic and indirectly reaping the benefits from it. Even films like *City of Men* (2007), which revolves around the friendship of two young men who were unwittingly caught up in a gang’s power struggle in the favela in which they live, end up sending the message that, whether residents of favelas actually choose to get involved in the drug traffic or not, their lives, and all too often their deaths, are defined by and through traffic-related violence.

The violence now associated with favela life has come to dominate discussions—both informal and in popular media—of what favelas, and those who inhabit them, are like. Unfortunately, the association of favelas with violence and danger is anything but novel and, as discussed earlier, hearkens back to the era of quilombos and other settlements of freed slaves. Further, the pop cultural association of favelas with violence is not limited to Brazil. For example, in a 2010 episode of the popular television series *Law & Order*, entitled “Brazil,” the character of a famous American scientist is being blackmailed by a prominent Brazilian scientist. When the American scientist tries to
explain to the police why “there’s something off about the [Brazilian] man,” he says, “I got to thinking that maybe he was raised in a favela. You know what those guys are capable of.” He then goes on to describe listening to the man arguing with someone in Portuguese and calls it “something vicious.” Clearly, even an American television audience is meant to understand that being raised in a favela could lead someone to be capable of anything—no matter how “vicious” or violent. That American tourists might, then, want to tour a favela when on vacation in Rio seems utterly unsurprising.

These popular cultural portrayals of favelas are neither innocent nor unimportant, despite being fictionalized accounts intended for mass entertainment. Rather, as Ronnie D. Lipschutz reminds us, “Popular culture also reproduces the tenets, principles, and practices that support existing social arrangements…Indeed, we might even say that a work of popular culture succeeds to the extent that it mirrors society and its members’ beliefs and practices and in so doing draws on naturalized understandings about social being” (2010:2-3). The popular cultural engagement with favelas as fascinating loci of danger and violence, then, should not be overlooked as irrelevant; on the contrary, even the more benign popular treatments of favelas tend to portray them as actually or potentially violent and as actually or potentially criminal, and, as Esther Hamburger (1999) and Sérgio Mattos (2000) have convincingly demonstrated, media permeates the social imaginary in Brazil. The result, following Lipschutz, supports “existing social arrangements” and deincentivizes viewers from agitating for more human urban spatial policies. Further, it should not be surprising that many residents of Rocinha are angry, at the very least, about popular representations of favelas. After all, as Harvey notes
“Struggles over representation are as fundamental to the activities of place construction as bricks and mortar” (1990:442).

Despite a number of significant changes in popular perceptions of favelas, few of them are for the better. For example, even when law-abiding favela residents appear as protagonists in films or television programs—a possible improvement on past representations—their lives and, all too often, their deaths are treated as defined by violence and crime. Indeed, even if we grant that such portrayals of favela residents (who are, at least, trying to be “good” people) constitute an improvement over earlier portrayals that highlighted not only criminality and violence but also disease, moral turpitude, and filth, there still exist prejudices similar to those voiced by early 20th century Cariocas. In fact, in conversations about my project with middle- and upper-middle class Cariocas, I was frequently asked “But aren’t you scared to go there?” The implication, of course, is that favelas are frightening places, places of danger, and places best avoided if at all possible. For example, as one middle-aged nurse told me, “Eu não iria pisar pé lá!” (“I wouldn’t set foot there [in Rocinha]!”) The fact that I was not scared to “go there,” was all too often dismissed, both during my dissertation research and during my initial, accidental foray into Rocinha in 2003, as an idiosyncrasy related to my nationality: my foreign-ness prevented me from understanding just how fearsome favelas actually are.

Just as favelas are still characterized as places of danger by the media and by a significant segment of the city’s population, they, too, continue to be regarded by some as places of dirt, disorder, and disease. In fact, in recent discussions of the status of the still-under-construction Vila Olímpica in Rio, one of the chief concerns that has been voiced
is that the athletes residing there will have to “smell” the favelas that border the facility. What have less frequently been voiced are concerns over how the construction of the Vila has disrupted the lives of those already living in the area.

**Forced Relocation**

As I mentioned above, not only did the military dictatorship inadvertently engender some modest changes in popular perceptions of favelas, it also engaged in a strategy of forcibly relocating people—often new migrants to Rio, but also residents of existing favelas—into government-built housing compounds. Although the process of forcibly relocating Zona Sul favela residents to government-built compounds further west was inaugurated and initially championed by Governor Carlos Lacerda (1960-1965), the process reached its heyday after the 1964 military coup. The housing compounds, heavily financed with U.S. money, through the Alliance for Progress, were located at a substantial remove from the city center, near neighborhoods such as Jacarepaguá (see Figure 2 on page 12). Built to staunch the flow of migrants into favelas, as well as to eradicate already existing favelas, they actually did little to resolve the “problem” of favelas. In fact, by throwing together people who did not know one another and by forcing them to live in communities not of their own choosing, rather than with family members or friends in already-established communities, the government actually helped to create some of the most notorious slums in Rio. The most famous of these are Cidade de Deus, Vila Kennedy, and Vila Esperança.

Not only was forcible relocation devastating to undergo, as people were required to leave behind their homes, often built with their own hands, and their communities
behind, the location of the resettlement communities in the Zona Oeste further exacerbated the precarious financial conditions in which so many impoverished Cariocas found themselves. The distance between the Zona Oeste and Zona Sul required residents, the luckiest of whom had employment in the Zona Sul, to travel several hours each way to and from work. Further, as bus fares at the time were calculated based on distance travelled, residents were also forced to spend an even greater percentage of their meager wages on travel than they previously had had to spend. However, despite the burdens such travel imposed on the poor, it was precisely the presence of widely available public transportation that allowed the military dictatorship to engage in favela removal. After all, keeping the labor force close as hand was no longer necessary, as workers could be forced to travel to their jobs, however inconvenient and expensive such travel might prove.

Understandably, many, if not most, of those slated for removal from their homes were less than enthusiastic about their pending move. For example, one of the first favelas to be eradicated was the Morro do Pasmado, in 1964. Morro do Pasmado, like the majority of favelas the state planned to demolish, was located in the Zona Sul, near the Botafogo neighborhood. Despite John W.F. Dulles’ gushing description of “the children delighted with shower baths [in the houses] and the women eager to move” (1996:154) from Morro do Pasmado to Vila Kennedy, these same women and children blockaded the entrance to Morro do Pasmado when police finally came to evict them.35 Their “resistance was met with soldiers armed with machine guns, who forced the

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35 Favela residents who resisted removal efforts were often not alone, as Catholic priests, steeped in liberation theology, frequently turned out to support them (c.f. Perlman 1980 [1976]).
residents to abandon their homes” (Perlman 1980 [1976]:205). The police later burned Morro do Pasmado, and everything left in it, to the ground (Rose 2005:240).

**Rocinha**

Rocinha, straddling the Dois Irmãos (Two Brothers) mountain peaks between the chic neighborhoods of São Conrado and Gávea, was founded in the mid-20th century, like several of Rio’s older favelas, by means of irregular land invasions that later became regularized, often after several attempts to remove them. According to long-time (often life-long) Rocinha residents, the now crowded, heavily populated neighborhood was originally a peaceful, bucolic settlement of working class citizens on the outskirts of a rapidly growing city. Dona Eliza, a septuagenarian daycare worker with a penchant for alternative horticulture whose family immigrated to Brazil from Italy when she was just a toddler, drove home the importance for her of Rocinha’s semi-agrarian past by asserting, “Era uma rocinha mesmo! As pessoas cultivaram o que precisaram; não tinha nada de mercado. Era um lugar bem bonito e longe da cidade.” (“It really was a ‘little countryside’! People grew what [food] they needed; there were none of these markets. It was a really pretty place and far from the city.”)

Although Dona Eliza was still proud to be a resident of Rocinha, she no longer believed Rocinha was the great place to grow up that she recalled it being during her childhood. In particular, she was disappointed by Rocinha’s residents’ lack of concern with the cultivation of their own food—as she told me repeatedly, “Rocinha já não é uma rocinha, mais as coisas podem crescer sim.” (“Rocinha isn’t the countryside any more, but things can still grow.”) To combat the, in her opinion, grave problem of residents not
growing their own food, Dona Eliza and some of her friends and colleagues devised a way of growing plants in two-liter bottles attached to the sides of buildings, where they received both sun and rain and took up little space.\footnote{Dona Eliza believed, in particular, that women should be invested in growing their own food, as men were often lazy or “vagabundos,” as she put it. The proudly never married Dona Eliza also believed that women of the world should unite and overthrow the male oppressors; she made me promise that I would include her scheme in any writing about Rocinha and that I would share her potentially earth-saving method of using the sides of buildings as growing spaces, while also re-using two-liter bottles.}

While not everyone with whom I spoke shared Dona Eliza’s passion for growing their own food, many older Rocinha residents waxed nostalgic about the neighborhood’s humble roots and semi-rural past. For example, Fernando, a 58-year-old clerk at a shop in Copacabana, told me that his childhood in Rocinha had been a happy one largely due to the more isolated, even pastoral, nature of the community. According to him, “Já não é mais como era. Já não é quieto, já não é calma. Quando era novinho a gente brincava sem preocupação. Eramos pobres sim, mas não tinha os problemas de hoje em dia.” (“It’s not like it used to be. It’s not quiet any more; it’s not calm any more. When I was young we played without worrying. We were poor, but didn’t have the problems of today.”)

When I asked him to reflect on the most significant differences between the quiet Rocinha of his childhood and the Rocinha of today, he explained, “Quando era novo, a cidade era muito longe. Tardava pra chegar. E agora? A cidade está aqui.” (“When I was young, the city was very far away. It took time to get there. And now? The city is here.”)

In reminiscing about his happy childhood in a more rural Rocinha, Fernando frequently compared the safety and tranquility of the Rocinha he had grown up with to the Rocinha his 3-year-old grandson would come to know. For example, he laughed when he told me, “Minha mãe deixava a gente brincar em qualquer canto da
communidade sem menor problema. O meu neto nem vai à esquina!” (“My mother let us play in any corner of the community without any problem. My grandson isn’t even going to the corner!”) On asking Fernando why he would not let his grandson roam the neighborhood, once he was a bit older, he made clear that his fears weren’t for his grandson’s physical safety. On the contrary, he assured me that he did not believe that Rocinha was unsafe. Rather, his fears revolved around all of the cars passing in and out of the community and around the fact that he no longer knew all of his neighbors (though he still knew most of them).

Even those residents who admitted that life in Rocinha was easier now that running water, electricity, public schooling, and bus service were widely available also confessed that the price of these conveniences—overcrowding, noise, and even violence—was a high one. In fact, although most community members, of any age, with whom I spoke did not envy those who had lived in Rocinha before it enjoyed access to the amenities listed above, most residents also pointed to features of their community that they believed should be improved. For example, Francisco, a 50-year-old employee of an ice cream parlor in Leblon and an active member of Rocinha Tur, cited lack of access to a good education as a primary problem of living in Rocinha. While he did not blame the educators at the local, public elementary schools, he noted that they “are always on strike” (“tão sempre na greve”) and that the children are the ones who suffer.

Conclusion

Although this history of the rise of favelas in Brazil is overly simplistic and brief, it points to a fundamental problem in both popular and state-endorsed understandings of
favelas. Favelas did not arise out of nothing and their emergence was not the result of a reluctance to work or to participate in the city on the part of favela residents. Rather, the emergence of favelas was historically contingent upon the workings of larger, structural forces and of changes in the global economy. Indeed, this kind of production of space was contingent upon the provision of labor. As the Brazilian economy underwent a shift from a slave-based, agricultural economy to a “free” labor, industrial capitalist one, elites found themselves forced to tolerate the growth of the favelas that housed the urban workforce. As public transportation expanded, it allowed the military dictatorship to forcibly relocate some favela residents to distant Zona Oeste settlements without disrupting production.

Regardless of the particular style of state intervention in favelas, favelas, and later their residents, have consistently been treated as “problems” to be solved in both state and public rhetoric. It is, in fact, this history of treating favelas as a problem to be solved, and their residents as “marginals” best avoided, that shapes both popular opinion and state policy today. It is also this understanding of favelas that has made state officials, such as those at the Ministry of Tourism, so reluctant to intervene in favelas tourism and has made the middle-class owners of tour companies so unwilling to examine their own complicity in the exploitation and demonization of the urban poor. The poor, after all, are understood as unworthy of assistance in a way that other potentially tourable groups might not be. One might imagine, for instance, orphanage tours or hospital tours, or even compare this to indigenous tourism, in which the “natives” are supposed to have a say (even if they do not).
By ignoring this history and its role in shaping the contemporary landscapes of Brazilian cities and, instead, by focusing on favelas as responsible for “urban decline” and as entirely separate from the better off “neighborhoods” that surround them, recent state programs like Favela-Bairro and PAC, to which I turn in the Chapter Six, are destined to fail on two counts: first, their interventions are aimed at the symptoms of urban misery and not at its causes; second, their interventions reproduce the spatial segregation of rich and poor, in which the poor are subject to increased surveillance, rather than carrying out their purported goal of the “democratization” of the city.
CHAPTER FIVE

Urban Poverty as a Tourist Attraction: Packaging Poverty

In this chapter, I introduce the practice of poverty tourism and discuss in some detail what a typical poverty tour of Rocinha is like. In order to demonstrate the overall similarity of most tours, I include discussion of three “typical” tours, as well as a tour that could easily be classified as an outlier, in that it was considerably smaller than most tours and featured a guide from Rocinha. I then turn to the ways in which “poverty” is treated on the tours and the understandings of poverty, and of Brazil, that this engenders among tourists. Just as importantly, I treat the ways in which the peculiar packaging of poverty on favela tours reveals middle class anxiety about a struggling economy and the rapid growth of impoverished urban enclaves in the last 20 years. Further, I suggest that poverty tourism arose not simply to fulfill a pre-existing, but unfulfilled, demand for a sort of “dark tourism” in Rio de Janeiro, but also as a way of providing critical, if largely rhetorical, distance between the Carioca middle class and a relatively well-off “favela.” I suggest that this critical distance is as much about maintaining a rigid division between racial categories that threaten to bleed into one another as it is about demarcating different kinds of space. Ultimately, the need to recreate and populate disparate racial categories, on the one hand, and the desire to inscribe race on the landscape, on the other, are part and parcel of the same project.

When I became interested in the phenomenon of poverty tourism in 2005, as well as when I began my dissertation fieldwork in July 2007, four tour companies offered so-called “favela tours” in Rocinha. By the time I completed my fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro
in May 2008, however, six tour companies specializing in poverty tours were in
operation—a fifty percent increase in just a year.\(^{37}\) The increase in tourist traffic in
Rocinha is suggested not only by the number of tour companies, but also by the
companion rise in tours offered per company. According to tour company personnel at
each tour company, all of the four companies operating in Rocinha at the beginning of
my fieldwork saw a significant increase in the demand for their tours during the study
period and three of the four companies were regularly offering more tours at the end of
the project than they were at the beginning. The fourth tour company, too, found itself
servicing more tourists over the course of the study period, but had simply increased the
size of its tour groups, not the number of its tours. Notably, all of these companies offer
favela tours in Rocinha, as opposed to in other favelas, and are owned and operated by
relatively affluent Brazilians who do not reside (and never have resided) in Rocinha.\(^{38}\)

Although an increase in the number of tour companies in Rocinha and an increase
in the tours offered by those companies both suggest a rising touristic presence in
Rocinha, yet another noteworthy indicator of increased tourist presence in the community
was the growing number of residents who told me they were aware of tours in their
community. While it was not at all uncommon in the first three to four months I spent in
Rocinha to hear people discuss tourism in their community as either something they had
not witnessed personally or as something that happened with insufficient frequency to be

\(^{37}\) This number only includes legally-formed tour companies that are licensed by the Ministry of Tourism. There are a number of entrepreneurially-minded Cariocas who take tourists to Rocinha without a license. While obtaining an accurate count of such enterprises is virtually impossible, I would estimate, based on my observations of such tours and discussions with members of Rocinha Tur, that there are several dozen.

\(^{38}\) One of the tour companies also makes brief stops in one of Rocinha’s neighboring favelas, Vila Canoas; another neighboring favela, often described as Rocinha’s “twin,” Vidigal is visited by foreigners who attend Nós de Morro’s theatrical productions. Nós de Morro is a well-known and respected theater group in Rio. According to Janice Perlman (2011), eight Zona Sul favelas are currently being toured; neither my research nor subsequent searching confirms this assertion. However, it is not unlikely that non-licensed tours have visited/currently visit other favelas.
a bother, this was certainly not the case during the last months of my project. By Carnaval 2008, in fact, Rocinha residents commented or complained to me on a daily basis about the dramatic influx of foreigners in Rocinha. The most common complaint I heard, however, was not simply or even primarily about the potentially problematic nature of tours that sell an experience of urban, “Latin American,” or “Third World” poverty, though such complaints were certainly aired, but rather about the traffic congestion caused by tour company jeeps and vans. As one 43-year-old woman who works as a maid in a mid-priced Copacabana hotel told me, “They [tourists] can be here, sure, but sometimes the bus can’t get through because they park their jeeps in the road and there’s no room [for the bus to pass], so I’m late [to work].”

The tourists who purchase poverty tours, typically from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, or the United States, are promised—both in tour company pamphlets and on their websites—the chance to engage with “real” or “authentic” poverty and, through this encounter, with the “real” or “authentic” Brazil—a Brazil presumably defined by poverty, as understood by tour company personnel and as exemplified by Rocinha. This “real” Brazil is, apparently, unavailable to them at their beach front hotels or, less frequently, youth hostels—regardless of the other visual indicators of “poverty” with which tourists come into contact (e.g. homeless people, panhandlers, street children). Notably, although Mark Anderson has recently, and compellingly, treated tourism as “an industry that masks its own forms of cultural

39 “Podem estar aqui, sim, mas as vezes o ônibus não pode passar porque eles deixam os jipes na rua e não dá espaço, e aí me atrasso.”
40 Australia seemed to have more tourists lodged in youth hostels and participating in poverty tours than did any other country, with New Zealand, Canada, and Israel not far behind. Out of 67 tourists lodged in a youth hostel with whom I came into contact and interviewed on or after a poverty tour, 21 were from Australia, 16 from New Zealand, 13 from Canada, and 11 from Israel. Of the other 6, 4 were from the U.S. and 2 were from Spain.
exploitation under the guise of cultural promotion and recognition” (in press:331),
tourism of Rocinha is not framed in terms of “cultural promotion.” Indeed, as will
become clear, Rocinha’s “culture” is not part of the appeal of the neighborhood; rather,
what is most appealing about Rocinha are visual and physical indicators of poverty, on
the one hand, and the promise of an encounter with danger and violence, on the other.

Further, tour company personnel consistently assure tourists that their presence in
Rocinha is a welcome one. Tourists, then, may not be aware that their presence in the
community is actually contested; they may even be blissfully ignorant that they are fed a
profoundly skewed, and often racist, understanding of poverty in Brazil. But, as Zizek
reminds us, “Ignorance is not a sufficient reason for forgiveness since it conveys a hidden
dimension of enjoyment” (2008 [1991]:2, emphasis original). And enjoyment is, after all,
what tourists are primarily after in Rocinha.41

All poverty tours in Rio de Janeiro, despite some variation among the different
tour companies, share a number of features in common. First, tourists are collected in
front of their hotels or hostels or in their hotel lobbies by gregarious tour guides and
escorted to the company van, bus, or jeep.42 Once all tourists, usually around 8-10, are
aboard, the tour guide, more often than not using a microphone, introduces
herself/himself and asks the tourists to do the same. Tourists typically include their
names, country and city of residence, and, to a lesser extent, their occupations.43

41 Of course, enjoyment is a very complicated concept; however, it is beyond the scope of this project to
dwell on the multiple meanings and uses of the term.
42 Guides are generally outgoing and jovial, making it clear that tourists have selected an exciting tour,
instead of a lesson of some sort, for their morning or afternoon.
43 This seemed to be more common among tourists over 50 and students, who sometimes shared the name
of their university with the group.
After the introductions, tour guides begin a brief history of “favelas” in Rio de Janeiro. Interestingly, the history given of the word “favela” varies considerably by guide. While the Aurélio Portuguese dictionary assures us that “favela” is derived from Latin and means “fava,” tour guides exercise considerable creative license when explaining the word and suggest that it points to anything from 19th century military weaponry to sugar cane production. Regardless of their particular version of the etymology of “favela,” guides concur that the name originally pointed to a locale populated by migrants from Northeastern Brazil. After explaining the origin of “favela,” guides point out places of interest along the way to Rocinha. As the vans skirt the Vidigal favela on the curving Niemeyer highway with its spectacular, if frightening, views of the Atlantic, guides also explain, in general agreement, that the name “Rocinha,” or “little countryside,” was bestowed upon the area when it was, in fact, little more than countryside, long before the city of Rio grew to its present-day proportions.44

Once they arrive in Rocinha, tourists begin either a 2-3-hour walking or jeep tour of the community. Those riding in jeeps are asked to walk only briefly during the tour, although they do exit the jeeps 6-7 times to take in particular views or to visit specific residences or businesses. The tours that take place primarily within jeeps cater to a slightly older clientele than those that are primarily walking tours. After participating in a total of 31 tours and observing over 50 more, I would estimate the mean age for tourists

44 The two narrow lanes with little or no shoulder cling to the side of the mountain, overlooking the crashing waves below. While there is a tiny retaining wall between the edge of the highway and the rocks below, in my experience, it offers little comfort for the passenger of a too-fast-moving taxi, van, or bus.
on jeep tours at 40-45, while I would suggest a mean age of 30-35 for tours consisting primarily or exclusively of walking.45

During the tours, tourists are generally encouraged to take photographs of anything and everything—including through the windows of private homes, with one major exception: they are warned in rather exaggerated fashion to avoid pointing their cameras in the direction of visibly armed men; to do so, they are told, will likely result in the loss of one’s camera or, at the very least, of one’s film/memory card/DVD. Although guides are adamant about this restriction, only one guide with whom I spoke could recall an incident in which a tourist’s camera was confiscated and that, according to the guide’s story, had occurred in 2004. Tour guides, in addition to warning tourists of what not to photograph, frequently point out places or things that tourists ought to be photographing, including graffiti, bullet holes in walls, seemingly unattended children, and tangled masses of self-strung telephone and power lines. The marking of these sights serves not only to define and draw tourists’ attention to notable features of the community, but also acts as a way of defining poverty itself.

On at least three occasions, I even witnessed tourists photographing dog feces in the street. While it is tempting simply to dismiss these incidents as odd aberrations or as examples of tourists’ fascination with what they might take to be visual markers of poor hygiene or even poor manners, I think it is more likely a rather dramatic, if unintentional, manifestation of what many tourists actually want and expect Rocinha, and by way of

45 The one outlier for these estimates is a tour company that targets residents of youth hostels and offers, in addition to its most popular walking tour of Rocinha, Rocinha party tours, during which the guides accompany tourists to a gang-sponsored party in the community, and Rio party tours. I would estimate the mean age of this tour at about 25. This tour company brings tourists to Rocinha in vans and then has each tourist ride a moto-taxi, or for-hire taxi/motorcycle, to the starting point of the tour, near the top of the mountain.
extension other slums, to be: a piece of shit. In fact, one of the tourists, a 21-year-old
Australian college student, who eagerly photographed feces during his February 19, 2008
tour, told me, in response to my asking why he was taking pictures of excrement, “It
gives a real feel for it, you know, like the smells and the sounds. It’s visceral.”
Apparently, for him, dog feces summed up the “visceral” experience of poverty in Rio.

When guides take the time to highlight something particularly photo-worthy,
tourists almost always comply—sometimes with enthusiasm, other times out of a sense of
obligation. For example, on several occasions tourists, who had failed to notice them
before a guide put his fingers in one and explained, “These are bullet holes from a high-
power [sic] gun,” exclaimed with apparent delight over a dozen holes spaced haphazardly
on the wall of a house on Rocinha’s Rua 2 (2nd Street). At other times, tourists largely
failed to share their guides’ enthusiasm over a particular, photo-worthy site. For
example, after a walking tour on April 17, 2008, a 37-year-old woman from
Massachusetts, and one of 13 tourists present on the tour, complained to me: “I don’t
know why I’m supposed to think graffiti is so interesting. We have that in Boston.” She
was referring to a black, spray-painted “tag” on a wall, indicating that “Rocinha é ADA,”
or “Rocinha is ADA.”46 From this woman’s comment, it seems that what is attractive
about a tour in Rocinha would be seeing what does not, for her, exist in Boston. After all,
poverty or “otherness” could not possibly be indicated through the presence of graffiti, as
graffiti is present in affluent domestic spaces, as well as in impoverished foreign ones.

Throughout the tour, guides narrate stories of Rocinha—often of its residents and
their propensity for alcohol abuse, gang-related violence, the sale of illegal drugs, and

46 ADA stands for Amigos dos Amigos or “friends of friends,” and is the narco-gang that dominates the
neighborhood.
occasionally, their “irresponsible” procreation. Tourists also learn what kinds of employment are, and are not, available to most residents of Rocinha. Career examples provided by guides often include hotel maid, waiter, domestic worker, and handyman.

After completing the tour, tourists are driven back to their Zona Sul hotels and are reminded along the way of what they have seen and of how this sets them apart from “average” tourists.⁴⁷ If guides are to be believed, the fact that tourists have taken a guided tour of a slum means that their vacations have not been limited to superficial encounters with cultural others, but rather that they have seen something “real.” Although to my knowledge no tour guide I heard making such claims had ever read MacCannell (1976), the similarity in differentiating a made-for-tourists front stage from the “real” “backstage,” supposedly fulfilled by Rocinha, is striking. Guides also take the opportunity to request that satisfied clients recommend their particular tour to friends, family members, and other tourists with whom they come into contact.

Although tours of Rocinha share a number of features in common, there are noteworthy differences among the various companies. One company that caters to a younger, backpacking clientele, for example, takes tourists on every one of its tours to a local daycare/nursery that they purportedly “sponsor.” According to guides on these tours, the tourists are helping to provide meals and low-cost childcare to the residents of Rocinha by participating in the tour, as the company donates a portion of its proceeds to the daycare center. Because of this donation, according to the tour guides, tourists on this company’s tours are welcomed at the daycare, where they are able to watch young children at play. Tourists on these tours tended to express their positive experience of the

⁴⁷ The Zona Sul, or Southern Zone, comprises some of Rio’s wealthiest, and most tourist-friendly, neighborhoods, including Copacabana, Botafogo, Urca, Ipanema, Leblón, Lagoa, Gávea, São Conrado, and Leme.
tour to me in terms of “helping the community” or “being part of something bigger [than a tour].”

While it is understandable that tourists might feel good about having made an indirect donation to a daycare center in a “slum,” what is, perhaps, more interesting is the relationship between what the guides say about the daycare and its employees and what the daycare’s employees have to say about their relationship with the tour company. Although guides assure tourists that they are indirectly contributing to the daycare center’s success, employees at the center told me that company’s “contribution” consists of one basic basket per month—or, in terms of money, the company’s monthly donations added up to little more than $20. Given that each tourist on each tour pays about $50, the company’s donation seems even more meager. In order to continue receiving the basic basket, which employees quickly pointed out that they needed (and much more), the tour company required the daycare center to allow only its tours to visit the premises and required that the daycare center provide the tour company with space to sell T-shirts and other tour-related memorabilia. The daycare does not receive a share of the sales of these goods, according to its employees.

In other words, the tour company is able to play successfully on tourists’ desire to “cure” poverty in Rocinha, even while they enjoy it during the tour. That tourists lack a context in which to understand the production and maintenance of enclaves of urban misery, which guides uniformly fail to provide, makes the appeal of an ethics of cure all the greater. After all, if poverty is understood primarily, if not exclusively, as a lack of

48 A basic basket, or “cesta básica,” is a bundle of essential items, mostly consisting of food, that can help a family meet its basic subsistence needs during a one-month period. Given that the basic basket targets a family with four members, a one basic basket contribution does little to assist the daycare in meeting the nutritional needs of the children under its care.
material assets, then the provision of those assets must be sufficient to remedy the problem. Further, tourists’ lack of knowledge of the specifics of the company’s contribution prevents them from questioning the efficacy of the cure.

Similarly, tour guides on this particular company’s tours assure tourists that the children, usually under 5 years old, they see at the center happily dance and play for their foreign visitors. However, on more than one tour, I witnessed tour guides (two different guides) telling the children, “You have to dance now” (“precisam dançar agora”) or that “You have to stop that [coloring] and dance now” (“têm que parar com isso e dançar agora”). On my fourth, and last, tour with this company, in late February 2008, as I was later banned for witnessing and understanding what the guide said, the tour guide told one very small child (about 3) who was reluctant to leave his drawing in order to dance and play for tourists, “Fuck! Shit! You’re going to dance now!” (“Porra! Caralho! Vai dançar agora!”) When the little boy began to cry, the guide switched to English and explained to the tourists that the child was just very shy. Even though none of the tourists could speak Portuguese, several of them told me later that they thought the guide must have said something to make the boy cry, as he had been playing quite happily before their interaction.

While this particular tour company’s practices are certainly questionable, not all tour companies are so overtly exploitative and, although each tour company donates something to the community, not each company touts its charitable activities on its tours. One tour company owner, who had been alone in his support of Rocinha Tour’s efforts to force companies to donate a portion of their proceeds to the community, told me that he was embarrassed that the collective contributions of tour companies to Rocinha were so
low and ashamed that his colleagues “behave as if it [their donation] was going to save the world” (“se comportam como se fosse salvar o mundo”). He not only would not discuss with me what contribution he makes to Rocinha, but he also refuses to discuss his contributions on his tours. He explained the former to me by saying, “It’s not honest to give [in order] just to talk [about it]” (“não é honesto dar só para falar”) and the latter by saying, “They [tourists] pay to get to know Rocinha [not me]” (“eles pagam para conhecer a Rocinha”). Whether he was being disingenuous in his explanations or not, what stands out as remarkable about this particular owner is that his tours, as I participated in them, offered no assurances whatsoever to tourists that they are “helping” the community by taking the tour. Not coincidentally, this particular company employs a Rocinha resident as guide on its tours when possible, though his pay is no better than that of guides at the other companies.

**On poverty tours**

In this section, I recount my experiences on three “typical” tours given by three different tour companies and then provide an example of a purportedly “different” tour of Rocinha, offered by a fourth company.49 My goal in including a tour from each company is not to bore the reader with the repetitious description of Rocinha’s key sights, but rather to draw attention to the similarities among the tour companies. These similarities include not only the sights visited, but also the content and style of the guides’ commentary and the reactions and behaviors of those purchasing the tours. In

49 It is worth noting that all tour companies claim that their tours are “different,” meaning better, than the competition.
highlighting the overarching similarities among the tours, I also note features of each tour that stand out as “different” or, at least, unusual.

In order better to understand the tour companies, I have included the chart below.

The chart provides a sense of the similarities and differences, in terms of cost and ownership, among the four primary companies offering tours of Rocinha.

Figure 5.1: Detail of Tours Observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th># of tours observed</th>
<th>Cost of tours</th>
<th>Ownership of company</th>
<th>Employs guides from Rocinha?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carioca Tours</td>
<td>4(^{50})</td>
<td>R$85(^{51}) (approx. $50)</td>
<td>3 owners: 1 female, 2 male</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungle Tours</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>R$95 (approx. $55)</td>
<td>1 male</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Slum Tours</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$45</td>
<td>1 male</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Safari Tours</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$35 (if booked in advance; otherwise $45)</td>
<td>1 female</td>
<td>No(^{52})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is clear from the chart, only one company employs guides from Rocinha; guides working from other companies are from a host of different neighborhoods—none of which is a favela. Tours cost between $35 and $65, depending on the exchange rate; and males outnumber females as owners. The ownership of the companies, as I discuss below, had no noticeable effect on the kinds of tours offered or on the content of the guides’ narratives.

**Carioca Tours**

\(^{50}\) I observed fewer tours operated by this company, as I was forbidden from continuing to participate in its tours after observing some troubling interactions between a tour guide/owner and a small child, as I describe above.

\(^{51}\) Some tour companies price their tours in Brazilian Reais, while others list their prices in US Dollars. I have listed prices in the currency chosen by the company and provided the Dollar equivalent of Real prices using the exchange rate on 3/31/2010. During much of my fieldwork, the exchange rate was less favorable for those using US Dollars, which is why I suggest that tours may cost up to $65.

\(^{52}\) Although this company does not employ guides from Rocinha, it does assist in training local residents to become tour guides for other Rio de Janeiro attractions through its sponsorship of a tourism school.
On Saturday, August 11, 2007 at 2pm, I stood on the southwest corner of the Avenida Nossa Senhora da Copacabana and Rua Miguel Lemos waiting for a van from Carioca Tours to pick me up for my afternoon tour of Rocinha. When the van arrived, at 2:13pm—unusually late for a scheduled tour, it was already almost full. As I climbed inside and made my way to an open seat in the back row, I was struck by a single fact: everyone in the van was a woman. As she pulled away from the curb, the tour guide/driver yelled back at me, “Are you the anthropologist?” I answered, “Yes,” and she returned to a conversation about traffic congestion in Copacabana that she must have been having before stopping to pick me up.

As I waited for a lull in conversation to request permission from the other tourists to record our tour, a woman in the seat in front of me turned around and introduced herself. Her name was Sara, she was 31, and she was traveling with her partner Naomi, who was 28, and 8 other friends, all of whom she introduced and pointed out, including their ages and details on who was partnered with whom. She also told me that they were staying in a youth hostel about 10 blocks from where I had been picked up. I learned that the women were all between 27 and 34 years old and they were all from Tel Aviv, Israel. As Sara put it, they were on “one last adventure before starting [their] families.” I asked her if it was okay with her if I recorded digital audio of the tour and she agreed and asked if everyone else thought it was okay. They all consented, and I began recording.

53 This was the only tour I ever witnessed that consisted entirely of women.
54 It is worth pointing out that not all North-American tourists in Brazil are “white,” though Caucasians did comprise all of the U.S.-American tourists I met on poverty tours. Instead, there is a certain segment of privileged African-American tourists who visit Brazil and, in particular, Bahia, on “roots” tourism. Although I did not observe any of these “roots” tours, it is worth considering that the exoticization of poverty I observed in Rio de Janeiro may or may not extend to other types of tours that engage with questions of poverty that appeal to North American tourists.
As Veronica, the driver/guide, negotiated the traffic making its way to the affluent Lagoa neighborhood, she told us about favelas in Rio and about Rocinha. According to Veronica, favelas have always been part of Rio de Janeiro and Rocinha was the oldest and largest.\footnote{Veronica was only correct about Rocinha being the largest favela in Rio; it is not the oldest and favelas have not “always” been part of the city (see Chapter Four for a discussion of the history of favelas in Rio).} She admitted to having been afraid of favelas when she was young and said, “If you had told me I would be working in favelas, I would never [have] believe[d] it.” As we came into view of the Lagoa, or lagoon, Rodrigo de Freitas, Veronica stopped discussing her earlier fears of favelas and became very excited. She slowed down as we merged onto Avenida Epitácio Pessoa and asked us all to look out the left-hand windows at a beautiful high-rise apartment building. She proudly told us that she owned a two-bedroom apartment on the 7th floor and that it was her first home of her own.\footnote{Two-bedroom apartments in Lagoa on the market, as of March 2010, cost between US$200,000 and US$500,000.} Everyone commented that it was a lovely neighborhood and Veronica returned to a discussion of Rocinha.

Veronica took great pains to emphasize that “we”—herself and the tourists—would be perfectly safe in Rocinha; she repeated her assertion several times, prompting Sara to turn to me and comment, “She’s making me nervous.” I assured her that, despite protesting too much, Veronica was right: we were safe in Rocinha. Veronica concluded her discussion of safety by noting that she carried a walkie-talkie and would be among the first to know if anything was about to “go wrong” in Rocinha. That she needed a walkie-talkie in the first place seemed to undermine her assertions that all was well, but neither the tourists nor I brought this up. Veronica did not offer details about who was on the other end of the walkie-talkie and refused to tell me when I asked her later.
Once we arrived in São Conrado, Veronica parked the van at a grocery store and asked us all to gather all of our belongings and follow her. She told us, “We are going into Rocinha the real way, like the people here do. We’re taking moto-taxis!” At this point, she gestured toward the dozens of young men across the street sitting on motorcycles and wearing yellow “moto-taxi” vests. As Veronica also stressed, Carioca Tours is “the only company to enter Rocinha this way.” We all crossed the street and climbed onto moto-taxis behind the drivers. I was terrified, as I had seen many times how the moto-taxis zipped in and out of traffic and took curves at a break-neck pace. My fear was so obvious that my driver tried to reassure me in English with “is okay.” I told him, in Portuguese, that I was quite afraid of motorcycles and he promised, also in Portuguese, to drive slowly, even if it meant we arrived later than everyone else. I thanked him and we were off. My driver was true to his word and we arrived in the 99 neighborhood unscathed; I was only too happy to pay him R$2 for the trip plus a tip.

