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The Authentic Interior: Questing Gemeinschaft *in Post-Industrial Society*

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Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a city whose economy was once based exclusively on steel production and heavy manufacture, is now developing its historical and cultural amenities and is marketing itself as a tourist destination. This paper explores the basis of the city's appeal to visitors with an examination of one of the major tourist events, the annual Christmas program. The research suggests that visitors are lured by Bethlehem's small town charm and the suggestion of an authentic urban community. This nostalgia apparently engages not only big-city tourists, but also those from the suburbs and small municipalities. The paper describes this case of cultural tourism in which the principle attraction seems to be a vicarious experience with *gemeinschaft*-like community.

Key words: cultural tourism, images of community, urban development

THIS PAPER EXPLORES A CASE of cultural reciprocity between hosts and guests (Smith 1989) in a touristic relationship. The geographical locus of the case is Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a city of 70,000 located about 80 miles west of New York City and 50 miles north of Philadelphia. Bethlehem lies between Allentown, a twin city to the west, and Easton, about eight miles to the east, in the region known as the Lehigh Valley.

In recent years, Bethlehem has become a tourist destination. The city specializes in historic and cultural tourism, offering a variety of expressive events and places of 18th and 19th century vintage that have been turned into museums. As sites go, it is something of an anomaly. First, Bethlehem, with its inextricable associations with steel production, projects a gritty industrial image to outsiders, one that is at odds with the usual tourist preferences. Second, the quantity and variety of amenities do not in any way challenge those which are available in nearby Philadelphia, its pastoral western suburbs, or, for that matter, the revitalized cities of the eastern seaboard that extend from Boston to Baltimore. Nonetheless, tourists do come in fairly large numbers, some for the lavish Christmas program, others for the annual series performed by the Bach Choir, and still others for two major outdoor festivals in the downtown.

The problem addressed in this paper is how to explain the unlikely popularity of this city as a tourist attraction. What might lure visitors to Bethlehem? In answer to this question, we present the results of our research on Bethlehem's Christmas program, which is the mainstay and oldest of the city's four major tourist events. We interpret visitors' motivations from a study of their impressions of Bethlehem during this time of year.

Crick (1989) points out that the reasons people travel and the reasons they choose the destinations they do are two of the less extensively treated areas of the anthropological tourism literature. The topic is, however, beginning to receive more attention. For example, Smith (1992), in a special issue of *Annals of Tourism Research*, addresses the motivation to travel in a series of papers that deal with pilgrimage and tourism.

Some of the research on this subject develops the idea that foreign travel, especially of the type called ethnic tourism (van den Berghe and Keyes 1984), is often motivated by a quest for authenticity—an opportunity for leisure-class westerners to view lives very different from their own and routines that are regulated by the primary forms of work and seemingly timeless social traditions. Domestic travel may sometimes do the same. Mooney-Melvin (1991) reports that a number of surveys conducted by public historians show that heritage sites in which visitors can experience alternative lifeways have ascended in importance as a reason to choose one destination over another.

MacCannell (1976) was one of the first observers to interpret tourism in this way. He argued that the sojourns of First World peoples to Third World places is frequently motivated by a search for meaning and the need to discover communities that respond to people's inner needs. Graburn (1989) suggests that travel to foreign places generally has the effect of radically altering the tourist's consciousness. He also argues that tourism is, in many ways, a modern kind of pilgrimage.

Although he was not concerned specifically with tourism, Robert Redfield's (1956, 1962) classic studies shed some light on the appeal of ethnic tourism. Redfield is best known for his work on the development of civilizations in ancient times and

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the peasant societies of modern times. For both time periods, he was interested in what linked the rural and urban sector, and he explored the reciprocal, if slightly antagonistic, relationship between urban dwellers and peasants of the hinterland. He described the exchange between sectors as one in which the "little tradition" consumed the products, services, and idea systems of the cities, while the "great tradition" relied on the primary products of the countryside. He also suggested that in both the primary phase of urbanization and in contemporary times, the folk acted as a creative resource for urbanites, providing arts and cultural forms that expressed a direct relationship between people and their environment.

At first glance, Redfield's model of the great and little tradition is a curious one to invoke in studying the relationship between a tourist and a host group in contemporary America. Bethlehem is no Tepoztlan and does not have the features of a peasant society. Yet Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley are regarded as the provinces by cosmopolitan people from afar. There is evidence, as shall be shown, that this hinterland image lures visitors in search of an old-fashioned community, one in which social relationships seem to be multiplex, intimate, enduring, and kin-based. Tourists visit Bethlehem, not for lavish displays of public history and the best representations of high culture, but the potential to sample an organic community that remains well connected to its traditions. Visitors seem to believe they will find unreflective folk spontaneous in their creation and appreciation of cultural forms. They may find these types elsewhere, as in the Amish counties of Pennsylvania (about 60 miles west-southwest of Bethlehem), but the fact that they also exist in an *urban* community is especially comforting. To experience an authentic community, albeit fleetingly, appears to serve as a touchstone to those from megalopolis.

The irony of the tourists' attributions is that their provincial hosts are neither unreflective nor guileless. Although they are not grasping materialists, they appear to be aware that there is a nostalgia for small town America and that they have something of value to tourists. The political and cultural leaders of Bethlehem have expended considerable time and financial resources to recreate their history and ethnic heritage in both the bricks-and-mortar and programmatic senses. Local planners, however, do not aspire for a tourism that dominates all other industries. They are quick to point out, for example, that the living history of Colonial Williamsburg is an artifice played out by actors who go home at night. They are proud that Bethlehem has kept its history alive while remaining a functioning community.

Following Nash and Smith's (1991) advice on the importance of situating tourism within its socio-cultural context, our discussion begins with some background on the development of the tourism system in Bethlehem and a description of the programs and events geared to visitors. The heart of the paper, however, is the presentation of our research on the Christmas program. This research relied on three methods of information getting: an ethnographic study conducted during December of 1990, an analysis of media portrayals of Christmas in Bethlehem, and an interviewer-administered survey of 348 visitors who were interviewed during the 1990 season. From these three sources, we were interested in discovering the people's image of the city as extrapolated during their December visit. We assumed that each method had reciprocal strengths and weaknesses and hoped they would be mutually confirming in their results. The main value of the survey was to determine people's perceptions of Bethlehem, but we were also interested in whether any demographic factors affected such perceptions. For example, we began with a working hypothesis that big city dwellers would be more likely to describe the city as a locus of "real community" than suburban or small town visitors.

