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## Dressing History: Costume as Communication in Massachusetts Historical Tours

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DRESSING HISTORY: COSTUME AS  
COMMUNICATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

HISTORICAL TOURS

BY

MEREDITH WILCOX-LEVINE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

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2015

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS  
OF  
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DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to determine the dual role of costume in performance beyond that of visual entertainment, both as a creator of “historical” space and as a conduit for the transfer of meaning as observed on costumed guides in the spectacle of guided tours in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts. A series of site visits, tour shadowing, questionnaires and interviews with tour guides and tourists was used to gain an understanding of the way in which costumes assist live performance in creating an educational, historical atmosphere. Conclusions concerning the success of costume as a non-verbal communication tool, a promoter of visibility in an urban landscape, and the trend surrounding the objectification and dehumanization of costumed guides is discussed and analyzed.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, many museums and cultural institutions have been forced to shift their methods of presentation to capture the interest of tourists. This shift is among other things evidenced in the increased use of historical costume at tourist and heritage sites, in particular, living history museums. First introduced in the late nineteenth century and later popularized in the latter half of the twentieth century, living history museums place an emphasis on recreating the past in both physical structure and human experience. This pairing of historic locations with costumed interpreters to educate as well as “contribute to atmosphere” has been extensively studied, as will be discussed in the literature review (Malcolm-Davies 2004, 279). Meanwhile, historically costumed tour guides in urban, modern settings without permanent sites with a direct physical representation of an historic nature have not been similarly examined. Until now, no studies have focused on the costume itself as a device for education, entertainment and communication in metropolitan historical tours. An argument can be made that tour groups create their own “ethnographic objects” in the form of costumed guides to both draw visitors’ attention and to transfer information (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 3).

Through a series of site visits and interviews with tour guides, tourists and tour company officials, the researcher aimed to gain an understanding of the way in which costumes assist live performance in creating an educational, historical atmosphere. New England is a prime region in which to find examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial

recreations, with a large number of historic sites and reenactments of events of the American Revolution. The tourism industry capitalizes on this rich area of history. This period of time and group of people are the bread and butter of Boston's tourism narrative, even claiming that their city to be "one of the most important places in the USA's past and present" ([historictours.com/boston](http://historictours.com/boston)). Four historical tour companies who utilize costume work directly with the Boston Common, and several other costumed tour companies exists in Boston and the nearby towns of Cambridge, Lexington, Concord and Salem.

The nature of this promotion often brings up the concept of authenticity, both in the retelling of history and the visual elements used to tell the story. When it comes to historical costume, the authenticity debate can become overwhelming and very technical. For the purposes of this study, I define "authenticity" as faithfulness and accuracy in reproducing and wearing clothing that would have been worn by a specific individual on a particular occasion during a specific period of time in the early American past. The part played by production, design, construction and purchase of costume elements will also be examined by interviewing those who wear and create them.

While the historical accuracy of the costume worn by each tour guide is certainly of significance, the united whole of the guide and costume and, in some cases the character they embody, are of primary concern. Studying the performance of a costumed guide often has the tendency to devolve from an observation of human interaction to a critique in performativity. It should be stressed that in this research, the primary focus was the costume and character presented by the guide, and not the

historical accuracy of the narrative and performance of each guide. While it can be difficult to separate costume and performance, the researcher was most interested in addressing the efficacy of costume in drawing the audience's attention to narrative and maintaining a connection to the past during a historical tour. Observations of behaviors or activities, particularly non-verbal ones, may be crucial to find evidence of non-verbal communication.

Limiting factors in this research include: the number of tour groups that responded to research inquiries, the number of patrons attending tours, and the relatively young age of one of the responding tour companies. Overall, this study should benefit both current and future groups who utilize historic dress, and identify better methods to use costume as non-verbal communication between people.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role of performance and interpretation in museums, living history sites and other cultural sites has been examined and studied by scholars in a variety of disciplines; anthropology, public history, heritage, performance and tourism studies, sociology, ethnography and philosophy. Connecting such performances to the implementation and use of historic costume required a review of existing literature published by scholars from around the world.

#### **Reintroduction of Heritage**

In *Interpreting Our Heritage*, public history scholar Tilden Freeman defines interpretation as “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information” (Freeman 1977, 8). It is this need for communication that Freeman stresses above all else, and information is secondary, in order to avoid a “sterile” experience for the visitor (Freeman 1977, 9). The “new museology,” a shift in museum focus toward the need for accessibility of culture by all levels of museum patronage, has increased the importance of interpretation in museum and historical settings since the 1970s (Ross 2004, 84). The term and concept of “cultural heritage” has been defined differently by many scholars, and is being reconsidered with the influx of interpretive spaces like living museums and heritage sites. According to cultural anthropologist Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels, cultural heritage can be seen as both “relationships forged between

past and present,” and as “creative processes, where the past is constantly remade in the present” (Samuels 2014). Jane Malcolm-Davies, a heritage tourism scholar, lists “heritage” as the last of three successive management approaches developed since 1850, used to “transform a resource into a product for consumption in the marketplace” (Malcolm-Davies 2010, 279). History and heritage as consumer products will be further discussed in relation to tourism.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s work on the “agency of display” suggests that exhibition is not simply the displaying of heritage, but its production. Focusing on practices in the late 1990s, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, a professor of performance studies, used case studies to examine the performativity of objects, and the constructed autonomy and interest promoted in artifact display. This examination includes the genre of living history museums, where both the constructed surroundings and the interpreters in costume can be considered objects.

Formats of presentation have progressed since the introduction of the “new museology.” Museum theatre is one of the most widely expanded genres, and follows Freeman’s principals of interpretation. Museum theatre, which exists in a variety of forms and atmospheres, seeks to “evoke emotion for the purpose of learning” (Bridal 2004, 4). Whether it is an improvised piece performed in a museum gallery, a scripted demonstration with special effects, or a fully costumed performer embodying a real person from history, museum theatre utilizes performance as a tool to “transform space, mood, or point of view” for an audience (Bridal 2004, 3). In this medium, it is possible to facilitate a different kind of communication. “Performance’s liveness and impermanence allow for a process of exchange—between artists and audiences,

between the past and the present—where new social formations emerge” (Roman 2005, 1).

## **Performance**

The historic walking tours of Boston can be considered “cultural performance” as defined by the anthropologist Victor Turner. In *The Anthropology of Performance*, Turner addressed the theory of cultural performance, the semiotics and signals found within it, and both the verbal and non-verbal communication cultural performance might contain. The key element Turner isolates about cultural performances is that they “are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture ... but may themselves be active agencies of change” (Turner 1987, 24). In light of this, the manner in which the propagators of cultural performance present themselves and the historical facts they convey are of great importance in preserving cultural heritage. The performance highlights the costumes worn, and the importance of non-verbal communication such costume can impart. This is reinforced by the sociologist John Urry, who claims audience perspective, or “gaze,” is “constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs” (Urry 1990, 3). Turner also notes, quoting anthropologist Milton Singer, that “‘cultural performances’ are composed of what he calls ‘cultural media’—modes of communication which include not only spoken language, but such nonlinguistic media as ‘song, dancing, acting out, and graphic and plastic arts—combined in many ways to express and communicate [the content of Indian culture]’ (Turner 1987, 23). This indicates that non-verbal communication can be as essential in cultural performance as verbal cues, especially in cases where a language barrier may exist. Dress can be considered as a form of media in this context.

In terms of performance, the costume and the person who wears it are often seen as a united whole. Theatre and performance studies scholar Aoife Monks' work in *The Actor in Costume* concerns the "double vision" that occurs when an actor dresses for theatrical purposes (Monks 2010, 3). The argument of dress and appearance as non-verbal communication is more complicated in a theatre setting, since the control of this visual message belongs to several people, specifically the director and costume designer, not just the actor. Costume is often the go-to design element for depicting a historical period on stage (Monks 2010, 21). Furthermore, the understanding and success of creating this historical period is partly the job of the audience. Monks bases this on the idea that "the 'historical body' is the product of the social belief systems circulating around the body. However, the historical body may not resemble a body on the street, but is rather representative of the fantasies and contradictions surrounding the body in the wider culture. Costume is central to the construction of the historical body on the stage" (Monks 2010, 24). It is the knowledge and "fantasies" of the audience that allows for the suspension of disbelief and creation of a believable historical space on the stage. Monks further addresses the uses, perception and effects that costume can have between the actor, the costume and the audience, and examines the "porous" relationship between the three. Costume is seen as visual enticement for the audience to enter the necessary agreement to suspend reality and allow the "play" between actor, audience and content to take place.

Monks also focused on the effect that costume has on the audience's sense of the actor's body, and the effect the costume has on the actor him/herself. "The costume is the spectator's means to access the actor's body, and is also a means for the

actor to access the world of performance” (Monks 2010, 20). Monks’ proposed connection and communication between interpreter and audience connects back to Samuels, who states that cultural heritage “offers opportunities for social change, with the long arc of history providing a vivid repertoire of past examples for fashioning future possibilities” (Samuels 2014).

Monks stresses the idea that “to talk about costume in distinction from the actor and the audience, we would have to speak about a bunch of dead fabric on a hanger, or think of the actor as a living paper doll” (Monks 2010, 3). In this way, separating an interpreter from their costume would change the perspective of each half. Knowing this, is it important to look at the interpreter and costume as a whole initially, particularly when an audience is involved. During interviews, the two pieces can then be separated and analyzed “backstage,” away from the “complex act of looking” performed by the audience (Monks 2010, 3).

A guide’s or actor’s thoughts and opinions of their own costume are meaningful observations to address, as Monks states that in the “third world between actor and dressed character,” the costume “is not the character’s clothes, and not the man’s, but the actor’s work clothes: the uniform or overalls that they do their job in” (Monks 2010, 19). It is in this consideration that we see the dual nature of the costume: its meaning to the wearer and to the observer. Details of the garments worn by guides, such as place of origin, the designer/fabricator, the facilities in which the costume is stored, and the person(s) responsible for upkeep and cleanliness are all factors which influence both the physical costume and the person who wears it. Details of these factors effect understanding of all three “worlds” presented by



Monks—those of the actor, the patron, and the world of the theatrical piece in which such pieces exist and are seen.