I asked the two women nearest me, Rachel and Leah, 27 and 34, respectively, what they thought of the journey up the mountain and Leah told me that it was “an interesting experience,” but that she thought they should have been told that they would be riding motorcycles—especially since they didn’t use helmets. She joked that Rachel “could have fallen off and killed herself and that would have ruined the whole trip!” Rachel playfully punched Leah’s arm and we turned our attention back to Veronica, who told us that we could take a moment to shop at the little tents of artisan crafts set up on

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57 That most Rocinha residents cannot pay R$2 to ride up the mountain each time they need to was not raised.
58 That all of the moto-taxi drivers were male and all of the tourists female adds a potentially sexualized dimension to our entry into Rocinha, particular given that the safest way to ride a moto-taxi is to sit astride it and hold onto the driver. I do not believe this element of the tours was intended, and even male tourists or other customers ride astride the motorbikes.
the sidewalk. The tourists began milling about and 4 of them—Dana (32), Abby (30), Sara, and Naomi—began taking pictures of the view of Gâvea, while Debra (33) and Sharon (29) posed for pictures with the street as their backdrop. Only Rachel, Leah, Ada (29), and Rona (31) seemed interested in the paintings and CDs for sale, though they did not purchase anything.

After about 10 minutes of browsing and taking pictures, Veronica told us all that it was time to begin walking. She invited us to photograph whatever we would like, but warned us against taking pictures of anyone who was carrying a weapon. She did not offer an explanation or provide an example of a tourist who had failed to heed her warning; instead, she told us only that doing so “wouldn’t be a good idea.” The first thing Veronica drew our attention to was a telephone pole with a large, tangled mass of wires, which were strung in every direction. She explained, “People mostly do things themselves here, like build their houses and get their own electricity. The state is not here.” Everyone seemed fascinated by the telephone pole and 7 of the women took photographs of it. Only Rona, Debra, and Abby did not photograph the wires.

As we began to make our way down the hill, we turned off of the Estrada da Gâvea and entered the steep and often narrow Rua 3. Soon after beginning our descent, Veronica drew our attention to the tiny plastic bags littering the ground in an alleyway to our left. She gave us a moment to contemplate what we were seeing before exclaiming, “They’re drug packets! They probably had cocaine [in them] just last night!” While it is unclear how long the empty packets had been accumulating, or exactly what they had

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59 Without intending to be ironic, Veronica made this assertion fewer than 25 yards from the Rocinha office of Light, the state-run electric company.
60 Given that their significant others and friends did photograph the wires, their choice not to do so presumably did not preclude their access to photos later.
contained when full, the effect of seeing them was pronounced. Several of the women muttered “wow’s,” while most of them photographed the litter. Having created a sense of current danger, Veronica went on to explain that the drug traffic ruled the favela and that many residents used drugs recreationally to escape their daily lives. As she put it, “If I lived here, I would want to take drugs, too.” While no one agreed with Veronica, no one challenged her assertions about Rocinha residents, nor did anyone comment on Veronica’s assessment of Rocinha residents’ lives being so bad as to necessitate regular drug use.

The next site to which Veronica drew our attention was the World Cup-related graffiti spray-painted on the walls of homes along our path. She explained that Brazilians were quite passionate about soccer or, in her words, “football,” and that this was even more the case for people in favelas, as many famous soccer players come from favelas. She also noted Brazil’s tragic defeat in the World Cup, but reminded us all that Brazil had still won more World Cups than any other country in the world. (Brazil, sadly, was defeated by France in the semi-finals at the 2006 World Cup.) Just as they had done with the drug paraphernalia, most of the women took the opportunity to photograph the elaborate graffiti.

As we continued our descent, Veronica explained that we were going to make our way to a neighborhood called “Roupa Suja,” or “Dirty Clothes” to see a daycare center that her tour company “sponsored.” Although Veronica was unclear about the meaning of “sponsored” and provided no additional information about what her company did for the center, she was quite clear about the meaning of the neighborhood’s name. As she put it, “It’s called ‘Dirty Clothes’ because the people who live there are so poor they
don’t wash their clothes.” While no one openly questioned Veronica’s claim that poor people do not wash their clothes, Rona turned to me and asked, “Really?” I answered, “No, not really” and we agreed to discuss it later.

On our way through the Roupa Suja neighborhood, Veronica called our attention to the dirt paths and to the homes constructed from wood, rather than from cinderblocks and reminded us again that we were in the poorest section of Rocinha. Once we arrived at the daycare center, Veronica first showed us the tour company merchandise for sale and then led us into the kitchen to meet the women working there. She explained that they provided lunch for the children who attended the daycare “with our [her company’s] support.” She also suggested that the lunches the children received at the daycare center might be the only food they ate during the day. No one photographed the kitchen or the women working in it.

Next, we were led into the main play area downstairs and had an opportunity to observe the children playing. Although Veronica invited us to take pictures of the children, no one did so. She explained that the children spent most of their day playing and coloring and that the daycare made it possible for the children’s mothers to work outside the home. Sara, who seemed particularly delighted to watch the 10-11 children squealing, playing, and running around, told me that she could not “wait to have one of [her] own.” After a few minutes watching the children, Veronica led us back out onto the front porch and up the stairs to the second floor, where we saw the thirteen babies

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61 The neighborhood actually earned its name because the women who lived there decades earlier had carried their families’ dirty laundry down the hillside to wash it in communal basins in one of Rocinha’s other neighborhoods.

62 Although I did not follow the children home to see if they were fed later and although I did not interview the children’s families to find out if/when they ate, I do not think Veronica’s claim was true. All of the children I ever saw in this daycare center looked well cared for.

63 I had some difficulty counting the children, as they were in constant motion.
being cared for at the center. No one photographed the (mostly) sleeping babies, either.
Whether the tourists opted to avoid photographing the children because they were too
“normal” or because photographing human beings felt too invasive is unclear, but I
suspect it was a combination of the two.

After leaving the daycare, we made our way back down the steeply sloping paths
toward the commercial center of Rocinha. Once we arrived on the bustling Vía Ápia,
Veronica drew our attention to the various shops, restaurants, and other businesses
located along the route, without suggesting that their presence might contradict some of
her earlier statements about the extreme poverty and lack of amenities in Rocinha. Next,
she pointed out an alleyway where, she assured us, community residents carried out their
“superstitions” and sacrificed animals to their “gods.” While several of the women
photographed the alleyway (Leah, Abby, and Sharon), the rest of the women
photographed the open-air marketplace across the street, where vendors sell everything
from live animals to fresh fruits and vegetables to pirated CDs.

Veronica then told us that it was time to head back to our van and return home.
As we exited Rocinha and crossed the street into São Conrado, she invited us to ask
questions for the first time on the tour. Initially, no one spoke, but once we were back in
the van, Leah asked Veronica how long she had been conducting tours of Rocinha and
what made her decide to do it. Veronica joked that it seemed “like forever,” but that
she had really just been doing the tours for “a couple of years.” She did not answer
Leah’s question about her motivation for giving tours of Rocinha, nor did she tell the

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64 It is worth noting that most tour guides immediately tell tourists how long they have been doing their
jobs as a way of bolstering their credibility.
group that she was one of the owners of the company. Instead, she began telling us that we were going to go through a neighborhood we had yet to see on our trip: Gávea.

At the mention of Gávea, several of the women grew more attentive and Abby whispered something to Dana. Then she asked Veronica, “Are we going to pass the planetarium?” Veronica seemed surprised that Abby knew about the planetarium and I was surprised by the question, as well. On all of the tours in which I participated, Abby was the only tourist ever to bring up the planetarium. As I soon learned, Abby had a rather particular reason for asking about the planetarium that had less to do with the facility itself and more to do with its location. Veronica told us that we would be passing the planetarium in just a few moments and that she would point it out once it came into view. When Veronica pointed to the facility, Abby asked her, indicating the smaller building to the left (when facing the front of the planetarium), “Is that the nightclub?”

This seemingly innocuous question initiated one of the most interesting exchanges I ever observed on a tour. Veronica, it seemed, knew all about the 00, or Zero Zero, nightclub and did not like it at all. In her words, “It’s not a place you want to go. It’s hip, but you shouldn’t go. It’s not a good club.” Given that I had visited 00 on several occasions, I was surprised by Veronica’s statement, but my confusion was quickly remedied, as Abby pressed Veronica on her evaluation of the club. “Why is it so bad?” she asked. Veronica then made clear her reasons for disliking the club: “It’s not the place, it’s the people. It’s not really a gay club, but they have taken over and sometimes there are more gays than regular people. It’s awful. I wouldn’t recommend it at all. You won’t meet anyone. I would go to Melt.” At this point, the tourists exchanged a variety of looks—ranging from what I would interpret as shock to amusement to irritation—with
one another. No one asked Veronica any more questions, but Sara asked me if I would like to have dinner with the group. I accepted her invitation and left the van with everyone else. Everyone, as I learned at dinner, had been quite surprised that Veronica had failed to notice that she had spouted homophobic commentary to a van full of lesbian couples (and me).

**Rio Slum Tours**

On Wednesday, October 10, 2007, at 9am, I stood waiting in front of the Copacabana Palace Hotel and hoping it would not rain. The van for “Rio Slum Tours” pulled in front of the hotel just minutes after I had arrived by city bus. I had arranged to be picked up in front of the Copacabana Palace not because I was staying there—I wasn’t—but rather because of its location by Posto 5, near the Leme neighborhood. I had figured that I would likely be the first tourist to be picked up for the tour and that I would, therefore, be able to watch my fellow tourists from their first moments entering the van. I was, in fact, the first tourist to be picked up. As the van pulled to a stop, Maurício, the tour guide, jumped out and asked if I was “Toe-mee.” I said that I was, in Portuguese, mostly to let him know that I would be able to understand his interaction with the driver. I had learned that it was important to do this immediately, rather than even a few minutes after getting picked up, after I heard a tour guide and driver on another tour discuss the driver’s wife’s suspected infidelities in great detail.

After entering the van, Maurício, an animated, fast-talking 40-something whom I liked immediately, told André, the 50-something, intense-looking driver, who bore an

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The tour I describe here was not remarkable in any way except, perhaps, for the high percentage of U.S.-Americans on the tour (30%). I gained permission from the guide, driver, and each tourist to record digital audio of the entire tour.
uncanny resemblance to Sylvester Stallone, that I was Carioca (in Portuguese). I corrected him (also in Portuguese) and explained that I was from Iowa in the U.S., but that I was living and studying in Rio and that I thought it was a wonderful compliment that he could mistake me for a local. We continued to chat about my studies, which both gentlemen claimed to find fascinating, until we reached the second tourist pick-up point, the Arena Copacabana Hotel. Before jumping out of the van to greet the next two tourists, Maurício told me that he’d be willing to hang out with me after the tour and tell me everything he knew or thought about favela tourism. While I was eagerly accepting his invitation and thanking him, André chimed in that he’d be happy to stay and talk with us; as I was thanking André for volunteering his time, Maurício returned with Sam and Phoebe, a heterosexual married couple from upstate New York, and all conversation from this point until the end of the tour took place in English.

Sam, it turned out, was 46 and an attorney, while Phoebe was 39 and an otolaryngologist. They had been married for 13 years and this was their first trip to Brazil. Neither of them had any children and they both described themselves as secular, liberal democrats. When I asked them why they were taking a tour of Rocinha, Sam responded with a vague, “It’s important to see everything” and Phoebe elaborated, “You can’t just look at the beach and the beautiful hotels and restaurants and think that you’ve seen Rio or anywhere, really…It seemed like the right thing to do.” At this point, I noticed Phoebe’s open-toed sandals and wondered what she would do if it rained, as the morning forecast had suggested it might.

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66 When introducing myself, I often accidentally claimed Iowa, instead of Illinois, as my home in the U.S., as I had only relocated from the University of Iowa to the University of Illinois a few months before beginning my fieldwork. This tendency waned as the length of time I was in Brazil grew, but even at the end of my fieldwork I had to make a concerted effort to remember where I was now “from.”
By this time, only a few moments later, we were stopped at the Odeon Hotel to pick up three more tourists: Sandy, a 34-year-old veterinary technician from Toronto, who was traveling alone; and Martin and Alice, both 37, from “Northern England,” and both secondary school teachers. Sandy was very excited to visit Rocinha because, as she explained, her younger sister had spent one Spring Break during college volunteering in a slum in Lima, Peru, and she wanted to see what that might be like.° Martin and Alice told me, and everyone else on the van, that they had chosen to take the tour because “one of our friends was here on holiday a few months ago and went on the tour and loved it.” What exactly their friend “loved” about it was left unclear, as we slowed in front of Ipanema’s Holiday Inn to retrieve Angie and April, two 26-year-old friends from London who did not give an occupation, but told everyone, in April’s words, that they were excited to see “how people really live.” Sandy, Martin, Alice, Angie, and April all wore shorts and tennis shoes.

After collecting Angie and April, Maurício told us that we only had one more stop to make, but that was at the Sheraton on Avenida Niemeyer, at the very end of Leblon, not far from Rocinha and quite close to the Vidigal favela. Normally guides would begin discussion of their qualifications and of the history of favelas in Rio long before arriving in Rocinha, but the proximity of the last pick up to Rocinha prevented Maurício from beginning his typical script. Instead, he invited tourists to ask him questions about Brazil or Rio and said that he would be happy to answer anything he was able to answer. For a while, no one said anything and everyone, instead, seemed to be looking out the window

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67 Neither Sandy nor any other tourist with whom I spoke questioned the logic of visiting a slum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to find out what working in a slum in Lima, Peru might be like. That the two would be similar enough to be interchangeable is so patently obvious to tourists that it goes unexamined.
at the beach and ocean on our left or at the luxury apartments and hotels of Ipanema and Leblon on our right.

It was Sam who broke the brief silence, as we passed Avenida Rainha Elizabeth and were very nearly side-swiped by a rushing taxi. “Is it just me or do people tend not to stop for traffic lights here?” Several tourists nodded and Maurício smiled. Someone laughed. “Well, we Brazilians do tend to think of traffic signals more as suggestions than as laws, but that is more at night or in bad areas than during the day. That guy was driving crazy,” Maurício explained. Everyone was, again, quiet for a moment. Then Angie asked, “Why is Sugarloaf Mountain called that? We were there yesterday and it doesn’t look very much like bread.” Maurício, again, had a ready answer, “Well, it’s based on a mis-translation, really. The ‘pão’ in Pão de Açúcar, as it’s called in Portuguese is really the wood part of the sugar, the cane. When they get the sugar part out they throw away the wood part in a pile and it gets really high. So the mountain looks like one of those sugar wood piles, not a loaf of bread.” Everyone, myself included, seemed to be impressed with his knowledge and quick explanation.

Now that he had established himself as knowledgeable about not only the naming of Rio’s tourist attractions, but also the quotidian quirks of driving in Rio, other tourists began asking Maurício all sorts of questions. These ranged from “Where is the best place to go shopping in Rio?” to “Where should I eat Brazilian barbecue?” to “Is it really dangerous to walk along the beach at night?” (“Fashion Mall,” “Porcão,” and “Yes, it can be, if it’s late,” respectively.) The question and answer session lasted until we turned left into the Sheraton’s parking area and André swung the van around in front of the lobby doors. Maurício got out and helped Ed, a 53-year-old construction contractor from
Philadelphia into the van’s front passenger seat. Ed’s wife, he told us, had thought that spending the morning in the Sheraton’s spa was a better use of her vacation time, so he was alone for the tour.

Once everyone was on board and André had made the somewhat dangerous (half-blind) left turn back onto Avenida Niemeyer, Maurício began discussing Rocinha’s history with the tour group. He explained that Rocinha had been founded by day laborers over 50 years ago and that its name, literally translated into English, means “little countryside.” When the community was founded, Rocinha was, indeed, the country and no roads connected it to the rest of Rio de Janeiro, where Rocinha’s founders worked, he told us. He warned the tourists, in a half-joking manner, not to be shocked upon arriving in Rocinha, as it was “anything but countryside now.” He went on to talk about how the tourists were about to visit, instead, the largest slum not only in Brazil, but also in Latin America. He speculated that it might be the largest slum in the world. “But don’t be fooled,” he told us. “Slums might look dirty and dangerous, but we are safe and welcome here. There is nothing to fear.”

There are, at least, three things worth noting in this quotation. First, Maurício uses the first-person plural “we” to refer to the tourists AND to himself; this use of “we” by tour guides was certainly not uncommon on the tours I observed. In fact, every tour guide I observed used “we” to group him- or herself and the tourists together at least once, but usually substantially more often. Tourists, however, largely failed to conceive of themselves and the tour guides as a kind of “we,” especially when the tour guides

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68 Ed was rather substantial and would likely have fit a bit uncomfortably into one of the three seating benches in the back of the van. The front seat, while roomier, did require him to turn his head to see Maurício, who was sitting on a stool with his back to the front seat, facing the rest of the passengers.  
69 Only Renato, a tour guide from Rocinha whose tour I include below, did not regularly group himself and tourists together as “we.”
made reference to “race” or color or, in some cases, class. Second, although Maurício was certainly not the only tour guide to tell tourists that their (or “our,” in his case) presence was welcome in Rocinha and that there was nothing to fear, he was rather unusual in that he did not, to my knowledge, undermine the assurance later in the tour by telling lurid tales of violence and bloodshed. Third, Maurício acknowledged that there is a difference between Rocinha’s appearance and reality, and he positioned himself as an expert with sufficient cultural knowledge to differentiate between the two for the tourists, who presumably lack such knowledge.

Before stopping in Rocinha, Maurício announced that we would be making a brief stop at a community center in the tiny, neighboring Vila Canoas favela. He told us that it would give us a better idea of favelas in Rio and that it was especially exciting because we were going to see the computers that his tour company had donated to the community. A few moments later, we had entered the community and Andre parked our van on the street alongside a two-story building with a wall in front of it with glass and wire on top. We entered through the main door and Maurício and Laura, a heavyset woman in her 50s who worked at the center, ushered us into a small room with 8 outdated computers. Maurício explained to us that the founder of his tour company cared so much about helping the favelas that he had started this project, which was supported by donations from tourists—and here he pointed to a little donation box—and by a portion of the proceeds from the tours. I did not notice any tourist make a donation, but given how cramped the room was with all of us inside, it would not have been difficult for a tourist to have donated discreetly.

While it is possible, it is also highly unlikely that I failed to notice Maurício whispering stories of violence to one or more of the tourists in the group.
Next, we were taken to an outside courtyard where the tourists had the opportunity to sign a guestbook and buy crafts made by local children. No one bought anything, but, according to Zygmunt Bauman, this should not be surprising. As he notes in an essay on “Tourists and Vagabonds,” “Consumers are first and foremost gatherers of sensations; they are collectors of things only in a secondary and derivative sense” (1998:83). Tourists’ embodied experiences of poverty are sufficient to displace any need to collect physical remembrances of their tours. Although they did not purchase anything, Sandy, Sam, Phoebe, Martin, Alice, and Ed all signed the guestbook. Although I did not sign it, I did take the opportunity to photograph the most recent pages of the book as a way of documenting the nationality of the tourists who signed the book as part of their tours of Rocinha. Before long, we were herded back outside and into our van and were once again on the road to Rocinha.

As we neared Rocinha, Maurício explained that, although the appearance and size of Rocinha had changed dramatically in the decades since its founding, the contemporary community, home to “about 200,000 or even maybe 250,000” still shared many traits with the earlier, countryside community. The most important of these traits, according to Maurício, was that many of Rocinha’s currently employed residents still performed menial labor for more affluent Cariocas, often as maids or doormen, either in private residences or in the Zona Sul’s luxury hotels. He also, to my surprise, said that, although Rocinha could now be accessed by a major road (the Estrada da Gávea highway), it was still largely disconnected from greater Rio de Janeiro. He elaborated on this claim by

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71 I only photographed the most recent pages, as I had already photographed earlier pages on a previous tour. The breakdown of tourists by nationality in the book closely mirrored the breakdown I observed on my tours, though I did note entries from Switzerland and Poland, which were two nationalities I never encountered on the tours in which I participated.

72 This was the highest estimate for Rocinha’s population that I ever heard on a tour.
telling us that many residents of Rocinha spent very little leisure time outside their community or the beach and that children, in particular, were unlikely ever to have seen much of the city, including the “historical downtown.” Although he did not go so far as to suggest that Rocinha’s residents were, quite literally, marginalized from the city’s attractions, it is worth noting that Maurício noted the social isolation experienced by many residents.

Once we had arrived at the intersection of Rua 4 (4th Street) and the Estrada da Gâvea, André pulled the van over to let us out. Maurício offered the virtually obligatory warnings about photography: we were welcome to photograph whatever we would like, except for any visibly armed men. If we did, he told us, he was not responsible for the consequence to our cameras. To his credit, he did not tell us stories about other tourists who had failed to heed his warnings. On the other hand, by leaving the “consequences” for noncompliance up to the tourists’ imaginations, he was likely as successful as other guides in impressing upon tourists the importance of obeying.

We disembarked in the area known as 99, or Nove Nove, and, after a short walk, Maurício began drawing our attention to the Light (state electric service) and SEBRAE offices just up the street from where we stood. Both companies provided evidence of official governmental presence in Rocinha and, according to him, demonstrated that Rocinha was not as different from other neighborhoods as one might expect. Indeed, although Maurício did not frame the presence of Light in terms of citizenship, in Brazil,

73 I do not know where Maurício came up with this information, but judging from the few conversations I had with minors, he was essentially correct.
74 This was, notably, Maurício’s only overt reference to the drug gang presence in Rocinha. He later indicated both gang-related graffiti and bullet holes, but provided little in the way of a context for the tourists to understand them.
individualized electric bills are often considered in precisely these terms (c.f. Pedrosa, et. al. 1990:85).

That Maurício’s highlighting of state presence in Rocinha seemed to contradict his earlier claim that Rocinha was, as it was 50 years earlier, disconnected from the rest of Rio, was not addressed. Indeed, Maurício walked the line between advocating a “Rocinha is different from the rest of Rio” position and a “Rocinha is basically similar to the rest of Rio” position for the duration of the tour. In later interviews with 3 of the tourists on the tour (April, Angie, and Sandy), this discrepancy was unnoticed consciously, but was repeated in their framings of Rocinha’s relationship with the rest of Rio. According to Angie, for example, “it’s (Rocinha is) connected [to Rio], but at the same time it’s not.”

Before beginning our descent, Maurício pointed out, without really needing to, the spectacular views of Gâvea, to one side, and of São Conrado and the Atlantic Ocean to the other. As tourists busily snapped photos of the panorama, Maurício indicated notable features of the built landscape, including the American School in Gâvea and the Intercontinental Hotel, built by the Brazilian architect responsible for Brasilia, Oscar Niemeyer, in São Conrado. The obvious, uncluttered luxury of both communities contrasted sharply with the garbage-strewn street, lined with cinderblock houses and crowded with pedestrian traffic, on which we stood. After a quick, cursory look at the artisan crafts for sale, which no tourist purchased, we set out in earnest.

As we made our way down the mountain, Maurício pointed out both a tangled mass of electrical and phone lines and told us, “They have to do it themselves.” Here, it seems that tourists were to understand that, even thought the state might be present in
Rocinha, as evidenced by the Light and SEBRAE offices, the state was also absent, leaving residents to solve basic problems, such as electricity and phone service, on their own. He then pointed out the steep steps of an alleyway, Rua 3, that we were about to descend and told us that the residents of Rocinha had had to create these on their own, too, which further underlined the absence of the state. While he did not explicitly state that residents of Copacabana, Ipanema, and Leblon, did not have to pave or build their own streets, tourists made the connection between local infrastructure and local resourcefulness. Ed, for example, chuckled and shook his head as he told me, after Maurício pointed out a particularly lovely, teal-painted 5-story apartment building, “If people back home had to do this themselves, they [the buildings] wouldn’t last two minutes.”

Before entering Rua 3 to begin our descent, the tourists were made aware of a Honda motorcycle dealership and a trash collection point, on opposite sides of the highway from one another. Maurício gestured to the traffic backed up along the highway and to the moto-taxis zipping in and out of the stopped and moving cars and trucks and said, “You can understand why a motorcycle makes sense here.” While tourists might be able to reason out why a motorcycle makes sense in a highly congested area, they were not made aware that most residents of Rocinha lack the means of purchasing one, either through full-payment or through some sort of finance plan. With respect to the trash collection point, Maurício noted, “They pick it up every day.” He did not explain who “they” are or that “they” have very few collection points for Rocinha’s approximately 200,000 residents—which would have helped to explain how dirty (to foreign eyes) the collection point might appear.
Once we entered the no more than 6-feet-wide (and much narrower in places) Rua 3, Maurício, like every guide I observed in this area, immediately pointed out the soccer-related graffiti on the walls of homes. He explained that it was related to the Word Cup (2006) and that the pictures were of a variety of famous Brazilian players, while much of the writing expressed the hope that Brazil would win its 6th World Cup Championship. Although Maurício decried the loss, as did every other guide I heard speaking of the World Cup, few of the tourists seemed remotely distraught by the tragedy. Sam expressed a sentiment common to many of the US-Americans I interviewed when he said, “I’ve never really gotten soccer.”

Nearly 1 hour into the tour, as we continued to make our way down the mountain, Phoebe slipped and missed several uneven stairs. I felt bad for having noticed her inappropriate footwear and not having said anything, but she recovered quickly with little damage to anything. Maurício, after checking to make certain that she had not sustained any injuries (physical or otherwise, I suspect), continued narrating about the school we were about to pass. “Here is where the children of Rocinha come for primary school and they have a lunch and you can see how nice it is,” he told us. He did not tell us, however, that many, if not most, of the teachers in the school have no more than a secondary education or that the school’s high concrete-and-chain link wall was erected as much to prevent gang members from using the school as a hiding place during shoot-outs with the police as it was to keep safe the children playing inside. Had he provided tourists a fuller understanding of the school, the “nice” exterior appearance might have seemed less impressive, and tourists would have had a better understanding of the crushing difficulties residents face when it comes to finding more lucrative employment.
Maurício also pointed out gang-related graffiti, which Sam, Sandy, and Alice photographed, walls pock-marked with bullet holes, which everyone except Alice, Phoebe, and Ed photographed, the mail delivery system of Rocinha, a daycare center, and several restaurants before we re-entered the main road. As we emerged back onto the Estrada da Gâvea, he made note of the moderately-sized grocery store to our left and the bus parking lot directly across the street. We continued down the hill, toward the appropriately-named “Rua S” (S Street)—a particularly steep and curvaceous section of the Estrada da Gâvea—where another parking area doubled as a space for large, public gatherings (such as when President Lula spoke in Rocinha). He also pointed out an internet café and several “lanchonetes”—snack/juice bars. As he put it, referring to the internet café, “Everyone in Brazil likes the internet and we have these [cafés] everywhere.” Here Maurício seemed to be indexing Brazil’s—and not just Rocinha’s—modernity.

We continued down the hill and finally found ourselves on the bustling Vía Ápia, where we were made aware of the post office, Bank of Brazil and Bradesco banks, dozens of shops ranging from butcheries to furniture stores to drug stores, and an open air market where fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats, along with live chickens, incense, and pirated CDs and DVDs were for sale. Just off to our right, Maurício noted an alleyway littered with garbage and ash, blood, bones, and feathers. He explained to the tourists,

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75 Even though Alice and Phoebe did not take photographs of the bullet marks, Martin and Sam did, so that both couples would have the photos, even if each member of those couples was not responsible for taking them. Ed, then, was the only person on the tour who would return home without photographs of bullet holes. Because the post office does not deliver the mail to each individual’s home in Rocinha, there is a community-run service that brings individuals their mail for a modest monthly fee. Those who do not wish to pay the fee must collect their own mail from the distribution point.

76 It is worth pointing out that here Maurício uses “we” to group himself with other Brazilians, rather than with tourists. Such variation in usage may, in part, explain why tourists failed to understand their guide’s “we,” but I seriously doubt that the total failure of “we” to resonate with tourists may be attributed entirely to the oscillation in usage.
several of whom looked aghast at the residue of sacrifice, that many Rocinha residents practiced a Brazilian religion known as “macumba” and that they made burnt sacrifices to their deities in this alley way.77

It is worth noting here that “macumba” is often used as a derogatory synonym for “Candomblé,” but can also be used in a non-derogatory, colloquial sort of way. It was unclear to me at the time in which way Maurício was using the term, but after speaking with him at length, I concluded that he did not intend to disparage the religion in any way. That having been said, he most certainly did intend to startle the tourists by pointing out the not insubstantial amount of dried blood in the alley. This is a prime example of how Rocinha is construed as “not like” the rest of Rio on tours.

We continued down the street to the place where André waited with our van and Maurício discreetly noted the presence of several armed men just across the street from where our van was parked. He gave us a final opportunity to photograph Rocinha, this time from below, and then ushered us back into the van. Once we were inside, in roughly the same positions in which we had arrived in Rocinha, he thanked us for participating in the tour and invited final questions about what we had, or had not, seen. As no one had any tour-related questions, he asked that we tell our friends or family members who were in Brazil with us about the tour and about him, in particular. He advised us that we would be dropped off at our hotels in the reverse order from that in which we had been picked up, which is to say that the last one to get on the van (Ed), would be the first one to get off.

77 Phoebe, in particular, seemed disgusted with what she saw. She told me, “it’s (animal sacrifice is) just so primitive. I mean, who still does that?” Phoebe was the only tourist I ever heard use the word “primitive” to describe Rocinha or its residents.
After nearly 30 minutes, everyone had been dropped off and I had made arrangements to interview April, Angie, Sandy, Sam, and Phoebe. André, Maurício, and I then stopped to discuss (in Portuguese) what they thought about this tour specifically and about tourism in Rocinha generally. Maurício surprised me by telling me that he did not like telling the tourists everything that he told them and that he believed the picture he painted of Rocinha on his tours was inaccurate. Such candor about problems with the representation of Rocinha was uncommon among the tour guides I encountered. Specifically, he told me that he thought the “social exclusion” of poor Brazilians was far too downplayed on the tours and that, in particular, tourism’s role in social inequality was overlooked.

When I pressed him to discuss what he perceived to be tourism’s connection with social inequality in Brazil, he explained, “Well, it’s one thing to tell them that [people from Rocinha] work in their hotels, but it’s another to tell them just how little they earn. I tell them one [thing]. I don’t tell them the other and I really can’t.” (“Pois, é uma coisa falar pra eles que trabalham nos hotéis, mas já é outra falar pra eles o pouco que ganham. Falo o primeiro, mas não falo o outro e realmente não posso.”) When I asked Maurício why he “couldn’t” tell the tourists about the low pay earned by hotel maids and waiters, he responded with a question: “Why? No one wants to hear something like that; it would ruin their [the tourists’] day.” (“Pra que? Ninguém quer escutar uma coisa dessa. Iria estragar o dia.”) He went on then to confess that he felt guilty showing tourists that “it’s not so bad” in Rocinha because “they have houses and electricity and water,” when “really, there are hungry people here and it’s even worse in other slums, but Rocinha is the slum that represents them all.” (“Não é tão ruim assim [na Rocinha]” porque “eles...
têm casa com luz e água [mas] realmente, têm gente aqui que passam fome e é ainda pior nas outras favelas, mas Rocinha é a favela que representa todas as favelas.”) In other words, Maurício, although he failed to articulate the mechanisms through which it occurred, believed that providing tourists with a sugar-coated view of poverty in Rocinha was connected with the continued existence of vastly unequal socio-economic conditions in Rio and he felt guilty about his role in perpetuating those circumstances.

André, on the other hand, did not share Maurício’s sense of guilt, but he did have a rather strong opinion on what tourists wanted to get out of a trip to Rocinha. As he readily admitted, his opinion was not based on any direct interaction with the tourists, nor was it based on overhearing their conversations, as he spoke very little English. Instead, André’s opinion was formulated by observing tourists’ behavior and contemplating what might compel them to do as they did. He summed up his take on why tourists found a few hours in Rocinha so appealing in the following way: “It’s a break for them, you know? They spend all this time on beautiful beaches and beautiful views and beautiful monuments and then, for a few hours, they get to see something ugly and feel superior again. Imagine if all they saw was beauty how hard it would be to feel that way!” (“É um descanso para eles, sabe? Gastam todo esse tempo nas praias lindas e vistas lindas e monumentos lindos e aí, durante umas horas, podem ver uma coisa feia e se sentem superiores de novo. Imagina se só viessam a beleza como seria difícil se sentirem assim!”)

André’s assessment was interesting for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was his assumption that foreign tourists come to Brazil with a sense of superiority rooted in their being from somewhere “better” than Brazil. In his view, foreigners’ exposure to
the profound beauty—both natural and human-made—of Rio threatened this sense of superiority and tourists, in order to regain it, had to spend time seeing something “ugly,” something that they would not (for whatever reason) see in their places of origin. Once their sense of superiority, according to André, was solidified, they would be able, once again, to enjoy Rio’s charms.

While no tourist ever told me that they went to Rocinha to regain a feeling of “superiority,” André’s understanding of the motivations behind participating in poverty tourism may not be all that far from the mark. In the words of Eric, a 43-year-old public interest lawyer from New York City, seeing Rocinha was, in fact, a way for him to “feel better” about his own life, to understand that “it’s not so bad.” Although I doubt rather seriously if all, or even most, tourists come to Rocinha in order to “feel better” about their lives in their countries of residence, at least 1 tourist on every tour in which I participated told me that they did feel better about their lives after visiting Rocinha. “Feeling better” here seems to be synonymous with feeling more grateful for the relative privilege they enjoy. In most of these cases, the tourists did not cite this as a reason for having undertaken the tour, but rather as a pleasant and unforeseen consequence of their participation.

Urban Safari Tours

At 1:40 pm on Thursday, March 6th, 2008, I stood, once again, outside the Copacabana Palace Hotel waiting to be picked up for my final tour of Rocinha with Urban Safari Tours. Right on schedule, the van pulled up and I climbed inside, where I met Ignácio, the guide, and Nilson, the driver. Ignácio was 37 years old, though I would
have guessed he was at least in his mid-40s. He had thinning black hair and large, wide-set eyes. He was pleasant and approachable, but he seemed sleepy. Nilson was thin with close-shaved brown hair and a beard. Already on board was a young, heterosexual couple from Toronto, Joel, a 35-year-old pharmacist, and Amber, a 34-year-old piano teacher. I was surprised to find other tourists in the van, but Amber told me that she and her husband were staying at the Leme Othon Palace Hotel, which is further up the coast—where the tour vans begin their pickups—than the Copacabana Palace. After Joel, Amber, and I finished our introductions, Ignácio informed us that we had only three more stops to make and then we could begin our discussion of Rocinha. Until then, he offered to answer any questions we might have and invited us to enjoy the sights from the van windows.

I reminded Ignácio, whom I had met on 2 other tours, that I was the American anthropologist studying favela tourism and, once again, requested his permission to record the tour. After he agreed, I briefly explained my project in Portuguese to Nilson and asked him for consent to record the tour, which he also gave. I then began what would be a rather lengthy conversation (approximately 15 minutes) with Amber and Joel about anthropology generally and about my project specifically. They both demonstrated a good deal of enthusiasm for the project and seemed to think it was a great idea to do something that, in Amber’s words, “lets you hang around in Rio for a long time.” While this was not exactly the assessment of my project that I would have preferred, I admitted to her that I thoroughly enjoyed living there and that there were probably other anthropologists who would have summed my project up in a similar fashion: studying tourism to get to “hang around” a beautiful tourist destination.
The third stop for the van (and my second) was at the Best Western Sol Ipanema, on Avenida Vieira Souto, where we picked up a middle-aged British couple: Jan, a housewife, and Evan, who managed at a construction company. Although it was nearly 80 degrees outside, Evan was dressed in khaki pants and he wore a cardigan over his button-up shirt. His attire seemed an odd choice for a nearly 3-hour long walking tour on a mountainside; his wife Jan, in short sleeves and a pair of khaki shorts, blended in with the rest of the people already on the van. Once on board, everyone once again introduced her- or himself.

Soon after stopping at the Best Western, we neared the end of Ipanema and stopped at the Hotel Praia Ipanema, where John, a 58-year-old, retired naval officer originally from South Bend, Indiana climbed aboard. Our final stop was at the chic Hotel Marina All Suites in Leblon. There, our final two passengers, the 45-year old advertising executive Luc and the 47-year old, freelance journalist Marie, both from Nice, got into the van. Once everyone had introduced him- or herself for the final time and had granted permission to record the tour, Ignácio began explaining what we were going to be doing and seeing that afternoon. In his words, we would “enter a different world and see real life” and come to understand “how Brazil works.”