The Development of Cultural Tourism in Bethlehem

Bethlehem is one of three cities and many smaller municipalities in the Lehigh Valley. The valley is about 40 miles wide from west to east and 20 miles long from Blue Mountain (southernmost of the Pocono Mountains) to the north and South Mountain to the south. The region was first settled by Europeans 250 years ago under the leadership of William Penn; it was subsequently populated by German and Scotch-Irish farmers, as well as by Moravians, members of a Protestant sect who came to the New World from Moravia by way of Germany. In the 18th century, the economy was based primarily on agriculture, but with the discovery of minerals in the Pocono Mountains and the ease of transportation of raw materials and goods, the region became an important heavy industry site from the early decades of the 19th century. Bethlehem became home to the Bethlehem Iron (later Steel) Company in the 1860s. The company dominated the city's economy until the domestic steel crisis of recent time.

Today, according to the Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors' Bureau, the region connotes an image to outsiders of a gritty industrial landscape blackened by decades of soot. That image is indeed based on reality insofar as the Lehigh Valley is a prototype of industrial development with its early history of mining, canals, and railroads and its later long episode of heavy manufacture.

Along with the other rustbelt cities of the midwest and northeast, the Lehigh Valley has staggered under the blow of economic restructuring. The economic fortunes of the City of Bethlehem have been closely associated with the health of its single biggest employer, the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. As noted elsewhere (Cameron 1989), the number of local steelworkers, once stable at about 18,000 people (white and blue collar workers) shrank by two-thirds to 6,700 in the 1980s. This trend is comparable with the country-wide employment pattern for the company as reported by Strohmeyer (1986:150–159), who notes that the layoffs between 1975 and 1984 at Bethlehem Steel reduced the workforce from 115,000 to 48,000 nationally. No one seems certain of the future of steel-making in Bethlehem, and people are prepared for the worst news.

It is possible that the steel industry and selected heavy manufacture may endure, but the economic fabric of the region is ineluctably being transformed. Redevelopment officials have enticed a host of new businesses to the area, including financial institutions, light industry, assembly plants, and warehouse way-stations. In this regard, Bethlehem has followed a path similar to the one taken in Pittsburgh, another city traditionally dominated by steel making (Plotnicov 1987, 1989, 1990). The overall low cost of business operations and ease of transportation to major markets have helped the region to make a successful transition to service and light industry. The development of tourism is very much in keeping with the diversified recovery program.

Tourism, however, has a long history in Bethlehem. Its be-

ginnings seem to date to 1937 when the head of the Chamber of Commerce, for obvious reasons, dubbed Bethlehem as "The Christmas City." The city instituted the Moravian custom of candle lighting on a grand scale, festooning windows, streets, and bridges with white electric lights. As part of this effort, they also erected a huge star on South Mountain visible for 20 miles to the north. Over the years, the Christmas program has expanded and has attracted increasing numbers of visitors.

The impetus toward *cultural* tourism coincides with the historic restoration period of the 1960s and 1970s when the old buildings of the north side were restored and transformed into "historic structures." This process was part of the national wave of urban gentrification and interest in architectural history. One section of the city, the downtown north of the Lehigh River, had always been maintained – it was the area known as the Moravian district consisting of Central Church, a prep school and college campus, an old cemetery, and a host of administrative and residential buildings that have been in constant use since the Moravians founded the city in 1741. Historic preservation groups launched campaigns to restore additional Moravian structures and sites such as a 17th century industrial area and inn.

These activities had a stimulus effect beyond the Moravian district. The hotel and businesses on the main street of the city's north side returned to their architectural origins. The city financed a Victorian restoration of public property, and private individuals renovated their homes in accordance with historic architectural guidelines. The museums mounted tours and displays of 18th century Moravian history and 19th century Victorian decorative arts. These efforts laid the foundation for cultural tourism.

In the past decade, the emphasis has turned increasingly to program design. The most notable development has been the creation of two major performing arts festivals, one held in August called Musikfest (Cameron 1987) and the other in October called Celtic Classic or Celticfest, for short. These new events compliment the older ones such as the Bach Festival in May and the December Christmas program, spreading tourist activities throughout the year.

Musikfest, born in the summer of 1984, is a nine-day music festival that presents free outdoor performances in seven sites throughout the historic downtown. Its obvious allusion to Munich's Oktoberfest is explained by the presence of an old German population in the area, erroneously known as the Pennsylvania Dutch. The festival celebrates the customs, cuisine, and music of these Pennsylvania Dutch, but also gives ample attention to the expressive culture of other ethnic groups. By design, it was meant to showcase and compliment the historic district.

Celticfest, a three-day event, pays homage to another founding population in the region, the Scotch-Irish, who arrived about the same time as the Germans in the 18th century. Folk singing, fiddling, and marching highland bands make their appearance at outdoor sites in many of the same locations in the downtown as Musikfest. The unique features of this festival are the very popular highland games competition and sheepdog herding demonstrations.

Ethnicity as conveyed through the modes of music, customs, and food is the basis of most of the preservation efforts. Moravian heritage appears prominently at Christmas, the Pennsylvania Dutch during Musikfest, and the Scotch-Irish during Celticfest. The immigrants associated with the 19th and early 20th century industrial period – the Hispanics and eastern and southern Europeans – so far remain fest-less and otherwise unchronicled in the big tourism script, although they do have their own celebrations.

There are indications that the currently ignored heritage of later immigrant groups will receive public attention as the programmatic emphasis of this decade turns to the region's heavy industry period. Local people are enthusiastic about the possibility of a steel museum, and one man has begun a capital campaign to restore old steam engines and create a short train run through the city. An active historical society associated with the city's south side, the site of the steel mill, has begun the work of interpreting the working class heritage and running tours through picturesque ethnic churches. Moreover, the region is participating in a state-wide initiative to restore the canal system, a move that should further galvanize local interest in the 19th century.

In addition to the physical and programmatic changes, there have been organizational changes in tourism, the most significant of which has been the creation in 1988 of the Bethlehem Tourism Authority, a non-profit agency funded by the city council. Its budget and staffing are small, but its appearance signals the general belief that tourism has important economic pay-offs and plays a role in economic redevelopment. The principle goals of the authority are to improve tourism marketing and help coordinate the efforts of those groups that are geared to visitors.