### **The Tourist Perspective**

Performance, cultural or otherwise, requires some sort of audience. Tourism is one of many industries that utilize cultural performance for the promotion of heritage. Cities like Boston, whose roots were planted decades before the War of Independence, capitalize on the history and mythologized heritage of early America. “As the modern consciousness of fragmentation and subsequent nostalgia for the integrity of the past has spread, so has the interest in retracing origins. Tourist attractions have quickly been constructed to gratify this fascination with beginnings” (Lindholm 2008, 45). Through “heritage—the meanings attached to the past in the present – institutional actors have come to see the careful use of the past as perhaps ‘the most important single resource for international tourism’ and city remodeling” (Silk 2007, 256). The draw of such histories and historical elements is of interest to many in the realm of tourism. An exploration of tourist theory is required to have any understanding of the tourist industry and tourists themselves. Professor Dean MacCannell’s work illustrates the manner in which tourist attractions are created, and how the modern tourist connects with and consumes a manufactured cultural experience, as well as theory on “staged authenticity” and the regions of touristic space. He states that “all tourist attractions are cultural experiences,” (MacCannell 1976, 23-24) and that “the current structural development of society is marked by the appearance everywhere of touristic space” (MacCannell 1976, 100).

The authenticity of a touristic experience is extremely complicated and varies greatly depending on the audience and the goal of the tourist site/experience. Scholar Charles Lindholm argues for multiple viewpoints in each circumstance of analysis. “The rapid worldwide growth of historical and cultural theme parks also is another response to the desire for an ethnic/racial/religious/national mooring in a floating world” (Lindholm 2008, 45).

The role of tourism in the preservation of cultural identity has been, and will continue to be, explored from a variety of perspectives. “Cultural Identity and Tourism,” a 2002 article written by scholars from New Zealand and Canada, focuses on the needs surrounding a sustainable indigenous tourism. They point to the fact that in order to “provide a meaningful tourist experience, managers of cultural attractions must be careful to present unique aspects of cultural identity and lifestyle while also respectfully preserving them for the benefit of the indigenous communities” (McIntosh, Hinch and Ingram, 39). Their argument regarding authenticity stresses a need for it in order to prevent “bastardization” or misrepresentation of a traditional culture (39). As is the case in many areas that promote local history and culture to an international tourism market, biases in terms of “whose” history is promoted can be problematic. McIntosh and her co-authors highlight this, stating that “the cultural experience offered in a commodified tourist setting may be authentic or a careful representation of certain aspects of a group’s identity” (MacIntosh et al 2002, 41). This connects directly to urban historical tourism, since the perspective of a particular group controls the viewpoint (and version of history) presented to the public. In this light, consistency in the definition and concept of authenticity is unlikely.

## **The Authenticity Debate**

Authenticity is a complicated subject, with a variety of definitions and meanings. Philosophy, psychology, social science, and history are just a few of the disciplinary approaches observed that comment on the idea of authenticity. Scholars like Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher labeled an existentialist after his death, focus on self-identity and “choosing the nature of one’s existence and identity” (Yacobi 2012). Heidegger is seen as a seminal thinker in the field of existential phenomenology. For Heidegger, “the things in lived experience always have more to them than what we can see; The presence of things for us is not their being, but merely their being interpreted according to a particular system of meaning and purpose” (Dreyfus, 1991).

Scholars have approached the concept of authenticity in a tourism environment in a multitude of ways. Some have broken the concept down into three theoretical perspectives in tourism literature; “objective, constructive and postmodern” (Rickly-Boyd, 2). Anthropologists have challenged both the definition of authenticity and the capacity of established institutions that claim to be authentic to truly embody an authentic “American national identity” (Gable and Handler, 1996, 568). This critique has been primarily aimed at Colonial Williamsburg, where the overall goal of historical accuracy falls short in the eyes of many critics, many of whom believe that the living history site is too clean, both physically and metaphorically (Gable and Handler, 570). The historic site has been said to lack both the “filth and stench” of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century town, and fails to acknowledge “unpleasantness like slavery, disease and

class oppression” (ibid). It is here that the terms authenticity and historical accuracy appear to overlap and become nearly synonymous.

Previous philosophical discussions concerned with the narratives of living history sites and approaches have defined authenticity as “isomorphism between a living history activity or event, and that piece of the past it is meant to re-create” (Handler and Saxton, 242). These authors also explore a “second type of authenticity,” where “living historians and reenactors seek a self-realization, which suggests the kindred notions of self-integration and self-transparency” (Handler and Saxton, 1988, 248). This approach focuses on self-discovery and identity experienced by both the living historian and the audience, and a general understanding of that shift by both groups. “The relationship of Heideggerian authenticity to living history lies in this: Living historians share with other moderns the notion that an authentic life is a storied or emplotted life. Their ideal of self-realization in an integrated, complete and fully individuated life is precisely what can be found in modern narratives, whether historical or fictional” (Handler and Saxton, 250). Heidegger’s approach, as well as that of other philosophers, focuses on the authenticity of narrative rather than physical attributes. This approach would be beneficial for any living historian or group in creating the narrative and character to be seen and experienced by patrons, in that authenticity involves not only accuracy, but ability to tell the story. Focus on the more demonstrable approaches and definitions of authenticity, those being historical accuracy of dress and the overall “historical space” environment created for living history tours, is necessary here.

## **Living History Sites and Historical Characters**

The first living history site opened in Stockholm, Sweden in 1891. Folklorist Arthur Hazelius, inspired by exhibitions of the Paris Exposition of 1878, sought to “preserve the traditions of rural Sweden,” and collected buildings and reconstructed them on site in Skansen (Malcolm-Davies 2010, 280). It was here that costumed demonstrators performed customs and traditions of a multitude of cultural groups, as it was Hazelius’ belief that artifacts could not be truly understood when removed from their context (Bridal 2004, 12). The concept of “open-air museums” with historical structures spread around the world, though the inclusion of costumed interpreters was not necessarily used at each site. Colonial Williamsburg, initially created in the 1932, was the first such site in the United States, and has gone through significant changes since WWII (Bridal 2004, 12; Tyler-McGraw 1998, 54). Similar sites in New England were established in the post-war era, like Plimoth Plantation (1947) and Old Sturbridge Village (1946).

Historical characters are one of the primary museum theatre approaches, says performance and interpretation scholar Tessa Bridal, and can serve as a site’s connection between objects and visitors. “Historical characters represent real, once living people, brought to life through the power of theatre to share their lives, work and times with an audience” (Bridal 2004, 21). This style of performance is a common sight at historical locations throughout the United States, and has been extensively studied at living history sites like Colonial Williamsburg (O’Toole 1984; Chappell 1989; Gable and Handler, 1996; Tyler-McGraw 1998; Magelssen, 2006), Plimoth Plantation (Chappell 1989; Magelssen 2006), and Old Sturbridge Village (Chappell

1989; Magelssen 2006; Becker and George 2012) in Massachusetts, and many other living history sites globally (Schell 1985; Carson 1986; Tivers 2002). Much of this research focuses on the performance and cultural aspects, with only an occasional mention of the costumes worn by each interpreter. Jane Malcolm-Davies identified this gap in research in 2004, and her research focused on the formation of costumes for living history museums, both the technical details surrounding the expenditure on such items and the educational value perceived by visitors who consume it. As seen above, further research in performance and interpretation has been completed since Malcolm-Davies' study, but the focus on costume is still secondary in focus. A study regarding corsets worn by interpreters at Living History Farms in Iowa, and the physical and intellectual effects the corsets had upon their wearer, was completed in 1998 (Gau 1999). Yet more studies concern reenactors (Poppy 1997; Gapps 2009), persons who wear period costume in reenactments of historic battles or atmospheres as a hobby or for entertainment. During the writing of this thesis, folklore scholar Pravina Shukla completed in-depth research surrounding the current practices performed by both interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg and the staff of The Costume Design Center, who research, create and maintain costumes for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Shukla 2015, 167). Despite this new publication, a gap still exists in the research of costumes used in historical tours, particularly in an urban setting.

### **Nouns of Use**

As seen in the literature cited above there is no consistent use of a term for the individual dressed in historic costume. Nouns such as interpreter, historian, actor,

player, reenactor, guide and docent have been used to describe the individual. The specific word used can be a hotly contested issue. Many in the profession are not trained actors, and to be called so is interpreted negatively. Malcolm-Davies found “this resistance to a theatrical definition is threefold: in reality, few costumed interpreters are actors; it protects against the fierce criticism of costumed interpretation within the heritage community that tends to assume that anything theatrical is fake; and challenges the suggestion that activities involving historic costume are frivolous and foolish” (Malcolm-Davies 2004, 281).

As can be seen above, the complexity in the pursuit of historically inspired non-verbal communication is substantial. The concepts of authenticity, identity and heritage, performance and tourism each play a role in interpretation and historic costume as it applies to costumed tour companies. The following research illustrates the connection between each concept and discipline.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches, namely interviews with costumed (and one non-costumed) tour guides and creators of various tour companies, and qualitative surveys filled out by tour patrons. Detailed observations of the guides, the patrons and the surrounding public during each tour was noted by the researcher, coded for themes and analyzed.<sup>1</sup> Observations on the storage and dressing spaces used by costumed guides were also taken into account.

Analysis was based on grounded theory, supported by in-depth observations, as described by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973). Geertz presents, in the context of ethnographic investigation, the need for a “thick description<sup>2</sup>” to make informed and educated interpretations of the cultural objects and ideas around them. Thorough observations and background analysis lead to more detailed notes, and in turn, a better understanding from which to critique and analyze. Geertz’s approach will guide the researcher to assemble as ‘thick’ a description of site visits and observations as possible.

#### **Costumed Tour Companies**

For this research, the scope of costumed historical tours focused specifically in urban Boston and Cambridge. Following approval from URI’s Institutional Review Board, five historic tour companies that utilize costume in Massachusetts were

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<sup>1</sup> Guide, patron, and company official questionnaires, interview questions, and the tour observation checklist can be found in the Appendices.