Ignácio then proceeded to explain that Rocinha was, “of course,” the largest favela in Brazil and “in the world.”\(^{78}\) This did not mean, however, that we needed to be afraid of visiting the community; as he told us, “Most people [in Rocinha] are workers and honest.” Whatever Ignácio’s intention was in reminding us that most people were “workers and honest,” he undermined his assertion that all was well in Rocinha by next discussing the drug traffic in the community. Specifically, we told us that a drug gang

\(^{78}\) No one on the tour questioned the accuracy of this assertion.
“owned” Rocinha and that nothing went on in the community without their permission. At this point, Amber interrupted him and asked if we, presumably meaning both “us” as a tour group and “us” as the tour company operating the tour, had been granted permission to visit Rocinha by the drug gang. Ignácio and I were both surprised by Amber’s astute question, but Ignácio recovered quickly and replied, “No, because we don’t need permission to go into the neighborhood. It’s a public neighborhood like everywhere else.” Although Amber did not push Ignácio further, she looked skeptical and later confided in me that she had not found his answer fully satisfying.

As our van wound its way up the Gávea side of the Estrada da Gávea, Ignácio told us that we were welcome to photograph whatever we would like, but he asked that we show respect to the people in Rocinha. Although he did not elaborate or explain his request, the tourists agreed and no one appeared confused about what exactly might constitute “respectful” photography. Finally, he reminded tourists that, although Rocinha was safe, we would likely encounter armed gang members on our descent through the community and he cautioned tourists against snapping their photos. This time, he elaborated, “Criminals don’t like [their] pictures to be taken.” Next, as we neared the top of the mountain, Ignácio pointed our attention to the mounds of garbage piled along the right-hand side of the highway. He explained that local residents were responsible for bringing their trash to a collection point, rather than having it picked up from their homes, and that it would then be loaded into garbage trucks and taken to the dump. No one had any questions or comments, so we exited the van and found ourselves near the arts and crafts tents in the 99 neighborhood of Rocinha.
Ignácio told us that this would be our only real opportunity to do any shopping in Rocinha and that he would give us a few minutes to look around. Everyone except John opted to snap photos of the views of Gávea and of the American School, rather than to browse in the tents. John did browse for a few moments in each of the 5 tents, but did not make any purchase or interact verbally with any of the sales people. After approximately 12 minutes, Ignácio motioned and yelled for everyone to gather around and told us that it was time to being our tour in earnest. He began narrating what we were seeing almost immediately, but did tell us that we should interrupt him if we had any questions.

The first thing Ignácio pointed out to us was the American School. According to him, it is one of the best schools in Rio, but its location near Rocinha was a problem because of the occasional gunfire exchanges between the police and the drug gang. The threat of stray bullets was enough to force the school to close sometimes and it was also enough, according to Ignácio, that some parents refused to send their children to the school in the first place. Even so, he told us that the students at the American School came from some of the best families in Rio and that the school was quite expensive, making clear the contrast between the affluence of the students and the poverty of Rocinha. That gunfire in Rocinha was discussed as a problem for wealthy school children, rather than for residents of Rocinha, did not raise questions from the tourists present.

As we walked, the next important sights we were directed toward were the Light and SEBRAE offices on our right. Ignácio told us that the state was attempting to “regularize” electric service in Rocinha, but that it was a difficult process because so many people “steal” their electricity. To demonstrate this propensity for theft, he pointed
out a telephone pole with a great number of wires connected to the top, forming a sort of tangled mass. He explained, “You see, people put these up themselves and so they don’t pay.” He did not explain that the state had only recently begun to provide services to Rocinha and many other favelas in Rio and that people had had to fend for themselves for many years. Everyone except Amber, who was busy watching a stray dog pick through garbage for food, took pictures of the telephone pole and wires.

Next, Ignácio told us that we would be stopping at a private home to take in the view from the rooftop patio, or lage, in Portuguese. Noticing everyone’s excitement, Ignácio assured us that this “might be the best thing you see in all of Rio.” We were let into the home, a three-story cinderblock building, and led across a tiled floor, past a large, flat-screen television, and up a narrow flight of stairs. We emerged onto the lage, which had a lovely built-in barbeque, and the tourists immediately walked to the far-end, facing the Atlantic, and began snapping photos of the view. Although I did not look through the viewfinders with the tourists, from the angles at which they held their cameras, most of their photos could not have included Rocinha. Instead, they chose to focus primarily on the Atlantic Ocean and São Conrado. Here, a nice home in Rocinha served as the perfect vantage point from which tourists could ignore Rocinha. After approximately 10 minutes, we left the lage and once again began making our way through Rocinha.

Ignácio asked if everyone was ready to start climbing (down) and, after receiving rather unenthusiastic assurances that everyone was ready, we turned off of the main highway and onto Rua 3. After we had been walking for only a few moments, Ignácio stopped us and pointed out the graffiti—both World Cup-related and gang-related—on the walls of the homes on either side of the street. He described the contest that had
inspired the graffiti in the first place: “Before the World Cup, everyone in Rocinha tries to make the best graffiti for the Brazil [sic] team and this street here always wins. And when the winner is chosen, they get cases of beer for the whole neighborhood to share, so everyone wants to win.” Ignácio did not explain who chose the winner or on what basis, nor did he tell us who supplied this free beer, but no one asked him, either. What he seemed to be trying to communicate is that Rocinha residents are willing to work—or, at least, to graffiti—in order to win alcohol; the underlying presuppositions that they do not normally work, that their skills might be limited to potentially problematic endeavors such as graffiti, and that they want/need a substantial quantity of beer, are, perhaps, more troubling than the overt message.

We continued down Rua 3 and Ignácio paused to show us bullet holes in the wall of a home. He became very animated and even put his fingers in the holes to demonstrate how large they were. As he put it, “These are bullet holes!” Evan, Luc, Marie, and Joel all photographed the holes and Amber posed with her fingers in them for Joel to take her picture. Next, Luc and Marie posed with the holes and had Jan take their picture. Only John did not seem interested in taking pictures of the holes. Instead, he looked through the open window of the house, where a television was playing in the living room, although no one was there. Taking notice of John’s attention to the insides of the house, which did not resemble the rather swanky interior of the home we had previously visited, Marie and Luc came over to look, as well. Unlike John, who seemed content just to gaze through the window, Marie and Luc took pictures of the inside of the living room and Marie stuck her arms through the window to get photographs of what she could not see herself.
Ignácio permitted the tourists to look into and photograph the home for approximately 5 minutes, without providing any feedback on the tourists’ photography, before steering us back onto the street. He told us that we were going to be seeing the primary school and the postal delivery service headquarters next. At the school, Ignácio drew our attention to the high fence with barbed wire on top that served both to keep the children in and fugitive gang members out. No one seemed especially interested in discussing the fence, but Marie, Luc, and Amber all photographed the school and the children playing in the courtyard. At the postal delivery service offices, Ignácio explained that the Brazilian Postal Service delivered all the mail for residents of Rocinha to this facility. From here, residents “either pick it [their mail] up or pay to have it delivered to their houses.” No one photographed the postal delivery office.

As we re-emerged on the Estrada da Gávea, Ignácio took the opportunity to summarize what we had seen or learned so far. He brought up the garbage in the streets, the graffiti, the stolen electricity, and the beautiful views. He joked, “They might not have much, but the views are great!” Here, “they” refers to residents of Rocinha generally and, perhaps, to residents of all hilltop favelas. This was a joke I heard dozens of times from tour guides and from non-residents of favelas, though sometimes it was intended to highlight the “unfairness” of the spectacular views being wasted on the poor. For example, one French expatriate, who runs an upscale catering business in Copacabana, told me, “It’s a shame they have all of the great views and I have to look at another apartment building.”

Finally, we wound our way through Vía Ápia, where Ignácio drew our attention to several chain restaurants, several banks, furniture stores, key makers, and to the
vendors selling pirated CDs and a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, meats, and live animals. All of the tourists took photographs up and down the street, frequently capturing, intentionally or inadvertently, passersby. Ingácio motioned for us to keep moving and we followed him down the sidewalk and across a pedestrian walkway over the Estrada Lagoa-Barra on our way to visit the Amigos da Paz samba school and the tourism school next door.

Inside the samba school, Ignácio first directed our attention to the T-shirts and other items available for purchase and then began explaining the importance of Carnaval to residents of Rocinha, while everyone photographed the inside of the facility. According to Ignácio, “They [Rocinha’s residents] practice all year so they can have the best parade and sometimes they spend all the[ir] money for months and months on the costumes so they [the costumes] can be perfect.” Although Ignácio did not directly criticize allotting a large percentage of one’s income to pay for Carnaval costumes, his tone of voice and animated hand gestures made it clear that we were to find such a choice shockingly irresponsible. He finished his discussion of Carnaval and the samba schools by telling us, “They don’t really win. Mangueira and Beija-Flor are the best schools.”79

As we left the school, Ignácio again pointed our attention to the items for sale, which nobody purchased.

Our final stop was at the tourism school. We did not go inside, but rather stood outside and listened to Ignácio explain how working with tourists and tourism in Rio was a wonderful opportunity for residents of Rocinha. Because tourism was Rio de Janeiro’s most important industry, he said, finding tourism-related work was not as difficult as it

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79 Samba schools or “blocos” have been “winning” Carnaval since 1932. The bloco with the greatest number of victories is actually Portela, with 21 wins. Mangueira has 18 wins, while Beija-Flor has 11, most of which have been in the last 10 years.
was in other areas. He emphasized that his tour company helped support and run the
tourism school and that a number of its graduates had gone on to become successful tour
guides. He again reminded tourists that their participation in this tour of Rocinha helped
make these opportunities available to the people we had just seen and that getting steady
work was the best way for them to change their lives. Finally, we walked back across the
pedestrian bridge and down the sidewalk to the corner where Nilson was waiting with our
van. Joel and Marie took the opportunity to take last-minute photos of Rocinha from our
sea-level vantage point and then climbed into the van with the rest of us.

On our way back, Ignácio invited us all to ask him questions about anything and
everything related to Rio de Janeiro and to Brazil, generally. He answered questions
from Luc and Marie about the best places to eat in Rio (Porcão), from Amber about the
best day trips from the city (Petrópolis), and from Joel about the best nightclub in Rio
(Baronetti). He also offered unsolicited suggestions for the best places to sample
capirinhas (the Academia da Cachaça), to listen to and dance samba (Carioca da Gema),
and the best shopping bazaars (the Hype Fair). Finally, before dropping of Marie and
Luc, he thanked us for participating in the tour and told us that he hoped we had enjoyed
our trip and that we would tell our friends and relatives about his tour.

A Different Kind of Tour?

On Monday, November 5th, 2007, I participated, along with 1 British and 2
German tourists (male, 31, female, 34 and male, 37, respectively), on a tour of Rocinha,

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80 Capirinhas are drinks traditionally made with cachaca, a Brazilian sugarcane-based liquor, lime juice,
and sugar. At Academia da Cachaça, they are available made with dozens of different fruits and dozens of
different cachacas.
The question about the best places to shop in Rio indicates that tourists did have an interest in shopping—
just not in shopping in Rocinha.
offered by Jungle Tours, that was promised, at the outset, to be “a different kind of tour.”
The guide making the assertion was 43-year-old Renato, a tall, wiry man with a close-shaved head and a propensity for enthusiastic gesticulation. Renato’s assurance that his tour would be “different” from other tours of Rocinha was based exclusively on one fact: Renato was from Rocinha, while other tour guides were not. Although he admitted at the outset that he had not been born in Rocinha, his mother had moved to the neighborhood when he was a toddler and he had lived there ever since. Renato’s connection to and investment in Rocinha set him apart from other tour guides in another, subtler way, as well. Whereas other guides set up an “us” (guides and tourists) and “them” (people from/in Rocinha) binary, Renato spoke with “we” (people from Rocinha) and “you” (tourists). This type of usage is significant, as linguistic anthropologists have repeatedly demonstrated how pronouns can be used to indicate both altered subjectivity and exclusion/inclusion (see Benveniste 1971[1958]; Graham 1995; Farnell and Graham 1998; Urban 1991).

This tour began like any other, with the tourists getting picked up at their hotels—both of which, in this instance, were located in Copacabana. After we had all introduced ourselves and gotten situated in the van, Renato introduced himself and began to promote his own authority. Unlike other tour guides, Renato’s claims to authority did not rest solely, or even primarily on his experience in leading tour groups, which was extensive. Instead, it hinged on his complete familiarity with Rocinha; in his words, he knew it “like the back of [his] hand.” He went so far as to assure the four of us that he would show us his “home” and that we would love it. I assumed, as did the other tourists, that Renato meant that he would show us Rocinha—his “home.” Only later did we learn that Renato
intended, quite literally, to show us his home; in fact, we would soon be offered an espresso in his kitchen.

The van arrived in Rocinha at 12:34 pm, according to my cell phone, and let us disembark in the area known as 99, where we could take in the spectacular views of the São Conrado and Atlantic, on one side, and Gâvea and the American School, on the other. Like the great majority of tourists, none of these tourists purchased anything at the arts and crafts booths along the sidewalk. Also like tourists on every other tour I witnessed, these tourists noticed and commented on the trash collection point near our stop. According to Renato, “It’s impossible to keep it up. There are too many people and too few [trash] collections.”

As we made our way down the mountain, along the same paths taken by other tour guides and companies, two things stood out as remarkable about Renato’s tour. First, when we turned off the Estrada da Gâvea and began our descent on Rua 2, Renato pointed out drug paraphernalia littering the steps. This was quite common. What is surprising, though, is that Renato used this litter as a way not of disparaging Rocinha or its residents, but as an opportunity for demonstrating how similar people in Rocinha are to people outside Rocinha. As he explained, “See? We have the same problems here as everywhere else.” In other words, the fact that a few people within the community used illicit drugs was not used to demonize the entire community; instead, Renato seized the occasion to highlight the similarities between Rocinha and any other neighborhood—in Brazil or abroad, where the consumption of drugs by some does not reflect on everyone.

The second remarkable incident on the tour was the stop at Renato’s home, which he shared with his grandmother. He invited us all in and assured us that we were most
welcome. After ushering us all into the kitchen, he introduced his grandmother to the
group and offered us a “cafezinho” or some water. As it was rather hot, the tourists
defeated the coffee, but Scott, the British tourist, accepted a glass of water. Renato and I
both drank a cafezinho; the difference in how we drank them, however, served as a useful
way of examining cultural difference. I drank my coffee black with no sugar, as usual,
while Renato placed several spoonfuls of sugar into his small cup. Renato, after
indicating that he thought my choice would “impossible” to drink, explained to the group,
“Brazilians like things sweet. We like sugar in our coffee and we like sweet desserts.”
He then asked if anyone had had a brigadeiro; upon learning that none of the tourists had
eaten one, he explained what the dessert consisted of and he encouraged them to visit a
bakery before they returned home from their trips.  

He assured them that they would not
regret it.

Although our visit to Renato’s home was brief—lasting only about 5 minutes, it
seemed to lead to the establishment of greater rapport between Renato and the tourists.
While before the visit, everyone had been relatively silent, afterwards, both of the male
tourists asked Renato questions. For instance, Scott wanted to know whether or not
Renato had ever witnessed a gunfight, while Klaus was curious about what people in the
neighborhood did for a living. Here Renato’s answers were in line with those provided
by other tour guides to similar inquiries. Rather than seizing another opportunity to
foreground the shared experiences and, indeed, shared humanity of those who reside in
Rocinha and those who do not, Renato fell into repeating stories of extreme violence and
widespread unemployment. For instance, shortly after Eric’s question, Renato drew
attention to a wall riddled with bullet holes and excitedly explained that these were left

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81 A brigadeiro is an extremely sweet, chocolate, truffle-like candy, often rolled in chocolate sprinkles.
from a battle between the local gang and the police. In answering Klaus’s question about work, Renato shrugged and sort of chuckled and then said, “Well, you can tell [from looking around] that they don’t work very good jobs. A lot of people don’t [sic] have jobs at all.” While it is true that violent acts do occur in Rocinha, and while it is true that many community residents find themselves unwillingly unemployed, Renato failed to provide a context through which tourists could make sense of his claims, opting instead to reproduce and re-circulate stereotypes of the violent favelas inhabited by lazy residents.

It is tempting to blame Renato for failing to educate tourists about the political, economic, and cultural factors that conspire to delimit the opportunities of those who live in Rocinha. However, it is just as important to keep in mind that Renato is a paid tour guide; his job is not to educate the (foreign or domestic) public, but rather to provide them with an enjoyable experience. Further, Renato is, perhaps, just as unlikely to defend Rocinha’s residents against baseless accusations of violence and indolence for another reason: he is a born-again Christian who believes, “God helps people, but people have to work for it.” In nearly a dozen conversations and interviews, Renato told me that he thought people “expected too much” from God and that this prevented them from working harder to change their lives. When I asked him if he thought the opportunities were really there for people to change their lives, he always pointed to himself as an example: although he had had children with 2 different women at a relatively young age, he had managed to learn English and become a tour guide. He was especially proud that he provided child support for his children. In his words, “I made it. So can they.” What Renato did not find problematic was that he was barely able to scrape by on his salary,
which forced him to live with his grandmother, or that he had not had a raise in years because, as he told it, his employer could not afford the extra 100 reais (about $65 at the time) per month that he had requested. That his boss was in the process of purchasing and customizing three brand new jeeps to expand his tours did not strike Renato as odd.

The last stop on our tour was the Amigos da Paz samba school, which we reached by crossing the pedestrian bridge across the Auto Estrada Lagoa-Barra, right in front of the Zuzu Angel Tunnel, which passes under Rocinha. Once at the samba school, Renato explained that many people in Rocinha lived for Carnaval and that it was not unusual for someone to spend more than she/he earned in a month on a costume that would be worn only once. While Renato stopped short of calling the expenditure a “waste,” he made it clear that he thought it was foolish, as was the inordinate amount of time spent practicing. Renato, like most other guides I heard explain the importance of Carnaval, highlighted key elements in the preparation of the floats, dances, and costuming, including the selection of a theme and the selection of an original composition for the music.

After we exited the school, Renato led us to our van, where Alexandre, the driver, was waiting, and he bid the tourists, “Good-bye.” He explained that he would not be accompanying them back to their hotels because he was already home and did not wish to ride back to Copacabana only to turn around and pay for a bus to come back to Rocinha. This was the only time I ever saw a guide not escort the tourists to their hotels, but none of the tourists seemed to mind; Renato later assured me that this was not his common

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82 The Zuzu Angel Tunnel, formerly known as the Dois Irmãos Tunnel, is one of the largest and most traveled in Rio de Janeiro. It runs under Rocinha and connects the affluent Zona Sul to the affluent Barra da Tijuca. Approximately 130,000 cars pass through the tunnel each day, according to the Secretaria Municipal de Transportes, Rio de Janeiro.
practice. Renato invited me to stay with him in Rocinha and promised to teach me “everything” he knew about tourism.

I accepted his invitation and, as I soon learned, Renato’s decision to stay in Rocinha hinged not only on his desire to avoid spending more time than necessary in traffic, but also on the fact that his young son was ill and waiting on a prescription to be picked up at a local pharmacy. The boy’s mother, I learned, had dropped off the prescription, but lacked the financial resources to pick it up. Renato had promised her he would take care of it, so, after the tour van had pulled away, we made our way to the Pacheco pharmacy.

Packaging “Poverty”

The discussion of poverty on the tours detailed above, as well as on dozens of other tours, is remarkable in that poverty is characterized purely in terms of “lack”—specifically of infrastructure, which is far better in Rocinha than in the vast majority of Rio’s favelas, though guides seldom point this out, but also of moral fiber, or a willingness to improve themselves or their community, on the part of Rocinha’s residents. Further, although guides seldom suggest outright that Rocinha’s residents make poor choices—such as using drugs, having too many children, or spending too much money on frivolities such as Carnaval costumes—that cause them to be poor, it is not difficult to get this impression from what they do say. This way of apprehending poverty is quite similar to ways in which poverty is defined by agents of the state and in popular media. The treatment of poverty in terms of “lack” also dovetails nicely with
treatments of favelas, and their residents, as “problems” to be solved and not as fully human beings whose lives are shaped by a multitude of forces beyond their control.

Poverty is also racialized on tours; this is occasionally done overtly through skin tone comparisons, but more often is done in more subtle ways. In attempting to highlight the presupposed differences between residents of Rocinha, on the one hand, and tourists and tour guides, on the other, guides group themselves and tourists together as “us” and oppose this “us” to Rocinha’s residents, or “them.” Although guides’ intentions are clear, this comparison consistently fails and leaves tourists, who generally do not see themselves and the guides as sharing racial characteristics, confused. Sometimes, though, poverty is racialized through the interchangeable use of phrases like “these people,” which is used to refer to Rocinha’s residents, “the urban poor,” and “Afro-Brazilians.” By treating such phrases as interchangeable, guides make clear that “urban poor” is synonymous with “Afro-Brazilian,” which is used as code for “black.”

This is a strategic production of otherness and objectification, and it permits a denial of a shared humanity across racial lines. According to Linke, “Racialization works through a process of objectification. The assignation of identities is fixed and rendered uncontestable by reference to physical or biological markers that incarcerate blackness and, at the same time, position the field of whiteness” (1999:131-2). Linke goes on to suggest, however, that the strategic deployment of these identities renders them permeable: there must, on occasion, be movement across their boundaries. Yet, as Dominguez (1986) demonstrates in a rather different context, movement into “whiteness” is contingent and not freely available; similarly, movement into “blackness” is not always, or even usually, by choice. Although Linke refers to racialized bodies, her
argument can be applied to the racialization of space, as well; middle class Brazilians take “white” Europeans, whose whiteness is unquestioned because of their places origin, to see the local “savages.” By circumscribing poverty, cultural backwardness, and blackness within Rocinha and, indeed, within favelas generally, they set up a binary through which they reaffirm their own whiteness and modernity and the whiteness and modernity of their neighborhoods. By way of comparison with the other “natives,” after all, what else could they be?

This, I believe, reflects Brazilian racial anxiety: the fear that Brazilian whites are not quite white enough—especially when compared with Europeans. This fits in nicely with earlier Brazilian governmental attempts to “whiten” Brazil through the importation of European immigrants; it also fits with the Brazilian myth of racial democracy—the supposition that, since everyone in Brazil has a “mix” of Portuguese, African, and indigenous heritage, there must be no firm racial categories and no racism in Brazil. Precisely because Brazilians tell themselves and others that there are no ossified racial categories in Brazil, they must continually find ways of locating—on the skin, in certain neighborhoods, discursively—whiteness at a distance from blackness. One of the ways through which this has occurred is in the rhetorical conflation of race and class and in the so common as to be stereotypical willingness to engage with questions of class, but not race, in Brazil. Indeed, Goldstein (2003) suggests that a willingness to speak openly about class allows the operations of race, and racism, to remain unquestioned. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, Brazilian scholars who have commented on urban spatial arrangements and on class, such as Roberto da Matta, have seldom attempted to separate, analytically, race and class in their analyses.
Part of the packaging of poverty on tours also revolves around pointing out or marking visual indexes of poverty. The most common of these are auto-constructed homes, self-strung phone and electrical wires, bullet holes, and garbage. James Holston, in lauding the tenacity and ingenuity of residents of São Paulo’s periphery, describes the auto-construction of houses as a “symbolic elaboration” tied up with an “equalizing narrative” (2008:8). The same could be said for residents of favelas such as Rocinha, who have literally built their homes and communities from the ground up. However, the U.S. and European tourists who witnessed these homes and had their auto-construction marked as significant by tour guides did not make sense of them in that context; indeed, such a context was not supplied by the guides, who rather pointed to the homes in order to index the poverty of Rocinha.

Similarly, self-strung phone and power lines were highlighted as evidence of the “otherness” of the urban poor; guides couched this “otherness,” despite its potential for interpretation as evidence of Rocinha’s residents’ autonomy and self-reliance, in terms of residents’ dishonesty or, even, outright criminality—residents “steal” services. Ironically, the same narratives that characterize Rocinha (and other favela) residents as existing outside the law because of their refusal to accept passively only those services provided by the state may also suggest that residents themselves are to blame for their substandard living conditions. In other words, the urban poor in Brazil are, at least on tours, damned for doing both too much and too little to improve their lives.

Interestingly, tour guides’ narratives of Rocinha residents “stealing” electricity are often discussed alongside the absence of the state. Here, guides partially exculpate Rocinha residents for their “theft,” or, minimally, provide a justification for it. What is
perhaps most radical in guides’ discussions of Rocinha residents being forced to fend for themselves is the potential to understand such tales as stories of the moral failure of the Brazilian state. After all, it is the absence of the state—and the services it provides other neighborhoods—that forces Rocinha residents to take matters into their own hands. Ultimately, however, guides and tourists both fail to hold the state accountable for its relative absence in Rocinha, preferring the easier, and perhaps more comfortable, blaming of the poor.

Bullet holes in walls are the third key marker of poverty highlighted on tours. Like the markers already discussed, bullet holes serve an extremely problematic dual function. Specifically, they are not only used to index poverty, but they are also used to link poverty with physical violence. It is not only, then, that evidence of previous acts of physical violence is taken as evidence of poverty, which is in actuality neither a necessary nor sufficient indicator of poverty; it is also that poverty itself comes to be partially defined as a state of actual or potential violence. It is not a far leap to ascribe violence as a characteristic of poor Brazilians, and, in fact, this is precisely how favelas and their residents are often treated in state and popular rhetoric. I return to the importance of stories of bullet holes in Chapter Eight: Stories of Violence and the Violence of Stories, while I address the issues of danger and physical violence in Chapter Nine: Thunderbolts of the Disenfranchised: Rethinking Crime and Justice in Rio de Janeiro.

The fourth and final key marker of poverty employed by tour guides is garbage and its invocation in the definition of poverty is no less fraught than the use of bullet holes. Indeed, although tour guides generally, if grudgingly, admit that the presence of
mounds of trash in Rocinha is directly related to the insufficient number of collection points and the insufficient frequency of collection, the presence of waste and, indeed, of filth is taken as a sign of poverty. While most guides do not go so far as to suggest that poor people are “dirty,” the connection is not difficult to make. In fact, the heaping mounds of garbage indicated by tour guides as notable features of Rocinha’s landscape come to act as a metaphor for Rocinha, and for slums generally. The favela, in this metaphor, is itself the waste generated by human existence in Rio more broadly.
CHAPTER SIX

Of Slums and Neighborhoods: Producing and Controlling Urban Space in Rio de Janeiro from Favela-Bairro to Erecting Walls

Since at least the end of the 19th century, the Municipal Government of Rio de Janeiro has taken an explicit, and varied, role in the shaping and controlling of enclaves of urban poverty in the city. Although Princess Isabel’s pronouncement of the end of slavery in 1888 dramatically altered the social landscape of the city, and, of course, of the rest of Brazil, it was the newly formed settlements of former slaves that most troubled city officials.\footnote{Princess Isabel would have become the Empress of Brazil upon the death of her father, Emperor Dom Pedro II, had he not been deposed in a military coup in 1889. For further discussion of the Brazilian empire, see Viotta da Costa (2000[1985]) and Bethell (1989).} Oscillating between a desire to keep a cheap source of labor close at hand and a desire to protect affluent Cariocas from “undesirables,” the Municipal Government of Rio de Janeiro sought first to monitor the new, hilltop settlements, or “favelas,” and only second to remove them. As public transportation in Rio expanded and became more accessible over the next several decades and as urban squatter settlements became more firmly entrenched in the landscape, city policy regarding favelas shifted, as well, to include “improvement” strategies, along with removal programs.\footnote{For further discussion of the history of favelas in Rio, see Chapter Four.}

In this chapter, I trace the most recent and influential policies to have shaped Rio de Janeiro’s urban landscape, focusing especially on three key programs: Favela-Bairro, Célula Urbana, and the Programma de Acelerização de Crescimento. I also discuss the most recent, and potentially most controversial, set of state interventions in Rio’s favelas: the construction of walls. In examining these programs, I suggest that, while official rhetoric has shifted over time and become, perhaps, more “humane,” favelas have been
and continue to be treated not as integral parts of the urban landscape—and, indeed, integral parts of Brazil’s neoliberal capitalist economy—but rather as blemishes upon it, to be, alternately, removed, hidden, or repaired.

**Favela-Bairro**

Beginning in 1993, the City of Rio de Janeiro instituted a program to convert urban slums, or *favelas*, into neighborhoods, or *bairros*. Known as Favela-Bairro, the program, as described by the Municipal Government, seeks “to provide urban improvements…and to create and provide access to urban facilities that will provide social benefits that, in turn, integrate a favela into the urban fabric and transform it into a neighborhood” (UFRJ-FAU 2007). The Favela-Bairro program, while ostensibly promoting a more democratic notion of who can and should be included in the city, actually reinscribes pejorative and inaccurate beliefs about favelas and favela residents that hearken to the still-circulating “myth of marginality” (c.f. Perlman 1976), with its assumptions that residents of favelas are not active participants in the formal economy, but rather are marginal to it. At the same time, by providing limited leisure spaces inside favelas, it encourages favela residents to remain within their communities for leisure activities and not to seek such activities in outside bairros—especially in the chic, touristy Zona Sul.85

In endorsing a vision of favelas that resonates with earlier incarnations of the myth of marginality, the Favela-Bairro program operates on the (incorrect) assumption that favela residents are not participants in the urban economy, but rather are “marginal”

85The Zona Sul, or South Zone, comprises some of Rio’s wealthiest and most tourist-friendly neighborhoods, including Copacabana, Botafogo, Urca, Ipanema, Leblón, Lagoa, Gávea, São Conrado, and Leme. Rocinha, for example, is nestled between two of the wealthiest of these: São Conrado and Gávea.
to it. Further, by treating favelas as “disorganized,” “unhealthy,” and responsible for “urban decline”—a thinly veiled reference to the criminality popularly associated with the poor, and especially with the poor of color—\(^{86}\) the Rio de Janeiro Housing Secretariat and Municipal Government characterize slums not by the presence of a host of positively-valued traits, but instead by their assumed lack of qualities attributed only to “neighborhoods.” Indeed, the very opposition of “favela” and “bairro” promotes the belief that residents of favelas do not engage in the same forms of sociality associated with officially-designated “neighborhoods.”

Far from being merely a “semantic” problem, the understanding of “favelas” in opposition to “bairros” promoted through Favela-Bairro structured the ways in which the “needs” of favelas were defined and the ways in which the program was implemented. In turn, I argue that the implementation of the program and its specific interventions in favela communities reproduces an intensely variegated and grossly unequal urban landscape—a landscape characterized not by the egalitarian principles espoused in local governmental rhetoric, but one that takes as a matter of course the segregation of rich and poor neighborhoods as an organizing principle and belies an unswerving commitment to market capitalism. Indeed, it would not be difficult to interpret the community

\(^{86}\) This association of the poor with criminality is not recent, but rather dates to at least the end of slavery. However, it has recently been revitalized by a number of popular cultural products, including, most notably, the blockbuster films *Pixote* (1981), *Cidade de Deus* (2002), *Tropa de Elite* (2007), and *Tropa de Elite II: O Inimigo Agora É Outro* (2011). Further, popular websites such as YouTube and Cabuloso have thousands of videos and photos, respectively, that show visibly poor, dark-skinned Brazilians—identified as “traficantes” or “criminosos”—being killed by, or immediately after having been killed by, the police. Even a cursory perusal of the commentary on these sites suggests that many find this association of “poverty” and “criminality,” as well as the police “resolution” of crime, unproblematic or even laudable. Such notions of criminality as embodied within poor individuals hearken back to Cesare Lombroso’s understandings of the “born criminal” (c.f. Lombroso 2005). As Nicole Rafter has recently suggested, in Lombroso’s typology, criminals were placed on a continuum, “ranging from the biologically doomed born criminal through the salvageable criminaloid to [the] idealistic and essentially innocent political criminal” (2006:34). Favela residents, on such a continuum, would be placed by dominant rhetoric firmly on the end of “biologically doomed born criminal[s].”
improvements advocated through Favela-Bairro and other programs in terms of facilitating the reproduction of a cheap, compliant, and readily available workforce, especially when such improvements focus on raising minimum standards of organization in the communities targeted. In this regard, it is worth noting that one area of community life seldom targeted for intervention is education, which is kept at minimum levels of competency. Only PAC, to be discussed later in this chapter, has addressed the woeful deficits of public primary and secondary education, especially within favelas. This should not be surprising, however, as education for the urban poor is not a tool for social advancement, but rather a means of “learn[ing] the ‘rules’ of good behaviour [sic], i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he [sic] is destined for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination” (Althusser 2001 [1971]:89). As such, only minimal investiture in education for the working poor is required.

In order to demonstrate how Favela-Bairro reproduces social inequality, I begin by describing the program and the logic of its interventions in socio-economically disenfranchised communities. Next, I draw on anthropological and geographical understandings of urban space in Brazil in order to contextualize the program and consider the larger structural forces that shape the character of contemporary urban spaces and, especially, those associated with and defined by “poverty.” I then demonstrate how such understandings can be productively applied to the Favela-Bairro program and to more recent governmental interventions in urban space, including Favela-Bairro’s spin-off Célula Urbana, and the federally funded PAC—or Programma de
Acelerização de Crescimento. I next examine the most recent program designed to intervene in and alter the space of favelas, the erection of walls around several Zona Sul slums. Finally, I connect these understandings of poverty and urban space explicitly to the framing of touristic interventions in “favelas,” such as Rocinha, and I conclude by offering a few suggestions for more palatable, and more radical, interventions in urban misery.

Favela-Bairro and Urban “Evolution” in Rio de Janeiro

The Favela-Bairro program was officially launched in 1994, with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank, with the express intent of integrating irregular land settlements into the structure of the formal city. At the time of its launch, it was the largest program of its kind ever undertaken in Latin America (Fiori, Riley, and Ramirez 2001). Favela-Bairro, steeped in neoliberal rhetoric, marked a sharp shift in Rio de Janeiro’s dealings with urban slums; for decades the city government had responded to squatter settlements not with an attempt to “improve” favelas, but rather with a two-pronged strategy of favela removal and resident relocation. It may be argued, then, that Favela-Bairro constitutes an improved, more democratic, and more humane, way of intervening in urban misery in that favelas were neither demolished nor relocated. However, even the “democratic” and “humanistic” components of Favela-Bairro should be regarded with skepticism. After all, as Shannon Bell asserts, “[a]ltruism, mutualism, humanism are the soft and slimy virtues that underpin liberal capitalism. Humanism has always been integrated into discourses of exploitation, colonialism, imperialism,

87 Ironically, several of the new settlements produced through residential relocation strategies are today among Rio’s most notorious favelas, including, most notably, Cidade de Deus (City of God). See chapter four for further discussion of the history of favelas in Rio de Janeiro.
neoimperialism, [and] democracy” (2005). The Favela-Bairro program, despite its less overtly problematic strategies, developed, like its predecessors, out of problematic assumptions about the nature of favelas, to which I now turn.

The very idea that a “favela” may be transformed into a “bairro” logically requires two simultaneous assumptions, both of which are underpinned by neoliberal capitalist ideology. First, one must believe that “favelas” and “bairros” are two separate, and perhaps opposed, categories with different ontological statuses. That this is certainly not the case has been demonstrated repeatedly, beginning with the works of scholars such as Janice Perlman (1976) and Milton Santos (1979 [1975]). Second, one must presume that “bairros” are superior to “favelas” in some way(s) and that, as such, the transformation from “favela” to “bairro” is a desirable one. Indeed, both of these assumptions help to underpin Favela-Bairro. The program is, in fact, explicitly social evolutionary: favelas are not only located at a conceptual and geographical remove from neighborhoods, they are also located at a temporal remove. Both favelas and their residents are understood as somehow less “modern” than those who inhabit more affluent communities; it is, in part, the task of programs like Favela-Bairro to bring slum residents out of the past and into the present.