It is ironic that these organizational and programmatic changes in tourism do not appear to have changed the visitors' perception of the city, or, for that matter, that of local people. If anything, improvements to the "product" and the growing sophistication in the marketing and management of tourism more effectively present Bethlehem as a real community both externally and internally.

Bethlehem, then, is a place in the throes of reinventing itself. The city is over 250 years old, but has only recently (the past few decades) begun to regard itself as an historic place and present this image publicly. This presentation, of course, has been helped along by federal legislation on historic preservation. Many of the expressive events are also of recent vintage. Nevertheless, by design, they have all the earmarks of permanence. People say about Musikfest, for example, that they can't remember a time without the festival.

Much of Bethlehem's heritage is therefore constructed, but it appears to be organically connected with the local people and their past. Without careful scrutiny, it is difficult to know which traditions are old and which are new, providing another illustration of the point made by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) that traditions and heritage that appear to have antiquity are often of recent vintage and deliberately constructed.

What is particularly striking about the expressive events of Bethlehem is that people, both locals and visitors, seem to care little about whether they really are old. There seems to be a willing suspension of disbelief, a collective amnesia about authenticity. This response is related to what Cohen (1988:379) describes as "emergent authenticity," that is, a negotiated agreement about what is perceived as genuine.

How can we account for this attitude? For locals, it may be the result of people laboring to rethink their history in positive terms in the aftermath of the recent economic trauma. But for both locals and visitors, it is also linked to the fact that the social architects of the tourism program have designed events that are well connected in a physical and a social sense to what already exists. For example, the organic feel is helped by incorporating

the historic sites, artifacts, and celebrations into the bustle of everyday life in the downtown where people live and work. One does not feel an artificial going back in time, but that the past is meshed with the present. In a word, Bethlehem's heritage seems real. The city projects itself a locus of real community, or what the social theorist Ferdinand Tönnies (1963) long ago described as "*gemeinschaft.*" The *gemeinschaft* image is particularly evident in visitors' attributions about the Christmas program. The next section presents the results of our research on this event, reporting in several ways about visitors' perceptions of Bethlehem.

Tourist Perceptions of the Christmas Program

As noted earlier, three varieties of data on visitors' perceptions are offered below. The first is an interpretive ethnography of the tourism text that is communicated to tourists who come to the downtown. It is derived from the first author's stint as a tourist during the month of December 1990, seeing and hearing as the visitors did in most of the sites. The second is a review of the print medium's construction of the Christmas program. The primary source was travel articles from newspapers and magazines. The third variety of information comes from the findings of a quantitative survey administered to 348 tourists, also in December 1990. People were asked many behavioral and demographic questions, but the main focus of the inquiry was an examination of visitors' image of the city.

Ethnographic Findings

The Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce estimates that 45,000 to 50,000 visitors come from out of town each year for the Christmas celebration. They come either by car or by charter bus. Most make their way to the main visitors' center where they pick up brochures and see an orientation film. This is the location where they generally decide what sites they will see. Most of the visitors come from eastern Pennsylvania, including Philadelphia, as well as from New Jersey, New York State, and other seaboard states.

The attractions available to tourists include: a guided bus tour of the city by night to view the lights; museum tours and walking tours of historic sites; visits to the Moravian *putz*, a giant nativity scene complete with lights, music, and narration; a live re-enactment of the nativity complete with actors in costume and animals, including three living camels; concerts of sacred music; an invitation to an Advent lovefeast in any of the Moravian churches; a beeswax candlemaking demonstration by a couple in costume; live carolers and taped music in the downtown where there are numerous gift shops selling quaint wares; and a ride in a horse-drawn carriage driven by a man in costume. All these activities transpire in the downtown that is brilliantly lit with white lights and electric candles and decorated with Victorian window displays.

Ethnicity, history, and music are the three most important themes of the tourism program, and all of them are closely linked to the Moravians, the Protestant sect that founded Bethlehem in 1741. It is apparent that the Moravians symbolically "own" Christmas. Heavy doses of their customs, religious tradition, music, artifacts, and early history are offered to the tourists.

The following is an interpretation of the text that is communicated to visitors by curators, tour guides, signs, and brochures at various sites throughout the downtown. It was gleaned from observational work done during the five-week Christmas program. The first author took the tours in the company of large groups of tourists.

At many of the sites, Moravian values are praised. They are hailed, for example, for their historical antipathy to racism and their concern for education, including that of girls. The daughter of one of the founders is credited with setting up the first girls' school. They are also celebrated for their stress on music and the arts. Music dominates their high church service, for example. Moreover, the Moravians are lauded for their emphasis on equality and human dignity, industry and self-sufficiency, and their steadfast refusal to bear arms.

More subtly embedded in the text are other themes that seem to resonate deeply in the tourist heart. The first is the institutionalized hospitality and generosity of the Moravians. Presented as an important tradition, it is stressed that they welcome strangers into their homes and churches. The lighted candles in all the windows of people's dwellings are the signs of welcome. This hospitality is also marked in an historical framework. During the Revolutionary War, Moravians refused to fight for religious reasons, but they set up hospitals to minister to the sick and wounded. Another instance that is often noted is the building of a special inn to house non-Moravians who were otherwise not permitted to reside in the town during the closed corporate period (ca. 1741–1850).

Another theme is the spiritual emphasis that Moravians give to Christmas. The story of the naming of Bethlehem is told in many locations and, after several hearings, it begins to take on a mythic quality with its implied reference to the actual city of Christ's birth. Visitors are also inundated with accounts of the many Christmas customs practiced in the homes and churches. They are told, for example, that Moravian families generally set up small *putzes* (nativity scenes) in their homes to use as teaching devices to tell their children about the "true meaning of Christmas." Equally impressive as a symbol of their nonmaterialism is the fact that most events of the program are free or by donation.

A third theme, one that is both subtle and powerful, is the continuity of custom and tradition among Moravians and the careful tending they give their heritage, including the historic buildings. Tour guides note with pride that Moravian structures have not had to be restored to their original design (unlike many other buildings in the downtown) because they have been constantly maintained over the years. One guide noted, for example, that the floor of the Old Chapel has been replaced three times since its construction because the building has been in continual use over the centuries. Another fact that impresses the visitors is that some of the colonial buildings have retained their original function—for example, the Gemeinhaus still serves as a community meeting place (not just a museum) and the Widows' House remains a residence for Moravian widows. In fact, from the vantage point of the tour buses, the widows are sometimes visible doing needlework in their communal sitting rooms.