<sup>2</sup> The detailed notes collected by an ethnographer can change the view of ethnographic research from a observational task to that of an “interpretive activity” (Geertz 1976, 314).



contacted for study; three companies responded, one in Cambridge (*Cambridge Historical Tours*) and two in Boston (*The Freedom Trail Foundation* and *Lessons on Liberty*). For comparison, one Boston tour company that does not utilize costumed guides was contacted and agreed to participate (Boston By Foot), bringing the number of tour companies studied to four.

Three of the studied tour groups focus on the Boston Freedom Trail, a collection of 16 Boston landmarks of significance during the Revolutionary War such as Paul Revere's House, the Old North Church and the Old South Meetinghouse. Most of these famous buildings and locations exist in and amongst modern buildings and streets of downtown Boston, creating pockets of "touristic space" throughout the city (MacCannell 1976, 100). The route was established as "a Boston tradition in 1951" (Wilson 1996). Information regarding the Freedom Trail can be found on the City of Boston's government website. Self-guided tours and other tours available through the "Boston Commons Visitors Center" are cited. The website directs visitors to the Freedom Trail Foundation website for more information on tours. For those who might prefer a self-guided tour, emphasis is presented in that "since the past and the present live alongside the Trail, its visitors have the opportunity to see the City as it truly is. Many visitors prefer to linger and study the many exhibits, thus a full day or more can be devoted to browsing along the Trail" (cityofboston.gov).

#### Freedom Trail Foundation

Those visitors who want a more engaging guided tour are directed to The Freedom Trail Foundation. Established in 1964, the Foundation is advertised as "one of the most signature tourist experiences in New England," and an "authentic experience of history... a vital part of Boston's growing tourist economy and

educational outreach” (thefreedomtrail.org). The Freedom Trail Foundation is responsible for the preservation, marketing and promotion of the 16 sites along the Trail, and offers a variety of tours to the public and private parties, each with a costumed guide. Public tours with this company can include over 40 patrons per tour, though guides have no minimum attendance requirement.

The guides, otherwise known as the “Freedom Trail Players,” each enact a “regular citizen of Boston and Massachusetts,” and can “play the more famous men and women of the Revolution” or “men and women of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries” during special events (Freedomtrail.org). Each “player” has a biography on the website, which includes birthdate, background information, profession, anecdotal descriptions, and a death date, and includes a picture of each “player” in costume. The presence of the photograph creates a solid connection between character and “player,” though it is unclear whether any one “player” is the sole guide to use each historical identity. A total of 35 unique biographies appear on the website. The “Walk Into History” Freedom Trail Foundation tour of The Freedom Trail begins at the Visitor’s Center in the Boston Common and ends at Faneuil Hall. The “Reverse Walk Into History” tour, on the other hand, reverses the starting and ending locations. Tickets cost \$14 for adults, and can be purchased online or at the starting point of each tour.

### Lessons on Liberty

Lessons on Liberty is the smallest of the tour companies included in this study with only five tour guides. These tour guides are advertised as “classically trained historians, not actors” (lessonsonliberty.com). The website also stresses that each guide wears “Authentic Clothing, Not Any Costume: Our clothes are period correct

and meet the strict standards set by Minuteman National Park for its colonial interpreters” (lessonsonliberty.com).

Background information on each guide is available on the company’s website. Each member of the group has a background in history, whether by training at a “living history museum” or at university, and two of the historians teach history in a secondary school environment, while a third teaches college level classes. The founder of the company and several fellow guides also participate in Revolutionary War era reenactments throughout New England, and the founder also works in costume in “Boston’s only Living History Exhibit,” “The Printing Office of Edes & Gill,” a working colonial print shop of his creation, located in Boston’s North End. Three of the other historians are male, and one is female.

Tours given by Lessons on Liberty guides begin at the Visitor’s Center in the Boston Common, and end near Faneuil Hall. The time and focus spent on each significant site along the Freedom Trail route varies with each guide. Group sizes vary. Tickets cost \$13.95 for adults, and can be purchased online or at the starting point of each tour.

### Cambridge Historical Tours

Founded in 2011 by two former Freedom Trail Players, Cambridge Historical Tours offer both public and private tours of Harvard, “the country’s Classiest Campus,” and the surrounding area with “Costumed guides” (cambridgehistoricaltours.org). Six different tours are available to the public, and last about 90 minutes. The company and its “professional storytellers” are unaffiliated with the university, and embody late nineteenth and early twentieth century citizens of Cambridge and students of Harvard, some of historical note and prestige. The website

describes the guides as “trained, versatile performers who make every tour a unique, immersive experience. We encourage our guides to make each tour their own, providing the unique perspective of their historical character, with engaging humor and infectious enthusiasm. The emphasis is on good storytelling and historical accuracy” (cambridgehistoricaltours.org). Biographies for each historical character are found on the company’s website. The website also makes it easy for a potential visitor to see the days and times that particular guides/characters are leading tours. Guides lead groups of all sizes. Tickets cost \$15 for adults, and can be purchased online or at the starting point of each tour.

### Boston By Foot

Boston By Foot offers nine “classic” tours during the summer season, which include a combination of historical sight-seeing from the eighteenth century to the present and tours of specific Boston areas like Beacon Hill, Back Bay and the North End (bostonbyfoot.org). Many of the tours include Boston Freedom Trail sites, and one tour, “Heart of the Freedom Trail,” specifically follows the Boston Freedom Trail route. Several special “Tours of the Month” and private tours are also available. Boston By Foot tour guides (also called “docents”) are local volunteers who complete a 6-week course with Boston By Foot veterans and staff on Boston history in preparation to giving tours (bostonbyfoot.org). As the company has over 200 docents who give tours, the backgrounds are mixed. Docents do not have a specific required uniform, but each docent is given an accessory or small garment with the company’s logo. According to the website, many volunteer guides have been with the company “for more than 10, 20 or even 30 years,” dating back to the company’s establishment in 1976. The company prefers to keep tour groups small and intimate, with guides

often leading only 2 or 3 patrons. The Heart of the Freedom Trail tour begins opposite King's Chapel and ends at Faneuil Hall. Tickets cost \$14 for adults, and can be purchased online or directly from the guide at the starting point of each tour.

### **Tour Patrons**

Following approval from URI's Institutional Review Board, tour patron respondents were recruited at the starting point of each shadowed tour prior to the beginning of the tour. Potential respondents were approached by the researcher and asked if they would be willing to complete a short, anonymous survey after the tour was completed. Demographic of age, gender and nationality differed with each shadowed tour, but the researcher did not recruit patrons under the age of 18. If the tour was well attended, and the numbers were such that the researcher was not able to address all potential respondents before the start of the tour, the researcher addressed the patrons at the conclusion of each tour, asking for anyone willing to fill out a survey regarding the tour. An information sheet concerning the study and a survey sheet were distributed to each willing patron (no more than 5 per tour group for increased diversity of participating tour guides). The information sheet included the same information as the disclosure sheet used with interviewees, but did not require a signature. The survey questions featured multiple choice and yes/no questions. Over the course of 13 costumed tours, a total of 41 patron surveys were collected. The same protocol was used with patrons of the two non-costumed tours attended by the researcher, and a total of 50 responses were gathered.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Questionnaire responses were manually entered on SurveyMonkey.com for processing.

## **Tour Observations**

Prior to following tours and requesting feedback from guides or patrons, the researcher shadowed a costumed guide tour in order to gain additional insights and observations that might support the qualitative interview and questionnaire data. A checklist of events and behaviors was devised, and is included in the appendices. After the conclusion of fieldwork, the results were compiled for analysis. Information from costumed tours was compiled separately from the non-costumed tour information.

## **Interviews**

Costumed tour guide interviewees were selected by having each interviewee refer or suggest others (“snowball sampling”), beginning with the founder or head of each tour company. The participants were initially contacted through a password-protected e-mail account, and were asked to consent to participate in the study. This introductory e-mail included requirements for qualified participants, which included United States citizenship, a minimum of 18 years of age, and at least one year of costumed guide work. Those candidates who agreed and met the requirements received a second e-mail to determine a convenient time and place to conduct the interview. This e-mail included attachments of the participant agreement form and a pre-interview question sheet to fill out. The pre-interview sheet asked for the participant’s background information and included demographic questions such as age, gender, years worked as a costumed guide, and any post-secondary education. Each question was presented in multiple choice form. Participants were asked to return the completed pre-interview questions at the interview and bring either their costume or pictures of their costume to the interview for discussion. Those who did not

complete the questionnaire prior to meeting for an interview were then asked to complete the questionnaire prior to the start of the interview.

The consent form for the interview was either signed by the participant ahead of time or at the scheduled interview before recording began. Once in the field, consent was readily agreed, and any questions regarding the consent form were answered by the researcher prior to recording. Interview questions probed for information about each guide's job parameters, both personal and for any character they portray, the patrons with whom they interact, the character(s) they portray, the costume they wear, how the costume was created, and any decision-making they had in the process. The participants were asked how they feel while in costume and any effects the costume may have on their sense of self/identity. Probing statements included "so tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_", "where did this \_\_\_\_\_ come from", "why did you choose to \_\_\_\_\_", "how do you see \_\_\_\_\_" and/or "tell me about this process." Questions developed from the tour patron surveys were also introduced for discussion during the interview.

To increase the costumed guide data pool, a tour guide questionnaire identical to the pre-interview questionnaires given to guides to be interviewed was presented to each costumed guide at the conclusion of their tour. The questionnaire asked for the participant's background information and included demographic questions such as age, gender, years worked as a costumed guide, any post-secondary education, and the term each guide used to identify themselves during tours. Due to the sensitivity surrounding this terminology, the researcher used the term "costumed guide" for all persons who perform this task.

The interviews with company founders, presidents, or education heads were conducted in a similar manner. The participants were initially contacted through a password-protected e-mail account, and were asked consent to participate in the study. If agreed, a second e-mail was sent to determine a convenient time and place to conduct the interview. This e-mail included attachments of the participant agreement form and a pre-interview question sheet to fill out. The pre-interview sheet asked for the participant's background information including position in the company, years worked with the company, and financial figures regarding the costumed guide program. Each of these questions were multiple choice and participants were asked to return the completed pre-interview questions at the interview.