This kind of treatment of “favelas” and “bairros” as occupying different stages in a hierarchy of development is remarkably similar to the assumptions underpinning much development discourse, in which the “Third World” is located at both a spatial and temporal remove from the “First World” (c.f. Escobar 1995). Given that the Inter-American Development Bank was a primary source of funding for the Favela-Bairro program, such a similarity is certainly not coincidental. Rather, it plays on
understandings of “bairros” as homes to owners of the means of production and of “favelas” as homes to labor, which requires thinking of the needs of each type of community differently. In the case of favelas, labor must be able, at a bare minimum, to reproduce itself.88

In order to cement the opposition between “favelas” and “bairros” in the program, favelas are primarily defined through lack—of infrastructure, of “organization,” of wealth, and of literacy (Prefeitura 2003). Similarly, the criteria by which a “favela” was included or excluded from the program also revolved around lack: those communities that did not meet a minimum standard of “regularization” were excluded. Communities designated “irregular” include those with a lack of established land tenure, lack of passable streets, and lack of potable water.89 The definition of “favelas” in this way is problematic not only because favelas and their residents are conceptualized as existing in a different time/space than other urban residents, but also because it fails to take into consideration what favelas have. As numerous researchers and commentators have pointed out, favelas often possess extraordinarily strong and vibrant social networks and favela residents, as a number of my friends and collaborators in Rocinha pointed out to me, may be more likely (or, at least, perceived as more likely) than residents of other communities to assist one another with basic needs, such as food or child care.

If the underlying logic of Favela-Bairro and its resulting conceptualizations of “favelas” and “bairros” are problematic, so, too, are the specific interventions engendered

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88 In this sense, it is even more reasonable that governmental interventions focus on minimal levels of organization: they bring “favelas” into line with working class “neighborhoods,” where the enforcement of “rules of morality, civic and professional conscience” (Althusser 2001[1971]:89) is more readily accomplished.

89 A less than kind reading of the exclusion of those communities most in need of infrastructural improvements would be that the high levels of un- and underemployment associated with these communities made them unfit for intervention. After all, such residents were perceived as less likely to be selling their labor in the formal economy.
by such thinking. While the program was ostensibly aimed at combating urban poverty and integrating favela residents into the formal city, its interventions fall short of the professed goal of the program. Indeed, the “evil” to combat was not so much “poverty” as the people and places suffering from it. The main interventions carried out under the program included paving some streets, numbering houses, counting residents, the creation of some “leisure spaces,” and some provision of construction materials for individual homes. These interventions, and the paving of streets, numbering of houses, and counting of residents, in particular, seem as much an exercise of spatial governmentality as they do an attempt to make the lives of favela residents better. As Foucault describes the shift to disciplinary regimes of governance, there is a “need to distribute and partition off spaces in a rigorous manner” (Foucault 1995 [1977]:144). The maintenance of the spatial separation of “favelas” and “bairros,” therefore, is necessary for the rational governance of the space—what Foucault means by “governmentality.” Further, such governance serves to “guarantee the obedience of individuals” (Foucault 1995 [1977]:148), which is an appealing goal for many state and local officials embroiled in the so-called “drug war.” After all, without numbered houses, paved streets, and a general idea of the number of residents in a particular community, the community is much more difficult, at the very least, to police. 

Similarly, the creation of leisure spaces in some communities, while offering residents more immediate access to such spaces than they might otherwise have enjoyed, serves as an indirect means of keeping favela residents in their place.

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90 Indeed, the difficulty of policing certain favelas without paved streets or numbered residences has not escaped local narco-traffickers, who use these communities as bases of operation. In other neighborhoods, such as in several located in the Complexo da Maré, local gang members dig substantial ditches in newly paved roads to prevent police cars from passing.
While the kinds of interventions undertaken under the auspices of Favela-Bairro reveal much about the logic and ends of the program, those interventions not considered are also quite revealing. For example, what is not considered is that Brazilian politicians rethink the neoliberal policies whose implementation in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in unprecedented urban migration and the growth of enclaves of urban poverty. In other words, while Favela-Bairro attempts to change the politics of the state toward urban, impoverished enclaves, it does not entail a simultaneous questioning of Brazil’s capitalist economy. Rather, the economic structure is left uninterrogated and the resultant political superstructure is only minimally challenged. Instead of espousing a more radical, and potentially more effective, intervention, Favela-Bairro operates on the assumption that, with a minimum of public investment in slums, slum residents will become an integral part of the urban fabric. Such an assumption, while problematic in that it assumes that slum residents do not already constitute an important element of the urban economy, is particularly insidious for blaming those residents who do not succeed in bettering their circumstances for their own misfortunes.

Favela-Bairro similarly fails to consider the democratization of public transport as a means of integrating the favela in the “urban fabric” (Prefeitura 2003). Indeed, although favela residents are expected, upon completion of Favela-Bairro interventions, to become productive members of society, the lack of public transportation in a number of communities severely limits the possibilities for favela residents to venture into the formal city. Perhaps more shocking than the lack of public transportation to some areas,

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91 It should not be expected that Favela-Bairro, or any other governmental program, for that matter, question the economic structure of society, as 1.) doing so would violate the class interests of those who create and implement the programs and 2.) revolutionary change does not originate from the state (see Marx 1979[1859], 2011[1867]).
however, is the curtailing of certain forms of public transportation (e.g. trains, subway) on Sundays. While the stated purpose of such curtailing is to save the city money by not operating the trains and subway on a day during which many citizens do not work, the result is that access to public beaches—frequently touted as Brazil’s “most democratic” of spaces—is denied to poorer Brazilians. Such an exclusion is entirely compatible with the kind of spatial governance already discussed and, in fact, Penglase has recently reiterated the class politics operative on beaches, which he describes as “implicitly upper-class and white areas where lower-class residents should act with respect and deference” (2011:421). As Foucault also notes, “[b]ehind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of ‘contagions’…crimes…people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder” (Foucault 1995 [1977]:198). Given the association in the popular imaginary of poverty with criminality, danger, and disease—an association dating at least to the turn of the 20th century (see Chapter Four), it is hardly surprising, though no less insidious, that the contemporary regimentation of space be so strict. Indeed, when “poor and dark-skinned youth,” who carry the marks of disorder and poverty inscribed on their skin, disrupt the “‘normal’ social order” through arrastões, or mass-muggings, on Rio’s beaches, the affront is not merely disorderly, but constitutes, according to Penglase, a “wound” (2011:420; see also Soares 1996a).

Finally, it is worth highlighting that, while the Favela-Bairro program seeks to combat urban poverty, the program does not include among its interventions the democratization of health care or of education. Rather than investing in health clinics or working to improve schools in favelas, the program creates “leisure spaces,” such as

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92 While bus service still operates on Sundays, the common necessity of taking several buses to arrive at Rio’s beaches makes the trip prohibitively expensive, and time consuming, even for members of the working class who reside in the Zona Oeste or Zona Norte.
paved soccer fields or basketball courts. Although a generous observer might suggest that such a strategy is meant to afford children a place to play, a more skeptical response would be that the city government has little interest in educating or in providing health care for a population it views as essentially expendable. After all, as Marx remarked, “The worshipful capitalists will never want for fresh exploitable flesh and blood, and will let the dead bury their dead” (1978[1891]). From this perspective, expenditures on the healthcare of the working class and urban poor are both wasteful and illogical. Instead, it attempts to distract them from the egregious social and economic inequalities that plague Brazil by providing attractive leisure spaces.93 Once again, the rigorous spatial division of educational and health-related services is compatible with a disciplinary form of spatial governance in which merit or need “are no longer the principal variables that define [the individual body]; but the place it occupies” (Foucault 1995 [1977]:164).

Occupying a favela, then, is sufficient to determine one’s access not only to the supposedly “democratic” space of the beach, but also to the supposedly universal rights, guaranteed in Article 6 of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, to education and health care.94

Having introduced the logic, goals, and interventions of the Favela-Bairro program, I now turn to a discussion of the kinds of spaces produced through Favela-Bairro and subsequent interventions in urban space in Rio, including Célula Urbana, the PAC, and the more recent project of walling off poor neighborhoods in Rio’s South Zone.

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93 According to the World Trade Organization, the wealthiest 20% of Brazilians control 62% of the nation’s wealth, while the poorest 40% have only 9%, making it one of the most unequal nations, in terms of wealth disparities, in the world (WTO online).
94 Article 6 states: “Education, health, work, leisure, safety, social security, protection of maternity and childhood, [and] assistance to the abandoned are social rights” (trans. mine).
Although Perlman (1971), Goldstein (2003), and others have demonstrated that the inhabitants of favelas are by no means “marginal” to the urban economy, such a belief underpins not only the Favela-Bairro program, but also later interventions such as the PAC. Indeed, the opposition of “favelas” and “bairros” hinges, in part, on the assumption that favelas are, in fact, peripheral—geographically, socially, economically, and even racially and temporally. These assumptions, too, permeate both the narrative construction of favelas on tours, as I discussed in Chapter Five, and popular discourse on favelas. The replication of beliefs about favelas that highlight their assumed peripherality in governmental programs are dangerous for several reasons. First, it predisposes the interventions to fail, as they are based on incorrect and highly problematic ideas. Second, such programs implicitly authorize the view that favela residents are *marginal*, rather than *marginalized*. This is particularly distressing as it absolves both the state and Brazilian elites of responsibility for creating and maintaining the socioeconomic conditions that create slums in the first place. Third, the treatment of favelas as peripheral and radically “other” when compared to neighborhoods makes it far too easy to distinguish between categories of people: the residents of favelas and those of “bairros” come to be understood as being as different as the places from which they come. In other words, the assumed peripherality of the favela becomes the assumed peripherality of the favela resident. Such a radical othering has real, and often violent, consequences for Brazil’s urban poor, as I discuss in Chapters Eight and Nine. Goldstein (2003), Perlman (1971), and others, such as Cecilia McCallum (2005), are correct then to draw much-needed attention to the spatialized politics of race and class in urban Brazil;
they do not, however, interrogate the kinds of urban spaces produced through the urban
intervention programs discussed here.

In order to understand urban spatial arrangements, it is imperative to situate
programs such as Favela-Bairro within sustained critiques of the operations of global
capitalism, as David Harvey has suggested (c.f. Harvey 2001a, 2001b, 1999[1996]).
Such a suggestion is necessary not only for understanding the actual workings of
programs like Favela-Bairro, but also, and perhaps more importantly, for understanding
the conditions that have led to a profound shift in the character of urban space in Rio de
Janeiro over the last few decades. One of the primary characteristics of this shift was the
dramatic and rapid increase in the number and size of favelas in the city. This rapid
increase in the number and size of favelas—and in the profound shift in the character of
urban space in Rio de Janeiro—is intimately connected to the “global historical
geography of capital accumulation” (Harvey 2001a:369).

In Brazil, this historical geography has been shaped by a number of policies
mandated by supra-national organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the
World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. As I noted in Chaper Four, the
implementation of ISI policies marked a shift not only in capital accumulation, but also in
human geography, as migrants from the Brazilian Northeast poured into the industrial
centers of the Southeast. The dramatic increase in the urban population permanently
altered the landscape of cities like Rio and São Paulo, as the numbers and size of favelas
grew exponentially. Upon reversal of ISI policies in favor of neoliberal capitalism, a
move also mandated by the IMF and World Bank, the conditions for the urban poor only
worsened, as the state was even less able to invest in urban improvements, however
defined. The precarious conditions in favelas, and the favelas themselves, both resulted from decisions made by lending agencies headquartered in the United States. Despite my criticisms of the program, it is important to note that Favela-Bairro marked the first concerted effort to ameliorate living conditions in these favelas.

Célula Urbana

A more recently inaugurated spin-off of Favela-Bairro, known as Célula Urbana, or Urban Cell, makes the implicit strategies of Favela-Bairro explicit. Célula Urbana, launched in 2000 and completed in 2004, attempted to create a model slum, with the goal of making each urban slum a “self-sufficient” “cell” by encouraging the opening of small food markets, pharmacies, post offices, and sometimes banks inside favelas. The program was carried out by a unique combination of the Rio de Janeiro municipal government and the German Bauhaus Dessau Foundation. The officially declared intent of the program is to make life easier within the favelas. According to official program literature, “The celular [sic] urbana model project has a very specific urban development approach. The socio-spatial structures that have evolved in the favela, and the favela architecture itself, are seen as harbouring [sic] development potential” (Bauhaus Dessau online).

Again, the focus on “development” implicitly categorizes favelas as “undeveloped” or “underdeveloped” and frames both the problem and the solution in terms of the realization of some level of development. The real problem of favelas, despite a lack of sufficient infrastructure, is not underdevelopment. The problem is that their residents are poor; they are systematically disenfranchised and denied adequate
access to education and healthcare. Their “luckiest” residents have their labor exploited in service sector and other low-level segments of the formal economy, while others remain unemployed in order to raise competition for employment and keep wages low. None of these problems is a problem of “development,” no many how many state programs assert that it is.

As part of this “development [of] potential,” Célula Urbana focused heavily on bringing favela dwellings up to minimum standards of size, despite the high population density and limited space of the model favela, as well as on increasing ventilation (ibid.). Despite the potential seen in favelas, the program simultaneously seeks to keep favela residents within their communities and to discourage their patronage of businesses in more affluent neighborhoods by creating more spaces for businesses within the favela. The very idea of the “urban cell” invokes not only notions of a fully functioning, self-contained whole, but also of a prison cell, which cannot be freely entered or abandoned. That such an association is unintentional makes it no less appropriate.

While Célula Urbana did not explicitly, or even implicitly, set out to turn favelas into large-scale prison cells from which residents were “discouraged” to leave, both its underlying logic and its practice support such an interpretation. That this is the case is demonstrated by Célula Urbana’s creation in the context of Favela-Bairro, which disproportionately targeted favelas in the elite Zona Sul. After all, favelas in the Zona Norte, such as the sprawling Complexo da Maré, do not mandate the same level of state attention, as they are located as a sufficient remove from Carioca elites. Despite the problematic logic of Célula Urbana, the program did seek to take the “perspectives of the inhabitants” into account in redesigning the space (Bauhaus Dessau 2004:24). Further, it
directly engaged in exposing the stereotypes of favelas as “dangerous and criminal” as erroneous (op. cit.:18). Ultimately, the program has been far less influential than Favela-Bairro, and its most notable accomplishment has been the creation of a multi-functional model building in the Jacarezinho favela.  

PAC: Accelerating Growth?

The Federal Programma de Aceleração de Crescimento, or the Program for the Acceleration of Growth, was officially launched in Rocinha by President Lula himself on Monday, March 7, 2008. He was accompanied by a host of state officials, including then-Chief of Staff and current President Dilma Rousseff, and he was received in Rocinha by 1000s of cheering residents, many with Lula or PAC-related T-shirts and signs. It was the cleanest I ever saw Rocinha—not a scrap of litter, let alone the habitual heaps of garbage awaiting collection, was to be found on the winding Estrada de Gâvea highway. Brightly painted billboard-style graffiti signs along the walls on the sides of Rua S, near the Centro Integrado de Educação Pública Doutor Bento Rubião, where Lula was to speak, welcomed the President and the PAC to Rocinha. The excitement over the PAC was not limited to public displays of enthusiasm, however, not did the excitement revolve only around the desperately needed urgent care clinic PAC would create. Instead, over a dozen community residents with whom I spoke about the program expressed the opinion that the PAC, unlike Favela-Bairro and Célula Urbana, was really

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95 Jacarezinho is located near the Rio de Janeiro city center and is the second largest slum in the city, with approximately 60,000 inhabitants as of 2004 (Bauhaus Dessau online).
96 Just over two years later, on March 23, 2010, he returned to Rocinha to attend the inauguration of an urgent care clinic, an apartment building, and a sports complex—complete with swimming pool, boxing rings, and skating rinks.
97 Rua S is a portion of the Estrada da Gâvea, so-named for its “s”-shaped curves.
going to change Rocinha for the better, and they often highlighted the planned leisure park as a key, desirable feature of the program; several people even had artists’ renderings of what spaces in Rocinha, such as the to-be-created leisure park, complete with a swimming pool, greenery, and an underground parking structure, would look like after the PAC hanging on the walls of their homes or offices.

Even the rather odd name of the program did not elicit the kinds of critiques I was accustomed to hearing with respect to Favela-Bairro, in particular. For example, Leandro, never one to mince words, readily explained the “senselessness” of Favela-Bairro: “Uma favela já é um bairro e aí Favela-Bairro já não faz sentido.” (“A favela is already a neighborhood so Favela-Bairro already doesn’t make sense.”) However, he remained oddly silent on the idea of “accelerating growth” in a neighborhood that has long been one of Rio’s fastest growing. When I pushed him on the topic, he responded only with an exasperated, “É outro tipo de crescimento.” (“It’s another type of growth.”)

While it may be that residents are pleased with the PAC’s commitment not only to restructure, expand, and improve leisure spaces in Rocinha, but also to improve educational facilities, create an urgent care center, and provide additional apartment buildings, I think such an explanation in insufficient.\textsuperscript{98} Community residents have not given up hope that the Federal government, in many ways less faulted for failing to live up to the promises of equality than the municipal and state governments, largely because of its distance, will respond to community needs. Further, because the residents with whom I came into contact identified with Lula—and with his working class background—more than with any local politician, they were less willing to criticize him,

\textsuperscript{98} PAC’s focus not merely on spatial governmentality, but also on improving health and education in the community marks it as, at least partially, distinct from previous intervention programs.
and more likely to believe that he held their best interests at heart. Even those residents who expressed frustration with the pace of change in Brazil after Lula’s election did not hold Lula to blame. For example, Francisco explained to me in no uncertain terms, “Não é culpa dele. Têm muita gente na Câmara e nem todo o mundo quer mudar.” (“It’s not his fault [that things haven’t changed more quickly]. There are lots of people in [Congress] and not everyone wants to change [things].”)

Ultimately, the residents with whom I discussed the PAC, along with 1000s of other residents, judging by the enthusiasm with which the launch of the program was greeted, were thrilled less by the specific content of the program—which rarely came up in conversation—than by the fact that “their” president and “their” government were taking notice of their needs. That these needs were defined by outsiders with little or no experience living in Rocinha and with little or no input from residents themselves was largely irrelevant. What mattered most was that the Brazilian state—and its most important agents—were perceived as responding to community needs, however defined; rather than disciplining or ignoring community residents—the two roles the state and its agents are often described as fulfilling, Lula was perceived to be entering the community to improve their lives. Further, his presence in Rocinha served as a very real validation of the importance of the community. In other words, Rocinha is important enough to host the President of the Republic, no matter what local elites, police officers, news stations, and novelas might have to say.

The overwhelmingly positive reception of Lula stands in sharp contrast to commonplace community discussions of other state agents or agencies present in Rocinha. For instance, while Light, the state-run power company, has offices in Rocinha,
these only seem to be interesting or laudable to tour guides, who rarely fail to point out
the Light building to tourists. By way of contrast, not once did I hear a community
resident happily discuss Light. On the contrary, in characteristically witty fashion,
Leandro shared his take on Light in the community: “Não ligam pra a gente.” (“They
don’t care about us” and “They don’t ‘turn on’ for us.” “Ligar” is used colloquially to
mean “to care about,” but also means “to turn on” something electrical, and Leandro used
this double meaning in his pun.)

Similarly, compared with the most common state agents present in Rocinha—the
police—Lula and the PAC were almost certain to be warmly received. After all, their
attempts to “better” Rocinha included strategies such as creating leisure spaces and a
parking structure, and not strategies, such as shooting at residents, that result in a body
count. Even if the rationale of the PAC is called into question, which to my knowledge
seldom occurred, the more overtly benign style of intervention, combined with
community identification with Lula, cause few raised eyebrows.

It would be easy, too easy, in fact, to dismiss the rhetoric of state programs such
as PAC as nothing more than high-minded cover for more sinister motives—surveillance,
social control, and the like. While they most certainly serve this function, they are not
simply a sham. Indeed, the rhetoric of social inclusion, and of “growth” in particular,
resonates with long-held Brazilian ideals about what it means, or ought to mean, to be
Brazilian. Specifically, Lula, in announcing the PAC, was one in a long line of
presidents (and dictators) who have promoted the idea of “growth” as a way of launching
Brazil on a new trajectory of prosperity. Dating at least to President Juscelino
Kubitschek, whose “50 years of progress in 5” slogan spawned massive construction
projects—including the building of a new national capital from scratch—the Brazilian government has drawn on the idea of growth and progress as what will mark the “once and future” country’s arrival at international prominence (Eakin 1997). The problem, then, does not lie solely in a troubling rhetoric—the rhetoric is not merely a façade, but a deeply resonant one. Instead, the devil is in the details, so to speak. And those details are, perhaps, nowhere more evident than in this most recent initiative at controlling—and, indeed, promoting—favela “growth.”

Nearly four decades ago, Janice Perlman demonstrated that governmental policy toward favelas seldom ameliorated the problems it sought to resolve. In fact, she has shown that governmental policies, typified by eradication and relocation programs, were the causes of urban marginalization, rather than a solution to it (Perlman 1976). These programs were met largely with hostility on the part of favela residents, who did not wish to be uprooted from their communities or to see the homes they had struggled for years to construct demolished (Perlman 1974; 1976).

Understanding resident reactions to governmental policies and programs aimed at “fixing” favelas in contemporary Rocinha requires an understanding of the different strategies of these programs. No one today seriously advocates for the removal and demolition of Rocinha and its estimated 200,000 residents. Instead, governmental programs focus on “urbanizing” the favela and promoting “growth.” Just as Perlman demonstrated with earlier programs, these programs may, in a kind reading, be designed with the “best interests of the favelados [sic]” (1974:5-6) in mind, but they are based on “basic and sometimes calculated misunderstandings” of favelas and their residents (1974:7). Further, as I argued with respect to Favela-Bairro, state sponsored programs
are political manifestations of a deeply inegalitarian economic structure, which remains unchallenged even by the ruling Workers’ Party (Partido do Trabalhadores/PT).99

**Walling Rocinha**

In a move at once predictable, given the state’s history of interventions in Carioca favelas, and utterly surreal, 2009 marked the launch of a new assault on Rio’s impoverished neighborhoods and their residents, particularly in the South Zone: the walling of favelas. Despite outcries from the communities targeted, Governor Sergio Cabral and Mayor Eduardo Paes have begun a multi-million Real initiative to “wall” eleven of Rio’s most notorious slums, including Rocinha, Babilônia, and Cidade de Deus. Notably, this is not the first time Rio’s state government publically declared the desire to wall Rocinha, though it was the first time plans came to fruition. In April 2004, then Vice Governor Luiz Paulo Conde proposed circumscribing Rocinha, Vidigal, Parque da Cidade (in Gâvea), and Chácara do Céu (in Leblon) within walls because of problems with the drug traffic.

In 2009, the professed motivation for erecting 1.2-3 meter high concrete walls around these communities is to “protect” the Carioca landscape from further deforestation, as the term being used for the walls, “ecobarriers,” suggests. However, the scale and timing of the project cast doubt on the veracity of such a motivation. In terms of scale, in Rocinha alone, the completed wall is to be 2.8 kilometers in length (Zahar 2009). The timing, as Rio prepares to host an upcoming World Cup (2014) and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, is certainly not accidental. Given that these events will trigger

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99 Lula was the first PT candidate to be elected to the presidency; Brazil’s current president—and first female president—Dilma Rousseff, a former Marxist activist, is also a PT member and was hand-picked by Lula to succeed him.
an influx of 10,000s of foreign tourists, athletes, and dignitaries into the city, not to mention their millions of dollars in local expenditures and advertising revenue for the city, both state and municipal officials have a vested interest in “cleaning up” Rio. Unfortunately, for the urban poor, the association of poverty, dirt, and disorganization is too deeply entrenched for their communities to be regarded as anything short of unsightly, filthy, and best hidden from sight.

Community members are, unsurprisingly, almost unanimous in their opposition to this new effort at urban segregation; in a symbolic referendum held by the Associação de Moradores in Rocinha, 1,111 residents voted against the wall, while only 54 voted in favor (Lacerda 2009). In addition to the insult of the wall itself, 415 families are slated to lose their homes and be either “relocated” or compensated by the government for their loss. While community ire has been sufficient to halt, at least temporarily, the construction of walls around Babilônia and other favelas near the Leme neighborhood in the Zona Sul, construction of the Rocinha wall is, as of the writing of this dissertation, underway.\footnote{100 I suspect that residents of Babilônia and other favelas will eventually lose their struggle to prevent the walling of their communities, given both of the scheduled international sporting events and the proximity of of their community to upscale and mid-priced tourist hotels.}

It is not only local residents who find the explicitly segregationist project objectionable, though they have the greatest cause for complaint. The walls represent the imposition of physical barriers where previously only social and economic barriers had existed, and community residents are well aware of the politics behind them. As one Rocinha resident remarked, “They want to cage us like animals” (Regalado 2009). After the program was launched, United Nations officials echoed this sentiment when they
questioned the Brazilian delegation about the “geographical discrimination” being played out in Rio’s landscape (*ibid.*).

Although the walls themselves are not being erected between Rocinha and outside neighborhoods, such as Gâvea and São Conrado, but rather between Rocinha and the surrounding forest, the message sent through the wall’s construction is clear. The walls serve as both a physical and visual demarcation of where laws, rights, and protections function and cease to function, in much the same fashion as the presence of police officers at the perimeter between Rocinha and São Conrado. They reinforce an unequal social geography and inscribe its limits on the landscape. Indeed, they serve as the literal limits of order and progress: on the forest side of the wall, state protections, laws, and rights exist; indeed, even governmental discourse on the purpose of the walls declares the state’s desire to protect the forest from the poor. On the side of Rocinha, these protections, laws, and rights do not exist: Rocinha, and the other to-be-walled favelas, are the threats from which the city and its natural landscape must be protected.

**Conclusion**

The Favela-Bairro program is only one urban intervention in one urban setting, but the complexities of analyzing this singular program are suggestive of the difficulties encountered in understanding and analyzing urban space more generally. The program, as I have discussed it here, reproduces an urban landscape of containment and exclusion of the urban poor, even while its advocates purport that it constitutes an element in the expansion of democracy and of the democratic values encoded in the Brazilian Constitution, and its style of intervention has been integral in shaping later programs—
both those that grew directly out of it, such as Célula Urbana, and those that did not, such as the PAC and the erection of walls. Rather than simply assessing the “truth” of assertions of progress, I have tried to show that the analysis of urban space is a highly complicated project—one that requires attention not only to the nuances of particular places, but also to the ways in which urban spaces are shaped by larger structural forces and the flows of global capital. Attention to such details leads not only to better and more sophisticated analyses, however; it might also lead to the production of more egalitarian spaces.

While it is certainly difficult to speculate on what the Favela-Bairro Program and its successors might have looked like had their founders reflected more critically on their assumptions about favelas—their nature, their origin, their desirable and undesirable characteristics, their rhetorical opposition to “bairros,” their relationship to Brazilian economic history—and on the structural undergirding of their political project, it is most certainly not difficult to assert that the program would likely have been quite different. After all, as Harvey points out, different framings of analyses of space lead some features being noticed and others being left unquestioned. Left unquestioned by the creators and proponents of Favela-Bairro and subsequent programs are precisely those global forces of capitalism that Harvey suggested are crucial for understanding, let alone intervening in, the production of urban space (2001a, 2001b, 1999[1996], 1985).
CHAPTER SEVEN

“Poor People’s Portuguese”: Surveying Speech and Space in Rocinha

One of the most memorable and, perhaps, revealing moments of my dissertation fieldwork came in July 2007 during a discussion about tourism in Rocinha with Leandro, a man who was to become one of my best and most beloved informants. I was sitting carefully on a broken plastic chair in a room on the bottom floor of a cinderblock building perched precariously halfway up a steep rock face, several meters above the winding Estrada da Gâvea highway. The huge, rectangular, glass-less window opposite me was half-covered with brightly colored, stapled-together posters of a parrot with a credit card in its beak, advertising “Credicard”—a credit card with usurious interest rates that purported to be available to “the people.” The first time I entered the sparsely furnished, mint green room, after climbing 47 uneven, garbage-strewn, cement steps from the street below, Leandro told me, quite rightly, “it’s best not to look down.”101

The room served as the headquarters for Rocinha Tur, a not-for-profit community organization founded in June 2007 to “organize” tourism in Rocinha; the building belonged to Leandro, the co-founder/president of Rocinha Tour (RT), and he and his wife Bruna occupied the floor above, while the rooftop “lage” provided additional leisure space, as well as a home for the family Labrador mix. Leandro, after a lengthy conversation about what he perceived to be the highly problematic, “exploitative” nature of tourism in Rocinha, declared that I understood his desire to make tourism beneficial

101 I, of course, did look down and it always amazed me that anyone could get a building to stay on such a steeply slanted surface.
for the residents of Rocinha and that I was, therefore, his ally. While I felt, to say the least, pleased that Leandro had deemed my interest in RT legitimate, I was even more pleased when he invited me to return the next day to learn more about the organization and to meet its other members. After extending the invitation to his new “ally,” Leandro then clapped his hands excitedly, a gesture I would see dozens of times during the next year, and said, in a sing-song voice, “E ainda melhor tú fala o português da gente rica!” Or, “And even better [than me being his ally] you speak rich people’s Portuguese!”

I soon learned that what Leandro and others understood by “rich people’s Portuguese” was the standard, largely slang-free, grammatically correct Portuguese they encountered in newspapers and heard used by television news anchors. It is the kind of Portuguese spoken by those who have had extensive formal education and/or have grown up in (or spent considerable time in) the company of other standard Portuguese speakers. In other words, it is the language spoken, as Leandro so aptly put it, by “rich people.”

Leandro’s interest in my Portuguese was only to grow throughout the months that followed, as he routinely asked me to revise or, in his words, “concertar,” meaning “to fix” or “to repair,” documents he had prepared for meetings or presentations at the State Ministry of Tourism, also known as TurisRio. This “fixing” of proposals and

102 As I explain later in this chapter, Leandro’s focus on making tourism beneficial for Rocinha was two-fold. According to him, and to RT members generally, tourism should provide both material and non-material/ideological benefits to the community.

103 It is worth noting that Leandro’s statement, while slang-free, is grammatically incorrect according to the rules of standard Brazilian Portuguese. “Tú fala,” a common grammatical construction in Rocinha and among the working poor generally, formed by combining the singular, second-person familiar “tú” with a third-person singular verb, is by standard rules a misconjugation of the verb “falar.” Because Brazilian Portuguese, unlike Portuguese Portuguese, for instance, does not make use of the second-person “tú,” even the correct construction “tú falas” would be marked as nonstandard, though technically correct. The standard or “correct” way of expressing “you speak” in Brazilian Portuguese is “você fala.”

104 Companhia de Turismo do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Tourism Company of the State of Rio de Janeiro).
explanations of projects that I was asked to perform functioned on several levels and was, in Leandro’s view, largely one of “translation.” In addition to standardizing the writing to conform to the rules of Brazilian Portuguese grammar, I shifted the tone and style of Leandro’s documents from colloquial and conversational Portuguese to a formal Portuguese more suitable for academic or bureaucratic contexts. The result was not just that the words and logic of the writing were altered, but that much of the passion and immediacy that characterized Leandro’s writing in the original text was, effectively, lost in translation.

Although I did not want to disappoint Leandro and the other members of Rocinha Tur who relied on me to “fix” the group’s proposals and other communications, I found both the idea and the practice of “repairing” the texts deeply troubling. After all, that which is not in some way broken or defective cannot, strictly speaking, be “repaired” and my complicity in “repairing” their work required at least an implicit acknowledgement of the “broken-ness” of their Portuguese. Further, by agreeing to “fix” RT documents, I reluctantly participated in shoring up or stabilizing—the other sense of “fixing”—the notion that my informants’ Portuguese, on the one hand, and acceptable, middle-class Portuguese, on the other, are fundamentally different languages and that only the latter of the two is valid.

My initial surprise and discomfort at having my Portuguese explicitly classed and in having my assumed skills put to work on a project of “translation” that I judged problematic quickly gave way to astonishment, as I soon learned that Leandro’s early assessment of my Portuguese was anything but unique. In fact, I soon came to realize that representatives and owners of tour agencies, as well as government officials, made a
similar distinction between my speech and writing and that of my informants and friends. That not only Leandro and the other members of Rocinha Tur really believed that we spoke different kinds of Portuguese, but also that state officials believed so, as well, was demonstrated rather dramatically at a meeting at TurisRio in October 2007, during which a high-ranking Ministry official requested that I “translate” what he was saying for the members of Rocinha Tur seated beside me. In his bald formulation of the request: “Traduz para eles por favor” (“Translate for them please”). He then paused to provide me the opportunity to do so, and no one spoke for nearly two minutes as they waited for me to “translate.” Once it became clear to me that the Ministry official was quite serious and that the meeting would not continue until I had “translated” his “rich” Portuguese into “poor” Portuguese, I grudgingly complied, though I altered almost nothing in my “translation.”

The surface absurdity of a native Portuguese speaker asking a non-native speaker to “translate” his Portuguese into Portuguese for other native Portuguese speakers quickly fades when it is understood alongside the common practices of managing space in Rocinha and, by way of extension, other “slums” in Rio and elsewhere in Brazil and in the context of deep-seated, though frequently disavowed, racism. Indeed, the refusal of this particular bureaucrat to concede that he spoke the same language as the poor residents of Rocinha seated in his office is not unlike the refusal of many middle-class

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105 I had not, of course, expected my foreign accent and my occasional awkward constructions to go unnoticed. That my friends in Rocinha never ridiculed the foreign-ness of my Portuguese is more a testament to their kindness than to my own linguistic proficiency.

106 The formulation is bold on two counts: first, in the idea of “translating” within the same language and second, in his use of the informal command “traduz,” rather than the formal “traduzca.” Whether his use of the familiar construction constituted an attempt to locate me as his equal or as his inferior is unclear, though I suspect, given my association with Rocinha Tur, that it was the latter.

107 The politics of translation, even among languages officially recognized as distinct, are fraught, as Graham (2002) demonstrates in her analysis of language usage and representation among indigenous activists in Brazil.
(and poor, too, for that matter) Brazilians to concede that “favelas” might, in fact, be “neighborhoods.” Further, the harnessing of language itself to deny a shared humanity between the rich, white bureaucrat and the poor, darker-skinned residents of Rocinha constitutes a compelling example of how linguistic resources may be used to set the parameters of a conversation—whether at a small scale, as in this incident, or on a much larger, national scale, as demonstrated by Graham (2011).

Indeed, just as “rich” Portuguese and “poor” Portuguese must be “translated” in order to be comprehensible to speakers of the other kind of Portuguese, “favelas” and “bairros” (neighborhoods) are conceived of as occupying opposite extremes of a habitational spectrum—a spectrum whose extremes, like rich and poor Portuguese, are grossly unequal. And, just as “poor” Portuguese must be “translated” into “rich” Portuguese in order to be characterized as comprehensible, so, too, must favelas be turned into “bairros” in order to be considered intelligible. That “poor” Portuguese is inscribed on the landscape through its association with favelas—which are themselves inscribed with race—provides an example of the mutual imbrications of race and class in contemporary Brazil.

In this chapter, then, I explore the cultural politics of classed speech and classed space in Rio de Janeiro by examining the language ideology evidenced in several ethnographic examples with reference to the practice of “poverty tourism,” to governmental programs created to re-shape Rocinha and other “favelas,” and to quotidian practices of social exclusion in both public and private spaces in Rio. By drawing on

108 Language ideology, defined by Alan Rumsey as “shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world” (1990: 346), has long been a subject of investigation for linguistic anthropologists; among the most significant works in this vein is Michael Silverstein’s (1979)
particular, and rather egregious, examples of the policing of linguistic and spatial
boundaries, I suggest that the politics of “correct” grammar and the politics of
“organized” space dovetail all too nicely: both the speech and writing of Rocinha
residents, on the one hand, and the physical space of Rocinha, on the other, are
characterized by tour company personnel and by state officials alike as “disorganized”
and even “incoherent” or “unintelligible.” Such a characterization has forced those
residents who would effect change in Rocinha to contend with an imposed identity of
“slum-dwellers” who speak “poor people’s Portuguese” and to attempt to re-present
themselves as residents of a “neighborhood” who are capable of middle-class speech.
Indeed, even as the state, through both the Ministry of Tourism and a variety of so-called
“urbanization” programs, increasingly attempts to render the physical space of Rocinha
legible or coherent, the residents of Rocinha who are leading the charge to change how
tourism in their community is conducted must also render themselves, through their
speech and writing, legible or comprehensible to the state officials and tour company
owners to whom they voice their demands. That they fail in their efforts is, I argue, as
much a consequence of the widespread adoption of neoliberal rhetoric by the ruling
classes as it is of middle class fear of crime—and of those presumed to be criminal.