Finally, community integration and spirit is given much emphasis. Volunteerism is a good measure of this attitude. Tourists learn that volunteers, not paid employees, staff nearly all sites. Those who visit the *putz* at Central Moravian Church are told that each year 400 volunteers scour the countryside for just the right kind of evergreen boughs and moss to use in the elaborate

reconstruction of the nativity. It is said to be slightly different each season, in itself evidence of the "living faith" of the Moravians.

The effect of this text, in both its surface and deep guise, is to communicate a vivid and integrated image of Bethlehem. Most obvious is the suggestion that most of the population is Moravian or partakes of their beliefs. Another is that the traditions are timeless and that the past pervades the present. In fact, however, neither of these assumptions is really the case. As already noted, what seems long-lived is often a recent tradition. One of our tipsters who is a member of Central Moravian Church reports that she has witnessed the ebb of old customs and diffusion of new ones over the past ten or 12 years. The strategy of situating the major tourist events in the city's historic district lends them an air of antiquity, institutionalizing them in a moment.

Media Construction of Christmas

The second kind of evidence on visitors' perception of Christmas comes from an analysis of some press coverage of the program. The print sources include the *New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Press, Washington Post, Colonial Homes, Pennsylvania Magazine,* and the *Saturday Evening Post.* The city is often featured in magazines for its colonial architecture, but essays on and pictures of the Christmas season have become popular fare in recent years. For example, the December 1992 issue of *American Heritage Magazine* featured Bethlehem for one of several places that illustrates that "the country is moving away from commercially inspired observances of the holiday and returning to simpler celebrations" (Stewart 1992:9).

This print coverage provides additional evidence that visitors believe they have slipped into a *gemeinschaft* time warp. Some of the themes noted in the previous section show up in the print material, especially the small town feel and religiosity. For example, note these titles: "Where Silent Night is Still Holy," "O Little Town of Steel," "Bethlehem, Where Faith Held Wide the Door," or "This Sleepy Hamlet Wakes Up at Christmas Time."

Writers note with approval the absence of commercialism and the usual feelings of pressure during the holidays, as in the following excerpts:

> It [Bethlehem] has been nicknamed Christmas City USA, a little pleasantry that belies the noncommercial atmosphere that pervades the city's celebrations (Supplement to *American Heritage*, December 1992, p. 10).
>
> . . . a December weekend in Bethlehem provided a pleasant look into the past and respite from the hype, the glitz, and the rush of the holidays (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 10, 1989, p. R-1).
>
> . . . the town remains blessedly free of any hint of Santa's Village-Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer kitsch (*New York Times*, November 30, 1986, p. 15).

There are descriptions of snug cafes, bright shops with Victorian storefronts, and twinkling white lights. Reporters admire the fact that the Moravian-run stores are closed on Sundays and that strangers are welcomed into the churches for rituals and music. Nostalgia and longing are transparent in the prose, as in this example:

> In Bethlehem, I came home to the small town Christmas I have never known: the fresh smell pine boughs tied to every lamppost, the hopeful lights in every window, and, maybe best of all, a real Sunday quiet (*Washington Post*, December 2, 1990, pp. El, 7–8).

Later, she admits,

> And when we left, I, who am not particularly religious, was ready to go back to the fold (*Washington Post*, December 2, 1990, pp. El, 7–8).

Although not a piece about Christmas, another account of Bethlehem deserves special mention. The writer touts the many virtues of the city, virtues that cannot be found in either the exciting, but unsafe, big cities or bland, homogeneous suburbs. She praises the neighborhood into which she has recently moved for its mix of expensive and affordable housing, its variety of household types, safety, and slower pace. The key value sprinkled through the article is heterogeneity—of class, occupation, age, and housing stock. She says:

> I like Bethlehem because it is a nice place to live, but I also recommend it because it is living proof of an unlikely reality: that small towns, composed of a small cross-section of households, ages, and incomes, can make Americans happier than the lonely American Dream House ever could (Flanagan 1990:85).

For a long time, the suburbs have been excoriated by the press and urban planners alike, and, for a while, the gentrified neighborhoods of the big cities were popular among urban professional. But this trend may be on the wane. Questing small town life seems to be fashionable, and Bethlehem is currently basking in the warm glow of journalistic praise. Whether these sentiments are shared by ordinary tourists is the question that is answered with the next data set.

Survey Findings

The findings reported here are from a survey of 348 people intercepted during three weeks of the Christmas 1990 tourist season. The survey was conducted by three student interviewers at several locations where there was a large circulation of tourists. The general purpose of the survey was to learn about the background of the visitors, whether anything in particular drew them to the city, the activities they sought, and how well they liked these activities.

Using a preliminary filtering question, we differentiated respondents into two sampling groups: those who had just arrived (*Sample A*, $n = 235$) and those who had already spent several hours touring the town and had seen some of the sights (*Sample B*, $n = 113$). While the questionnaires given to both samples contained many of the same questions (e.g., demographics, activities planned, reasons for visiting), we were especially interested in the first-hand impression the second group had formed of Bethlehem's Christmas program. To obtain this sort of information, we asked Sample B respondents to indicate on a 5-point scale whether they agreed or disagreed with each of 20 adjectives as these might apply to the Christmas program.

As noted in the introduction, the underlying question guiding the research was whether visitors perceived Bethlehem as a genuine community, one that has retained its traditions and history in an uncontrived way (the *gemeinschaft* notion). A secondary hypothesis was that the *gemeinschaft* image of Bethlehem might be more pronounced among tourists from big cities than among tourists from suburbs, small towns, and the rural countryside (i.e., urban residents might have more reason to be nostalgic about a sense of closely knit community life).

Demographic Characteristics (Samples A and B combined). Slightly more than half of the visitors came from some part of Pennsylvania—Lehigh Valley (12%), eastern Pennsylvania including Philadelphia (31%), or central and western regions of the state (8%). Another quarter (26%) came from urban and suburban New Jersey, and 12% came from New York State, particularly New York City and Long Island. The rest came from other mid-Atlantic states, such as Maryland and Delaware, and beyond.

In terms of occupation, 46% of the sample fell in the blue collar/pink collar category, 22% in clerical or sales, and 33% in management or professional. Housewives, who were grouped under pink collar, were quite numerous, representing 16% of the group. As for education, 41% of the sample had high school or less, 17% had some college, and 42% had a baccalaureate degree or better.