As with the guide interviews, the need for verbal explanation of the consent document did not present itself, as consent was readily agreed to and the document already signed. Any questions regarding the consent document were answered by the researcher prior to recording. Questions probed for information about the job parameters of costumed guides, how to costumed guide program embodies or advances the company's mission statement, the character(s) they portray, the costume they wear, how the costumes are created, and any decision-making guides have in the process. Probing statements included "so tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_", "where did this \_\_\_\_\_ come from", "why did you choose to \_\_\_\_\_", "how do you see \_\_\_\_\_" and/or "tell me about this process."

Several Boston By Foot tours were shadowed by the researcher. After the conclusion of each tour, the researcher approached the guide and asked for a short interview. Questions focused on the guide's background, their view of their tour



format and how they feel about groups where the guides dress in costume. These questions, and additional questions surrounding the choice of dress used by Boston By Foot guides, were also asked of the manager of the company.

All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and the recording will be erased after the thesis is defended. All data will be stored in the Principal Investigator's office (Dr. Karl Aspelund, Department of Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design) for three years after protocol has ended. All interviews are considered confidential, and the names or characters of the participants will not be listed in the results of this research.

### **Costume Pieces and Facilities**

Interviews with company officials allowed the researcher to view the facilities used to store costume pieces and serve as a dressing room for costumed guides. Observations of these facilities support testimony gathered during interviews with guides and company officials, and provide insight into how each company utilizes costume.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

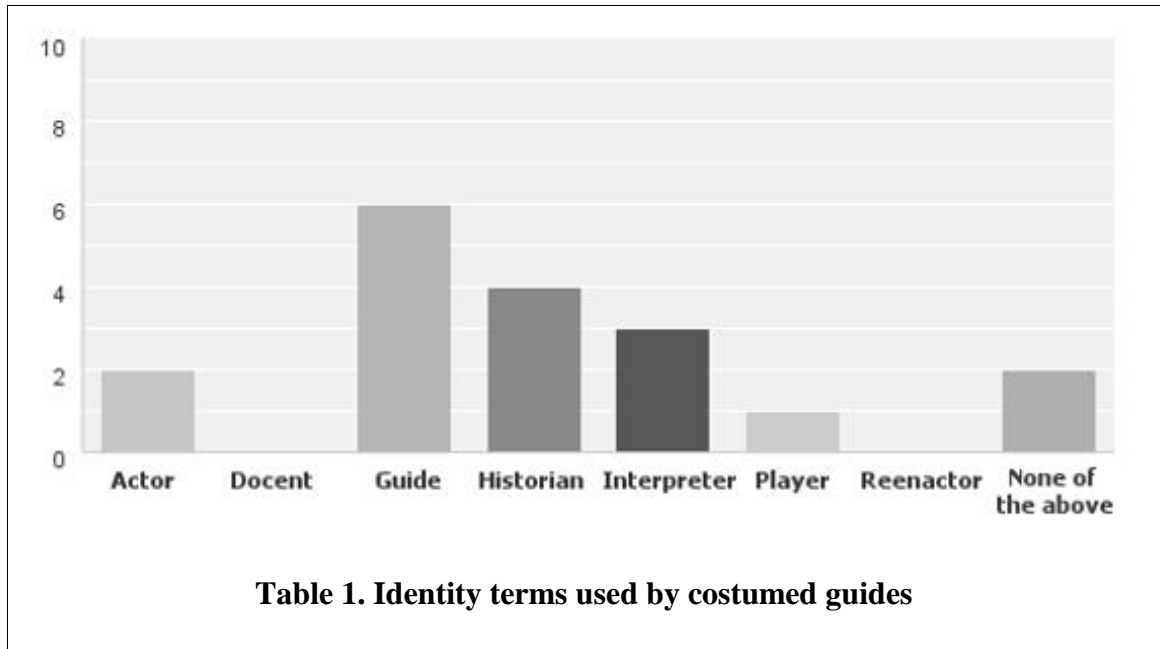
#### **Costumed Guides: Defining the Job**

Of the twelve costumed guides who filled out the questionnaire, six were between the ages of 18 and 29, four were between the ages of 30 and 49, and two were between the ages of 50 and 69. Eight guides identified themselves as male, three as female, and one as “other”. The “other” response was selected by a guide who filled out the questionnaire as her character, who was a woman pretending to be a man. Five of the respondents have worked as costumed guides for 0 to 5 years, five for 5 to 10 years, and two have worked for 11 to 15 years. Three of the twelve guides who filled out the questionnaire selected more than one of the identity terms provided by the questionnaire (Table 1).<sup>4</sup> “Guide” was the most popular choice, selected by six respondents. “Historian” was selected by four respondents, “Interpreter” by three, and the terms “actor” and “none of the above” were chosen by two guides each. The title of “Player” was selected once, and the terms “docent” and “reenactor” were not chosen at all. The respondents who chose “None of the above” filled in their own definitions of “Teacher” and “Professional Storyteller”.

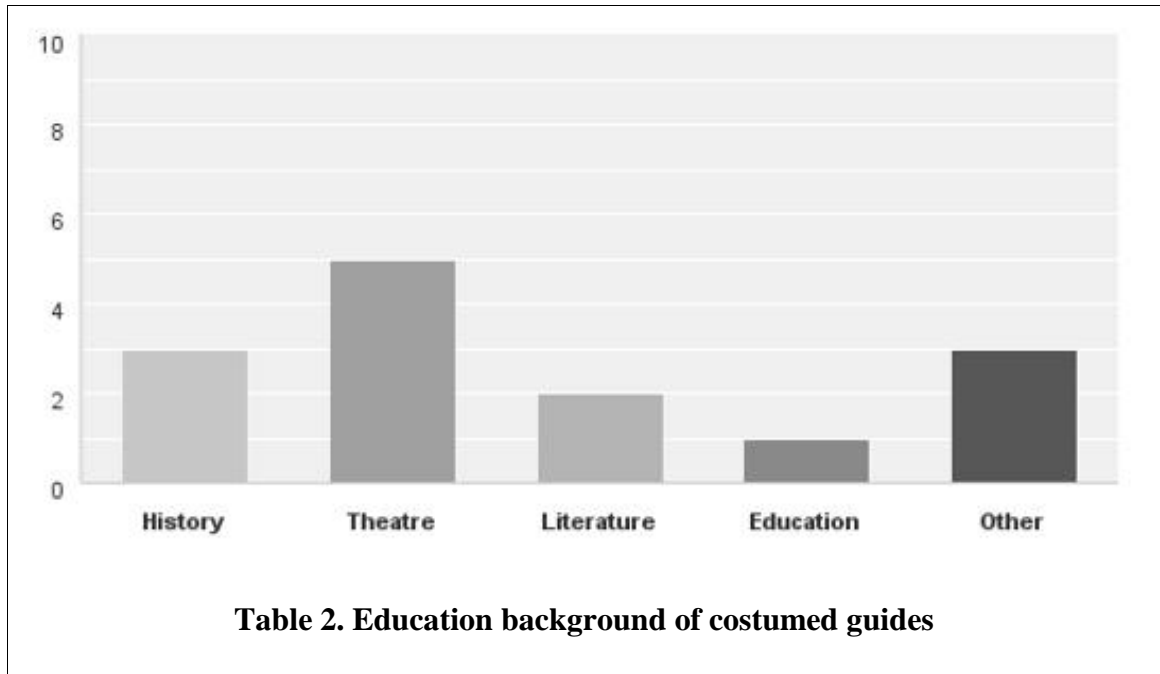
The chosen noun is only one piece of the puzzle. No matter what the title, the task of the tour guide is to inform the members of their tour group about the Boston and Cambridge of the past. The method varies with each guide, and style of delivery and connection can be unique to each guide. “I define my job as being kind of a

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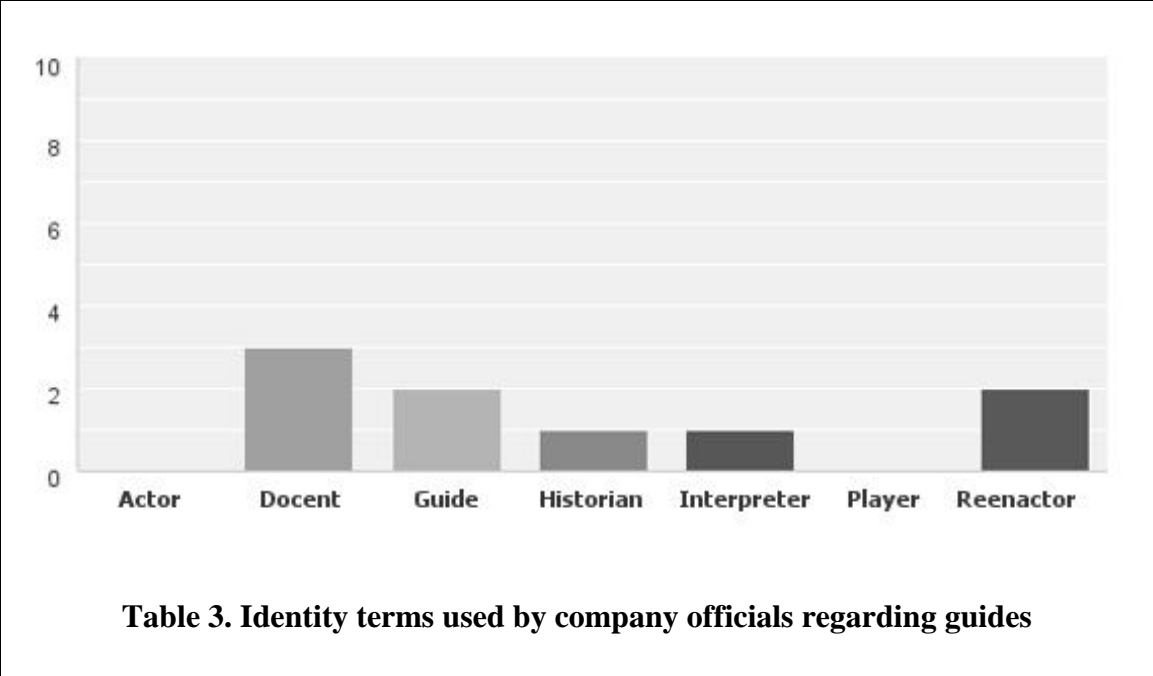
<sup>4</sup> The identity term choices were directly taken from the websites and other promotional literature of each tour company.



catalyst from history and study to the public. My job, I think, is to tell them about history...the events of history in the Boston area, but also to dispel mythology about it” (costumed guide 4481). Another guide believes the costumed guide’s role is “basically a glorified storyteller. I feel I do a lot of myth-busting, and debunking a lot of, sort of, legends. So I sort of try to bring it [history] to life before their eyes, I think it was very dramatic when it happened, and the problem is that it’s no longer taught in a dramatic way. So, it’s sort of lost its, uh, its allure to people, unless they have a really inherent interest in history” (costumed guide 5979). Another guide sees her role in a straight, to-the point view. “I mean, to me, I’m a tour guide. It’s pretty clear. I think the best guides of any kind, whether you’re doing bus tours or whatever, are good storytellers. So that’s kind of how I think about it. Yeah—I’m a tour guide” (costumed guide 2643).