After examining my friends’ and informants’ interactions with governmental
representatives, I turn to a discussion of how the politics of classed space play out when
residents of Rocinha, and, by way of extension, other favelas, occupy “rich people’s

pioneering “Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology” (see also Woolard 1992, Woolard and
109 That the tourists Rocinha Tur ultimately sought to reach through its efforts were primarily
English speaking only compounds the problem of “translation” and forecloses the possibility of more
direct intervention in tour rhetoric.
110 See chapter 9 for discussion of the criminalization of the urban poor in Rio and, in particular, of
the urban poor of color.
space.” Indeed, by discussing a particularly revealing incident I witnessed involving my research assistant João at São Conrado’s exclusive Fashion Mall and an incident a friend and informant experienced in an apartment building in the affluent Jardim Botânico neighborhood, I suggest how successfully occupying “rich people’s space” can be as impossible for favela residents as speaking “rich people’s Portuguese.”

**Reconfiguring the Space of Urban “Favelas”**

As I discuss in Chapter Four, favelas have long been a part of the Rio de Janeiro landscape; in fact, given their longstanding place in the city, any attempt to categorize them as aberrant is ahistorical, to say the least. Further, as explored in chapter six, in governmental programs aimed at altering and, ostensibly, improving favelas, “favelas” must be translated into “neighborhoods” by bringing them into line with middle-class expectations of what a neighborhood looks like. This type of thinking is reflected in both official and popular rhetoric characterizing the “problem” of favelas in Brazil as one of an eyesore to be eradicated. Further, in such characterizations the “cause” of favelas is described as one of poorly-managed or “disorganized” growth or even as a lack of growth, rather than as a symptom of a grossly unequal distribution of wealth, an ossified class structure, high unemployment rates, and a lack of provision of public services, including, but not limited to, adequate education, sanitation, and safety.

While state and local governmental programs are key in the reshaping of the Rocinha’s landscape, they are certainly not the only forces at work. Instead, local non-governmental organizations, sometimes in collaboration with state entities, and tourism
are both helping to reshape Rocinha, as well. Key examples of the former include not only the efforts of RT and its parent organization AM Consultoria, but also NGOs such as the Rocinha Surf Club, Gasco, and Rocinha XXI, all of which collaborate, in various combinations, with the federal SEBRAE program.\footnote{Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas (Brazilian Support Service for Micro- and Small Businesses).} While the more obvious examples of the latter include the installation of signs demarcating noteworthy areas or features of Rocinha, such as those planned by TurisRio, a less obvious, though potentially more remarkable, example would be the failed initiative led by RT and supported by a number of other community organizations to charge “admission” to Rocinha.

Charging admission is a strange way of playing on the understanding of favelas promoted by poverty tourism of favela-as-spectacle and not really like a neighborhood, but more like an amusement park.\footnote{Rio de Janeiro Mayor, Cesar Maia, has commented ironically that the recent project of constructing a wall around Rocinha will result in “a type of cocaine-themed amusement park for criminals” (“uma espécie de parque temático da cocaína para o criminoso”).} Here the access to Rocinha’s streets and plazas—ostensibly public spaces—becomes (or would become) limited to those willing or able to pay. Notably, those who advocate charging for admission to the neighborhood suggest that the fee only be levied on foreign tourists and not on residents or locals visiting Rocinha.

This seems at first glance like a very odd case of private interests taking over public space. However, I would like to suggest that it is something rather different. There are several typical ways of thinking about how private interests take over public space, and Setha Low is straightforward in her assessment of this variety; as she puts it, “Private interests take over public space in countless ways” (2006:83). Some of the most common, or, at least, most reported of these methods include the erection of physical
barriers, such as walls or fences, around public spaces and the installation of surveillance technology. Other means of privatizing public space are through legal or economic means, such as park conservancies or BIDs, which confuse the traditional boundaries between public and private. While anthropologists and other scholars have shown a great deal of concern about the limiting of access to public spaces, and I believe they have rightly done so, and while those who have opposed the restriction of access to public spaces have frequently done so in opposition to the notion that one should be required to purchase access to public space, understanding the interconnections between tourism and public space in Rocinha, particularly with regard to the Rocinha Tour-led initiative to impose a sort of duty on tourists entering their community, requires a rather different interpretation of the purchase of access to public space. Here, the attempt to charge admission to a particular neighborhood—what we might call an economic strategy for controlling access to a public space—is being undertaken not by elites who seek to prevent “undesirables” from entering their neighborhood, but by the urban poor, whose neighborhood is increasingly billed and sold as a tourist attraction by middle-class Brazilians to middle-class, foreign tourists, and who are imagining strategies to make the sale of their community profitable for the community itself.

**Poverty Tours and Favela Organization**

Poverty tour company owners are, notably, opposed to both local community and governmental efforts to re-shape Rocinha; in fact, they are, as a whole, upfront about their fears that a “clean” or “organized” Rocinha would not be a profitable Rocinha, and they reject out of hand RT’s desire to play a role in determining how Rocinha is to be
treated narratively on the tours. Instead, as a group they are invested in maintaining the status quo in Rocinha and in depicting the community in entertaining, even if inaccurate, ways. Eduardo, a long-time tour company owner, made the point especially well at a meeting convened by Rocinha Tur and held in Rocinha’s new shopping mall “Nosso Shopping” (“Our Mall”). When Leandro suggested that the tour companies make a small, voluntary contribution (about $3 per tour) toward hiring workers to pick up garbage along the Estrada da Gâvea, the Largo do Boiadeiro, and the Via Ápia (Rocinha’s main streets), Eduardo exclaimed, “Ai, não vamos enfeitar o pavão!” Literally, “Oh, let’s not dress up the turkey!” Here he not only compared Rocinha to a bird to be consumed by tourists, but also made clear that “dressing up” the turkey would lessen its appeal. The five other company owners or representatives present at the meeting, notably, did not disagree with Eduardo that a clean Rocinha was an unprofitable Rocinha, and that the most important factor in evaluating the need for community services, such as the additional street cleaning suggested by RT, was the impact on profitability, rather than on community quality of life. When Leandro pressed the issue, Eduardo became even more explicit, stating, again with regard to the appeal of garbage in the streets to tourists, “Mas eles pagam por isso!” Or, “But they pay for that [seeing the garbage]!”

Here the problem of translation operates on two levels: first, RT’s requests that Rocinha reap physical improvements, and share modestly in the profits, from tourism was translated by company owners into begging for money, on the one hand, and threatening

113 The center was named in contradistinction to shopping centers like the Fashion Mall or Rio Sul, which are out of the reach of Rocinha’s residents both fiscally and, all too often, physically. The name makes clear that other shopping centers might be “theirs” (or rich people’s), but the one in Rocinha is “ours.”
their businesses’ profitability, on the other. Secondly, RT’s expression of the desire to move Rocinha along the “favela”-“bairro” path advocated by contemporary urban planning programs was lost on owners, who tended only to respond to the requests on the level of begging or threatening. No owner ever indicated to me directly or indirectly that they understood RT’s frustration with garbage in the streets as a metonym for frustration with grossly unequal living conditions between middle- and upper-class neighborhoods and their own “favela.” Nor did RT members express their concerns in such direct terms. Instead, they tended to focus on the disjuncture between the two kinds of communities and on the economic opportunities it provided to middle class Cariocas. In this regard, Pedro, a founding member of RT in his early 40s, provided a typical explanation of the problem: “They come here from the beautiful neighborhoods, and make money with our garbage.” (“Eles vem cá dos bairros lindos e ganham com o nosso lixo.”) He concluded by succinctly characterizing the disjuncture: “É esquisito.” (“It’s strange.”) That he managed to describe those from “beautiful neighborhoods” who sell an experience of Rocinha without anger attests to his ability to discuss the effects of exploitative practices dispassionately—something not all members of RT, quite understandably, were able to do.¹¹⁴

Despite RT members’ engagement in a struggle to better their community, they did not question that “favela” and “neighborhood” index fundamentally distinct types of communities. This failure should not be construed as meaning that members believed the distinction was one of negative judgment toward Rocinha. Rather, the most salient

¹¹⁴ Pedro’s personal experiences with people from “beautiful neighborhoods” makes his composure all the more astounding. Eight years before I met him, his wife, who was eight months pregnant with their first child, was killed by a group of teenagers who were driving drunk in Barra da Tijuca, a rich neighborhood where she worked as a maid. The privileged boys involved faced no jail time and were charged with no crime.
features of neighborhoods to be highlighted, which favelas did not possess, had to do with adequate infrastructure. Similarly, RT members did not question that their community ought to be a tourist attraction. Rather, they believed that Rocinha had much to offer tourists, if only it were represented in the correct (i.e. locally-endorsed) way. Key community features noted by RT members included Rocinha’s bustling commercial center, its sweeping vistas, the Rocinha cultural center (which no organized tours visit), and what several members called “calor humano,” or “human warmth.”

Even when Leandro suggested that it was in the companies’ best interests to improve Rocinha’s infrastructure by, for example, helping pay for a parking lot for the vans and jeeps in which tourists arrived, Eduardo argued that even the lengthy traffic jams that resulted from parking vans and jeeps in the too-narrow streets were part of the spectacle for tourists. That these traffic jams made it difficult for Rocinha’s residents to get to or from home and work was no more compelling a motivation for meeting RT’s requests.

Just as RT’s attempts to secure assistance from tour company owners in cleaning streets or in raising revenue for other community projects were rejected, so, too, was RT’s request that they be given a say in the community’s representation on the tours. The members of Rocinha Tur were, perhaps, the most vociferous in raising concerns about Rocinha’s representation on tours, but they were certainly not alone. Indeed, many residents with whom I spoke expressed concern over what tour guides were saying about them, and more than a few exhorted me to say and write “only good things” about

115 The “human warmth” posited by RT members was also noted in discussions with other community residents, who often argued that residents of Rocinha cared more about one another than residents of middle-class neighborhoods did. This positing of a moral high ground could be interpreted as a strategy for indirectly challenging public perceptions of favela residents as asocial and potentially criminal.
Rocinha to counteract not only any disparaging remarks that might be made by tour
guides, but also the usually negative press coverage Rocinha receives, when it receives
coverage at all. Sandra, an elderly woman who has lived in Rocinha for 50 years, all of
which she has spent working in a daycare center, made very clear the target audience for
the “good things” so many community members asked me to say or write. As she put it,
“Volta lá e escreve só coisas boas. Fala para eles que não é como é na televisão ou nos
filmes e que somos gente igual todo o mundo.” (“Go back there and write only good
things. Tell them it’s not like TV or the movies and that we’re people like everyone
else.”) The “there” and “they” referred to the United States and to US-Americans,
respectively.

It is worth noting that Sandra was concerned not that Brazilian elites have their
beliefs about favela residents challenged, but rather that foreigners—in this case residents
of the United States—receive a positive assessment of both Rocinha and its residents.
Her exclusion or omission of Brazilian elites from her request was neither accidental nor
unusual. Indeed, whenever I was exhorted to write or say “good things” about Rocinha,
the target audience was always, either explicitly or implicitly, composed exclusively of
foreigners. While it could be argued that this focus on a foreign audience for my writing
and/or speech resulted not from a lack of interest in changing Brazilian elites’ attitudes
toward favelas, but rather from my own foreignness, such an explanation is too easy and
wrongly downplays the political savvy of my friends and informants. Indeed, those who
shared their frustration over Rocinha’s representation on tours were well aware that those
peddling the stories are middle-class Brazilians to whom they might address their
grievances. That they choose not to do so is revealing. As one radio personality
responded to my inquiry of why he did not take up his concern about the “exploitation” of Rocinha with tour company owners, “Não vejo o porquê” (“I don’t see a reason to”). However, he excused tourists for their participation in what he viewed as an exploitative practice by highlighting their ignorance: “Eles não sabem” (“They don’t know”). In his understanding, middle-class Brazilian tour company owners most certainly do “know” and attempting to initiate a meaningful dialogue with them on the matter would be an exercise in futility.

Just as residents of Rocinha focused their attention on what foreigners might think about them, the middle-class Brazilians with whom I spoke about favela tourism tended to express concern or even anxiety that “they” (meaning foreign tourists) would get the wrong idea about Brazil by visiting favelas, though middle-class fears seemed to have more to do with foreigners thinking of Brazil as a “dirty” or “poor” or “Third World” country, as a number of them told me, than with foreigners misunderstanding favela residents. This common focus on a foreign “other’s” understanding of Brazil generally and of favelas in particular, seems to me to indicate that, on the one hand, middle-class Brazilian tend to be unconcerned with how residents of toured favelas think or feel about their portrayal on tours (or on television or in the news, for that matter) and, on the other hand, that many residents of Rocinha have largely “given up” on changing local opinion about their community.

Despite having been told as much by company owners, Leandro, along with José, a grandfather in his 50s, and Pedro, the other two members of Rocinha Tur present at the meeting discussed here, refused to believe that anyone would want to see garbage or have traffic problems. On the way back to headquarters after the meeting, Leandro pressed the
point and asked me to assess the legitimacy of Eduardo’s assertion. Because this left me in an awkward position, as I wanted neither to lie nor to admit Leandro and the others that many tourists did, in fact, want to see garbage and that they often photographed it enthusiastically, I promised to try to figure out tourists’ motivations for visiting Rocinha. Leandro left tourists’ interest in garbage aside for the moment and, instead, after invoking Eduardo’s characterization of Rocinha as a “turkey,” asked me if I thought tourists looked at the residents of Rocinha, at him and his neighbors, as “animals.”

While tour company owners, then, disagree with official and grassroots efforts to change the shape of Rocinha, they do not, fundamentally, disagree with the official framing of the “problem” of favelas. Indeed, they, too, treat favelas, along with intense poverty, not as unfortunate, though perhaps, ameliorable, consequences of the expansion of global capital, but rather as a problem of “organization,” or lack thereof, and “cleanliness”; in their calculation, however, the problem is not one to be resolved, but rather one to be exploited for profit. In other words, a “favela” should never be translated into a neighborhood. Here, the favela is a spectacle to be viewed by better-positioned others, but not a spectacle for which those “others” should pay those whose lives form a part of that spectacle. Further, allowing community members to have a say in how Rocinha is represented is dismissed immediately. After all, community residents, such as the members of RT, are unlikely to highlight quite the same features of Rocinha as do the non-local guides and owners, who tend to view Rocinha not as a community populated with fully human agents, but rather as an unsightly blemish on Rio’s landscape, inhabited by actual or potential criminals.116

116 See Chapter Five for further discussion of tour guides’ treatment of criminality in Rocinha.
Rocinha Tour and “Organization”

It is worth noting that the framing of the “problem” of favelas in terms of organization/disorganization is not limited to state officials and tour company owners; instead, as I noted earlier, the members of Rocinha Tur, too, made use of the organization/disorganization binary and listed RT’s function as one of “organizing” tourism. They described the way tourism currently operates—with a variety of privately owned companies bringing varying numbers of groups consisting of varying numbers of tourists to Rocinha daily to walk or ride along a route determined by the companies, but with very little variation among them—as “disorganized.” By “disorganized” they did not mean that the tours lacked an itinerary, a schedule, or a well-rehearsed script; tours most certainly do not lack these things and RT members were well aware of this. Rather, by calling the tours “disorganized,” they were drawing attention to the lack of local-community benefits garnered by the tours and even the lack of knowledge about the tours by community residents and leaders alike.

Of even greater importance in terms of “organization,” RT members sought to provide input on how Rocinha should be represented on tours of the community. Although none of the members of RT expected tour companies willingly to allow Rocinha residents—through organizations such as RT and the local residents’ associations—to endorse an official script, they ultimately hoped to place enough pressure on company owners and Ministry of Tourism employees that their points of view would be taken seriously. In the end, trying to “organize” tourism constituted community residents’ attempt to take some (albeit small) measure of control over the
tours of their community and of how they, their homes, their neighborhoods, and even their garbage would be depicted. At a minimum, they sought to have an accurate count of how many tourists visited daily—something the tour companies refused to give them, and to garner some small financial contribution to the maintenance of the toured areas.


In a compelling article on the politics of slang in Rio de Janeiro, Jennifer Roth-Gordon argues that “the enregisterment of slang has been integral to the construction of longstanding social and spatial distinctions in Rio, demarcating the physical space of the favela and naturalizing the exclusion of its residents” (2009:58). In her formulation, slang is the language that “came down the hill,” which points both to slang’s association with favelas and to the socio-spatial separation of the “hill,” used synonymously and often euphemistically with “favela,” from the asphalt below. Roth-Gordon further demonstrates how “the monitoring of appropriate linguistic repertoires by particular speakers within particular contexts…contribute[s] to the ongoing linguistic and social process of enregisterment [and that]…the unauthorized breaking of linguistic convention indexes the breaking of laws” (op. cit.:64). While she is correct to point to both the oral and spatial dimensions of the practice of the enregisterment of slang as a means of stigmatizing and stereotyping both favela residents and favelas, this practice and its consequences are not limited to slang. In fact, even the largely slang-free Portuguese of my informants, both at meetings with state officials and at meetings with company owners, as well as in their written documents, was differently enregistered and valued.

117 “Asphalt,” or the Portuguese “asfalto,” directly indicates the paved streets enjoyed by “neighborhoods” and implicitly contrasts them with the unpaved streets common in favelas.
Their inability to follow the rules of standard Brazilian Portuguese, or to use formal Portuguese, marked not only their speech and writing but also their community and selves as disorganized and in need of translation.

As Roth-Gordon asserts, “Standard Portuguese…is institutionally supported and enforced as the language of the nation-state and a prerequisite for national belonging” (op. cit.:63). While state officials’ refusal to recognize the language of RT members as the same as theirs is, perhaps, a rather egregious example of how standard Portuguese is enforced, it is certainly not the only one. Both by their residence in locations sometimes literally left off the map of the city and by their inability to speak the language of “national belonging,” residents of Rocinha and other favelas and speakers of “poor people’s Portuguese” are rendered disordered, unintelligible, and even potentially criminal. The “poverty” of grammar, the “poverty” of space, and the “poverty” of the person become mutually inextricable and the perceived presence of any of these is used to index the others. The result is that community residents are placed in a triple bind when it comes to altering the status quo. Not only must they contend with beliefs about their personal integrity, or lack thereof, but they must also overcome linguistic and spatial marginalization that work in tandem to construct them as unintelligible and less-than-full members of the Brazilian nation.

Speech and Space: Beyond (Un)intelligibility

Neither the physical space of Rocinha nor the speech and writing of my informants is disordered or unintelligible. In fact, I would like to assert that unintelligibility and disorder, though frequently invoked, do not create a barrier to
comprehension, even for those who suggest that they do. Rather, appeals to or invocations of unintelligibility and disorder constitute passive modes of denying claims made by those deemed unintelligible or disordered. Indeed, both middle-class tour company owners and state officials at the Ministry of Tourism invoke notions of unintelligibility to refuse to engage with residents of Rocinha—and with the problems they wish to ameliorate—without having to dismiss them out of hand, which would be a far more confrontational and explicit form of rejection. According to Roberto Da Matta, such a tack is profoundly Brazilian. As he suggests, “Brazilian society seems to be inimical to conflict” (1991:139). Further, he describes the hierarchical and authoritarian features of Brazilian society as “a system of domination, where open conflict is repressed and avoided” (op. cit.:140).

Whether or not one accepts Da Matta’s general characterization of Brazilian society as a whole, his insights are useful for thinking through the strategy of asserted unintelligibility. Such a strategy of feigning incomprehension, of forcing those with few years of formal education to attempt to speak and write as if they had extensive, post-secondary schooling, of “translating” themselves and not just their speech and writing, in other words, not only serves as a convenient, non-confrontational, and effective means of rejecting their claims, but it also reaffirms the social and spatial hierarchy that renders the act of translation both necessary and impossible. In other words, the middle-class Brazilians demanding translation not only maintain their superior position by refusing to challenge the structures that lead to it, as recognizing RT’s demands would require, but they also get to strengthen their position of superiority by making clear that the “poor” Portuguese of the urban poor is incomprehensible. Indeed, it is a different, and decidedly
inferior, language, embedded in a different, and decidedly inferior, community, spoken by different, and decidedly inferior, people that requires translation in order to be comprehensible.

Such a use of “poor” Portuguese not only to define a particular, and presumably inferior, kind of person, but also to define a particular—and just as inferior—kind of space is reminiscent of Jacques Derrida’s discussion of the power of the language of racism. As he describes the power of racist language, “It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes. A system of marks, it outlines space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders” (1985:292). In Rio de Janeiro, this marking off of space is carried out not through an overtly racist language, but through a covertly racist language that adjoins particular kinds of speech with particular kinds of space under the banners of unintelligibility, of disorder, and of poverty.

Ultimately, it is not simply the spoken and written language of the urban poor to which Ministry officials objected, but rather the very presence of favela residents in state offices. In other words, favela residents only make sense in their prescribed spaces and not in the offices of agents of the Brazilian state. Indeed, the very presence of favela residents in the offices of a state that views them and their neighborhoods as problems to be solved is unintelligible, as our typical treatment upon arriving at the state building where TurisRio is housed demonstrates. The security personnel at the front desk routinely failed to ask me to present identification upon entering the building, but they inspected the documents of my friends with an intensity that is suggestive. ¹¹⁸ Indeed, on the single occasion on which I was asked to provide identification, I had forgotten my

¹¹⁸ This differential treatment was like both class- and color-based, and, although crossing into state offices constitutes an especially egregious example, the crossing of racialized and classed borders is an everyday feature of life for many Brazilians (see Lugo 2000).
driver’s license and had no other photo identification. The guards, rather than barring my entry, waived me through and then proceeded to examine my friends’ documents and to interrogate them about their reasons for visiting the Ministry. On several visits, they even called the TurisRio offices to confirm our appointment before allowing my friends to continue to the elevators. At a fundamental level, then, appealing to agents of the state to improve the nature of tourism in Rocinha—or even being present in a state building, for that matter—just doesn’t make sense.

It is not only within the boundaries of state offices, however, that the urban poor are treated as unintelligible and out-of-place. Instead, the boundaries between “poor space” and “rich space” are also maintained in both public and private space in Rio. In the next section, I turn to examples of how the politics of spatial intelligibility play out in such spaces by recounting and unraveling an encounter at the São Conrado Fashion Mall. As I show, even crossing the few blocks between Rocinha and the Fashion Mall is virtually impossible, and extremely painful, for Rocinha residents.

**Outside the Comunidade/João at the Fashion Mall**

If, I as have discussed elsewhere, Rocinha and other “favelas” are characterized in popular media, as well as on tours, as places defined by a “lack” of infrastructure and a super-abundance of criminality and dirt, their residents, too, suffer from a stigmatization that associates “slum-dwellers” (or, in the most offensive local term, “favelados”119) with

119 “Favelados” means approximately “slum-dwellers” and, while I typically heard it spoken by residents of Rocinha (and one tour company owner), they always attributed it to non-residents. Leandro, for example, claimed that tour company owners did not take Rocinha Tur seriously, or treat its members with respect, because all they saw was a “banda de favelados” (a “group/pack of slum-dwellers”). “Favelado” here carries far more meaning than simply “someone who lives in a slum.” Instead, it defines its referent exclusively by place of residence and, in so doing, invokes a
criminality, violence, and unacceptable (to the Brazilian middle classes) morals. Many Rocinha residents with whom I interacted either explicitly or tangentially indicated that they were well aware of how they were viewed by Cariocas who did not reside in “favelas” and most of these were quite critical of the larger society’s treatment of both favelas and their residents. The most common form of resisting the dominant discourse on favelas and favela residents I witnessed was the refusal to use the term “favela” to name their neighborhood or other similarly-positioned neighborhoods.  

Because of its negative connotations, most Rocinha residents with whom I came into contact eschewed the term “favela,” favoring instead the term “communidade,” or “community.” Unlike “favela,” which seems to highlight only the supposed negative features of an impoverished neighborhood, “community” draws attention not primarily to the socio-economic conditions of Rocinha’s residents, but rather to a positively-valued, social dimension of the neighborhood: that residents of Rocinha are, at least in local rhetoric, more socially proximate and more invested in one another’s welfare than residents of middle-class neighborhoods, or “bairros,” who are presumed to know or care little about those who reside close to them. Another common term used in Rio de Janeiro to avoid using “favelas” is “morro,” or “hill,” as a number of commentators on urban Brazil have noted (see Penglase 2011; Roth-Gordon 2009). Although this term is likely

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constellation of negatively-valued traits that account for company owners’ reluctance to trust or negotiate with people from Rocinha.

120 It is worth noting that not all Rocinha residents with whom I spoke were critical of the term “favela.” In fact, a number of people told me that what was objectionable was not the use of the term, as it could be usefully applied to dozens of communities, but rather for Rocinha to be labeled a “favela,” when it was clearly, for them, a “bairro” (neighborhood). The defining characteristics of “favelas” in such explanations were not, however, criminality, violence, lawlessness, vice, and other traits popularly associated with “favelas,” but rather involved, primarily, a lack of infrastructure.
used in Rocinha, I seldom heard it spoken by residents, who seemed to prefer the term “comunidade.”

A number of people with whom I discussed the difference between “comunidades” and “bairros” anecdotally explained how they understood the two to be dissimilar. For example, Marcela, a 45 year-old woman who was born in Rocinha, but had lived in several middle- and upper-middle-class neighborhoods, including Jardím Botânico, Gávea, and Ipanema, told me that she had been eager to return to Rocinha after living in these other neighborhoods, despite their more socially desirable location and association with luxury. As she explained it, “Aquí as pessoas se conhecem, ligam, mas lá fora não é assim não. Tão ném ai.” (“Here [in Rocinha] people know each other, they care, but out there it’s not like that. They just don’t care.”) While the feeling of camaraderie and mutual interest that Marcela attributed to Rocinha, as a “comunidade,” certainly contributed to her feeling more at home in Rocinha, she also shared with me experiences of racism and classism in her former neighborhoods. For instance, she recounted the incident that ultimately led to her moving out of her chic apartment building in Jardím Botânico and returning to Rocinha: “Foi a primeira semana lá. Tava esperando o elevador e entrei junto com outra mulher. Ela olhou pra mim e, antes de sair, falou ‘É o elevador social.’ Fiquei tão angustiada, porque ralei pra estar lá, e resolvi voltar pra cá.” (“It was my first week there. I was waiting for the elevator and I got on with another woman. She looked at me and, before getting out, she said, ‘This is the social elevator.’ I got so upset, because I worked really hard to get there, and I decided to come back here [to Rocinha].”

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121 Many, if not most, apartment buildings in Brazil have, in a not-so-subtle display of classism, two separate elevators: a nicer one used by residents and their guests and another, less nice one for
Although Marcela was the only resident of Rocinha who discussed experiences of living in a more affluent neighborhood with me, her story shared features in common with dozens of other stories I heard. In fact, although the woman in the elevator was certainly being rude, and was arguably being cruel, in her thinly veiled adamancy that Marcela did not, could not be in a chic building outside the role of servant, her indirect method of putting Marcela in her place was anything but uncommon. Indeed, indirect attempts to keep the poor, or those perceived to be poor, in their place are more common than overt assertions of classism and racism, as I describe below.

Just as less than kind treatment outside Rocinha is commonplace, the tendency of Rocinha’s residents to refer to Rocinha as a “community” and to middle-class areas as “neighborhoods” is not unique; in fact, discussions with residents of other so-called “favelas,” as well as with social workers active in other “favelas,” indicated that calling “favelas” “communities” was common practice among their residents. An unfortunate consequence of this terminological shift is that “community” has come to be largely synonymous with “favela” and has come to carry many of its negative connotations, while losing the positive features it was selected to highlight in the first place. That this is the case is evidenced not merely by the use of “community” interchangeably with “favela” in Brazil’s ever-popular telenovelas, but also in everyday conversation. For example, as one well-educated, middle-class Brazilian friend of mine remarked to me on learning of my research project, “Nunca iria trabalhar numa comunidade.” (“I would never work in a community.”) Such an assertion only makes sense where “community”

 servants, delivery personnel, etc. The woman Marcela encountered in the social elevator assumed, after looking at her and reading her “race,” that Marcela must be a servant and was chastising her for riding on the wrong elevator.
is understood to be something negative, a term that does not describe every neighborhood, but only those sharing some undesirable set of traits.

Even while many residents were critical of the treatment of their neighborhood in popular discourse, they did not often directly challenge the treatment they received outside the comunidade. Even Leandro, who was considerably less than thrilled by his reception at TurisRio, neither overtly nor subtly challenged his treatment to our hosts. He never challenged the discourse of translation, nor did he object to the assumed difference between his Portuguese and that of state agents (and me). Instead, he reserved his criticisms for after our meetings, once we were “among friends.” This may, of course, only be further evidence of his political savvy, but I think he genuinely understood himself as speaking a difference language than the rich, as his initial, delighted classing of my speech, in contradistinction to his own, suggests.

The most appalling (for me to witness) example of a Rocinha resident interacting with people outside the comunidade and being subjected to humiliating treatment came when my friend João and I visited the Fashion Mall. João served as my research assistant at the beginning of my fieldwork in Rocinha and was instrumental in putting me in touch with several people who became my key informants. I met João through a local NGO, which I had contacted in hopes of finding a research assistant. João was suggested both because of his academic ambitions—he hoped to finish secondary school, as he had only been able to complete the 8th grade, and go to college, where he wanted to study theater, and because of his desperate need for employment—he was the sole provider for himself and his ailing mother, and he had been unemployed for nearly six months when we met. I liked João immediately and, after explaining my project and what I would need for him
to do, he accepted my offer to work with me, we agreed on a salary, and we soon began our work together. On August 11, 2007, João and I had agreed to meet to follow a tour group through Rocinha. However, unexpected police presence in the community meant that we were unable to do so. Instead, we decided to wait it out and see if we would be able to enter the community later.

At my naïve suggestion, we headed for the Fashion Mall—located only a block away from our meeting spot—to have a cup of coffee and discuss our project. The Fashion Mall, though physically close to Rocinha, is located at a great social distance and, as I later learned, very few residents of Rocinha ever set foot inside. It is the most expensive shopping center in Rio and is filled with shops selling internationally known designer shoes, accessories, and apparel. In retrospect, João’s claim that he “wasn’t dressed right” for entering the Fashion Mall makes perfect sense. At the time, however, I simply responded by noting how comparable our outfits were—both of us had on flip flops and he had on cargo shorts and a T-shirt, while I had on a cargo skirt and a tank top, and asserting, “Não faz mal. Só vamos tomar um cafezinho.” (“It’s not a problem. We’re just going to have coffee.”)

As we approached the entrance to the mall, the armed guard who stood watch near the door looked us over, but neither stopped us, nor spoke with us. I felt pleased and reasonably certain that João had overreacted; however, once we were inside the mall, it took fewer than five minutes for me to realize exactly how wrong I was. The first out-of-the-ordinary (for me) encounter that we had was being followed by a guard inside the

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122 João worked for me fewer than three months, as he obtained employment with a theater company. Although the work paid less and required longer hours than he had worked with me, he told me that he’d never felt right about taking my money for “hanging out, talking, arranging meetings, and thinking,” as those were things he would gladly have done for free.
mall. At first, it would have been possible to dismiss the guard’s proximity—about 5 feet behind us, by suggesting that he had decided to go in a direction similar to ours at precisely the same time. However, the guard stopped when we stopped and stood watching João as we put our backpacks down at a table. It is worth noting that the guard did not stare at me and, in fact, that he refused to make eye contact with me when I attempted it. Although this guard did not stand watching us during our entire visit to the Fashion Mall, he repeatedly “checked on us” while we drank our coffee and talked.

Obtaining coffee, too, proved to be more eventful than one might expect such a banal occurrence to be; the young woman working behind the coffee bar, who I would guess was in her late teens or early 20s, took my order, but failed even to ask João if he wanted anything. In fact, she did not acknowledge his presence at all until I pointed out that we were together, at which point she asked me what he wanted. I told her that she would have to ask him and she did so with noticeably less enthusiasm than she had used in taking my order. Whether the young woman was being deliberately unkind in ignoring João, or whether she was acting on the assumption that he was too poor to purchase coffee at this particular establishment, is unclear. What is clear is that João walked away from the encounter with his feelings of being in a place where he should not have been reaffirmed.

If the behavior of the guard and café employee suggested to us that we ought not have been in the mall, the shoppers staring at us as we sat and drank our coffee and went over our notes drove this point home. Not all of the shoppers seemed hostile; instead, they seemed to be trying to figure out what we were doing there or, at least, there together. Rather than ignoring or attempting to ignore our treatment, I pointed out that
people did not seem entirely pleased with our presence. Although João was generally calm and soft-spoken, he quickly and forcefully began expressing his opinions on why this was. He told me, directly this time, that he was not “supposed” to be here. I clarified that “here” meant the Fashion Mall and then pointed out that the mall was open to everyone and that we were customers just like the people staring at us. While I was, in part, being deliberately provocative to see how João would respond, I also believed that we ought to have been allowed to walk around the space without being harassed and I was incensed at our appalling and, to me, unusual treatment.

João was also angry, but his anger at our treatment stemmed not from any indignation that such a thing could occur, but rather because it was something he had expected and, in fact, predicted. Although he did not indicate as much, I suspect that his anger also extended to me, as I had summarily dismissed his efforts to prevent us from visiting the mall in the first place. João had no illusions that he, or other poor Brazilians, for that matter, could simply walk into a “rich person’s place,” or “um lugar de ricos” in his words, without suffering some sort of repercussions. When I pressed him on the question of ownership of space—rich versus poor—he was quite clear: “Aquí é o lugar deles,” while Rocinha “é o meu lugar.” (“Here [the Fashion Mall] is their place,” while Rocinha “is my place.”) That one ought to stay in one’s own space was João’s unspoken assumption.

I next asked João to expound upon who “they” were and this engendered a passionate discussion of race and phenotype, rather than of class, or of “rich” and “poor,” between me and João, during which he adamantly asserted that we were fundamentally different “colors.” Although I discussed “race” and “color” with a number of other
informants, this was the only explicit conversation I ever had in Brazil about the relationship between degree of pigmentation, class, and “race.”

João ridiculed my reading of his and my own color as virtually identical and asserted that he was “Afro-Brasileiro,” which, interestingly, does not index color, but the geographical origin of his claimed ancestors. The subtext of his assertion was that being “Afro-Brasileiro” was incompatible with being “white,” while the explicit message was that “um lugar de ricos” is synonymous with a “white” space and that the two are fundamentally incompatible with “poor” space and with being “Afro-Brasileiro.”

João’s usage of two geographical places—Africa and Brazil—to assert his “race,” rather than calling himself “negro” or “black” is telling, as he consciously links presumed ancestry with racial categorization.

The subtext of João’s assertion is that it is not, ultimately, phenotype that indicates one’s “race,” but rather the claimed place(s) of origin of one’s ancestors. The irony here is that the geography of states and even of entire continents can be marshaled as “proof” of one’s “race,” even while it allows for the discussion of “race” without referring to racial categories. This type of flexibility in the invocation of large-scale places is most certainly not found, however, in the rigidly policed borders of small-scale “rich” and “poor” spaces, which are quite fixed.

Before this conversation, I would have called João “white” without pause, though, clearly, I would have been missing not only João’s own self-identification, but, more importantly, his interpretation and even justification of that self-identification; after our

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123 The reluctance of my friends and acquaintances to engage with questions of race, in favor of focusing on issues of class, lends further credence to Goldstein’s (2003) argument that discussion of class and class inequality in Brazil is used as a way of avoiding discussions of race and racism.

124 The mutual imbrications of race and language and, indeed, of racism and language have been fruitfully examined by a number of linguistic anthropologists, including, most notably, Hill 1993 and 2008, Graham 2011, and Urciuoli 1996 and 2009.
discussion, I became more interested in the converse of the Brazilian popular saying “dinheiro embranquece” (“money whitens”): something to the effect that “lack of money ‘blackens,’” as I noted that not one of my close friends in Rocinha considered herself or himself “white,” whatever their particular “color” might be, while quite a few called themselves “black” or “Afro-descendente” whatever their particular “color” might be, and that, in conversation with friends outside Rocinha, not one of them considered there to be many, if any, “white” people in Rocinha, though they might call themselves “white” (again, regardless of whatever their “color” might be). These classifications draw heavily on notions of class and its assumed linkages to, and even proof of, both “color” and “race” (see Goldstein 2003).

Ultimately, that “rich” and “poor” Portuguese are incompatible and may considered to be mutually unintelligible should be unsurprising in a context where “rich” and “poor” spaces occupy not only different geographical locales, but also, and more importantly, different ideological positions. Such positions are cut through with cultural politics that assert racial democracy while ignoring the nefarious—and ubiquitous—effects of racism. Claiming the inability to understand “poor” Portuguese, and assuming that “poor” Brazilians are unable to understand “rich” Portuguese, within the space of a state government office serves as a way of reminding “poor” Brazilians that they are out of place, just as directly as being following by an armed security guard in a shopping mall and being reminded to use the servants’ elevator do.