To give a comparative perspective on this group, the occupational and educational profile is somewhat similar to the audience that goes to Musikfest, although there is a slightly greater proportion of professional and baccalaureate holders in the festival group.

With respect to household income, 31% of the Christmas visitors had incomes over $50,000, which is less than the Musikfest audience, of which 35% have incomes exceeding $50,000. This difference may be a function of older age (more retirees) among the Christmas visitors, two-thirds of whom are over 50 years of age, with the greatest proportion being in their 50s and 60s.

Finally, the Christmas program apparently appealed more to women than to men: two-thirds of the sample were women.

Previous Visits and Logistics (Samples A and B combined). The majority of those surveyed (59%) had never been to Bethlehem before, while 41% had visited the city at least once previously, for the Christmas program, one of the festivals, or some other reason. Nonetheless, the predominant way people learned about the program was by word of mouth (40%), followed by print sources (31%), and tour bus/travel companies (15%).

The vast majority of visitors came by car (70%), others by bus (27%) or by foot (downtown residents). This finding was quite surprising because it has always been assumed that the bus trade far exceeds car travelers.

Over three-quarters (77%) came only for some portion of a day. The remaining 23% stayed overnight, the majority at a hotel or motel rather than with friends or relatives.

Special Attractions (Samples A and B combined). In the survey, a high percentage of the visitors (73%) said that something in particular, as opposed to general curiosity, had attracted them to the Christmas program. Their verbatim responses to this open-ended question were coded into categories, discriminating between first- and second-mentioned ideas. Among the first mentions, some aspect of lighting prevailed as the most popular response (32%). In particular, people were struck by the beauty and ubiquity of the lights through the city, as well as the enormous star on the mountain that flanks the southern boundary of the city. Other features cited were the entire program, the religious connotation of the name of the city, the historic buildings and sites, and Moravian traditions and history. Among the second mentions, lighting appeared less strong and other features surfaced more often than the first go-around. Overall, lighting appeared as an important draw, having rich and deep connotations with the season.

Two-thirds of the visitors said they thought Bethlehem's celebration of Christmas was unique in some way. Once again, the features were divided into first and second mentions. The lighting and the night light tours on the buses were overwhelmingly rated as the most unique feature of the program (51%) and these remained strong among the second mentions (33%). Also cited as unique were traditions and crafts associated with the Moravians such as the *putz* and the church lovefeast. The religious emphasis in the program was striking to the visitors, as was the historic setting in which events occurred.

Contrary to our assumption, the visitors' home residence and previous attendance at the program did *not* affect significantly the perception of special attractions or unique features. Neither factor was statistically significant. Those from the large urban and suburban regions to the east were no more sensitive to the folk and religious features of the program than those from other locations and both previous and new attendees perceived the program in similar ways.

As for what people said they had done or planned to do, highest on the list were visits to the gift shops on Main Street (74%). The night light tours also showed strongly (69%), as did visits to the *putz* (64%), museum hopping (42%), and walking tours (28%). It was clear from the responses that recreational shopping is a critical aspect of Christmas tourism, rivaling perhaps the cultural aspects of the experience. Lest this preference be construed as materialism rearing its ugly head, however, we suggest that Christmas shopping "feels" different from the usual utilitarian shopping in the sense it is done in the spirit of generalized reciprocity (itself associated with small-scale societies).

Overall Image of Bethlehem's Christmas Program (Sample B only). The audience's overall image of Bethlehem's Christmas program was assessed from the rating data for the list of 20 adjectives (*n* is 112 instead of 113, because one respondent left the rating questions blank). The adjectives pertained generally to the presence and degree of stimulation, commercialism, nostalgia, and religiosity the respondents perceived. The rating data were analyzed in several ways for different purposes.

The most straightforward and important rendering of the Christmas program's image is revealed by the means and standard deviations for each of the 20 adjectives. Table 1 presents these figures, ordered (top-to-bottom) in terms of how well they were judged to describe Christmas in Bethlehem. Responses to many of the descriptors skewed toward the extremes of the scale (either high agreement or high disagreement), indicating those adjectives resonated well with the respondents. The strongest responses suggest that the program was viewed as historic, tasteful, interesting, and authentic; conversely, it was clearly not regarded as insufficient, boring, high pressured, or glitzy.

The ways in which ratings among the adjectives are intercorrelated provide insight into a second aspect of the Christmas program's image: the image's complexity or dimensionality. If, for example, the 20 adjective ratings were perfectly correlated with one another, then they would all be manifestations of a single underlying conceptual dimension (each adjective being just a different way of measuring the same thing). At the other extreme, if the 20 adjectives did not correlate with one another at all, then each item would constitute a separate dimension in

TABLE 1 Audience Ratings of Bethlehem's Christmas Program [scale = 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree)]

Adjective	Mean	SD	*n*
1. Historic	4.61	.557	112
2. Tasteful	4.54	.640	112
3. Interesting	4.49	.681	112
4. Authentic	4.34	.676	112
5. Entertaining	4.26	.729	112
6. Enriching	4.19	.840	112
7. Religious	4.18	.928	112
8. Meaningful	4.16	.830	112
9. Small townish	3.96	1.012	112
10. Nostalgic	3.95	.981	112
11. Serene	3.85	.984	112
12. Old fashioned	3.81	1.065	112
13. Musical	3.72	1.148	111
14. Ethnic	3.60	1.122	112
15. Commercialized	2.56	1.067	112
16. Crowded	2.20	1.076	112
17. Insufficient	1.80	.889	111
18. Glitzy	1.63	.732	112
19. High pressure	1.54	.706	112
20. Boring	1.48	.694	112

respondents' images of the Christmas program, as each adjective would provide information not measured by any of the other adjectives.

The most common way to analyze inter-linkages among items is factor analysis with varimax rotation. SPSSx principal components factor analysis identified six independent dimensions from the intercorrelations evident in the 20 adjective ratings (see Table 2). This is a surprisingly large number of independent factors (underlying dimensions) given there are only 20 items, and the item loadings do not lend themselves to particularly meaningful English glosses for the factors. These problematic results probably derive from the high degree of skewness and small standard deviations for many of the adjectives, conditions that generally undermine the reliability of factor analysis.