The pool of costumed guides who filled out the questionnaire were predominantly college graduates, with eight having earned a secondary degree, three who attended college and didn't graduate or are still in school, and one who did not attend college (Table 2). Of the eleven guides who have or are currently attending college, five pursued or are pursuing a degree in theatre. Three respondents selected "History" or "Other" as their major, two selected "Literature" and the remaining guide selected "Education". Those who selected "Other" identified their studies as "Late 18th century furniture making" and "Law". Discussion with company officials identified actors and theatre studies majors as the targeted background for guides for two groups, while one group specifically employs guides with a background in history. "Finding people to work who have my same passion is really difficult. I have two requirements: mostly it seems I'm hiring people with degrees in history... However, if you're a reenactor, and you have the passion for this and you seem knowledgeable, that also works for me" (company official 2358).



**Company Officials**

Of the five company officials interviewed, three have worked for their company between 0 and 5 years, one has worked for 6 to 11 years, and one has worked for their company between 11 and 15 years. The title or terms used for guides are inconsistent, even among costumed tour companies, and four of the five company officials chose more than one term for their employees. Of the identity terms provided by the questionnaire, the term “Docents” was selected by three officials, “Guide” and “Reenactor” by two each, and “Historian” and “Interpreter” by one each. No officials selected “Actor” or “Player” as a term for their employees (Table 3), though the term “Player” is specifically used to describe the guides on one company’s website. Two of the five company officials include working as a guide as part of their job, and one has previously done so with a different organization. The remaining two have not themselves worked as a guide. Two of the interviewed officials hold the title of

company President and two others the title of Executive Director. The final interviewed executive serves as the Business Manager for their company.

### **The Costumes**

Two companies that use costume base their interpretations in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Basic costumes for women are comprised of a shift or long undershirt, a set of stays, a petticoat skirt, a gown, bed gown or jacket, a fichu or neck handkerchief, stockings, shoes and a cap with or without a hat. The basic men's attire consists of a long-sleeved shirt, a stock, cravat or other neckwear, breeches, a vest or waistcoat, a coat, stockings, shoes and a hat. Practical short gown & petticoat combinations were the most common costume for women in the colonies. Shifts, shirts and some types of neckwear would have been made of linen, and most outer garments were wool, though some women's gowns were of linen. Only the most fancy dresses were made of silk, though men's waistcoats were at times worked in silk since men's coats were worn open and the waistcoat was visible (Tortora and Eubanks 2010, 275).

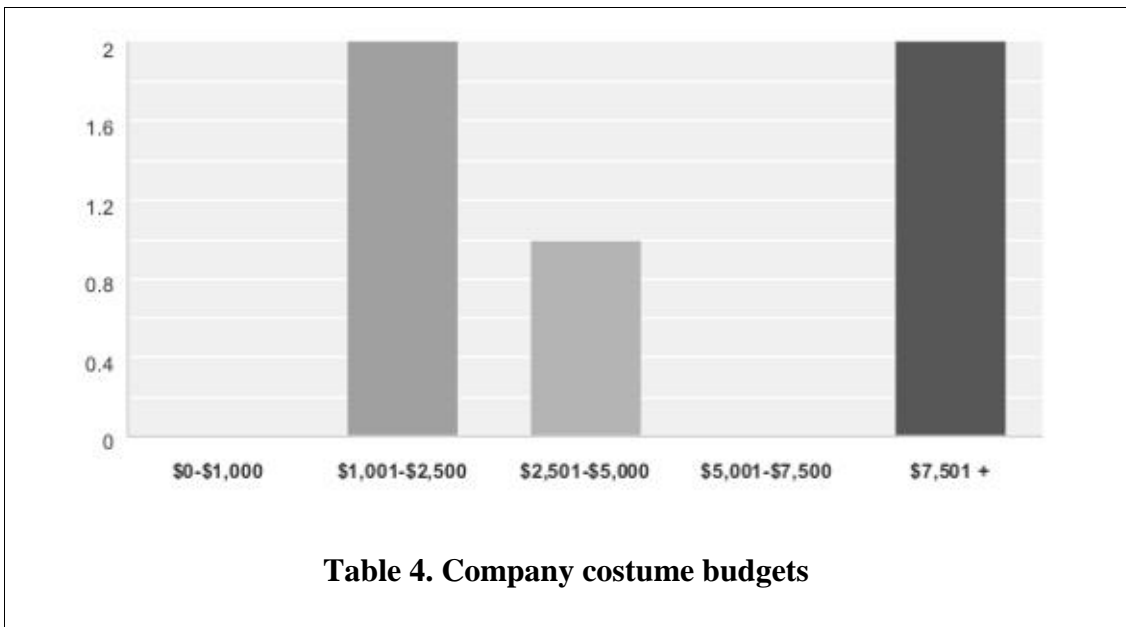
### **Costume Budgets**

The cost of costumes for guides varies greatly due to a significant number of factors (Table 4).<sup>5</sup> Of the four company officials who work with costumed guides, one approximated a yearly budget for costumes between \$1,001 and \$2,500. Another estimated a yearly budget between \$2,501 and \$5,000, and the remaining two officials estimated budgets exceeding \$7,501. The budget for the non-costumed guides approximated a yearly budget for between \$1,001 and \$2,500 for accessories like hats, shirts, flags and clipboards with the company logo. The size of the costume budget

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<sup>5</sup> To respect the sensitive nature of financial information, the names of these companies will not be directly linked to their costume budgets.

does not appear to be reflected in the price of a tour as all four companies charge between \$13.95 and \$15.00 for adult tickets.



The costumed tour company with the lowest bracket of expenditure on costumes (Company A) places the responsibility of acquiring and maintaining appropriate costume pieces on the guides themselves, since they are hired as independent contractors.<sup>6</sup> Most, if not all, of the guides in this company also participate in period reenactments outside of the company, and several guides have participated in such proceedings longer than they have been working as guides. Most reenactment groups hold members to a very high standard of dress, where pieces must be as historically accurate as possible. Interpreters at places like Minute Man National Historical Park must follow a set of standards in their dress<sup>7</sup> The head of the company, who also serves as a costumed guide occasionally, is also similarly strict his

<sup>6</sup> Guides are not paid hourly, but earn a percentage of the tour earnings, and choose which tours they want to lead rather than adhere to an assigned schedule.

<sup>7</sup> The “Battle Road Authenticity Standards” are used by each member of Company A to govern the authenticity and accuracy of their dress, and can be found online through the Minute Man National Historical Park webpage (<http://www.nps.gov/mima/getinvolved/supportyourpark/upload/Battle-Road-Authenticity-Standards-2012.pdf>) or “The Hive Online” site at [thehiveonline.org](http://thehiveonline.org).

requirements for proper period attire, and aims to “set a pretty decent example” with his own garments. Accurate fiber content is important (wool and linen, supplemented with cotton and silk; no cheaper, modern manufactured fibers like polyester and nylon), and correct period shoes are essential. Accurately constructed clothing, hand sewn rather than stitched with a machine, of this type is expensive, even for those who make their own pieces. Full outfits made by period tailors like Henry Cook, who are recognized by reenactment groups, can cost upwards of \$2000, handmade linen shirts \$250, and reproduction footwear around \$450 (company official 2358).<sup>8</sup> Several sources of period costume pieces are commonly used by reenactors, and each vary in price and precision. Some use a combination of sewing methods, where machine stitching is used only where it cannot be seen.

Since each guide has their own unique set of interests and background, they decide whether to dress as a rich or poor citizen of the period, as a soldier or a civilian. Such choices determine the quality of fabric used, the specificity of the tailored fit and the number and cost of embellishments and accessories. Design specifications in these circumstances are a collaborative process between the guide and the tailor, and require the guide to have an intimate knowledge of the requirements for such pieces. The head of the company does not oversee a formal final approval of each piece belonging to each guide, but will not hesitate to veto a piece should it fail to meet their standards. “They can dress however they want as long as it’s... decent. And if something looks wrong, I will point it out and say ‘That’s not right.’ Like when (a guide) started, he had striped stockings, but they didn’t wear those” (company official 2358).

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<sup>8</sup> Information regarding 18<sup>th</sup> century tailors and other merchants can be found online on websites such as 18c New England Life (<http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org/Merchants.htm>)



The tour company that spends over \$7,000 a year (Company B) purchases costumes for its guides from other period costume vendors, many of them outside of the New England area. Standard garments of the time make up much of the majority of costume pieces purchased and used. These are primarily “sacque-back” and “polonaise” style gowns for women.<sup>9</sup> For men, however, waistcoats (vests) and jackets are the staple, though styles differ between civilian and military wear. Optional design elements, such as simple or fancy cuffs, or the fiber content of a dress, either cotton or linen, depend on the class or status of the character portrayed by each guide and the frequency with which the costume may be used. Some gowns or petticoats are made with modern pockets<sup>10</sup> so guides can carry personal objects (and in some cases, small props to use on tour) with them. For women’s gowns, cotton is used more often than linen, since “linen, if it’s dyed, fades so fast” (company official 8425). Most of the purchased men’s garments are jackets of two different kinds, and design input is usually limited to color, fabric covered or metal buttons, and a jacket with or without a collar. Female characters are also assigned a “fancy dress” usually made of silk, for special occasions.