Each of the incidents described here, along with the dozens of others that I heard about and the 1000s of others that I did not, points to a situation in which tenuous presuppositions about the nature of one’s speech are used to reaffirm equally problematic
assumptions about the nature of urban space and vice versa. Both the hierarchical classing of speech and the imposition of a politics of intelligibility on the built landscape are indicative of and productive of a deep-seated—and widespread—racism that is consistently denied in public discourse in the name of the Brazilian myth of “racial democracy.” Further bolstering the denial of a racial component of spatial and linguistic segregation is the extensive adoption of neoliberal capitalism since at least the early 1990s. The rhetoric of neoliberal capitalism, as espoused by figures such as Milton Friedman (c.f. 1962), operates on the assumptions that unhindered competition reduces or is anathema to racial (and other) forms of discrimination and that those who fail in the so-called “free market” deserve to be poor.

Ann Kingsolver (2002) has described this type of thinking as “poverty on purpose” and has demonstrated how Friedman and other “free marketeers” have “exported neoliberal capitalist logic as riders on loans through the World Bank and the IMF” (24). Such logic has had enormous, and enormously negative, repercussions for those most at risk, as they have seen expenditures for social relief programs dwindle and disappear. In Brazil, the logic of free competition and “purposeful poverty” has provided elites not only with a justification for ignoring the human costs of their economic success, but also, and more importantly for the present discussion, with a means of justifying their insistence that racism does not exist in Brazil or, at the very least, that it does not hinder anyone’s chances for success.125 In other words, according to this line of reasoning, the urban poor are poor because they have not competed successfully, not because they are systematically disenfranchised and exploited. Similarly, the rhetoric of unintelligibility

125 See Harrison (1995) for an eloquent discussion of race/racism and political economy.
discussed here provides a convenient means of explaining precisely how urban poverty is
the responsibility of the urban poor: in order to compete successfully in the free market,
and in the urban landscape, they must learn to render their speech, their communities,
and, ultimately, themselves coherent. Failure to do so, in this logic, is no one’s fault but
their own.
PART THREE: VIOLENCE AND POVERTY

CHAPTER EIGHT

Stories of Violence and the Violence of Stories

In Brazil generally, and in Rio de Janeiro specifically, stories of violence, both within the favela and outside of it, circulate on television, in newspapers, from person to person and, of course, on “poverty tours.” Although these stories demonstrate considerable variation in topic, narrative structure, mode of delivery, and target audience, they have in common violence both as their central focus and as their organizing principle. Violence in the stories I address here is always physical violence and is always physical violence involving the poor and is directed, most often, against the poor; as such, the violence in these stories is not the larger, and arguably more pressing, structural violence that shapes the lives of those who inhabit landscapes defined by poverty. Indeed, the violence of the stories of violence I treat here is that they obscure the more profound, structural roots of the physical violence they sensationalize and eroticize.

By examining tales of violence in Rocinha told on poverty tours, in news media, and person to person, I argue that, in all of these stories, wherever they are circulated, Rocinha, along with its residents, emerges as a potentially scary place filled with people whose lives are defined primarily, if not exclusively, through violence—as perpetrators, as victims, or as both. Further, I suggest that the most significant violence of these

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126 In fact, stories of violent episodes, real or imagined, constituted a significant element of every tour in which I participated. See Chapter Five: Urban Poverty as a Tourist Attraction for further discussion. Anthropological studies of the circulation of narratives have proliferated in recent years (c.f. Urban 2001 and Roth-Gordon 2009).

127 This simplistic, and problematic, casting of favela residents as “victims” and/or “perpetrators” of violence is not limited to lay discussions. Indeed, academics may also promote such understandings.
stories is not their lurid romanticization of physical violence or even their simplistic blaming of the poor for said violence, but rather their role in obfuscating—and contributing to—the material conditions of possibility for the very existence of such violence. After all, as John Keane remarked fifteen years ago, “Thanks in part to high pressure media coverage, the whole world feels increasingly filled with violence” (1996:5). And a world filled with violence seems to beg for a violent response, rather than to invite critical reflection on the fundamental causes of violence. Further, as Ellen Moodie has suggested, “Crime stories occur at the intersection of self and other, citizen and state, powerful and powerless” (2010:2). As such, stories of crime or, at the very least of extralegal violence, provide a compelling lens through which to examine relations of power, particularly between the state and its agents and its most disenfranchised of “citizens.”

Although I focus here on the content of narratives of violence and of violent narratives, it is worth briefly addressing narratives more generally. Narrative, broadly speaking, may be defined as a way of “recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of clauses which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (Labov 1972:359-60). According to David Herman, the creation of narratives is a “Basic and general strategy for making sense of experience” (2002:23). Though Herman primarily concerns himself with literary narratives, his assessment of the function of narratives is applicable to the types of stories I discuss here. An interesting, and rather important, caveat is that the “experiences” being rendered sensible through the

For example, according to Brazilian social scientist Silvia Ramos, “Poor black young people in the slums and peripheries of Brazil’s cities are either protagonists or victims of the violence that claims at lease [sic] 50,000 victims each year” (2007:328). Of these “50,000 victims,” Baçante Pires suggests that 20,000 are in metropolitan Rio de Janeiro alone (2008:13).
production of narratives are not first-person experiences, but rather third-person experiences. In other words, those producing and circulating the stories I treat here were in no case directly involved in the actions or events described; instead, they were implicated either by being present in the area where the story(ies) occurred (i.e. the setting) or by residing in the area (e.g. either Rocinha/another favela or non-favela Rio de Janeiro).

This type of “adoption” of another’s story constitutes a form of “narrative induction,” which Charlotte Linde defines as “the process by which people come to take on an existing set of stories as their own story” (2001:608, emphasis original). As Linde demonstrates, narrative induction is central to the process of identity acquisition. In the case of stories of violence circulated among residents of Rocinha, narrative induction allows a diverse population to express solidarity with others in their community and in opposition to those who act violently against it.128 As I show with respect to an especially important set of narratives—Ágata’s story(ies)—community residents who repeat and share narratives of violence suffered in Rocinha not only ally themselves with a particular, innocent victim of violence, but they also construct, by way of extension, all victims of violence in Rocinha as innocents harmed by a corrupt and oppressive state apparatus.

With respect to the stories of violence circulated on poverty tours and in the mass media, narrative induction promotes a rather different form of identity acquisition. Instead of uniting its participants around a shared sense of outrage in the face of violent oppression, here narrative induction serves as a significant form of rhetorical distancing.

128 For discussion of diversity in Rocinha's population, see Chapter Three.
Rather than violence coming to be understood as something that happens to “us” and to “our” community, violence—and along with it poverty, inequality, and oppression—becomes “their” problem. “They” are located, through the telling, retelling, and consumption of particular kinds of violent stories, at a social, as well as a physical, remove from “us.” “We” then become the innocent outsiders whose lives are inconvenienced by the indirect side effects (e.g. traffic jams) of “their” violence. This type of social separation between “us” and “them” is neither unusual nor limited to the effects of stories in/of Rocinha. As Teresa Caldeira demonstrates, with respect to the production and circulation of stories, or “talk,” of crime in São Paulo, such narratives “organize the urban landscape and public space, shaping the scenario for social interactions” (2000:19) and infusing these interactions with further fear and violence (see Part I for discussion of space in Rio de Janeiro).

As Charles L. Briggs argues, narratives of violence are especially worth examining, as they point to the ways in which “violence gets ideologically separated from the violence of modernity, extracted from history and political economy, individualized as products of pathological subjectivities and defective domesticities, and made to represent entire populations, thereby naturalizing representations of class, gender, space, state, and nation” (2007:331). In the case of stories of violence circulated on poverty tours and in mainstream media in Brazil, the poor and the spaces they inhabit are naturalized as violent, potentially criminal, and frequently pathological. However, it is not only the poor and their communities that are constructed and naturalized through media narratives of violence. Rather, the middle and upper classes are also constructed
through their interpellation into a position of neutral outsider to the violence, as “good,” nonviolent, noncriminal citizens.  

In the following stories, one recurring pattern merits special mention: the use of metaphors of “invasion,” both in the sense of a military incursion and in the sense of the transfer or spread of disease, to describe people-out-of-place. For example, in Rocinha, people often described police presence in their community, a presence that nearly always resulted in damage to non-gang-affiliated people, as “invasions”; at the same time, at least 20 people with whom I spoke about tourism in the community also discussed the presence of foreign tourists in Rocinha in terms of “invasion.” Similarly, mainstream newspapers (*O Dia, O Jornal do Brasil, A Folha de São Paulo*) and television newscasters frequently referred to gang activity outside of favelas in terms of “invasion.” Invasion seems to invoke not simply the idea of violence or destruction, but specifically violence from outsiders, from the perspectives of the speaker and listener. “Invasion,” notably, is also the metaphor of choice for discussing irregular or squatter settlements—the kinds of settlements that, if left “untreated,” become “favelas.” This is true not just in popular media and conversational settings, but also in governmental and academic literature treating squatter settlements (see Chapter Four).

It may be argued that tour operators, news reporters, and “average” people who circulate stories of the horrors, real or imagined, of the “favela” do far less damage than those who commit physical acts of violence. Even if we grant that not all utterances carry the same weight, and thus do not do the same damage, language, as Zizek reminds us, “is, at its most elementary, the medium of commitment” (2008 [1991]:xii). The

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129 Attempting to project an image of ideological neutrality is, in fact, a central feature of modern news reporting.
repeating, the circulating of stories that define the urban poor in terms of violence, at the very least, commits the speaker to the maintenance of a status quo characterized by oppression and denies, or refuses to acknowledge, a shared humanity with the object of the stories. Further, even though not all utterances are performative in Austin’s (1975) sense, all utterances do something—even if that something is an implicit declaration of commitment.

The “doing” of these stories, as I suggested above, involves two, simultaneous moves: the first situates blame for violence squarely, and solely, upon the shoulders of the urban poor; the second, operating largely as a consequence of the first, absolves the ruling elite of any responsibility for perpetuating the political economic structures actually responsible for the creation and maintenance of savagely unequal conditions—conditions which themselves give rise to the kinds of violence that figure so prominently in these stories. Even in the stories told by residents of Rocinha to other residents of Rocinha, the near obsession with invoking ballistic analysis, as I demonstrate, served primarily as a way of pointing the blame for suffering at the police; it did not lead to further analysis of the political-economic forces that structure the relationships between the police and the community and that, in fact, cause the existence of large enclaves of urban misery in the first place. Further, these stories continue to cast favelas and their residents as places and people whose lives are defined by violence. However, rather than being cast as perpetrators, they are portrayed as victims.

To put it differently, the circulation of stories of physical violence maintains the focus of speakers and listeners alike on seemingly random, and largely decontextualized,

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130 I do not wish to suggest that elites are directly responsible for the growth of favelas; instead, as Lenin, following Engels, asserts “[i]n a democratic republic...‘wealth wields its power indirectly, but all the more effectively’” (1987 [1932]:278).
acts. These acts are attributed to actors whose motivations are understood to be individual or, if placed in any context, livelihood-related. In other words, the background logic of these stories is that drug gang members shoot at police officers to protect their economic interests, while police officers shoot at drug gang members because it is the job of the police to curtail illegal activities and gang members break the law; although the police are, of course, agents of state repression, their role as state agents, much less as agents who serve the interests of elites, is not indexed in the stories I address here. Not only do these kinds of stories serve as a means of (re)creating a dichotomy between the “bad,” “violent,” and “criminal” poor and a “good,” “non-violent,” and “legitimate” middle class, but they also do a greater violence: they obscure the sociocultural and political-economic context that delimits the realm of the actors’ potential acts, as Briggs (2007) suggests.

These stories, then, are triply violent: they are violent in content; they reaffirm the violence of the poor; and they deny the very existence of structural roots of both poverty and violence. As Briggs notes, narratives of violence “produce truth, authority, affect, ethics, and, often, consent” (2007:331). In popular media narratives of violence in Brazil, all of these features are routinely produced: the truth of the dangerous, criminal, and pathological poor is continually recreated; the authority of the Brazilian state and its agents to oppose and subdue actual and potential criminals is reaffirmed; and the viewing/reading public is urged not to indentify with the objects of state violence/the

131 In news media, in particular, stories of violence are most certainly not random. Indeed, the stories circulated on TV and in newspapers ignore the “normal” violence, which is to say the violence of agents of the state, and focus instead on the rarer, but more frightening for the privileged classes, violence of drug gang members (see Barçante Pires 2008).
poor, but instead to consent to the harsh, or even brutal, treatment of this potentially violent population and, at the same time, to deem such treatment ethical.

It is crucial to note that, although the effects of these violent stories are insidious, I do not wish to suggest that the Brazilian media intentionally seek to commit violence against the poor or to create a cultural climate in which violence against the poor is accepted or even lauded. I do not believe this is the case. A likelier explanation for the pervasiveness of the kinds of stories I address here is that editors, journalists, and the public that consumes and repeats these stories are engaged in a form of what Virginia R. Dominguez has called “motivated seeing” (2009:157). Just as Dominguez demonstrates how scholars’ particular social and political commitments delimit what they are able and willing to “see,” both the producers and the middle-class and elite consumers of mainstream Brazilian media are unwilling and unable to see anything but the proximate causes of violence.¹³² Physical violence, in this type of viewing, results not from enduring conditions of desperate poverty and from a gross othering of the city’s poor and black residents, but from the pressure of a finger on a trigger. To see beyond the immediate “police versus out of control gangsters” accounting of violence would require a fundamental challenge to a status quo rooted in a radically unequal, and profoundly racist, distribution of wealth.¹³³

According to Paul Farmer, this obfuscation of the larger context in which violence and suffering occur is characteristic of structural violence. In fact, the invisibility, or in

¹³² Whether scholars’ or media consumers’ political commitments delimit their seeing, or whether, as some scholars might suggest (c.f. Laclau and Mouffe 2001[1985]), their delimited seeing instantiates—or “retroactively creates” (ibid.xi)—their political commitments is a fascinating question beyond the scope of this project.

¹³³ The continued salience and, indeed, centrality of this type of antagonistic “us” versus “them” thinking constitutes further evidence, were it required, of the profound inadequacy of “third way” political theory (c.f. Giddens 1998, 2000).
this case “unspeakability,” of certain causes of suffering serves as a condition of their continuation (Farmer 1992; 2004). However, as Peter Benson rightly argues, “Oftentimes, the problem is not that suffering is invisible or its causes unknown. Individuals and whole groups can have something at stake in actively overlooking and taking distance from other people’s suffering” (2008:594). In the case of the stories of violence circulated on tours and in mass media, what is at stake for those who ignore the more fundamental, and less immediate, causes of violence in Rio is not simply a distancing from the realities of those who live in and through situations of violence, though such distancing is, undoubtedly, comfortable. Rather, what is at stake is their active complicity in the production, consumption, and maintenance of such violence. After all, if the political-economic roots of both poverty and violence were seriously interrogated on tours or in the media, then those consuming both kinds of stories would be implicated as “winners” with a vested interest in maintaining a grossly inegalitarian, post-industrial, global capitalist system: the same system that maintains vast enclaves of urban poverty and controls them through violence, both real and symbolic.134

By instead circulating stories that stop short of investigating anything other than the proximate causes of violence, they both commit further violence and abdicate responsibility for it. Just as tour guides assure tourists that their gawking presence in Rocinha is a welcome one, mass media outlets assure the Brazilian middle and upper classes that the violence and suffering of the urban poor is caused by the poor’s own misbehavior, errors in judgment, and/or criminal proclivities. That such stories simultaneously trumpet the presumed “successes” of Brazilian police forces in their

134 And, in an astounding demonstration of efficiency, it then commoditizes such enclaves and offers them up for sale through tours.
“war” on drugs further contributes to the illusion that the “problem” of the criminal poor is under control.

Anthropological Approaches to Narrative and Violence

In an illuminating article on the politics of narrative, violence, and infanticide, Briggs (2007) divides anthropological treatments of the relationship between violence and narratives into four types. A brief discussion of Briggs’ typology is useful not only for providing a general overview of the varieties of extant anthropological work on narratives and violence, but also for situating the present discussion. The first of these types consists of those understandings that are “doubly immanent” (2007:319) and view violence as engendering narrative at the same time that narrative reproduces violence. Teresa Caldeira’s City of Walls (2000) is exemplary of this type of treatment, which seeks to examine the mutual constitution of narrative and violence, rather than positing a simplistic either/or primacy.

A second type of treatment Briggs identifies comprises those analyses that treat “narrative-violence connections as immanent but grant…them a positive functionalist value” (2007:319). In other words, such analyses view violence as necessarily resulting in the production of narratives, but attribute narratives with the capability of soothing or relieving their narrators of the effects of violence, or, as Briggs phrases it, of moving “people beyond the effects of violence” (op. cit.:320). A key example of work grounded in this type of approach is John McDowell’s Poetry and Violence (2000). Such works are interesting and even laudable for their inherent optimism. The notion that narrators experience a sort of catharsis through the narration of their pain is, after all, a pleasant
one. On the other hand, imbuing narrative with the power to assuage the wounds inflicted by violence runs the risk of placing responsibility for healing squarely, or even solely, on the victim of violence, rather than seeking to alter the circumstances that produced violence in the first place. Of course, McDowell and other whose approaches fall into this category do not tout narrative as a cure-all for violence; however, instilling narrative with a positive function runs precisely this risk.

The third type of approach to the violence-narrative relationship prevalent in anthropological texts “also finds immanent connections between narratives and violence but locates them as ideological effects of narrative economies” (Briggs 2007:319). This type of study often focuses on the multiplicity of narratives that emerges from differently-positioned narrators and calls into question any set relationship between narrative and violence. Examples of such works might include Michael Gilsenan’s *Lords of the Lebanese Marches* (1996) and Briggs’s work on ritual wailing (1993). Gilsenan’s work is particularly interesting, as he demonstrates the contingency of the narrative/violence relationship, rather than positing a simplistic, necessary relationship.

The final type of treatment of violence and narrative discussed by Briggs eschews any “natural” or immanent connection between narrative and violence. Typified by Michael Taussig’s work (1987), this approach focuses not on reference but on the circulation of stories. While this kind of approach is intellectually interesting, Briggs neatly summarizes its potentially problematic consequences: “Scholarly efforts to denaturalize narrative-violence relationships perform symbolic domination if they deny by fiat the force of the acts that preoccupy narrators” (2007:322). In other words, although a focus on circulation independent of reference is possible and even promising,
it also ignores the deep connection narrators have with the content of their narratives and, in so doing, substitute the researcher’s interests and preferences for those of the narrators, which, as Briggs rightly notes, constitutes “symbolic domination” (ibid.).

My own approach to the narrative-violence relationship, as is evident both in the title of this chapter and in my concern both with the violence in stories and the violence of stories, most closely resembles the first type of approach discussed here. In fact, I believe Caldeira’s (2000) focus on both the content and consequences of “crime talk” is exemplary, particularly as she refuses to posit the kind of resolution of violence through narrative that characterizes the second type of approach discussed by Briggs. My research suggests that resolution is neither the goal of nor a side effect of the production, circulation, and consumption of stories of violence in or of Rocinha. Indeed, the violent content of narratives and the violence of the narratives themselves fail to be ameliorated through the production and circulation of the narratives. In order to begin thinking about the circulation and production of narratives of violence in Rocinha, I now turn to an especially salient set of stories to which I was privy during my time there.

Ágata’s Story

I never met Ágata, never saw her, nor had I heard of her before February 16, 2008. In fact, I know with certainty very little about her even now, though throughout the last weeks of February and the months that followed, I heard dozens of conflicting stories about her last moments of life. Although a number of details varied, the stories agreed upon the following: on February 15, 2008, Ágata, who was approximately 11

135 Although I have used pseudonyms throughout this project, I am here using Ágata’s real name. My reason for doing so is that she has, in her death, become well-known in Rocinha and beyond.
years old, walked home from school with her friends and went to her second-story bedroom to play or work on her computer. The frequent indexing of Ágata possessing both her own bedroom and her own computer in these stories is not accidental, though it likely was not conscious. Rather, it points to Ágata’s relative privilege. She is, in no way, despite her residence in Rocinha, one of those typically criminalized in Brazil—she is not poor, nor is she male. Both of these factors, combined with her extreme youth, locate her “innocence” beyond reproach. While Ágata was on her computer, BOPE officers were “invading” Rocinha and preparing to engage in a vigorous exchange of gunfire with the local narco-traffic gang. At the same time, I happened to be sitting in a bar/restaurant discussing tourist “invasions” in Rocinha with a local filmmaker, our waitress, and several opinionated friends.

Once the exchange of gunfire began—an exchange initiated by police officers according to every account I heard from a Rocinha resident—my friends and I, along with the other bar patrons, moved further inside the bar, away from the doorway, in the hope of avoiding stray bullets. Although it is impossible to say with certainty who actually started the exchange of fire, it is worth noting that residents of the community with whom I later spoke about the incident were absolutely certain that the police were responsible. First, it reveals that residents of Rocinha are, with arguably good cause, suspicious of the police and view them as violent and unconcerned with the well-being of Rocinha’s residents. Second, it demonstrates that the community is united in its apprehension of a perceived common threat.

As the bar owner pulled the metal safety door down, several pedestrians darted inside to join us and escape the scene being played out in the street and to wait for the
shooting to cease. During our wait, conversation was sparse and most of us lapsed into introspective silence, wondering what we would find when we were finally able to leave the relative safety of the bar. We were lucky to have been where we were, on the bottom floor of a multi-story building near the bottom of the hill; Ágata was not so lucky, as one bullet passed through her bedroom window and, then, through her head. She died instantly, while gunfire continued to echo through the community, by my hearing and my watch, for about 30 minutes.

When the gunfire stopped, I exited the bar cautiously. Although it was not my first, nor would it be my last, time inside Rocinha during a police raid, I was still scared of leaving the bar and venturing into the street; my fears extended not only to my own bodily integrity, but also to what I might see or hear once outside—what might be called my psychic integrity. Before I had walked 15 yards down Vía Ápia, I knew something terrible had happened—more terrible, that is, than having one’s community exposed to a haphazard spray of bullets from the high-powered weapons of police officers seldom held accountable for their “collateral damage.” No one told me exactly what that terrible something was until the next day, but the urgent running around of dozens of Rocinha’s residents that I witnessed, as I made my way to the white vans that would transport me back to the safety of my high-rise apartment in Ipanema, assured me that my hunch was correct. Had I been a better anthropologist, or a less fragile human being, I would have stayed later that afternoon, would have witnessed firsthand the agony of those knew Ágata and those who did not, would have asked people how and when they knew what they knew, before their memories had a chance to be rewritten or forgotten, but I wasn’t and I didn’t. Instead, I fled, even after the immediate risk of staying in Rocinha had
passed, to a neighborhood where the police don’t shoot little girls, or boys, or women, or men at random; where no one is guilty of the crime of living in an area dominated by the traffic of illicit drugs (though many consume those same drugs); and where I could safely contemplate the luxury of being able to leave and enter Rocinha at will.

People talked about Ágata endlessly in the following days and weeks, almost as if talking about her would somehow make her death make sense, eventually, or as if it would resolve it or make it go away. That no one I knew ever found resolution through repeating or listening to stories of her death casts serious doubt on the idea that narratives of violence possess a “healing mission,” as McDowell has suggested with respect to Mexican corridos (2000:196). Perhaps rather than a “healing mission,” the endless discussions of Ágata’s death demonstrate a longing for comprehension, a way not of healing, but of attempting to wring sense from the senseless. Even in this effort, though, I suspect that the stories largely failed, as their virtually ceaseless repetition suggests.

Flyers and banners appeared on Rua 2, near where Ágata had lived and died, many asking a question too painful to be rhetorical: “Who is going to be the next one to die when the BOPE climbs the hill again?” (“Quem vai ser o próximo a morrer quando o BOPE subir o morro de novo?”) Many of the signs and posters contained photocopied photographs of Ágata, while others assured readers that those who knew Ágata “truly miss her” (“sentem saudades verdadeiros”). The highlighting both of affect and of truth in these signs, along with the critical calling into question of BOPE actions and their consequences, is a substantial part of what narratives of violence do, according to Briggs

136 A substantial body of literature on the role of narrative in facing state violence and working through trauma exists, much of which subscribes to the notion that exposing violence through narrative promotes healing (c.f. Adam and Adam 2001; Hayner 2001; Caruth 1995; Minow 1998). While such an approach is still popular, particularly in institutional settings, scholars have recently begun critiquing the notion of narrative-as-healing (c.f. Ross 2003).
(2007). Further, asking who is going to be the next to die at the hands of the BOPE makes clear not only that the police are responsible for violence in Rocinha, but also, and more importantly, that residents of Rocinha are vulnerable as potential victims of violence. Even while calling into question police actions, then, such signs and stories do not question the definition of favelas and their residents with respect to violence.

In order better to understand the nature of these stories, as well as their typical characteristics, it is important to include one of these stories in its entirety. The version of Ágata’s story included below was recounted to me by Cássia, a woman in her early 30s and a life-long resident of Rocinha. Cássia and I had met each other for the first time over six months before Ágata’s death and we had only spoken for more than a few minutes about a half a dozen times. I frequently saw Cássia, usually with 2-3 other young mothers, sitting and chatting on the Largo do Boiadeiro while their children played together. It was in such a context that Cássia hailed me with her typical “Oi, gringa!” on February 18. She was sitting with two women—Elena, 27, and Amélia, 30—and it was immediately clear to me that she had stopped me with a rather specific purpose in mind.¹³⁷

After pausing to make sure that Elena, Amélia, and I had met, Cássia began her story:

Cássia: “E aí? Tava aqui no sábado?” / “And you? Were you here on Saturday?”

Tomi Tusia: “É, tava.” / “Yeah, I was.”

¹³⁷ Cássia usually stopped me just to hear how my project was going or to look at my fingers to see if I’d stopped picking at my cuticles. Our first meeting had been at a nail salon on Rocinha’s Vía Ápia and she, several other customers, and the nail technicians present that day had all decried my bad habit and offered a plethora of suggestions for better nail care. Cássia continued to check my (lack of) progress every time she saw me.
Cássia: “Então, ficou sabendo da menina, da Ágata?” / “So, did you find out about the girl, Ágata?”

TT: “Sim. Foi horrível, não foi?” / “Yes. It was horrible, wasn’t it?”

Cássia: “Claro que foi. Toda vez que eles entram acontece alguma coisa ruim. E com as drogas muda nada.” / “Of course it was. Every time they come in [here] something terrible happens. And with the drugs nothing changes.”

Elena: “Pois é.” / “Yeah.”

TT: “Sabe como aconteceu?” / “Do you know how it happened?”

Cássia: “Sei, foi a mesma história de sempre—” / “I do, it was the same story as always—”

Elena: “—bala perdida” / “—stray bullet”\(^{138}\)

Cássia: “É, mas bala perdida deles—” / “Yeah, but their stray bullet—”

TT: “—deles? De quem?” / “—their [bullet]? Whose?”

Cássia: “Da BOPE. Olha, a bala que matou a menina entrou pela teste e saiu pela parte detrás.” / “The BOPE. Look, the bullet that killed the girl entered through the forehead and exited through the back part [of her skull].”

TT: “e…?” / “And?”

Cássia: “E aí tinha que ser deles. Na verdade sempre é e a evidência comprove.” / “And so it had to be theirs. In truth it always is and the evidence proves it.”

TT: “A evidência?” / “The evidence?”

Cássia: “É, da bala. Tinha que ser deles por causa da trajectória.” / “Yeah, of the bullet. It had to be theirs because of the trajectory.”

\(^{138}\) For discussion of the fetishization of stray, or “lost,” bullets in Rio, see Penglase 2011.
Elena: “É assim mesmo.” / “That’s how it is.”

It is important to note here that, in drawing attention to the lack of counter-deﬁnitions of Rocinha in these narratives of violence, I do not intend to criticize community residents. Nor do I wish to suggest that the remarkable lack of deﬁnitions of favelas that rely on positive features is somehow their “fault.” Indeed, I do not believe that it is. Rather, my intent is to highlight how different stories of violence—with quite different goals and motives—conspire to create a similar deﬁnition of favelas as places deﬁned primarily, in not exclusively, through violence and how the resulting understanding of favelas as inherently “violent” shapes how favelas, and their residents, are treated both popularly and by agents of the state.

Folk Ballistics and Narrative Evidence

Perhaps the most fascinating construction of truth through narratives of violence came in discussions with community residents on the forensics of Ágata’s death. Indeed, in the days and weeks after Ágata’s death, I found myself drawn into over 25 conversations with community residents about ballistics, despite my utter lack of expertise on the topic. Although I made it clear to people who asked me my opinion that I had no knowledge of or experience with ballistic analysis, nor had I had any training that would qualify me to speculate on the significance of angles of entry, blood spatter, bullet trajectories, and the like, people summarily ignored my protestations as irrelevant. For example, Glaúcio, a man in his early 20s who became especially frustrated by what he likely perceived as either my refusal to cooperate or my deliberate obtuseness, went so far as to counter my claims of ignorance by yelling at me, “But you’re an
I then admitted defeat and stopped trying to convince him of my ignorance.

Whether I was singled out as an “expert” because of my educational credentials, because I was a foreigner and, as such, presumed to be an objective outsider, or a combination of the two is unclear, though I suspect being an anthropologist, rather than some other type of scholar, had something to do with it. Not only did Glaúcio invoke my being an “anthropologist” to counter my claims of ignorance, but several other people also made passing references to popular depictions of anthropologists on television, and not only during discussions of Ágata. Kelly, for instance, a 19-year-old student of tourism, once suggested to me, in a different context, months prior to Ágata’s death, that she found my interest in tourism “different,” as anthropologists “solve crime.” Though I was stunned by this assertion at the time it was made, I later learned that Kelly had seen the American television program *Bones* and had formed her opinion of what anthropologists do this way.¹³⁹

Regardless of the reasons behind my role as “expert,” people really wanted, or perhaps needed, the bullet that ended Ágata’s life to have come from the police. For example, Cássia, an unemployed mother of three in her mid-30s, told me, with complete certainty, that the bullet had hit Ágata in the top part of the head and exited through the back. Her contention, a significant one, was echoed time and again, with only slight variation. The implication of these arguments was a crucial one: after all, if what Cássia and others said was true, the local narco-traffickers could not have inadvertently shot

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¹³⁹ *Bones*’ central character is a forensic anthropologist who, while portraying anthropologists as emotionless, highly logical, robotic people not unlike the Vulcans of *Star Trek*, does, in fact, help solve crimes.
Ágata, because they generally fired their weapons from ground level.\textsuperscript{140} A weapon fired from ground level, after all, would have hit Ágata from below, not from above. The BOPE officers, on the other hand, fired both from the ground and from a helicopter and could have easily been responsible for the death of a young girl.

Often without saying so directly, dozens of Rocinha residents placed blame for the death squarely on the “invading” police, who, according to everyone with whom I spoke about the tragedy, should not have been there in the first place. As Cássia succinctly pointed out, “Every time they come in [here] something terrible happens. And nothing changes with the drugs.” (“Toda vez que eles entram, acontece alguma coisa ruim. E com as drogas muda nada.”)\textsuperscript{141} In other words, Ágata’s death, and the deaths of every other accidental or intended victim of police/gang fighting, was senseless in the extreme: even had the police succeeded in killing or injuring only those directly responsible for the drug trade, the drug trade would continue unhindered.

Here, police presence is associated not with ameliorating violence caused by the drug trade, but rather with causing—and even predicting—violence. In Cássia’s formulation, police presence in the community is enough to indicate that “something terrible” is going to happen. Further, this “something terrible” always creates victims of

\textsuperscript{140} Even if Cássia was correct about the angle of entry, it is not clear that the police had to be responsible. Presumably, gang members also fired from the upper floors and tops of taller buildings, which would have placed them in a position from which it would have been possible to kill Ágata.

\textsuperscript{141} Cássia’s assertion is remarkably reminiscent of Fidel Castro’s comment on the inefficacy of weapons to eliminate other social problems: “The ever more sophisticated weapons piling up in the arsenals of the wealthiest and the mightiest can kill the illiterate, the ill, the poor and the hungry, but they cannot kill ignorance, illness, poverty or hunger.” (“Las armas cada vez más sofisticadas que se acumulan en los arsenales de los más poderosos y ricos, como ya expresé una vez, podrán matar a los analfabetos, los enfermos, los pobres y los hambrientos, pero no podrán matar la ignorancia, las enfermedades, la pobreza y el hambre.”) (Castro Ruz 2002). Perhaps to this we should add that weapons can kill drug traffickers—and their neighbors, but not the drug traffic.
the residents of Rocinha, who are protected neither by their weapons, in the case of dead
gangsters, nor by their innocence, in the case of Ágata and other victims like her.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating components of what I have called “folk
ballistics” is that the ballistic analysis carried out here has little to no relationship with
forensic evidence—that body of evidence labeled, collected, and interpreted by
“impartial,” scientifically-trained specialists, whose authority generally trumps even the
most complete and convincing eye-witness accounts. In fact, in “folk ballistic” accounts,
all of the references to angles of entry, trajectory, and exit wound patterns were based
exclusively on other stories. Rather than attempting to use first-, or second-, or third-
hand accounts of what had happened to Ágata to complement ballistic data and other
forensic evidence produced by scientific experts to fill in the gaps in narrative accounts of
what had transpired, both kinds of stories were co-constructed. In other words, stories
about “bad” police and their murder of a little girl helped construct the ballistic accounts
needed to “prove” who had killed Ágata, just as these newly invoked folk ballistics
helped flesh out the story of what must have happened.

In such a context, my own experience as a coerced “expert witness,” who was
neither “expert” nor “witness,” makes sense. Despite lacking any forensic training, my
status as an allied outsider, my educational credentials, or both provided sufficient
“expertise” to vouch for the possibility that the stories I heard of Ágata’s death were
accurate. That I was an anthropologist, rather than another type of scholar, perhaps
served to bolster my credibility, and I became a “witness” by participating in the co-
construction of both narrative and evidence.
The use of “folk ballistics” to bolster narrative accounts of violence and culpability stands in marked contrast to a pattern identified by Elizabeth Drexler (2006). As she argues with reference to her work in Indonesia, narrative accounts of violence are not only unable to diminish the effects of forensic evidence, but are also unable to posit effectively “the state’s liability for abuses” (2006:323). While Drexler is focused on past state violence and on “legitimate” forensic evidence created by trained experts, her suggestion that anthropologists pay “more attention to the work that narrative does in bringing into existence certain conflict formations” (2006:232) is an important one. In this case, the narratives of Ágata’s death, along with the folk ballistic analyses created through narrative, identify and create a pattern of conflict between an invading outsider, the BOPE, and the victimized insider, Rocinha’s residents/Ágata.

Having addressed the most important and most widely circulated stories of violence I encountered among Rocinha’s residents, I turn next to a different, but no less important, set of narratives of violence in Rocinha: those circulated on poverty tours. Like Ágata’s stories, accounts of bullet holes on poverty tours also locate physical violence in Rocinha. In other words, Rocinha is the setting for violence in both types of accounts. Unlike Ágata’s stories, accounts of bullet holes on poverty tours neither lay blame for violence on agents of the state nor draw attention to the senseless victimization of Rocinha’s residents by state agents. Instead, as will become clear, on poverty tours violence is treated as a generic problem—and touristic highlight—of Rocinha, rather than as a problem in Rocinha.
“One of the most significant, and common, encounters with violence on poverty tours in Rocinha revolves around the identification of bullet holes in the walls of homes. Such holes are, on the surface, relatively uninteresting; usually measuring between a few millimeters and a centimeter or so in diameter and no more than one or two centimeters in depth, tourists tend not to notice these pockmarks until tour guides point them out. And they point them out in the most dramatic fashion. While every tour guide has her or his own strategy for calling attention to the physical markers of past violence, guides generally run their hands over the bullet holes and ask tourists what they think made the holes. On some tours, tourists guess correctly, while on others they seem to be at a loss. In either case, guides enthusiastically exclaim something to the effect of “these are bullet holes!” By running their hands over the walls and putting their fingers into the holes, they give tourists nonverbal consent and encouragement to do the same, which occurred on every tour I witnessed in Rocinha.

As tourists photograph each other posing in front of the holes or with their fingers in the holes, tour guides take the opportunity to drill home the importance of such an activity. These vacant depressions are not merely holes, as guides point out; nor are they simply unsightly blemishes on an otherwise well constructed and painted surface. Rather, they constitute proof that tourists have encountered something far removed from their everyday lives, something defined by violence. Although guides almost never distinguish who left the bullet holes (i.e. police officers or gang members), tourists are left to imagine that the bullet holes unambiguously index gang violence. Indeed, while it is impossible to say with certainty whose guns leave which holes, the only context
tourists have for interpreting these signs of past violence is provided through references to gang graffiti and visibly armed young men. The police are typically left entirely out of tour scripts.