Multi-dimensional scaling of the 20 adjective ratings with Anthropac 3.22 software (Borgatti 1991) produced a more interpretable and plausible picture of the interlinkages among the items. Anthropac's non-metric MDS routine collapsed the 20-by-20 item Pearson correlation matrix into 2-dimensions with a tolerable stress level (stress = .108). Figure 1 shows the positioning of the 20 adjectives in this 2-dimensional space, where the closer two adjectives are to one another, the higher their correlation with one another. A plausible interpretation of the

TABLE 2 Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Entertaining	.801	.229	.071	.023	.116	.201
Interesting	.769	.127	−.078	.143	.097	−.143
Boring	−.668	−.279	.198	−.016	.043	.159
Insufficient	−.668	−.185	.063	−.015	−.044	−.352
Historic	.614	.182	−.280	.091	.138	.123
Tasteful	.605	.069	−.402	.244	−.029	−.043
Meaningful	.170	.863	−.017	−.006	−.009	−.015
Enriching	.312	.665	−.165	.334	−.181	−.001
Nostalgic	.296	.497	−.288	.055	.289	−.033
Religious	.298	.491	.134	.311	.165	.070
Glitzy	−.165	−.025	.777	−.086	.085	.035
High pressure	−.139	−.120	.765	.100	−.207	.039
Ethnic	.028	.059	.100	.804	.134	−.030
Authentic	.248	.224	−.376	.679	.131	.077
Crowded	−.000	.129	.426	−.097	−.691	−.135
Old fashioned	.247	.260	.107	.281	.643	−.108
Musical	.357	.373	−.148	.178	−.441	.333
Serene	.312	.424	−.037	.268	.434	.058
Commercialized	.009	−.111	.150	.052	−.071	.828
Small townish	.127	.471	−.210	−.142	.186	.568
Eigenvalue	6.092	1.785	1.572	1.265	1.110	1.028
Percent variable	30.5%	8.9%	7.9%	6.3%	5.6%	5.1%

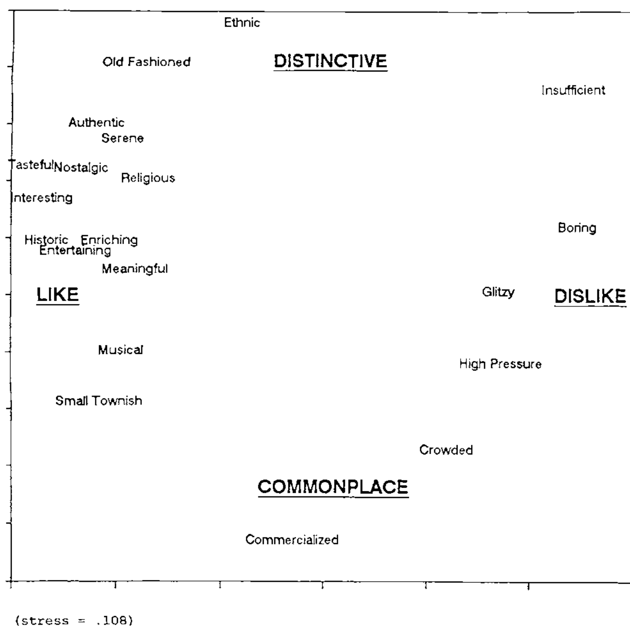

FIGURE 1. NON-METRIC MULTI-DIMENSIONAL SCALING OF THE TWENTY ADJECTIVES

two axes is: (a) left-to-right corresponds to a "like/dislike" affective evaluation, and (b) top-to-bottom corresponds to something like a "distinctive/commonplace" impression.

A third question concerning people's image of the Christmas program is whether individuals' images are similar or whether there are different images of the "same" event associated with some identifiable group. This question was investigated using two analytical procedures. The first, more familiar approach utilized oneway analyses of variance, with responses to the 20 adjectives as dependent variables and eight demographic/behavioral characteristics as independent variables. The eight demographic/behavioral variables were: home residence, occupational category, education level, household income, age, sex, previous visits to Bethlehem, and length of stay.

Only 15 of the ensuing 160 ANOVAs revealed a significant group-group contrast at the .05 confidence level. Adjusting for the fact that 20 tests were being done for each of the eight demographic/behavioral variables, only two of the tests were significant at the "experiment-wise" adjusted level of .0025 (i.e., .05/20). This failure to find group-group differences—groups defined in terms of residence, income, education, age, sex, etc.—supports the ethnographic intuition that visitors to Bethlehem's Christmas program respond to the event in very similar ways.[1]

Another approach to the same question is consensus analysis (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986). Briefly, consensus analysis converts an original respondent-by-item data matrix into a respondent-by-respondent, chance-corrected agreement matrix. This inter-respondent agreement matrix is then factor analyzed (without rotation). The extent of consensus among respondents is indicated by the ratio of the first factor's eigenvalue to the second factor's eigenvalue. As a rule of thumb, if the first eigenvalue is at least three times larger than the second eigenvalue, then there is a fairly strong consensus.

The data from 112 respondents on the 20 adjectives were analyzed with Anthropac, and the findings indicate a very strong consensus. The first eigenvalue is 16 times that of the second—77.189 and 4.750, respectively.[2] This finding further supports the conclusion that respondents' images of the Christmas program are very similar to one another.

Summary

What, then, do these three sorts of data suggest about the overall perception of the Christmas program? It appears that visitors clearly regard the program as interesting, stimulating, and tasteful, in large measure because history and tradition are so apparent. The program seems to hearken to old, but dear values about the religious aspect of Christmas. Moreover, much of Bethlehem's appeal derives from a high quotient of ethnic heritage that remains vital. Overall, the city and the program seem to conjure up a vision of an earlier, less hectic time—an oasis of small town America persisting in mass society.

A secondary hypothesis of the research was that residence should influence attributions made about the program's image, which led to a check to see if big-city dwellers would be especially susceptible to the small-townish aspect of the celebration. Different perceptions were not, however, discernible in any group-group comparison based on demographic characteristics, and consensus analysis also indicated a strongly homogeneous audience response. Contrary to our original hypothesis, then, those from large and dense urban centers had essentially the same attributions as those from the small municipalities, e.g., perceiving the event as being old fashioned and exuding a real community feel. Indeed, the high degree of homogeneity among visitors is a major finding of the survey data.

In summary, it is safe to say that the responses of the visitors surveyed, along with the journalists, are consonant with the ethnographic interpretations of the Christmas program. In its various ways, the program strongly projects colonial history and the social and religious customs of the Moravians. More subtly, the ambience in Bethlehem connotes a rare condition of *gemeinschaft* in post-industrial society: there is a high degree of community involvement and participation, consensus about social values, and continuity in belief and customs over time. Tourists consume this image; their experience appears to be spiritual, rich, and meaningful. Bethlehem at Christmas seems to connect people to some inchoate set of feelings about the proper celebration of Christmas (social and spiritual) and, very likely, to their ideas of what a community should be.