Not all costumes used are pieces purchased together. Company B has a large stock of costume pieces collected and used by a variety of guides over the years. Newly hired guides are usually assigned an older costume when they begin with the company, and other guides can “cobble together” outfits should they wish to wear

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<sup>9</sup> Another term for “robe à la Française.” These gowns featured a fitted front and loose pleating in the back of the bodice (Tortora and Eubanks 2010, 287). Polonaise gowns consist of an overdress and petticoat in which the overskirt was puffed and looped by means of tapes and rings sewn into the skirt (ibid, 283).

<sup>10</sup> Pockets existed during this time period, but were completely separate from a lady’s skirt or petticoat. Worn under overskirts or dresses, pockets were bags sewn onto a ribbon and tied around the waist and reached through a slit in the skirt (ibid, 285).

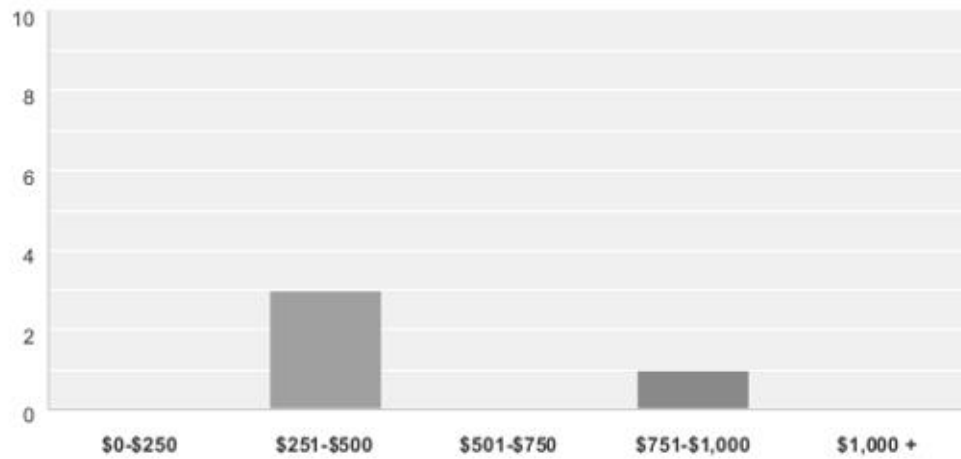
something different than their usual assigned costumes. This is often the case in bad weather. Temperature is a key element for guides in costume. Weather in Boston reaches an average high of 82°F during the summer and an average low of 22°F during the winter (intellicast.com), and one costumed company works year-round. “(Men) have a heavier jacket for the winter and a lighter jacket for the summer. We have some people that make us order them a \$700 costume and it comes in, and they didn’t realize that they ordered wool, so they wear something else all summer, and then they’ll go out in wool when it gets to be a little bit colder” (company official 8425). Accessories, such as winter cloaks, are ordered from “off the rack” period costume makers such as Jas (James) Townsend and Son. Many guides “embellish” and “personalize” their costumes with accessories of their own creation, such as knitted mitts or shawls (interview with a costumed guide, 2643). Female guides must purchase their own set of stays. Occasionally, guides who can construct their own full costumes are hired, and are then paid the equivalent of an outside sourced costume directly (costumed guide 5165). Footwear is the responsibility of the guides in Company B, since reproduction footwear is very expensive and can wear out quickly. Guides are instructed to find plain, understated black or brown shoes. The “most simple” shoes may not have laces or be “shiny.”

Company C, the spin-off group that focuses on the nineteenth century, relies on a hired “costumer,” usually a theatre professional or Master’s student in theatrical costume design, to help each new guide find an appropriate costume for the character they select. The time period portrayed by the guides spans from 1875 to around 1916,

and the costumer is responsible for selecting, ordering, fitting and tailoring each piece for the guides. Each guide is also responsible for their own footwear.

### **Costume Maintenance**

The cost of costume maintenance for period costumes can also vary greatly. Of the four company officials who work with costumed guides, three approximated yearly maintenance budgets between \$201 and \$500, while the remaining official estimated a budget between \$701 and \$1,000 for the upkeep of costume pieces for guides (Table 5). For Company C, the company with the highest maintenance budget, the head of the company does a limited amount of weekly laundry for the guides, but will send costumes out to the dry cleaners every two weeks (company official 5662). Company B has a washer and dryer on site, and pieces like socks and undershirts are laundered after every tour. Other costume pieces are dry cleaned when necessary. These two companies each have an office with costume storage where guides dress before walking to the tour start points, while Company A does not have on-site storage or laundry facilities. Guides for this company often travel to and from Boston in costume.



**Table 5. Company costume maintenance budgets**

### **The Costumed Effect**

Each interview included questions regarding how guides see the costume they wear, how that costume affects them personally, and how they think the patrons and public view them and the costume they wear.

When asked how they thought their patrons saw the costumes, each guide had a different opinion. For the members of Company A, the costumes were not considered costumes at all. “At (our company), we don’t see it as a costume, we see it as a uniform. Now when I wear something that’s NOT a (military) uniform...I would call it a uniform only in that they’re my work clothes. Like if you go to Dunkin Donuts and there’s a person behind the counter and it’s their work clothes, their uniform—it’s a work uniform. You wouldn’t call it a costume” (costumed guide 4481). This view does not, however, mean the costume has no effect on guides in Company A. The head of the company, who does lead tours occasionally but also spends a great deal of time in costume while working with a period printing press.

“Maybe I’m just more comfortable that way? Um, but for me, it really does do something... it tells that person that you’re not just one of everybody else. I don’t know, part of my personality likes that... I liked being dressed up. I mean I’ve done things in here (the print shop) for groups, like I was doing, there were a couple groups where I was not dressed up, and I got in here, I’m doing my thing, and I even printed, and it just doesn’t feel right. (*pause*) Maybe I’m crazy” (company official and guide 2358).

Guides for other companies expressed a similar sentiment that wearing a costume changes one’s “mindset” when conducting a tour, and even shifts the level of comfort, stating “I put it (the costume) on and I sort of feel very much like I’d be in a different time period. I also sometimes feel more comfortable in that clothing than regular person clothing” (costumed guide 4481).

Opinions on the effect that costume can have on patrons also differs with each guide. One guide sees dressing in period clothing as “double-edged,” since “I think it gets people on the tour... you know, they see a Redcoat, and they see anyone dressed up in 18<sup>th</sup>-century clothes... and there’s an attraction to that. But I also think that, when you dress up—on the flip side of that—people are not going to take you seriously. Certainly in the beginning. By the end of the tour—and I can’t speak for others, but I suspect its true for them as well—is we’re taken much more seriously by the tour’s end” (costumed guide 4481). One of the female guides interviewed “really enjoy(s) wearing the costume. It’s comfortable, I love the way it looks, and I know that there’s a benefit... to people. There’s a bonus. It adds an extra element to the tour

that is not there otherwise” (interview with a costumed guide, 2643). Similarly, another guide described the costume effect as-

*transportive, for the patrons. I think hearing it from someone who can credibly pull off Colonial wear—you know, they’re wearing the accurate attire, they’re wearing it properly, they’re wearing proper footwear, and they’re not wearing earrings or jewelry... I think if you’re really in it...people look at you and believe “Ah, this person was really alive.” It’s as much as the suspension of disbelief will allow them. So it’s transportive for them—they suddenly start to see like the stagecoaches and the horse-drawn carriages, the trolleys, the street trolleys going by. They suddenly see the people in tri-corn hat walking around and they see less of the people in baseball caps walking around. Like for me, it’s like bringing them into my world, like where I can see those things, because I like to pretend that I’m living like 300 years ago. I feel like if I believe it enough, and I look the part enough, they can see those things, or see James Otis speaking when I talk about him. They can see, when they look at the State House, they can see the British soldiers having the altercation with the colonists for the massacre. I want them to see it, and if I’m in the proper attire, I think they can see it more easily (costumed guide 5979).*

Company officials were each asked about their organization’s reasons and goals for using (or not using using) costumes for guides. One company official considered the costumes to be a visual stimulant, often for entertainment. “It adds an extra element, it makes it more fun, it’s attractive to people... it’s like a novelty, but it attracts people and they can come and learn the history of Boston. I wouldn’t say it was for educational purposes, but some guides do use it for educational purposes and explain the components of what they’re wearing... I would say it is more to evoke an era” (company official 8425). Another company head described their company’s goal in having costume “is to give people a sense that the building is just that old, and the people who were walking around in front of it look like us... it boils down to, what can you do to promote people’s imaginations, to trigger ...how can you get them to

think about this as an actual human being's life, a period in time in which everyone was just like you, except they dressed a little differently" (company official 5662).

### **Characters vs. People**

Of the three costumed tour companies observed, two used alternate, historical characters, as defined by Bridal.<sup>11</sup> For one group, these "historical" personalities could either be real or created, while the other company used only people who actually existed as the basis for their characters. The company official for the group who does not use characters for their guides explained their reasoning in that "playing a character interferes with educational aspects. It's really hard to do right, to do a character. If you can pull it off, then, if you have the people who can speak 'the speak,' I suppose it's good. But I wanted this to be accessible. I didn't want the interpretation to get in the way of people asking questions and learning about what's going on" (company official 2358). Guides in this group have also found that not portraying a character during tours can be an unwelcome surprise to patrons. "I think, if they (patrons) just walk up, they do expect actors, which I am very quick to say I'm not, by the way. And I think, when I see people's faces, they're disappointed. The way I present it is there's one difference between myself and other people who do the tours, and that's they are actors, and they're animated and demonstrative and entertaining. And I'm none of those things. I say that, and I see people's faces going 'Oh, God...we're on the wrong tour' (costumed guide 4481). Direct evidence of the desire for alternate characters among patrons was observed during a costumed tour in August. At the beginning of the tour, the guide introduced himself as an actor to the

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<sup>11</sup> "Historical characters represent real, once living people, brought to life through the power of theatre to share their lives, work and times with an audience" (Bridal 2009,21).

group, and asked the group to vote on whether he speak to them as his 21<sup>st</sup> century self or as an 18<sup>th</sup> century character. Nearly all the patrons in the group called for his historic character, so the guide bowed, turned in a circle and when facing the crowd again, he spoke in a jaunty English accent with a flurry of gestures as his introduction of character.