The message such an encounter with imagined gang violence sends is clearly and unambiguously received. Tourists I interviewed or with whom I spoke after a tour of Rocinha learned to define Rocinha as a place of violence, even though they had no direct experience of violence in Rocinha. Indeed, tourists were able simultaneously to describe Rocinha as a place of violence and as a place in which they felt safe with no apparent sense of contradiction. Further, because tours of Rocinha are framed as “favela” tours, rather than as tours of a unique neighborhood with a particular history, tourists are encouraged to generalize their experiences in Rocinha to the 100s of Rio de Janeiro favelas they did not tour—and to distinguish between favelas and non-favela neighborhoods, in part, on the basis of violence. That tourists were able to make the connection between the bullet holes in Rocinha and the violence of other favelas was demonstrated in conversations I had with tourists after the tours. Sara, a 31-year-old Israeli lesbian whom I met on a tour in August 2007, for instance, was not alone in highlighting her increased knowledge of “City of God” after taking a tour in Rocinha.142

It is, perhaps, in discussions of bullet holes that the distinctions between “rich” space and “poor” space are most clearly reaffirmed on tours. The former space comes to be defined not only as affluent, white, and beautiful but also as “safe,” as bullet holes are not part of the landscape (or, at the very least, are not highlighted for tourist

142 City of God was the favela most consistently known by name to tourists; in fact, tourists often cited the film City of God as having sparked their curiosity about favelas. That City of God and Rocinha might be (and, in fact, are) very different communities never seemed to occur to tourists who pointed to touring Rocinha as a means of gaining knowledge of City of God.
consumption). “Poor” space, by way of contrast, is rendered not only as impoverished and lacking but also as violent and potentially dangerous; this rendering, rather than distressing tourists, both fulfills their desires for an (indirect) encounter with physical violence and confirms their suspicions that favelas are, indeed, places of violence. After all, bullet holes and the criminal activities they invoke are literally inscribed on Rocinha’s landscape and they are understood only in the context of preexisting beliefs about the potential criminality of the urban poor. Such a treatment of Rocinha and, by way of extension, all Carioca favelas reenacts and reaffirms spatial segregation, on the one hand, and naturalizes material inequalities, on the other. Despite how problematic these stories might be, they are certainly not the only stories that highlight physical violence at the expense of other community traits.

“Chaos in Rocinha”: Rocinha on the News

One afternoon in November, I sat in my friend Toninho’s house in Rocinha’s Laboriaux neighborhood discussing his views on tourism in the community. A capoeira mestre who spent hours each week volunteering to teach physically and mentally disabled children in the community capoeira, Toninho was passionate about improving Rocinha. His particular intervention was targeted at making non-drug-related activities and hobbies more readily available to all community residents, regardless of their ability to pay and irrespective of their able-bodied-ness. On several other occasions, he passionately defended his belief that the camaraderie engendered by “playing” capoeira, along with the physical and mental discipline it promotes, constituted a social “good” and helped
both children and adults build confidence, physical and mental strength, and self-
respect.\footnote{Although capoeira is often treated in popular discourse as a type of martial art, practitioners are adamantly that capoeira is "played," rather than fought, and the Portuguese verb "jogar" is consistently used to frame this activity. "Jogar" means "to play" in the sense of a sport or game, as opposed to "brincar," which means "to play" in the sense of children's toys or games.}

As he vented his frustrations with the lack of financial benefits for the community from tourism, our attention was drawn to a scene unfolding on the television in the corner of the room. We both paused, making certain that we were seeing what we thought we were seeing; then Toninho asked the inevitable question: "Tá acontecendo alguma coisa?" ("Is something happening?") The scene on the television was an aerial view of Rocinha; in fact, the very building in which we were sitting was visible in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. Wanting to find out what was afoot, Toninho grabbed the remote control from the couch and raised the volume. Rocinha, according to the reporter, was in "chaos." After watching the screen for a few moments, Toninho got up to look out the window, motioning for me to stay where I was, just in case something was, in fact, happening. After a moment, though, he invited me to join him at the window; nothing out of the ordinary—aside from the helicopter filming the scene depicted on the television—was taking place.

Although it was odd to witness the disjuncture between how Rocinha is depicted on television news stations and how Rocinha is experienced by those who live there, what is more striking is just how common—and how insidious—this disjuncture is. Most startling is not that news station and newspaper depictions of Rocinha and other favelas rarely match with lived experiences in the communities, but rather the pervasive association in mainstream reporting of favelas with violence and culpability for a host of
social ills. The result is that this disjuncture serves as the space within which state violence against the community as a whole can be exercised. Whether the violence of high-powered weapons or the violence of urban restructuring programs that treat favelas as obstacles to be removed from the urban landscape, rather than as vibrant, socially diverse neighborhoods, the promotion of a violent, and erroneous, depiction of Rocinha and other favelas through the news media allows the state’s exercise of violence in and toward favelas to go essentially unquestioned. Indeed, violent repression of “violent” communities is rendered both logical and necessary. As such, it is important to examine in greater detail the role of news media in promoting particular—and problematic—understandings of violence and poverty.

Further, as Stuart Hall, et. al have noted in a rather different context, media coverage of crime can serve the interests of the state (1978). By directing attention to crimes such as mugging, they show how attention was directed away from both economic and social crises. In the case of Brazil, what we might call hyper-attentiveness to “chaos” and (real or imagined) violent crime in the media serves to maintain a definition of the urban poor as both criminal and potentially dangerous, to discourage viewers or readers from questioning how enclaves of urban poverty were created and are maintained, and to avoiding questioning the logic and consequences of neoliberal economic policies more generally.

Similarly, violent police action against criminalized populations becomes justified through this kind of media coverage. After all, as Hall, et. al note, “Action to stigmatise and punish those who break the law, taken by the agents formally appointed as the guardians of public morality and order, stands as a dramatised symbolic reassertion or
the values of the society” (1978:66, italics original). When these “dramatized symbolic reassertions” of social values are then highlighted in subsequent media reports, the “problems” of urban poverty and crime are, at least until the next day’s reporting, resolved.

Violence in the News

In *News as Culture*, Ursula Rao (2010) demonstrates that studying the media is indispensable if anthropologists are to understand social configurations in a world characterized by the technologically mediated exchange of information. Further, she makes clear that “studying the media from an anthropological point of view means understanding how media technologies are used to make, maintain, change and give meaning to social relations” (2010:9). Although the present project is not an ethnography of the news media, interrogating news media is crucial for understanding how common (mis)understandings of favelas are created and maintained and, more importantly, how these understandings generate consent for and legitimize the state’s violent treatment of favelas and their residents. As Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin put it, studying media is this way is crucial for understanding “the enforcement of inequality…and the impact of technologies on the production of individual and collective identities” (2002:3). Some examples of typical headlines involving Rocinha that appeared in newspapers during my fieldwork include: “War in Rio: Confrontation in Rocinha Leaves One Dead and Six Injured” (Martins and Dutra 2008), “Military Police Discover Arsenal in the Favela of Rocinha in Rio (Anonymous 2008), and “Gunfire
between Criminals and Police in Rocinha Leaves 2,400 Students out of Class” (Anonymous 2007b).

That news reporting in Brazil serves the interests of the state is indisputable, despite the fact that the state does not directly control media or own media outlets. Rather, it exercises power through the handful of elite families who own most electronic and print media outlets. The concentration of Brazilian media outlets in the hands of few families is so extreme that it has been identified by many scholars of media in Brazil as a form of “coronelismo electrônico” (“electronic colonelism”) (c.f. Cunha 2002). “Colonelism” in this case refers to the local rule by colonels/elite patrons common during the Old Republic (1889-1930). “Electronic colonelism” is an updated, but no less troubling, version of this kind of rule of elites. Cunha describes the media generally, and television, in particular, as an “indivisible mechanism of the state apparatus, although with roots firmly planted in private enterprise” (2002:217, author trans). 144

Although the trend of state interference in and even (usually indirect) control of the press was already firmly established in the first decades of the 20th century, Article 122 of Brazil’s 1937 Constitution provided the state with control over the press. The state continued to use the media, and especially television, to mold public opinion through the middle decades of the 20th century. The emergence of a robust middle class in the 1960s, as a result of the expansion of capitalist relations in the years during and after Kubitschek’s presidency, shifted the state’s focus from print journalism as a means of promoting its ideology to a focus on television. As Guedes-Bailey and Barbosa have noted, “Television [with the help of the dictatorship] become the mass medium to shape

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144 It is worth pointing out that the project of nation-building has often been linked to broadcast television (c.f. Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin 2002).
ideas and moral, political and cultural values” (2008:57). Further, they demonstrate that the state continues to exert incredible influence over television content: “Contrary to global trends of a borderless media market, the Brazilian state continues to be central to decision-making, implementation and control of the regulation process of the media system” (2008:59), the ratification of the 1985 Constitution notwithstanding.

The problematic representations of communities such as Rocinha in mainstream news media has not gone unnoticed by community members. Indeed, the refusal of news reporting—and of other facets of mainstream media—to engage with the needs and realities of community residents has led to the creation of alternative television and radio stations. In fact, Rocinha boasts both a TV station, TV ROC, and several radio stations. These smaller stations are run by community residents, who control both their format and content, which results in a significant and quite intentional difference in representations of Rocinha.

According to Lucas, a life-long Rocinha resident in his mid-40s who was involved with both the local TV station and one of the local radio stations, community-controlled television and radio are necessary if Rocinha is to acquire what it needs in terms of services and infrastructural improvements. He was highly critical both of tourism in Rocinha and of Rocinha’s portrayal in mainstream news media—terming them both “exploitative.” As he outlined the significance of having locally-controlled media, “consciousness-raising,” which he deemed to be of central importance, can only occur through the consumption of “legitimate representations of the community that do not only have to do with the [drug] traffic” (“concientização” occurs through “representações legítimas da comunidade que não só têm a ver com o tráfico”). He went on to make his
point even clearer: “Our community is much more than drugs and so are our problems” (“nossa comunidade é muito mais de que drogas e nossos problemas também são”).

Conclusion

Lucas’s framing of mainstream media representations of Rocinha as illegitimate when compared to those produced by community residents is telling and far from unique. In the stories of Ágata’s death I discussed earlier, community residents sought to make truth claims that challenged the legitimacy of narratives that construct Rocinha residents as the causes of community suffering. Similarly, the struggle for legitimacy is reflected in community members’ marshalling of folk ballistic evidence in support of their causal claims. Just as community residents struggle to legitimize their versions of Rocinha and events carried out there, so, too, do tour guides who call attention to bullet holes in order to bolster the credibility of their depiction of Rocinha as a “scary” or “dangerous” place. In both cases, it is worth noting that physical evidence and, indeed, ballistic evidence—whether in the form of depressions in walls or in the form of narratively constituted bullet trajectories—is sufficient, if not necessary, to legitimize narratives of violence.

In both instances, too, recourse to expertise serves to support further the versions of events promulgated in these stories. In the case of tour guide narratives of past and potential violence, expertise on Rocinha is asserted at the beginning of tours and embodied through the assertive marking of noteworthy sites and the animated discussion of their significance. In the case of the narratives of Ágata’s death, my own imposed “expertise” in forensic analysis and my position as a sympathetic, educated outsider were levied to lend credibility to residents’ evidentiary and causal claims.
In the case of news media, “evidence” of Rocinha as violent and chaotic often comes in the form of aerial video or photography of the community. Because the neighborhood does not conform to middle class standards of spatial organization, these shots may be sufficient to bolster claims of violent chaos, particularly given the lengthy association in Brazil of poverty with violence and danger. When these images are coupled with the sounds of gunshots or with photos of pools of blood or even of bloody corpses, the evidence is more than sufficient to lend credibility to the argument that Rocinha and other favelas are violent and in need of violent repression. Indeed, such evidence is virtually incontrovertible. These stories are, then, as I suggested in the beginning of this chapter, violent in content, violent in their representations of the poor, who are reduced to villains and/or dead bodies, and violent in that they obscure the fundamental causes of both poverty and violence in favor of advocating heightened violent policing as a solution to urban violence.  

145 There even exist popular websites that post photographs of the dead bodies of traffickers, or suspected traffickers, killed by police officers, such as the popular Cabuloso website. Such websites allow viewers to leave commentary on the photos, which range from “congratulations to the police” to “they should do this in all of Brazil” to “they have to put a bullet in all of the marginals” (Cabuloso 2010). It is doubtful, of course, that most Brazilians share such extreme points of view, but the 1000s of comments are telling.  

146 Although photographs of “collateral damage” regularly appear in television and newspaper reports, newspaper photography of dead gangsters is particularly common and ranges from photographs of the bodies in situ to photographs of the bodies in the morgue. Although I cannot state categorically that photographs of the dead bodies of victims of violence who are not residents of favelas never appear in news reporting, I have never seen one.
“Peoples do not judge in the same way as courts of law; they do not hand down sentences, they throw thunderbolts; they do not condemn kings, they drop them back into the void; and this justice is worth just as much as that of the courts. It is for their salvation that they take arms against their oppressors, how can they be made to adopt a way of punishing them that would pose a new danger to themselves?” (Robespierre 2007 [1792]:59).

“It is a crime to kill a neighbor, an act of heroism to kill an enemy” (Leach 1967:27).

Academic contemplations of crime, violence, and justice, particularly within the social sciences, have tended to focus on one of two elements of the criminal, violent, or just acts or events. On the one hand, studies within anthropology, sociology, and related disciplines have concentrated on exposing the larger structural and social forces responsible for creating an environment in which particular acts, by particular people, are judged criminal or in which violence thrives (c.f. Caldeira 2000; Caldeira and Holston 1999; Rodrigues 2006). These studies have proven invaluable in understanding the contexts in which violence is produced and reproduced. On the other hand, legal scholars, criminologists, and historians have more frequently attempted to unravel the complicated juridico-legal channels through which crime and justice have been defined in different historical moments (c.f. Des Rosiers and Bittle 2004; Godfrey, Williams, and Lawrence 2008; Young and Matthews 1992). Such studies have fruitfully addressed the contingency of acts defined as criminal or just.

What has been less frequently and less completely addressed in academic literature is the contingent nature of the definition of similar acts, carried out in similar
locales, in similar times. In other words, what is “criminal,” what is “just,” and what is “violent” depend not only on the socio-historical context in which the act is performed, but also, quite significantly, on the actor performing the act. Further, discussions of “criminality” and “justice” tend to operate on the mistaken assumption that the two are mutually exclusive categories, only the former of which is typically associated with violence. Indeed, when “justice” requires what might in other circumstances be termed “violence,” it is often glossed as “coercion,” treated as an enactment of legitimate “power,” or reduced to an example of “force.”

In this chapter, I continue the discussion of violence and poverty I began in Chapter Eight: Stories of Violence and the Violence of Stories, but focus not on the violence in/of stories and instead on physical violence. As I discussed in Chapter Eight, physical violence, or the threat of it, constitutes a significant element of both tourist and media accounts of Rocinha and of favelas more generally. Reflecting on physical violence in Rio de Janeiro demands consideration not just of poverty but also of understandings of crime and justice, as “crime,” “justice,” and “violence” are not often readily separable. In order to begin a more thorough reflection on the overlapping relationship between violence, crime, and justice, a few examples will prove illustrative:

On July 23, 1993, as on so many other nights, dozens of street children sought shelter on the steps of the historic Candelária Church in downtown Rio de Janeiro. However, unlike on most other nights, a group of heavily armed men sprayed the steps of

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147 Violence and justice are, of course, not always treated as separate; indeed, discussions of the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence to carry out justice are legion. However, the acts I discuss here, as violent acts of justice, are not carried out by the state or its agents. Similarly, private acts of violence, particularly within the household, continue to be treated as “just,” particularly when the “honor” of the one carrying out the violent act is at stake (c.f. Hautzinger 2005).
the church with bullets, killing 8 sleeping children and injuring a few others. Perhaps the most shocking element of the massacre is that several of the men responsible for these killings were police officers. Despite the high profile of the case and the surrounding public furor, only two of the men involved were ever convicted of any crime.

In April 2005, over 30 residents of the Nova Iguaçu slum, on the northern outskirts of Rio de Janeiro in the Baixada Fluminense region, were shot to death by a group of men who fled the scene in a silver Volkswagen bus (c.f. Astor 2005). None of the residents killed or caught in the crossfire had been involved in or accused of any crime. In connection with the crime, 12 police officers, current or retired, were arrested, although only 4 of them were believed to have committed the actual shootings.

In April 2007, suspected members of the Red Command drug gang set a city bus, stopped in a working class Rio de Janeiro neighborhood and loaded with over a dozen passengers, on fire. They reportedly stood with their semi-automatic weapons aimed at the bus to prevent any passengers from escaping. By the time police arrived at the scene, all of the passengers were dead and the gang members were long gone. News coverage of the incident highlighted the inhumanity of gang members considered to be out of control.

In May and June 2007, over 1,000 police officers participated in a violent “clean-up” of Rio’s Complexo do Alemão slum. On a single day, June 27, 2007, they killed 19 community residents—18 with guns and 1 by stabbing. According to newspaper reports,

148 In a somewhat bizarre twist, one of the children to survive the massacre, 15-year-old Sandro Rosa do Nascimento, later became one of Brazil’s most famous criminals and was subsequently killed by police. In 2000, Nascimento, still homeless, hijacked a bus and took 10 passengers hostage. He was captured alive by police, but died of asphyxiation en route to the police station. The officers who drove him to the station were charged with and tried for murder, but were acquitted. Nascimento’s story was the subject of a well-known documentary, Bus 174, by writer-director José Padilha (2003).

149 The sighting of a Volkswagen bus with several men inside is one of the keys used to identify police death squad activity in Brazil by a number of scholars of violence (c.f. Rose 2005).
only 8 of these victims had any association with a drug gang (Anonymous 2007). According to unnamed police leadership, the action was “legitimate” and “within legal limits” (ibid.). João Tancredo, president of Rio’s Human Rights Commission (OAB-RJ), named the massacre the “Chacina do Pan,” or “Pan [American Games] Slaughter.”

Only a few days later, in July, the streets of Rio were flooded with heavily armed police officers in uniform in anticipation of the 2007 Pan-American Games. No busses were set on fire, no slums invaded, no street children murdered in their sleep, nor were there mainstream media reports of car-jackings, of tourists being robbed, or of inter-gang shoot-outs. It was as if the city and its myriad inhabitants had called a temporary truce—even if that fragile truce was little more than a façade.

In December 2008, over 200 police officers entered Rocinha in an operation that resulted not in the capture of an elusive crime lord, but in the death of two suspected gang members (i.e. dark-skinned young men) after a vigorous exchange of gunfire in the Zuzu Angel tunnel that connects the affluent Barra da Tijuca with the affluent Zona Sul. The state Security Secretary, José Mariano Beltrame decried the “audacity” of the gang members who exchanged fire with police outside the confines of Rocinha, endangering the lives of commuters, as well as of police officers. Rio’s Governor Sérgio Cabral, who had previously expressed the belief that “Rocinha is a factory for the production of criminals,” went further and suggested that such violence was to be expected “until the day that we manage to dominate Rocinha.”

The violence of Cabral’s explicit association of an enclave of urban poverty such as Rocinha with criminality is eclipsed

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150 The violence, he said, would continue “até o dia que conseguirmos dominar a Rocinha.” He said that Rocinha is a “fábrica de produzir marginal.”
only by his overt desire to put Rocinha, used here as a metonym for all of Rio’s poor 
neighborhoods, violently in its place.\footnote{151}

On Saturday, August 21, 2010, drug gang members from Rocinha, led by Antônio 
Bomfim Lopes, affectionately known as “Nem,” invaded and occupied the 
Intercontinental Hotel is chic São Conrado, only blocks from Rocinha. The hotel’s 800 
guests were unharmed, but Nem’s audacious show of power landed him at the top of 
Rio’s most wanted list.\footnote{152}

Over a week-long period, beginning on Sunday, November 21, 2010, drug gang 
members from the Vila Cruzeiro slum set dozens of vehicles on fire, including a truck 
full of furniture and electronic equipment from the popular home furnishings chain Casas 
Bahia. On the Thursday, November 25, the number of vehicles burned was at least 35. 
Military Police and BOPE agents responded by invading both Vila Cruzeiro and the 
Complexo do Alemão. At least 23 people died as a result of these invasions.

In this chapter, I suggest that crimes like setting busses or cars on fire, while 
horrifying, are not simply the acting out of inhuman, out of control gangsters and, 
instead, might be interpreted as the “thunderbolts” of the urban poor, thrown against the 
nebulous machine of post-industrial capitalism, of grinding, dehumanizing poverty, and 
against the often-violent indifference of the ruling classes.\footnote{153} While I do not wish to

\footnote{151} It is worth pointing out that the estimated number of annual homicides in Rio de Janeiro is 6000, while 
on-duty police killings in Rio de Janeiro number around 1000/year (Amnesty International 2006). The 
figures for police killings are heavily debated and Huggins (2010) suggests that police killings may account 
for up to 70% of civilian homicides in Brazil. Reliable figures for police death squad activity are 
nonexistent.

\footnote{152} Only two months later, Nem was widely praised in Rocinha for organizing the neighborhood’s first gay 
pride parade as a way of combating the discrimination he perceived in his community. The parade drew an 
estimated 10,000 participants, and approximately 30,000 people attended.

\footnote{153} Although I have singled out one such occurrence, hundreds of busses have been set on fire by drug 
gangs in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo during the last 20 years. In perhaps the most egregious incident, 
over 50 busses were set on fire in one 4-day period in São Paulo in May 2006.
suggest that these events are somehow less than appalling or that any loss of human life is less than tragic, I do wish to argue that they are no more terrible, and perhaps less atrocious, than the incidents of violence endured every day by those Brazilians unfortunate enough to have been born impoverished. In fact, I would like to go so far as to suggest that these incidents, rather than providing examples of the “inhumanity” of gang members, as local media tends to suggest after such events, actually serve both as acts of popular “justice” and as demands for it. That these demands are neither met nor recognized as such only exacerbates an already volatile situation.\footnote{Even Marxist-oriented scholars have tended to deny the importance of understanding crime as anything other than individual acts that are parasitic on the workings of capital. Such a framing of crime, which draws on Marx’s own discussion in The Eighteenth Brumaire (1852), has been critiqued at least since 1975, when P.Q. Hirst noted scholars’ treatment of criminal activities not as “forms of political rebellion against the existing order but as more or less reactionary accommodations to them” (218).}

Referring to the type of gang activity discussed here as “thunderbolts” highlights several salient features of the actions. First, in Robespierre’s formulation, as in various mythological traditions, thunderbolts are “thrown”—they are sudden, targeted, and fleeting. Further, thunderbolts are an apt metaphor as they are heard not only, or even primarily, by those at whom they are narrowly targeted, but also by many others in the surrounding areas: the louder, or more audacious, the thunderbolt, the greater the number of “non-targets” aware of its occurrence. Finally, just as real thunderbolts are accompanied by an instant of light, so, too, do the metaphorical thunderbolts of the disenfranchised momentarily illuminate the quotidian injustices faced by the urban poor. That these targeted moments of clarity shed light on the precarious situations in which the urban poor live is, in the present analysis, their most important characteristic.

By addressing gang-perpetrated acts of violence alongside police-perpetrated acts of violence, I seek to highlight not simply the similarities in tactics, although, as I
demonstrate, these are considerable. More importantly, I draw attention to the startling
dissimilarity in popular understandings of these forms of violence. Ultimately, I suggest
that gang members’ demands for justice fail—and fail to be recognized as such
demands—because the structural violence that maintains a grossly unequal division of
wealth in Brazil also undermines the possibility of the middle and upper classes
identifying with the urban poor or, indeed, even recognizing their humanity.

Although I seek to problematize the assumptions that justice and violence are
readily separable and that gang violence in Rio de Janeiro is senseless, it is worth noting
that violence need not always be explained, though there certainly exists a tendency
toward explication in social scientific writing on violence. Indeed, as Carolyn Nordstrom
points out in a thoroughly sensible critique of anthropological theorizations of violence:
“A common approach in the ethnography of violence is to identify the reason—if not the
reasonableness—in violence and struggle” (1992:260). Nordstrom’s point is a significant
one; it is, after all, but a short step from explanation to justification. It becomes, then,
mandatory to point out that in interrogating violent acts, and their popular interpretations,
I do not assert that they are “reasonable” or even unavoidable. Instead, they are acts of
desperation, perpetrated by those with no access to formal channels of grievance
resolution, in the case of gangsters; in the case of police officers, they are violent
enactments of a violent status quo. Attempting to understand the context of these acts
and their meanings should not be construed as condoning them, though it runs the risk of
being interpreted as such. On the other hand, to dismiss gang acts of violence as without
“reason” or as “unreasonable” commits a different kind of violence—a violence no less
insidious for being bloodless—that of denying gang members’ full humanity. That their
humanity is consistently denied by state agents and in public discourse is, in fact, part of
the problem.

In order to demonstrate how violent gang actions against the Brazilian public
might be understood as “thunderbolts” of the oppressed, it is necessary to contextualize
these actions in terms of other types of “justice” carried out in Brazil. As such, in the
remainder of this chapter I first discuss gang violence in the context of other examples of
vigilante justice in Brazil.155 Next, I briefly examine the history of violent policing in
Brazil and then focus on contemporary police practice. I then demonstrate how public
identification with police violence, and the lack thereof with the urban poor, contributes
to the need for public enactments of violence. Finally, I place gang and police violence
into dialogue and suggest how both the similarities in practice, as well as the
dissimilarities in reception, of these acts calls into question any attempt to separate
“crime,” “justice,” and “violence” into discrete categories of analysis.

Gang violence and (un)popular justice

In arguing that gang-perpetrated violent acts in the city beyond the favela
constitute acts of and demands for popular justice, it is important to address the long
history in Brazil of a parallel system of justice, a system that operates outside the courts
and the state bureaucracies, but on the basis of a logic similar to that of the gang
members. This system has operated most notably, though not exclusively, in rural,

155 In describing different types of non-legal violent actions as either “vigilante” or as “extralegal,” I follow
Abrahams’ (1998) understanding of these categories. “Vigilantes” commit violent acts of justice because
of their frustrations with official state apparatus and its (in)ability to handle “crime”/guarantee “justice.”
“Extralegal” violence is not typically committed by those frustrated with the system; on the contrary,
extralegal violence may be committed by agents of the system, such as police officers. The key defining
feature of “extralegal” violence is not motivation, then, but rather its lack of legality. To put it more
bluntly, these actions are, at least technically, “criminal.”
farming regions, where landowners have employed a host of strategies to insure a docile and compliant workforce. These strategies include the use of threats, the control of wages, and even the use of assassination of “rabble-rousing” figures, carried out by the revealingly named “justiceiros,” or “justice-makers.”

César Barreira, in discussing “the enormous social demand for parallel justice” (“a enorme demanda social por uma justiça paralela”) in Brazil, makes clear that justiceiros very much view themselves as carrying out acts of justice, as opposed to perpetrating crimes, even when their actions are both violent and outside the law (2008:21). Further, he demonstrates that these men do not consider themselves to be paid assassins or murderers, despite being remunerated for their work; instead, they claim to commit “socially justifiable actions” (or “ações socialmente justificáveis”) that require little, if any, defense (2008:22; see also Barreira 1998). It is similarly unlikely that gang members view themselves, in the act of defending or promoting their own, primarily economic, interests, as murderers, either. Instead, their actions, while outside the law, are not unlike those of the vigilante “justiceiros,” though, of course, their targets differ considerably. In fact, there is a way in which gang members may see themselves as modern day versions of Robin Hood—committing justifiable crimes against elites and helping the poor.

Such a formulation of gang members enacting and demanding justice does not, however, require that gang members think of themselves as protestors or “Robin

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156 My choice of the masculine plural “men” here is both deliberate and accurate. I have never read nor heard any account of a female justiceiro, nor have I heard of women committing or participating in either the gang or the police actions I address here.

157 That gang members may be viewed, by themselves and others, as a sort of modern, romanticized outlaw analogous to Robin Hood is discussed in the chapter on “favelas” in Brazilian history and in the popular imaginary.
Hoods.” On the contrary, their beliefs about themselves are relatively unimportant for thinking about the relationship among crime, violence, and justice and for interpreting their actions as “thunderbolts” of the disenfranchised. Indeed, as Eric Hobsbawm argues, with respect to bandits in peasant societies:

“[a]s individuals they are not so much political or social rebels, let alone revolutionaries, as peasants who refuse to submit, and in doing so stand out from their fellows, or even more simply men who find themselves excluded from the usual career of their kind and therefore forced into outlawry and ‘crime.’ En masse they are little more than symptoms of crisis and tension in their society…Banditry itself is therefore not a programme for peasant society, but a form of self-help to escape it” (1969:19).

Further, he describes the ambiguous position of the “not-so-poor” / “poor” bandits—figures whose “criminality” and accumulation of wealth set them apart from the law-abiding poor, but whose birth and position outside the law set them apart from elites:

“[the bandit] is an outsider and rebel, a poor man who refuses to accept the normal rules of poverty…This draws him close to the poor: he is one of them. It sets him in opposition to the hierarchy of power, wealth and influence: he is not one of them…At the same time the bandit is, inevitably, drawn into the web of wealth and power, because, unlike other peasants, he acquires wealth and exerts power. He is ‘one of us’ who is constantly in the process of becoming associated with ‘them’” (op. cit.:76).

Although gang members exert power, they cannot, following Robespierre’s forceful articulation, punish politicians and elites in the usual way: by voting against them, or protesting against them; this would, in effect, jeopardize the members—as, even if they were successful in removing one or two politicians from office, the structure would remain intact. By turning arms against “the public”—that nameless, faceless repository of proper civic behavior, the gang members are calling the entire structure of

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158 It is worth noting that the Portuguese word for “gangster” is the same as the word for “bandit”: bandido.
oppression—a structure that guarantees “the public” safety—into question. After all, in a country with no safety net for the poor, for the homeless, for the unemployed, is it not reasonable to suggest that drug gang members take up arms against their oppressors, as Robespierre suggests, “for their salvation” (2007 [1792]:59)? And if, then, their actions call into question the righteousness of state policies and actions that systematically disenfranchise and abject the poor, are not those actions justifiable or even just?

By revealing the tenuous periods of “peace” in Rio’s non-favela neighborhoods to be little more than a show produced for the consumption of “the public,” by bringing the violence that shapes and permeates their daily lives into the daily lives of those who would rather ignore it, gang members attempt to force “the public” to grapple with the state of things, even while attempting to force the state and its agents to retreat. In Barreira’s words, “These daring, super-organized, and powerful actions have as their end openly defying the State and its monopoly on the use of violence” (“Estas ações ousadas, super-organizadas e poderosas, têm como meta desafiar abertamente o Estado e seu monopólio do uso da violência”) (2008:239). Defying the state and challenging its monopoly on the use of violence is not merely retaliatory, though it does at times fulfill a retaliatory function; rather, such a challenge demands that gang members, and other “favelados,” who are always already suspected of gang affiliation and criminal sympathies, be held in the same esteem as representatives of the state: as fully human agents who can and do make justice. Further, these “daring” and aggressive actions disrupt and refuse state efforts to render, through its own use of violence, the urban poor both acquiescent and submissive (see Nordstrom 2004:61).
While R. Ben Penglase, in examining another case of a drug gang members leaving their home favela to “paralyze” the city, is right to point to the utility of “instigating alternating states of order and disorder” (2005:3) as a central tactic utilized by gangs to consolidate power, he misses the opportunity to place police and gang violence into dialogue. Instead, his analysis, though compelling, reduces the “strategic-ness” of gang violence outside the favelas to an attempt to gain or maintain power within the gang, over rival gangs, or over state agents. That these actions are carried out against the public—and not against state agents or other gang members—seems irrelevant.

Perhaps Penglase overlooks the similarities in police and gang tactics for the very same reason that the public is unlikely to perceive the similarities between them: the police are mythologized as heroes, while the tendency Adam Smith first noted, which has come to be called “compassion fatigue,” has desensitized the public, making it virtually impossible to identify with the poor. After all, they are simply too consistently miserable to worry about.

It is tempting, perhaps, in thinking through violent gang actions such as setting a bus on fire to point to these examples as evidence that gang members are sadistic or driven by their desire to live out some sort of revenge fantasy. While such desires may, indeed, serve as partial motivation for some gang members who commit acts of violence against those who are free to occupy public space, this type of reductive explanation overlooks two crucial characteristics of the actions. First, although there may be a component of sadistic pleasure or of schadenfreude, these acts are not directed at agents of oppression (i.e. agents of the state) and cannot, therefore, be directly retaliatory.
Second, these actions are not random, but rather calculated, instrumental, and communicative.

In considering gang-related violence and crime, it is imperative to note that most gang “crime” does not involve the setting of busses on fire or the vandalizing of storefronts that I discuss here. Instead, gang activities are typically directly related to the acquisition, purification, and sale of drugs (to those able to pay for them) (c.f. Zaluar 2000, 2001). Similarly, when gang members commit violent acts, the targets of their actions tend to be members of rival factions (Campos Coelho 1988; Zaluar 2004). These actions, while not my focus, form the basis for popular portrayals not only of gang life but also of life in favelas and other impoverished communities generally. The resulting narrative of life in favelas emphasizes violence, substance addiction, and an assumed unwillingness to enter the formal economy. Gang-perpetrated acts of (un)popular justic, or their demands for it, then get folded too neatly into a pat narrative of decay, rather being recognized as the unusual and intentional highlighting of the violence of gross inequality.

Police in action, police injustice

Before examining the public’s identification, or lack thereof, with gang and police actions, it is important to include a brief examination of the history of police action(s) in Rio de Janeiro. As will become abundantly clear, what U.S.-Americans and Western Europeans, so frequently concerned with ideas of “human rights,” might term “police brutality” is standard practice in Rio de Janeiro and, indeed, in all of Brazil, and has been for over 200 years, despite the 1988 Constitution’s assurances that “no one shall be
submitted to torture or degrading or inhuman treatment” (Article 5, Section III).\textsuperscript{159} As van Reenan describes the history of policing in Brazil, “policing has meant violence, and primarily violence directed against the masses of poor people” (2004:38; see also Pinheiro 1991:168). By tracing the history of police violence—from the formation of the earliest known death squads in 1809 to the present, I seek to highlight the ways in which “justice” is carried out in Rio and to provide a context in which to interpret not only contemporary police actions, but also the actions of those who do not pretend to carry out justice on behalf of the state.

As early as 1809—14 years before Brazilian independence from Portugal, under the subcommand of Miguel Nunes Vidigal, the Royal Police Guards (Guarda Real da Polícia de Corte) routinely engaged in the practice of killing “marginal” Cariocas (Rose 2005:234).\textsuperscript{160} It is unlikely that the deaths of only a few “marginals” would have come to the attention of the public and, as such, the approximate number of persons killed by police officers in this period is unknown. According to Saima Husain, “the royal guard was predominantly used to oppress and discipline slaves, quell slave uprisings, and protect the small European minority from the poor, black enslaved majority” (2009:49; see also Kant de Lima 1995 and Holloway 1993). The Guarda Real did not maintain rigorous records of its activities and initiatives; however, what is known is that Vigidal’s early example served as a model for the subsequent, and notorious, “Mão Negra,” or “Black Hand,” which continued the practice of exterminating undesirables in the region during the 1880s. In fact, police behavior toward disenfranchised populations in Rio has

\textsuperscript{159} The original text reads “ninguém será submetido a tortura nem a tratamento desumano ou degradante.”

\textsuperscript{160} A compelling reason for keeping “marginals” at a minimum arrived in Rio one year earlier, as the Portuguese Royal Court, fleeing Napoleon, made Rio de Janeiro its new home in 1808.
been so consistent that R.S. Rose asserts that Carioca police “have been de facto death squads since the time of” Vidigal (ibid.).

Despite a history of nearly 150 years of killing those members of society deemed undesirable, the first real police “death squads” in Rio were formed in 1957 with the approval of the federal police chief General Amauri Kruel. Kruel had gained insight into police techniques through his brother, who worked as a torturer/investigator with the Central Police during the 1930s and 1940s. This first “death squad” was called the “Grupo de Diligências Especiais” (GDE) or “Special Diligence Group.” According to Rose, the Special Diligence Group “had the green light to eliminate each and every delinquent circulating in the city. There were to be no questions, no paperwork, and no prisoners taken alive. When it was decided to go after a specific suspect, the individual’s death had already been agreed upon” (2005:233). The group operated largely off the public radar and is believed to have been successful at eliminating “undesirables” for years, until its officers mistakenly shot and killed an innocent favela resident who worked for Globo networks. The resulting media coverage brought the group much unwanted attention, but it did not, ultimately, halt the group’s workings. Instead, it encouraged the GDE to operate more quietly and carefully.