FAKE *GEMEINSCHAFT*?

It should be stressed that the image of "real community" communicated in expressive events and most dramatically at Christmas is mythic—not in the sense of untrue, but as a pervasive normative value. In truth, the city is not a cohesive community. There are many non-overlapping interest and ethnic groups, social classes, and religions. Social relationships are not particularly multiplex and long-lived. Social networks are not unusually dense in their make-up. There is much the same conflict, intolerance, bigotry, and violence as elsewhere.

Although ethnicity is celebrated in the abstract, it has been a troublesome issue historically. For example, it is widely known

that Bethlehem Steel, when it went afield some years ago for industrial workers, did not go south where there was a large black population. They put out the call instead to the residents of Puerto Rico and Mexico and to the countries of eastern and southern Europe. There are, as a result, very few blacks for a northern, industrial city. It is also accurate to say that there has been a long history of prejudice toward Hispanics in the region. This attitude is evident from anecdotal sources and newspaper articles, as well as from research reports (Blank 1983).

The Pennsylvania Dutch, who shine during Musikfest, are the brunt of jokes and scorn at other times. They are known locally for their family orientation and work ethic, but they are in other contexts ridiculed for their inward-looking conservatism and historical antipathy for education. Locals also poke fun at the "Dutchy" dialect and folk cures that are still practiced by a few.

There is also an interesting conflict or, more accurately, a community tension that plays out in the design of the tourism plan. It exists between those who champion colonial history and those who promote 19th century industrial history. This tension masks an old class cleavage in the city. Those in the former category see the industrial era as a polluting one—in both a literal and metaphoric sense. Just as the steel company fouled the air and besmirched the pastoral landscape along the Lehigh River, the steel workers—red-necked, noisy, and different—sullied the sedate, homogeneous ambience of Bethlehem on their arrival. But the descendants of those workers have staked their claim to have their history written and have their worksites and neighborhoods sacralized as sight-seeing zones. The conflict is all but over now because of national and state-wide interest in industrial history, but it provides another demonstration of the reality of social relations in Bethlehem.

As for the seeming homogeneity of the city, the Moravians may have a special claim as founders, but they are truly just one of the many denominations that exist locally. Moravians do not constitute a well bounded ethnic group and are not identifiable by the standard markers of language, custom, cuisine, or place of origin. There are, indeed, living representatives of the founding families, but they are outnumbered by the more recent joiners of the faith. Like Quakerism, Moravianism is a religious creed rather than an ethnic identity. To partake of the heritage, one only need join one of the Moravian churches.

Besides glossing over heterogeneity and conflict, the small town image of Bethlehem also rings false in that it was deliberately constructed and did not arise organically. Although they have acted in a community-minded manner, the architects of Bethlehem's image do have a systemic view of tourism and possess special abilities (business and creative) with respect to program design. Indeed, the developmental phases of tourism have been neither painless nor without conflict as planners have disagreed concerning what should be emphasized and how best marketed. Knowing that such discussions and debates have transpired tilts one to a more cynical view of "the product" so crafted.

It would be overly cynical, however, to suggest that the tourist program is nothing but a sham perpetrated on unsuspecting visitors by cold-blooded entrepreneurs. The prime movers do not appear to be motivated by personal greed or power, but rather are proud of their city and consume its cultural attractions with the same relish as do visitors. What may have begun as a deliberately crafted marketing image to attract tourists has now altered local residents' own impressions of their city. Portraying contemporary Bethlehem as a *gemeinschaft*-like community is largely a fantasy, but it is a plausible and desirable fantasy, one now enjoyed and embraced by many local residents.

We therefore concur with Cohen (1988) that tourism development does not necessarily de-mean or demean the cultural amenities packaged for tourists. The commoditization of culture triggers reinvention and recreation of past and present cultural forms for locals as well as for tourists. Whether the ensuing changes are considered harmful or beneficial will vary case by case and analyst by analyst. The overall effect of the feedback loop between *culture lived* and *culture imaged*, however, is to render the very notion of "authentic culture" exceedingly ambiguous (Smith 1982). Authentic relative to what, to when, and from whose perspective?

Conclusion

The case just outlined demonstrates the appeal of ethnic heritage and the lure of the small town in domestic tourism. While one may certainly find authenticity in exotic places around the globe, as the literature on ethnic tourism shows, it may also be found closer to home in certain kinds of work sites and in historified towns. The case also alludes to several issues that appear in the tourism literature on the topic of authenticity. We conclude with a discussion of some of them.

It seems undeniable that history and folk culture have become important resources in modern society. One ponders the appeal of these resources. Even a cursory glance at history seems to indicate that the qualities of folkness and pastness are differentially appreciated. Western society alternately casts a net forward or backward in time and variably celebrates or despises the simple folk.

According to Leonard Meyer (1989), our current preoccupation with different times and peoples is a legacy of Romanticism, the cultural ideology that pervaded the arts and social philosophy of the 19th century. Romanticism arose under conditions of great political and economic flux, in particular the collapse of ancient regimes based on inherited right and the development of new forms of production. The novels and paintings of the period celebrated the simple, rural life and manual labor, presenting a sharp contrast with the new forms of work and social relations found in the fast-growing cities.

Many social scientists of the 19th century also succumbed to a romanticized vision of society. An early example of this tendency was Ferdinand Tönnies (1963 [1887]), who studied changes in social structure associated with industrial capitalism. He argued that the nature of social relations was very different in small communities as opposed to impersonal metropolises. Moreover, he felt that the quality of life in small communities was morally superior to that of cities: "City life and *Gesellschaft* doom the common people to decay and death" (Tönnies *in* Nisbett 1966:209). Cohen (1988:379) argues that a nostalgia for this mode of life persists among intellectuals, especially curators and ethnographers. In fact, he suggests that, in the case of anthropologists, this value impels some to a profession that allows them to study "real folk culture."

Contemporary society continues to celebrate the folk *and* to look back. Simple people are honored because they are thought to possess authentic culture. Their creative efforts reflect a direct relationship between the individual and environment, and

their expressive forms lack the sophistry and self-consciousness of the cultivated arts.