The tour companies that do use characters for their guides go about the matter in different ways. One company, whose motto is “History with a Wink,” approach tours as an opportunity to share educational and amusing stories with patrons. Guides with this company “stay in character until you can tell the person no longer wants you to be in character, at which point, break character. If you stay in character to the point of awkwardness, it’s bad for business” (company official 5662).

Similarly, guides in Company B present a character, but don’t hold themselves strictly to this type of interpretation while on tour. “I think we let (our character) slide, especially on the Freedom Trail, because we’re walking around in the midst of all this modern stuff, and we jump around in history as well” costumed guide 5165). Another guide presented a similar reasoning, saying that “it depends on the group. Some people can be really annoyed by the idea that you are a persona, and I’m not going to stick to it. And obviously we’re not like the reenactors at Plimoth Plantation who stay absolutely in their orientation of time and place, because, you know, you’d be psychotic if you had to walk through the streets of Boston and not know what a car was” (costumed guide 2643). Company officials backed up this balance between historical character and modern guide, stating that guides “don’t stay in character, just portray a character” (company official 8425).



Guides in both companies select a character to portray when first beginning with the company. Company C gives each new hire a short list of possibilities, but encourages them to research outside of this list. Guides at Company B can either research and interpret a real person from Boston's colonial days or create a character of their own. "I think for the most part, the...characters we have on, that the different guides have, are ones we kind of developed ourselves, rather than necessarily how much we know about the original character. It's our interpretation" (costumed guide 5165). Several guides chose their characters based on backgrounds similar to their own, or characters who have a good connection to a specific location on the Freedom Trail. However, both companies deem famous historical figures like Paul Revere or Sam Adams off limits. "Everyone has an idea of what they think those people are, so we try to do other...people so they can learn about different parts of the American Revolution" (company official 8425).

### **Connecting with a Character Through Costume**

The connection between an actor and the costume they wear, the creation of the "sensate body" according to Monks, is a crucial part of the performer's process in creating character, though it "can never be absolutely known by the audience" (Monks 2010, 23). One costumed guide described how her understanding of the character she portrays has changed with the addition of a new costume. Her selection of character for interpretation, a woman who pretended to be a man and served in a Massachusetts regiment, appealed to her because of her own background. "I was such a tomboy growing up... So, for me, it was just like perfect" (costumed guide 5979). She did not, however, dress as a man in a military uniform during her tours. "I was wearing a dress

for the first 8 ½ seasons, so I was portraying her post-Revolution, but I was so much younger, I was exactly how old she was when she was fighting. She was approximately 20-21 years old when she enlisted, and that's how old I was when I began working as a guide. So I felt so much like I was not her at first.” (costumed guide 5979).

The guide's connection to the character was altered significantly by the custom-made regimental uniform she now wears. “I tried to wear a soldier's uniform that was way too big, and people were catcalling “Napoleon” on the street. The costume I have now, which is like a fully authentic colonial kit, like, it's got the proper rankings as well...” (costumed guide 5979). The guide had a say in choices made surrounding the new costume, and chose trousers rather than breeches, which she believe make her look “more the part.” “And I definitely get way more positive comments now from the patrons... ‘You're looking sharp’ or ‘How are you doin’, soldier,’ you know, like, they do start to regard you with a better respect” (costumed guide 5979).

### **The Costume and Authenticity**

Authenticity regarding the costumes used by tour guides was discussed during several interviews, though no formal or standard definition of the term was used or discussed. When asked if the authenticity or accuracy of the costume was important, and why, one company official declared “I think that people, even if they don't know, they know. You can tell when somebody is in a costume. Even if you have no idea what those costumes are and what period clothes looks like. You can tell when they've spent the time, and the details. And so I think it's not okay to do any ‘costumed

interpretation' because that stinks. I've seen, in the last 10 years I've been out on tour and I've seen historic sites try it, and... you can tell, and it just doesn't look right. But when it's right, again, the lay person not being an expert, they know the difference. They really do" (company official and costumed guide 2358). Another guide agreed with the reason for authenticity, but does not believe that most patrons would recognize the difference.

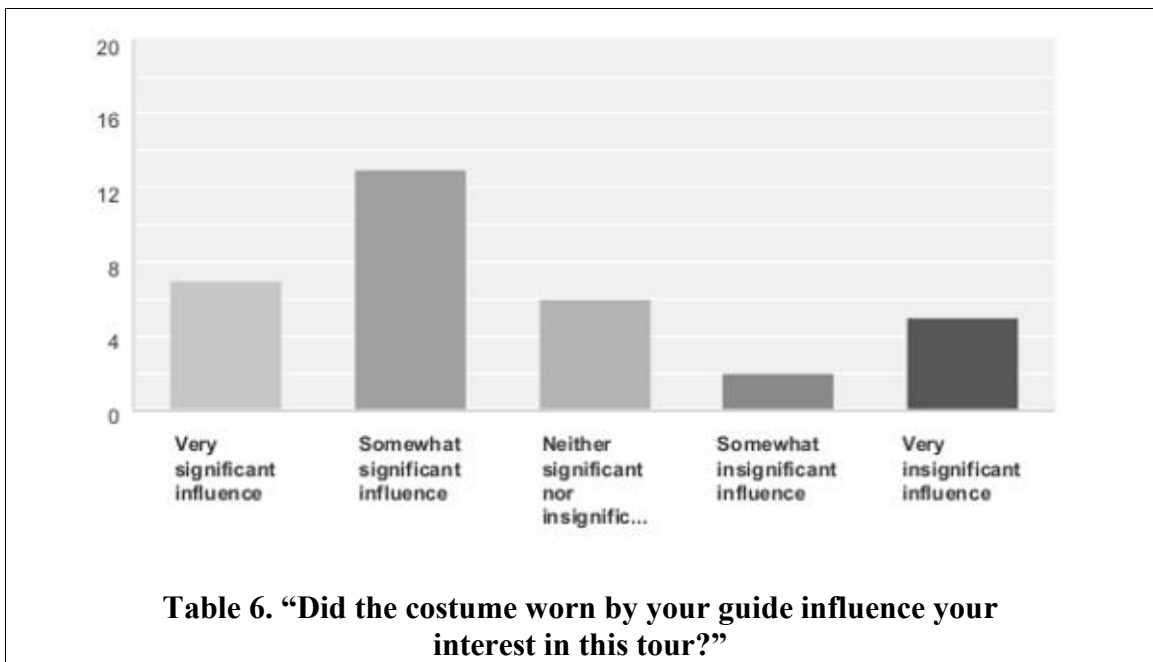
*Well it is—it's important for me because it's looking at history, and as accurate as you possibly can. I mean, if you have to open your coat and take your hat off, behaving in that manner, that's not how they would have behaved in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were more subdued. They did wear their hats, sometimes wigs, kept their jackets on, neck stocks....so I think, in terms of our sartorial effort, we do quite well. But if you do the other way, it's interesting....I've been in a pub with (another guide), who has this long beard. And people have said 'You look pretty good—your clothes are better. But he looks more authentic.' And I asked them, 'Why do you say that?' 'Well, it's because he has that long beard.' and I say, 'Well, they didn't have beards in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.' 'Really?' 'Yeah.' So first you have to deal with an educated public. He just looks older because they assume beards were worn a long time ago—whether it's 17, 18, 19<sup>th</sup> century, it's all the same to them. It's old. I mean, you could put on a zoot suit and they'd think that was part of it (costumed guide 4481).*

### **Patrons of Costumed Tour Companies**

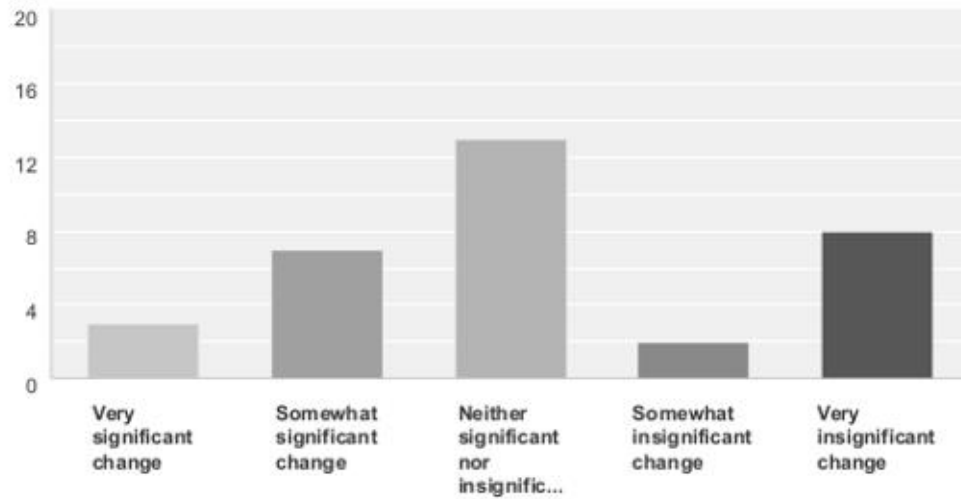
Of the thirty-three patron respondents who attended a costumed tour, twenty claimed the visit as their first time in Boston or Cambridge, while thirteen had visited the area previously. Twenty-four of the respondent patrons were between 18 and 59 years of age and eight patrons identified as 60 years or older. Twenty-three patrons chose their attended tour because they "like learning from a tour guide." Six patrons felt that the tour they selected "seemed like the best option," and four patrons followed a "recommendation by a third party" or their tour was "part of a vacation trip/package." One patron shared that they "like interacting with people in costume,"

and the options concerning “cost”, “not my decision” and “other” were selected by one patron each. The “other” reason was that the chosen tour “seemed to be the most historically accurate tour” available. Another respondent also commented that they had been looking for “a more academic tour,” and were pleased with their choice.