In 1960, only three years after the creation of the Special Diligence Group, Carlos Lacerda was elected governor of Guanabara state (i.e. Rio de Janeiro) and the precarious position of the city’s poor worsened. Bent on “cleaning up” the city, Lacerda was willing to ignore even the most egregious police abuses, effectively giving the police a carte blanche to eliminate the undesirables “dirtying” the Rio de Janeiro landscape. In fact,

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161 In an ironic twist, Rocinha’s “twin” favela, located on the other side of the Dois Irmãos mountains and as prone to police/gang violence as Rocinha, was named after Vidigal.
despite the ludicrously positive description of Lacerda by biographer John W.F. Dulles (1996), Lacerda’s extreme, and quite public, position with respect to the city of Rio’s poorer inhabitants earned him the lasting nickname of “mata-mendigo,” or “beggar killer,” in the press.

If Lacerda’s influence on policing in Rio de Janeiro was deleterious, under the military dictatorship (1964-1985) the problems of police violence became drastically exacerbated. Torture techniques were refined; the police were better trained; and the Military Police (“Policia Militar”) division was created to extend the military’s power. As van Reenen succinctly argues, “The military dictatorship…did not introduce violent policing…[it] reorganized it, professionalized it and merely pushed it to extremes” (2004:38). The increasing professionalization of the police force proved particularly problematic for curbing violent excess on the part of police officers. Rather than diminishing violence actions, Martha K. Huggins demonstrates, in a study of police torturers in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, that professionalization “disembodies violence by eliminating or obscuring human agency and substituting nonhuman organizational imperatives” (2002:147). In other words, the rationality in policing instituted by the military regime displaced culpability for killing and torture from the individual police officer to the logic of the police organizational structure. The urban poor and, in particular, the urban poor of color have been disproportionately disadvantaged by the rationalization of policing. Although professionalization has resulted not in improved police conduct with respect to suspects, but in the more efficient use of violence, some

162 For a compelling discussion of the intimate relationship between rationality and racism, see Nancy Leys Stepan 1990.
scholars continue to argue that “professionalization” of Brazil’s police forces is the most viable means of solving police human rights violations (c.f. Husain 2009).

Although the military directly controlled the police forces in Brazil for just over two decades, the techniques and skills honed under the dictatorship remained intact after the transition back to civilian government.163 Indeed, Jennifer Roth-Gordon, following Bittencourt (2007) and Holston (2008), asserts that the PM “was never demilitarized” (2009:58). Instead, after the end of the dictatorship, police officers continued to make use of the lessons they had learned, particularly as those related to interrogation techniques and to the acceptable use of torture. According to Barreira, “Torture, which under the authoritarian regime was a recurrent practice in the interrogation of political prisoners, came to be a frequent exercise in detentions and in inquiries involving poor, black, and unemployed people” (“A tortura, que no regime autoritário era uma prática recorrente nos interrogatórios dos presos políticos, passou a ser um exercício frequente nas detenções e nos inquéritos envolvendo pessoas pobres, negros e desempregados”) (2008:200; see also Zaluar 2004:141). Further, as Paul Chevigny points out, in Latin America generally, “It is the job of the police to fight the enemy—crime—that is embodied in the person of the criminal” (1999:49).

The criminalization of the “poor, black, and unemployed” decried by Barreira is then doubly problematic, as they are not merely converted into criminals to be brought to justice, but into enemies to be eliminated.164 That those who are “poor, black, and

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163 In all 26 Brazilian states, there are still Military Police and Civilian Police Forces, with the former serving a preventative function and the latter investigating crimes. This separation of functions between the two police forces is enshrined in Article 144 of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988.
164 Léïc Wacquant convincingly argues that the increased criminalization, surveillance, and incarceration of the poor—those who most threaten “order”—is the result of the application of neoliberal economic ideology in “the realm of justice” (2009:1). For further discussion on the criminalization of young, poor, black males in Brazil, see Goldstein 2003 and Schepers-Hughes 2006.
unemployed” are disproportionately residents of favelas is not coincidental; indeed, as Rossana Reguillo argues, in a beautifully written article on the social construction of fear in Latin America, “Discourses on urban violence” convert “[u]rban crime…into crimes that come from poor neighborhoods” (2002:200). As such, police are as likely to target poor neighborhoods for their “just” actions as they are to target particular individuals.165

It is worth noting that just as vigilantes in rural areas of Brazil often conceive of their actions as enactments of “justice”—as the moniker “justiceiros” reveals—so, too, may police officers engaged in extralegal violence. In fact, “justiceiros” has been used interchangeably with “grupos de exterminio” (“extermination groups”) for decades to name the death squads that operate in Rio de Janeiro (c.f. Americas Watch 1993). That “extermination group” could be used synonymously with “justice-maker” is telling not only of public opinion when it comes to killing suspected criminals, but also, and more importantly, of the confused, overlapping categories of justice, violence, and crime in Brazil.166 Despite the prevalence of “extermination” terminology to refer to the elimination of elements of the population deemed “undesirable,” some scholars of violence in Brazil still find the term inaccurate. For example, Alba Zaluar, a long-time commentator on gang- and drug-related violence in Rio, argues that “Corrupt policemen [sic] form what one could call ‘extortion groups,’ a name more appropriate than ‘extermination groups,’ for policemen who kill young traffickers are demanding their

165 That poor people are those most considered “out of order” in not coincidental; nor is it surprising that both state and popular discourses on favelas highlight their “disordered” and “disorganized” nature. See chapter four for further discussion of favelas in popular discourse and chapter six for discussion of favelas in state-sponsored programs.
166 Although I am limiting my discussion here to police killing of suspected criminals/the urban poor, extralegal killings of suspects do not stop once the suspects are in custody, nor are convicted criminals exempt from lethal violence on the part of police, as the 1992 massacre of 111 unarmed inmates at the São Paulo House of Detentions demonstrates all too well. Although police officers involved in this incident claimed, as usual, that they were in mortal danger from the inmates, not a single officer sustained an injury.
share of the traffic money” (2004:143). It is worth pointing out that Zaluar, not unlike other scholars of violence in Brazil, refers to the young men killed by police only as “traffickers,” which effectively reduces them to flat, one-dimensional caricatures of humanity and presupposes that victims of police violence are criminals. Such a strategy is also frequently employed in newspaper articles that discuss only “bandidos” (“gangsters”) or, more callously, “bandidos mortos” (“dead gangsters”). This is precisely one of the linguistic strategies used to create fear of poor neighborhoods as the loci of urban crime (see Reguillo 2002).

Such a history of violent excess, of “extermination,” rather than embarrassing contemporary police officers, shapes their views of what good policing ought to be, as Colonel Marcos Jordim, the highest-ranking Military Police [PM] officer in Rio de Janeiro since 2008, makes clear. After a BOPE operation in the Vila Cruzeiro slum resulted in nine deaths of “suspects,” Jordim proudly and publicly declared, “The PM is the best social insecticide” (“O PM é o melhor insecticidio social”) and that “there are no mosquitoes left standing” in Vila Cruzeiro (Toledo 2008; “não fica nenhúm mosquito em pé”). Jordim was neither relieved of his duties nor censured by the PM for his statement, leading to the conclusion that the PM do, in fact, view Rio’s poorest inhabitants as “insects” or “mosquitos” to be “exterminated.” Indeed, State Security Secretary José Mariano Beltrame, when forced to comment on the incident, summarized it only with a dismissive, “What happened happened” (ibid.; “O que aconteceu aconteceu”).

This type of action and this type of rhetorical justification are characteristic of what Daniel Linger has called “wild power” (2003). Drawing heavily on Antonio
Gramsci (1971), Linger describes wild power as “a form of coercion that is unregulated, unofficial, unpredictable, potentially annihilating, and therefore terrifying…the interactional spaces in which wild power operates…lack legal or bureaucratic regulation, leaving victims defenseless against the machinations and caprices of their persecutors” (2003:100). Although police officers are, of course, “official” agents of the state, their extralegal killings often take place out of uniform, as paid members of a death squad. Notably, death squad activity in Brazil, unlike in most of Latin America, is seldom undertaken for political gain; instead, death squad activities are largely carried out for remuneration (van Reenan 2004:42). As such, police death squad activity, much like official police activity, is primarily targeted at “cleaning up” undesirables (e.g. the poor, the homeless) and not at eliminating political rivals or activists.

A few statistics will serve to make clear just how often the police in Brazil, and in Rio de Janeiro State, in particular, kill their suspects. In 2008, 26 police officers were killed in the line of duty in Rio de Janeiro State, 22 in São Paulo State, and 41 in the United States (Human Rights Watch 2009). In comparison, during 2008, police in Rio de Janeiro State killed 1,137 “suspects,” while police in São Paulo State killed 397 and police in the entire United States killed 371 (ibid.). As Figure 9.1 makes clear, on-duty police officers in Rio de Janeiro kill their suspects at a rate nearly two and a half times

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167 Because police forces are run by states, rather than by cities, all discussion of statistics of police killings refers to Rio de Janeiro State and to São Paulo State. However, in the State of Rio de Janeiro, all of the most violent Áreas de Segurança Pública (Public Security Areas), the units into which the state is divided for policing purposes, are located in metropolitan Rio de Janeiro (Human Rights Watch 2009:37).

168 At the time of this writing, 2008 is the last year for which reliable figures are available; given that 2008 was also the last year of my field research in Rio de Janeiro, it is also the most appropriate year for comparative purposes.
higher than those in São Paulo and at nearly five times the rate of police officers in the United States.\textsuperscript{169}

Figure 9.1: Police Killings/Police Fatality Suffered (2008)*

![Bar graph showing police killings in different jurisdictions.]


While these figures are astonishing, perhaps more revealing is the number of arrests made by police officers for every “suspect” shot and killed. In Rio de Janeiro State, there were 26,151 arrests in 2008, while São Paulo State counted 136,068 arrests and the United States had 14,005,621 arrests (ibid.). A comparison of arrest/kill ratios in each of these jurisdictions makes clear that police officers in Rio de Janeiro State are far likelier to kill their suspects than in either São Paulo State or the United States. In fact, the arrest/kill ratio in São Paulo is over 100 times lower than that of the United States, while that of Rio de Janeiro is over 1,600 times lower. When Rio de Janeiro is compared to São Paulo, the arrest/kill ratio is just over 15 times lower (see Figure 9.2).

\textsuperscript{169} The figures discussed here do not include killings by off-duty police officers or by police death squads. Although the United States is used here for comparative purposes, a comparison with other nations, including South Africa, yields similar results. Police in São Paulo, who are far less lethal than those in Rio de Janeiro, kill more people/year than the police of all European countries combined (Barreira 2008:240).
Figure 9.2: Arrests per Police Killings (2008)*

One possible explanation for the extreme variance in police killings would be that São Paulo State, as a whole, is considerably more violent than the United States and that Rio de Janeiro State is, in turn, considerably more violent than São Paulo State. Higher levels of criminal violence would, after all, be likely to be met with higher levels of police lethality. However, it is possible to control for varying levels of general violence by comparing the number of police killings in each of these states to the number of homicides in each state. It is worth noting that the number of homicides in each locale is likelier to give a good indication of general levels of violence than the number other violent crimes, such as rape, armed robbery, and/or assault, for several reasons. First, as demonstrated by a plethora of academic and activist writing on the topic, rape, for a variety of reasons, often goes unreported. As such, any figures for rape would dramatically understate levels violence. Second, violent crimes such as armed robbery and/or assault may also go unreported, particularly in Rio de Janeiro and generally in
Brazil; when the assailant is unknown, there is little hope that reporting such a crime will result in the recovery of stolen goods, as both my own experience of being robbed at gunpoint and my informants’ anecdotal accounts attest. When the assailant is known, there may be compelling reasons for not reporting these sorts of violent incidents. In fact, Holston and Caldeira (1998) suggest that almost 75% of crime victims in Brazil do not avail themselves of the criminal justice system.\footnote{Caldeira (2000) also demonstrates that confidence in the state’s ability to deal with crime is extremely low.} Third, because I am comparing levels of general violence with instances of lethal violence on the part of the police, homicide is most clearly analogous. Homicide, then, is the logical choice of violent crime for comparison purposes.

As is evident in Figure 9.3, when police killings are compared to the number of homicides in each jurisdiction, in Rio de Janeiro State the ratio is over twice as high as in São Paulo and over seven and a half times higher than in the United States (see Figure 9.3). Such a ratio indicates that the exaggerated levels of police lethality in Rio de Janeiro State cannot be satisfactorily explained simply by pointing to higher rates of violent crime, though there is a higher rate of homicide in Rio de Janeiro State than in São Paulo State and a higher rate of homicide in São Paulo State than in the United States, as Figure 9.4 illustrates. In fact, the homicide rate in Rio de Janeiro State is over 3 times higher than that of São Paulo state and over 9.5 times higher than that of the United States, suggesting at least a partial solution to the question of differential violence.\footnote{Among certain sectors of the population and in certain metropolitan areas, such as Rio de Janeiro, the rate is much higher. For instance, Ramos (2005) demonstrates that among 15-24-year-olds in urban Rio de Janeiro, the rate is 200 homicides/100,000 inhabitants. This is over 4 times higher than the rate for Rio de Janeiro State. Similarly, Cano, Borges, and Ribeiro (2005) suggest that the rate for black males between 20-24 years of age is 218.5/100,000 inhabitants, which is the highest rate for any segment of the population they identified.}
Perhaps the question of police violence and, more specifically, of police lethality, is ultimately a foolish one. After all, as David Graeber has succinctly characterized police, they “are, essentially, bureaucrats with weapons…whose job is to operate precisely where the bureaucratic structures for ordering information encounter, and appeal to, genuine physical violence” (2006). That these violent operations are carried out largely on the bodies of the urban poor is, perhaps, also unsurprising. After all, the nonworking poor have long been criminalized under capitalist regimes as a means of
guaranteeing an available, and compliant, workforce (see Batista 1990 for an elegant statement of capitalism’s criminalization of the poor). In Brazil, this process of criminalizing the urban poor—those who lived “outside of the labor market imposed and created by capitalism” (“fora do mercado de trabalho imposto e criado pelo capitalismo”; Coimbra 2001:80), and the subsequent emergence of the myth of the “dangerous classes,” was completed during the first half of the 19th century (Guimarães 1982). These “dangerous classes” are, more often than not, residents of favelas and it is against favelas that police violence is primarily targeted; as João Costa Vargas succinctly characterizes it, “The repressive presence of the police in the favelas is as enduring as the favelas themselves” (2003:19).

Similarly, Carolyn Nordstrom, whose work plumbs not simply physical and psychological violence, but what she terms the “existential” realm of violence, contends that “Violence is employed to create political acquiescence; it is intended to create terror, and thus political inertia; it is intended to create hierarchies of domination and submission based on the control of force” (2004:61). In the case of Brazil, the elite minority has long feared the dominated, impoverished majority and compliance with elite rule has been extracted through threats and violent coercion (c.f. Skidmore 1999). Until 1888 this coercion was enacted on the body of the slave; since then, it has been enacted on the bodies of the urban poor and especially the urban poor of color. In both cases the victims are not just those physically wounded or killed, but all of those of the same status.

172 In addition to his writings on justice, violence, and human rights, Batista was State Secretary of Police and Justice and Vice-Governor of Rio de Janeiro State from 1990-1994 and Governor from 1994-1995. Many considered his pro-poor, pro-human rights, and anti-death squad policies radical, and Chevigny, writing for Americas Watch, characterized his policies as placing Rio “at the opposite extreme” of São Paulo, where tolerance of police violence remained en vogue (1993:17).
who are meant to learn through example to stay in their place. In both cases the victimizers are believed to act justly and in the public interest.

**Public Identification**

Although the state’s authorization, both implicit and explicit, of police brutality and assassination is partly responsible for the use of extreme violence to elicit compliance from the urban poor, such actions are also made possible through public indifference. I do not wish to suggest here that the Brazilian public is indifferent to all acts of police violence and brutality; on the contrary, the excesses of the military dictatorship (1964-1982) were met, when possible, with public ire. Rather, the public is indifferent at best when the targets of police brutality and violence are not leftist academics or middle-class college students, but rather the urban poor (c.f. Huggins and Mesquita 1996, 2000). As Ray Abrahams describes the attitudes of “respectable” citizens toward police killings, either official or extralegal, of poor, black, young men, “Their attitudes often range between acquiescence in and positive support for the killings, which are seen as necessary if decent society is to be protected” (1998:132). He further asserts that these same citizens are often willing to lie about what transpired if and when they witness a police killing, in order to “foster the claims that the young people in question are often victims of each other’s violence” (ibid.). In other words, both passive acquiescence and active support of police killings are strategies associated with “respectable” citizens.

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173 It is worth pointing out that Abrahams calls these killings “youth murders” and even entitles the section of his book that deals with Brazilian police death squad violence “Youth Murders in Brazil,” despite his own admission that the violence is not targeted at “youth” generally, but at poor, black, male youth.
The failure of the Brazilian public to identify with the poor is neither new nor surprising. On the one hand, as Cecilia Coimbra demonstrates, popular media in Brazil, from newspapers to television news reports to popular programming such as novelas, have for decades treated poverty and crime as intimately linked; today media continue to “unite poverty and criminality indissolubly and naturally” (“unem indissolúvel e naturalmente pobreza e criminalidade”) (2001:75). On the other hand, directly associating the poor with criminality is largely unnecessary for preventing middle- and upper class Brazilians from identifying with them. Indeed, as Adam Smith pointed out over 250 years ago in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*,

“This disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition, though necessary both to establish and to maintain the distinction of ranks and the order of society, is, at the same time, the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments” (2002 [1759]:72).

Smith further clarified his position by explaining under what circumstances we may expect to identify with those who suffer: “Before we can adopt the resentment of the sufferer, we must disapprove of the motives of the agent, and feel that our heart renounces all sympathy with the affections which influenced his conduct” (*op. cit.*:86).

Whether those “agents” of suffering are heavily armed police officers keeping Rio “safe” or politicians protecting the urban middle class, the Brazilian public is unlikely, at best, to disapprove of their motives. As Husain puts it, “Police violence remains cloaked in impunity because it is largely directed against the ‘dangerous’ classes and rarely affects the lives of the privileged” (2009:51).

In other words, the public is first disinclined to sympathize with the plight of the urban poor precisely because they are poor and, as such, unworthy of respect; second,
because the public does not disapprove of the motives of the police, or the “agents” of the poor’s suffering in Smith’s formulation, they are further disinclined to be concerned about police actions—even when those actions might, on first blush, appear suspect. Police motives, then, whether maintaining public security, combating actual or potential crimes, or punishing actual or suspected culprits, make it even less likely that the public will be troubled by the most egregious police actions precisely because the public agrees with the motivations behind them. To put it differently, motives trump methods, rendering the latter beyond reproach, carried out, as they are, for the public good.

Smith’s conception, in addition to helping make sense of public indifference to police excesses is also useful for reinterpreting gang violence as a form—even if a flawed one—of justice. In fact, in Smith’s understanding, injury is, quite simply the violation of justice. Every injury—physical, economic, social—suffered by the urban poor is a violation of justice; doing violence to punish those who have, or are perceived to have, caused an injury (or violation of justice) can then be an act of justice itself. It may be objected that the citizens who suffer directly from gang actions in Rio have not directly caused injury to gang member or other members of the urban poor. However, if the public has caused injury to the urban poor by its consistent failure to empathize with their plight (and, as such, its failure to intervene), then the violent acting out of the poor against the public may be considered an act of justice, a chance to redress a grievance, or, at the very least, a demand for consideration. That this consideration consistently fails to materialize only makes the next demand all the more salient.
Gang and Police Violence

In comparing gang members’ and police officers’ violent acts, several similar features are worth examining closely. First, and most important, both gang and police actions—regardless of their public reckoning as criminal and/or just—are fundamentally biopolitical, centered as they are around the exercise of power over life. As Nordstrom makes clear, “Violence is set in motion with physical carnage, but it doesn’t stop there. Violence reconfigures its victims and the social milieu that hosts them” (2004:59; see also Daniel 1996; Nelson 1999). The repetitiveness of police violence against the urban poor in Rio—a legacy over 200 years in length—has contributed to a social context in which agents of the state not only have the right to eliminate undesirables in actions both punitive and preventative, but also are considered right in choosing to do so. The result is an atmosphere in which violence, described by Nordstrom in the context of war as “feel[ing] like existential crisis” (ibid.), becomes utterly mundane. Violence against the poor, and against their communities, is so commonplace that Tiago, a 34-year-old male who self-identified as “negro,” barely paused in his analysis of tourism in Rocinha when gunfire broke out between police and the local gang. Only after I prompted him did he comment on the shooting: “É assim mesmo” (“That’s just how it is”).

In the case of police-perpetrated acts of violence, the actions are justified—if not made “just”—by their exercise against the bodies of the urban poor—an always already suspect group. Indeed, the criminalization of the urban poor renders the violent enacting of state power on the bodies of suspected criminals not only justifiable, but also supremely rational. Such rationalization of this type of violence is by no means

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174 That state violence against the urban poor—and, in particular, against dark-skinned, young males—might be considered rational should be unsurprising. After all, as Christian Delacampagne reminds us,
difficult or unique. As Cynthia Willett suggests, “Oppression can be rationalized by those who have power as discipline and punishment” (1995:151). According to this logic, police punishment of the always-already criminalized urban poor is both rational and just. In the case of gang-perpetrated acts of violence, the actions are justified—if not made “just”—as judgments of an oppressed people against those who implicitly authorize their oppression or, as importantly, as a form of vigilantism carried out against wrongdoers. As Frantz Fanon has argued, the oppressed are justified in killing their oppressors (1963).

Second, the actions of both groups are not unmediated, in Agamben’s sense of the word (c.f. Agamben 2000). Indeed, the very lack of official repercussions for the sorts of violence discussed here demonstrates that such actions are, at the least, expected and even routine; as such, everyday rules for social interaction apply, even as they are ignored (op. cit.:40). In other words, police violence is not carried out in spite of state and federal laws guaranteeing equal treatment or due process. Rather, violence is precisely the process due a criminalized population; equality, as it turns out, is for equals. By the same token, gang violence against the public is not carried out in spite of public beliefs about the urban poor. Instead, such actions are interpreted as proof that gang members—and by way of extension the urban poor as a whole—are violent, criminal, and out of control.

Ultimately, both police violence against suspected gang members and suspected gang members’ violence against the Brazilian (or Carioca, in the case of Rio) public demonstrate a callous disregard for human life, resulting as they do in a body count of intentional victims and collateral damage. The victims in both instances have neither

“racist discourse…progressed hand in hand with the very foundations of Western rationalism” (1990:83; see also Stepan 1990).
been charged with nor convicted of any crime; similarly, no legal redress is available to those actual or would-be victims who survive.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ That the vast majority of police victims is, at best, “suspect” is clear in newspaper reporting on police actions in favelas. For example, a typical article published in O Globo about a police invasion of Rocinha assures the reader that “a polícia vai investigar se os baleados teriam envolvimento com o tráfico” (“the police are going to investigate whether or not those shot were involved in the drug traffic”) (Martins and Dutra 2008). In other words, when it comes to the urban poor, police policy is first to kill the suspects and to investigate their possible crimes afterwards or, as Paulo Sergio Pinheiro sums it up, “Shoot first and ask questions later” (1999:5).
CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have tried to contextualize the practice of poverty tourism in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro in terms of larger-scale processes of spatial segregation, linguistic subordination, and violence, both physical and narrative. Drawing on detailed analysis and description of individual tours, on an historical discussion of poverty in Rio, and on an examination of spatial management programs, I have argued that the rise of poverty tourism is neither accidental nor irrelevant. On the contrary, the relegation of the urban poor to the status of tourist attraction is part and parcel of a variety of projects, including racially-inflected, externally-imposed (and locally-embraced), neoliberal strategies of capital accumulation and spatial management, rhetorically and physically violent racism, and a linguistically-enacted politics of hierarchical othering. Further, although poverty tourism may appear, on the surface, to be inconsequential and faddish, I have attempted to demonstrate that it is neither; rather, it constitutes an ideal lens through which to consider the logical consequences of free-market capitalist excess. Here, after all, the urban poor are not merely the “losers” in the struggle to accumulate, but they—their homes, neighborhoods, and bodies—are converted into a saleable commodity for the consumption of global “winners.”

Although I have been highly, and I believe rightly, critical of the practice of poverty tourism, it is important to reiterate three key points, before turning to a review of the parts and chapters that comprise this dissertation, and finally, to a summary analysis of the conditions of possibility for such a practice. First, the tourists who undertake poverty tours do not do so because they are “bad” people, nor do they necessarily do so
because they consciously seek to make their own lives appear more satisfying by way of comparison with Rocinha, even if this is regularly listed as an inadvertent side-effect of participating in a tour. Rather, many tourists appear to be caught up in an attempt to move beyond merely “enjoying” their vacations and, instead, to use them as an opportunity to “learn” something, however superficial that learning might be. Tourists also highlight a desire to engage with an authentic or “real” Brazil, behind what they perceive to be the façade of luxury accommodations, trendy shopping centers, and chic restaurants and bars. Such a desire to engage with a “real” Brazil—and to learn something from it—is interesting not simply because it raises questions of authenticity and its construction, but also because it challenges common assumptions, both popular and academic, about the nature of vacations and tourism: they are not, at least for these tourists, just about “fun.”

Second, although members of the Rocinha Tur organization sought to intervene in the practice of tourism in Rocinha in order to harness economic benefits for their community and to exert some measure of control over how their community is represented, they did not oppose any and all tourism in their community. Their objections to poverty tourism were rooted in how it is being practiced in the community and, specifically, in their lack of say in creating tour guides’ scripts and in the lack of financial, or other, benefits for the community and its residents. That Rocinha had much to offer tourists was unquestionable for members of RT, as well as for many other residents with whom I came into contact. Indeed, most of the members of Rocinha Tur, like many other Cariocas, held the opinion that Rio de Janeiro, as a whole, was full of noteworthy sites and worthwhile attractions; what might need to be explained, in this
conception, is not why particular neighborhoods are appealing, but rather why particular neighborhoods are not. Rocinha, in such thinking, is much like Ipanema, the city center, Copacabana, and Santa Teresa: one of many interesting sites to be visited by tourists, both foreign and local. As such, the local opposition to poverty tourism that I addressed here revolves around how the tours are conducted—and not around the fact that they are offered in the first place.

Third, the experiences of my friends and collaborators involved with Rocinha Tur at the Ministry of Tourism, TurisRio, point to the challenges of appealing to state agents to improve the lives of the urban poor. However, not every TurisRio employee with whom I came into contact fully agreed with Ministry policies, and not every employee believed him/herself to be superior to my friends, despite the politics of translation that played out in TurisRio’s headquarters. Instead, employees sometimes claimed to feel, at least partially, constrained by the bureaucracy in which they worked; for example, one TurisRio official told me, after a particularly frustrating meeting in March 2008, that he was politically-aligned with the Rocinha Tur project, but that there was nothing he could do to bring their plans and desires to fruition.176

Review of Parts and Chapters

In the first part of this project, which consists of three chapters, I contextualized both Rocinha and my research. First, in the introduction, I described my initial, and quite pleasant, encounters with the community, as well as discussing my first engagement with poverty tourism. Next, in Chapter Two, I reviewed the literature that has been most

176 As “evidence” of his support for Rocinha Tur’s “politics,” he told me that he had voted for Lula. Apparently, for this official, voting for a PT candidate from a working class background is sufficient to demonstrate some degree of solidarity with people from Rocinha.
salient for guiding my thinking about Rocinha, poverty tourism, and urban space, and, finally, in Chapter Three, I explained and provided an overview of my principal research methods, both within Rocinha and outside it.

In the second part, Spaces and Languages of Poverty, I sought to establish a dialogue between spaces of poverty—understood in terms of both the physical and the symbolic landscape of Rio de Janeiro—and the languages of poverty in urban Brazil. The intimate connection between space and language was addressed in a discussion of the history of favelas and favela interventions in Rio, in Chapter Four: Favelas in the Rio de Janeiro Landscape and Popular Imaginary and in Chapter Six: Of Slums and Neighborhoods: from Favela-Bairro to Erecting Walls, respectively. As these chapters indicate, language and, in particular, the linguistic construction of oppositional binaries have shaped Rio’s physical landscape in dramatic fashion. In Chapter Four, the proliferation of favelas is placed in historical context, as are governmental and popular responses to this proliferation. In Chapter Six, I discuss the most recent favela-intervention strategies undertaken by the federal, state, and local governments, and I analyze how these have shaped the character of urban space in Rio.

In Chapter Five: Urban Poverty as a Tourist Attraction: Packaging Poverty, I provided examples of how touristic narratives of Rocinha’s social history and physical layout provide critical, rhetoric distance between the Carioca middle class and the urban poor—despite the geographical proximity of the spaces they inhabit and the economic proximity of more affluent residents of Rocinha and struggling members of the middle class. Chapter Seven: Poor People’s Portuguese: Surveying Speech and Space in Rocinha examines the themes of linguistic and spatial distancing with reference to several
important ethnographic examples. As I discuss, the politics of translation operates at the levels of both space and language and serves to shore up difference, even as it attempts to naturalize it. Further, I show how notions of translation are employed not only by elites and agents of the state but also by residents of Rocinha.

In the final section, Violence and Poverty, I addressed the question of violence in the context of Rocinha. The violence of poverty is both narrative and physical, as the two chapters in this section make clear. In Chapter Eight: Stories of Violence and the Violence of Stories, I examined several types of stories of violence, including, most notably, the narratives circulated throughout Rocinha after the inadvertent shooting of a young girl during a police invasion in the community. I argued that stories of violence in Rocinha, wherever they are circulated, become stories of violence of Rocinha; I further suggested, in contrast to much work on narratives of violence, that stories of violence do not necessarily serve to relieve the suffering of the storytellers. On the contrary, they may not even be intended by their tellers to serve such a function.

In Chapter Nine: Thunderbolts of the Disenfranchised: Rethinking Crime and Justice in Rio de Janeiro, I turned from narrative/violence to physical violence, and I brought two types of extralegal violence into dialogue. As I attempted to show, both police actions against the urban poor and drug gang actions against the Carioca public operate according to a particular logic. In the case of the former, in a place where the urban poor are criminalized and treated as expendable and where violence against poor, black, male youth is carried out with impunity, it is unsurprising that police act violently toward favelas and their residents. In the case of drug gang members, I have argued that their violent actions against the public must be understood both as part of a long history
in Brazil of violent demands for, and acts of, justice, rather than merely as shows of power or as gang members being out of control, and as instances during which the quotidian violence experienced by Rio’s urban poor is brought into the lives of those who implicitly authorize it.

Poverty Tourism: Conditions of Possibility

Although I have shown that the state is not really absent from Rocinha, or other favelas, it has, in a very real sense, *absented* itself, at least in its less repressive incarnations. By forcing poor Brazilians to meet most of their own needs on their own, by carrying out projects meant to reorder the “disorder” perceived in favelas and whose underlying logic reaffirms a racialized spatial segregation between rich and poor, by offering up the bodies of the poor as targets for its own, most repressive apparatus, the Brazilian state has created the conditions of possibility both for drug gang violence in favelas and, more recently, for favela tourism. I do not wish to suggest that Brazilian politicians and lawmakers generally set out to create such conditions; rather, their stalwart adherence to and implementation of neoliberal capitalist economics could be expected to do nothing else. Indeed, poverty tourism and the commoditization of impoverished enclaves that it entails constitute a perfect example of capitalist excess.

Even before the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s, though, the state did little to improve the lives of the poor—urban or rural, which should also be unsurprising. After all, as Lenin reminds us, “The state is an organ of class *rule*, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another; it creates ‘order,’ which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the collision between the classes”
In the case of Brazil, the “order and progress” promised by the Brazilian flag require first that favelas be “ordered” in accordance with a middle-class logic that facilitates surveillance and, more importantly, violent policing, and second that those who best embody the failure of progress, the poor, unemployed, youth of color, be excised from the body politic. Those who remain stuck in communities characterized less by “progress” than by the lack thereof can then be exploited by the same middle-class Brazilians the state represents. In this case, that exploitation takes the form of tourism, and thus many forces want them to remain “disorganized.”

Indeed, while recently examined forms of ethnic tourism depend, in part, on initial capital investments, poverty tourism not only fails to generate such investments in Rocinha, along with the potential (limited) local-level benefits they might entail, but it also generates profit precisely on this basis. In other words, the lack of investments in community improvements enhances, rather than detracts from, the appeal and saleability of the experience of poverty; as one tour company owner astutely pointed out, referring to the mounds of garbage that result from insufficient collection, tourists “pay for that.” The appeal of touring poverty, as I have suggested, is ultimately related not only to experiencing such visual indicators of poverty, but also to experience the relatively safe “danger” of the favela, which is understood by many tourists to be more “real” than their often luxurious beach accommodations.

Understandings of favelas as places of actual or potential violence are promoted in both popular cultural representations of poverty in Brazil and in local and national...

177 Mark Anderson, along with many of the Garifuna activists with whom he has worked in Honduras, is highly critical of these “dominant models of capital-intensive tourist development” as they are deployed to foster ethnic tourism (2011:334).
media reporting. Such reporting highlights physical violence, criminality, chaos and disorganization, and the violent police interventions aimed at resolving favela violence. The result is that even the most proximate causes of urban poverty are ignored, while even the most “law-abiding” residents of favelas are criminalized. The consequences of this kind of understanding of favelas, and of urban poverty, include the inclination of middle and upper class Brazilians to “despise” the urban poor, which, as Adam Smith noted, is “necessary both to establish and to maintain…the order of society” (2002 [1759]:72); the promotion and implementation of strategies of spatial segregation; and, as I have shown, even emphatic denials that “rich” and “poor” Brazilians might speak the same language.

Although I have tried to show how several urban intervention programs designed to “improve” favelas operate on a problematic logic that addresses neither the causes nor the consequences of urban poverty, these are not the only programs in Brazil designed to intervene in poverty. For example, the Bolsa Família program, launched in 2003, has become a model program for improving the immediate living conditions of poor families, reducing infant mortality, combating hunger, reducing rates of child labor, and helping to keep children in school. In fact, with the backing of the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, countries around the world are emulating the Brazilian example. The program provides cash incentives to families with children to keep their children in school, educate themselves about disease transmission, and make sure their children receive basic medical care, such as vaccinations. The payments themselves are rather small, but they have impacted more than 13 million poor, Brazilian families to date (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome 2011).
Although Bolsa Família has increased rates of prenatal care among poor women and has helped keep children and teenagers in school (Hoddinott, et. al. 2010), the small payments families receive—from as little as $40 per month to as much as $77 per month (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome 2011; Rosenberg 2011)—may do little to change their long-term conditions. After all, children grow up, and public education in Brazil is unlikely to prepare many students for post-secondary education. In communities such as Rocinha, which have rents that compare with working class neighborhoods, the amount of money earned through the program may be less than what children could earn by working. The program, despite a number of positive consequences, seems to be little more than a temporary, stop gap measure, rather than a long-term solution to the problem of extreme inequality. Further, given its narrow focus, it addresses neither the precarious living conditions of many poor Brazilians nor the causes of those conditions.  

Rocinha Tur

Ultimately, Rocinha Tur has not been successful in changing the operations of poverty tourism. Tour company owners continue to tout their involvement in and support of the community, in the words of one owner, “as if it were going to save the world,” without seeking resident input on what kind of involvement would be beneficial. There is still no community input on how Rocinha is narratively represented on tours. Tour company vans and jeeps continue to block roads. And tourists continue to take pictures

178 In 2010, then-President Lula acknowledged that the “structural roots of hunger” needed to be addressed in tandem with programs to alleviate immediate suffering (da Silva 2010:9; author trans.).
of garbage, feces, and bullet holes. New to the list of noteworthy sites, however, is the wall being constructed around Rocinha and the dozens of homes being destroyed by it.

TurisRio, despite the regular treatment of RT members as burdensome or, at worst, irrelevant, has made good on its promise to become more actively involved in poverty tourism in Rocinha. This involvement, rather than shaping the practice of tourism, has taken the form of financing the placement of signs in Rocinha to index sites of tourist interest—which Rocinha Tur never requested and didn’t need.

Finally, despite its lack of direct success, RT has not failed altogether. Perhaps the most noteworthy, even if indirect, achievement is the recent election of an RT sympathizer as president of one of Rocinha’s residents’ associations. Although RT has not radically altered the practice of tourism in Rocinha, this small success suggests that one of Leandro’s initial goals—“conscientização” (“consciousness-raising”)—has been, at least partially, achieved.
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