Looking back takes a number of guises. We have all witnessed the trend whereby things old – be they buildings, neighborhoods, or furniture – come to be regarded as "historic," "quaint," or "antique." Historic sites such as Colonial Williamsburg have been infused with life as actors play out scenes of "living history." Ethnic groups construct their heritage, as Handler (1987) says, to stay the tide of mass culture. Nostalgia is rife in material culture (collectibles) and expressive culture (the greatest hits of ____). As the historian Lowenthal (1985) convincingly argues, history in the 20th century has become a booming industry with a heavy tourist trade.

The west is not the only contemporary culture area to have rediscovered both the folk and history. Graburn (1984) suggests there is a new appreciation among the leaders of non-western societies about the value of expressive traditions in the arts and religion. Like urban people everywhere, they feel the need to retreat into the past and discover beauty and meaning anew (Graburn 1984:411). Ben-Ari (1991) writes of the nostalgia boom in Japan that has led to the invigoration of historical societies, folklore study, and expressive arts. He reports on a male rite of passage in a small commuter village that has become a significant tourist attraction to people from the big cities.

But how can the current fashionability of history, heritage, and nostalgia be explained? Certainly, technology makes the fashion possible by providing for the ease of recording. However, this is a mechanism and not a cause. Gatewood (1990) reviews five social-psychological theories for the "nostalgia craze" in contemporary America:

1. Nostalgia is a *slowing mechanism*. It is a psychological adaptation to circumstances of rapid culture change during which individuals fear becoming obsolete (Judith Rydell *in* Croke 1990). Statistically observable trends in nostalgia, then, would correspond to the pace of culture change.

2. Nostalgia is a *fixation on a developmental stage* in one's life-cycle. Americans fear becoming adult (congruent with the general glorification of youth in American culture), and nostalgia is a means of coping with one's own aging and consequent identity crises (Best and Nelson 1985, Davis 1979). Social trends in nostalgia, in this view, should reflect population demographics, e.g., baby-boomers (now 40-year-olds) are of the age to become nostalgic.

3. Nostalgia is a *psychological luxury of the affluent, leisure class*. Rummaging through the minutiae of the past, real or imagined, is a narcissistic pastime for those with too much leisure time.[3] Trends in nostalgia, then, should reflect demographics of the leisure class – as segments of the population become increasingly affluent, one should expect to see proportionately more alleviation of boredom through narcissistic reflection.

4. Nostalgia is one of the ways Americans *search for authentic experiences*. Alienation is so much a part of contemporary life that people seek to gratify emotional needs for connectedness and community by going back in time (or elsewhere) to find a simpler, gentler life. Hinterland tourism and the museumification of primary and even manufacturing occupational cultures are also manifestations of this underlying motivation. The authenticity lacking in modern urban life is thought to lie in the past, in contemporary but rural enclaves, *or* in non-service forms of work (a twist on MacCannell's 1976 general explanation of tourism; see also Gatewood 1989; Handler 1986, 1987; Handler and Linnekin 1984, 1988).

5. Nostalgia is symptomatic of a more general *crisis in cultural confidence* (precipitated in the contemporary era by World War I, World War II, the nuclear age, Vietnam, and Watergate). Whenever societies become fearful of the future and lose confidence in their way of life, people will seek emotional solace and security in the safe certainty of the past. In this view, nostalgia is a species of nativistic movement, akin to such phenomena as the Ghost Dance and Cargo Cults. In particular, nostalgia would fall into Linton's typology as a form of "revivalistic-rational" nativism (Linton 1943:233).

Whatever the reason or reasons for American's historical appetite, cultural tourism in Bethlehem of Pennsylvania illustrates how history and ethnicity can easily be transformed into a commodity and served up for public consumption. Even though the *gemeinschaft* may be pseudo and the folk hip, there remains the desire to believe that authentic communities do exist. The case of Bethlehem shows that the city is not just selling its history, but also offering a healing balm to heavily mediated lives.

It seemed likely at first that only big city tourists would engage in the fantasy of *gemeinschaft*, but the survey findings show that the client group is much broader – those from the big and small cities, the suburbs, and possibly even residents of small towns. In this respect there is a parallel with Sieber's (1991) finding for Boston, where residents outnumber tourists in their consumption of cultural amenities.

Having unmasked the apparent charade that transpires in Bethlehem's tourism program, we ponder whether the cultural forms and events presented to visitors are less valid for their deliberateness and whether it is somehow morally wrong to cater to nostalgic impulses. It is clear that the visitors who enjoy the city as presented to them do not have exacting standards concerning authenticity. As for the locals who are involved in the design of new programs and the tourism text, they appear to work under the assumption that they are merely unveiling preexisting motifs already present in the community; their construction is a plausible reality and one they, and others, would like to believe. One must ponder, too, whether a genuine *gemeinschaft* arrangement has ever existed. As the Redfield (1930)-Lewis (1951) controversy illustrates, the answer seems to depend on one's point of view. At the least, our study of Bethlehem suggests that a subjective image of *gemeinschaft* – fact or fiction, warranted or not – can be as powerful to people as any objective reality. Authenticity, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

NOTES

[1] At first glance, it may appear that our failure to find group-group differences based on education and income contradicts Cohen's *a priori* argument that "intellectuals and other more alienated individuals will engage on a more serious quest of authenticity than most rank-and-file members of a society" (1988:376). Our findings do not refute Cohen's hypothesis, however, because he is discussing tourists' motivations to travel generally, whereas we are reporting tourists' perceptions of a particular place they have been. It is entirely possible that the more "intellectual and alienated" respondents in our sample were engaging in a "more serious quest of authenticity" than other folks. Our data merely

show that people with higher educational levels, higher household incomes, etc., did not perceive Bethlehem's Christmas program differently from other people.

[2] As a methodological point, we should note that consensus analysis seems susceptible to some of the same quirks as Q-mode factor analysis. In particular, reversing the "polarity" of scalar items can radically change the conclusions one would draw. For example, if we re-polarize the six lowest-rated of our 20 adjectives (recode 1's as 5's, 2's as 4's, etc.) and perform consensus analysis on the recoded data, the results argue *against*, rather than for, homogeneity among our 112 respondents. Polarity inversions of this sort do not affect R-mode factor analysis of ANOVAs done on the items. Consensus analysis of the original data corroborates the ANOVA findings, but we do not have such confidence in the method that we would predicate all other analyses on it (such as performing ANOVAs only on the "cultural competence" scores obtained from the consensus analysis).

[3] This idea was suggested to us by James McIntosh.

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