Thirteen patrons felt that the costume worn by their guide had a “somewhat significant influence” in their interest regarding the tour, and seven patrons admitted a “very significant influence” in interest because of the guide’s costume (Table 6). Five patrons felt the costume had no significant influence either way, and seven claimed the costume had little to no influence on their interest at all. When asked if the costume

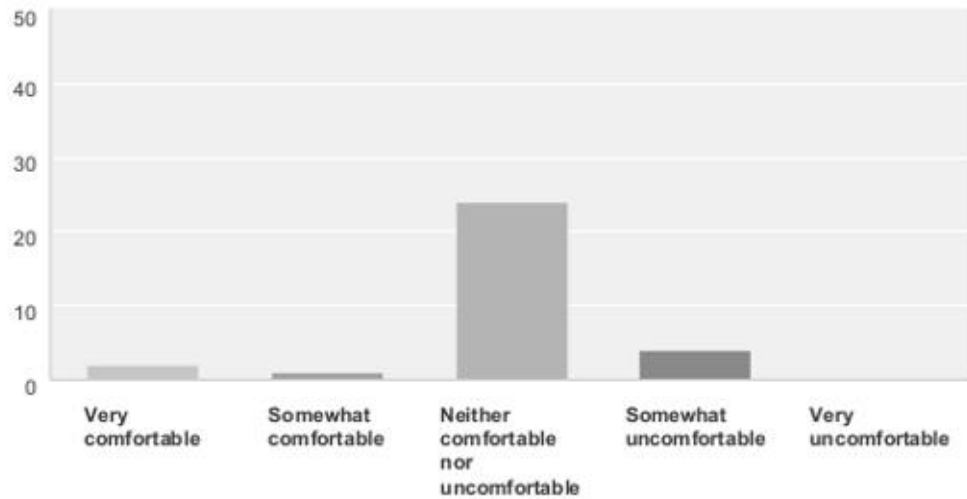


worn by their tour guide changed or altered their perception of the information provided during the tour, thirteen patrons claimed “neither a significant or insignificant influence” (Table 7). Ten patrons experienced some sort of change, with three claiming a “very significant change” and seven claiming a “somewhat significant



**Table 7. “Did the costume worn by your guide alter/change your perception of the historic information you heard?”**

change”. On the other hand, ten patrons felt little to no change, with two claiming a “somewhat insignificant change” and eight a “very insignificant change.” Most of the patrons, about 84%, felt “very comfortable” interacting with their guide, and none claimed to feel uncomfortable. When asked if a change of their guide’s wardrobe to modern clothing would increase their comfort level, 24 patrons claimed a neutral opinion, while three patrons believed their comfort level would rise, four patrons felt they would be less comfortable, and two did not answer the question (Table 8).

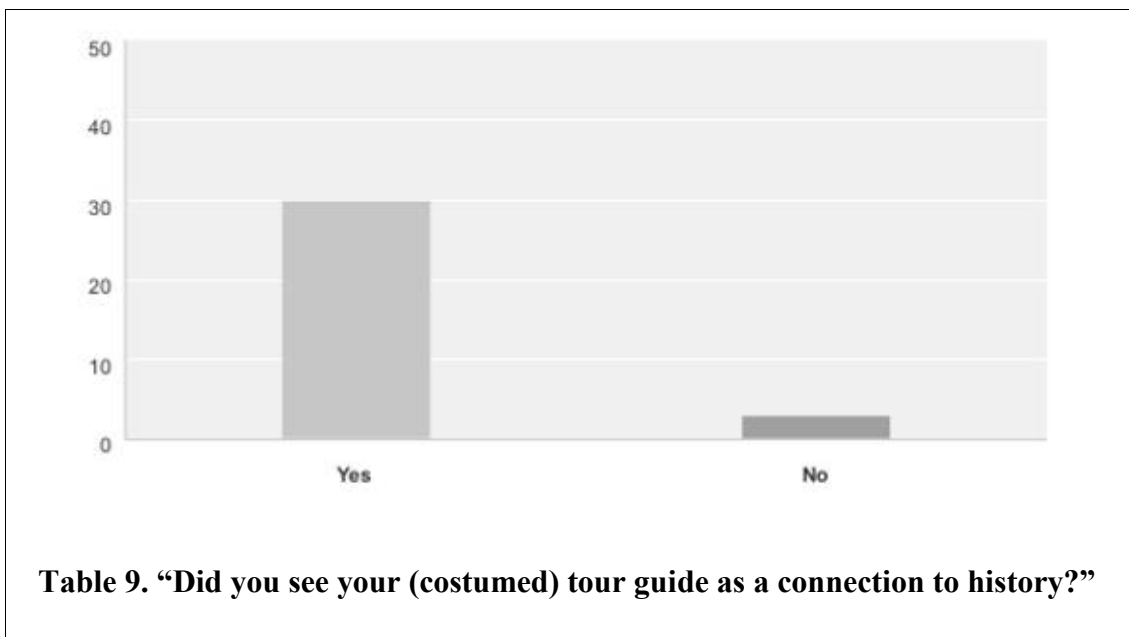


**Table 8. “If your guide were dressed in modern clothes (ex. Polo shirt and khaki pants) would you have felt more comfortable?”**

Many of the comments concerning the tours focused on the guide’s historical knowledge, delivery and presentation, and storytelling. Several felt the tour they attended was “very educational,” “entertaining,” “informational & [the guide] did it in a very fun way.” Three respondents mentioned their guide’s costume, with one “appreciat[ing] the costume because [they were] from overseas.” Another liked that their guide was “dressed in period. It made him easy to recognize among the crowd of people.” A third felt the guide’s “outfit was a nice way to keep track of him.” One respondent felt the guide’s “accent and costume was pretty cheesy, but if people come here some may want an ‘authentic’ experience.” Over 90% of patrons saw their guide as “a connection to history,” thirty people in total (Table 9).

Of the thirteen costumed tours the researcher followed, four groups had 1-5 patrons, two had 6-10 and 11-15 patrons, respectively, one included 21-25 followers, and four tour groups were comprised of more than 26 patrons. Among the various tour

groups, nine tours included families of 3 or fewer, and six tours included families of four or more. Five groups included young children. Eleven tours included pairs or groups of patrons from outside the United States. These groups were often identified at the beginning of the tour, as many guides begin their tours by collecting tickets and asking patrons from where they originate. Seven tours included patrons who did not know they would be following a tour ahead of time, and chose to purchase tickets after speaking with the guide.



In eleven of the thirteen tours, the researcher observed adults using technology, including cameras, cell phones and iPods or iPads. Most used digital cameras or the cameras on their smartphones throughout the tour. Eight tours included teenagers or children using cell phones or cameras. On only one tour was a patron observed recording the tour guide throughout the tour.

Though many tour guides asked their groups if they had questions, few patrons responded at the time of inquiry. Much of the dialogue between the guides and patrons

occurred while walking between sites rather than at the sites themselves. Of the followed tours where a patron asked a question in front of the group, only one included questions regarding the guide's costume, and another singular tour included a patron's question about the guide's character. Three tours included questions regarding the time period from a patron.

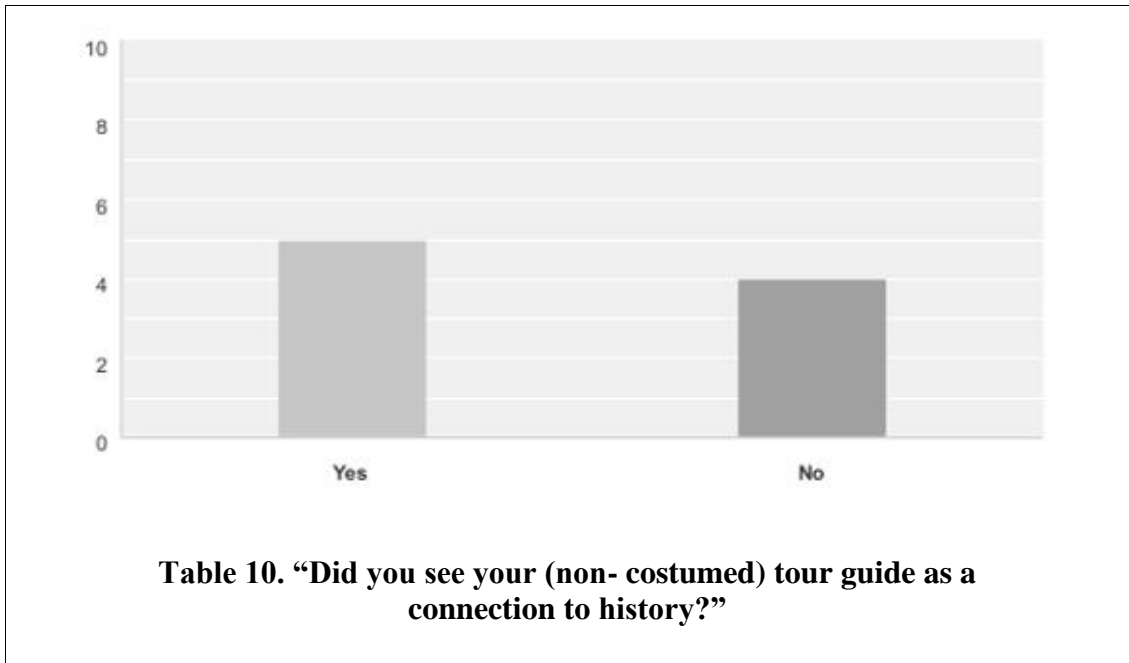
### **Patrons of Tour Companies Without Costumes**

The researcher attended two tours led by non-costumed guides. Both tours were relatively small, with six to 10 patrons in each. One tour included a family of four with young children. The other tour included a "walk-up" group who had not reserved or purchased tickets ahead of time. This tour group was made up of curious, talkative patrons who asked the guide many questions, and several used cameras and cell phones.

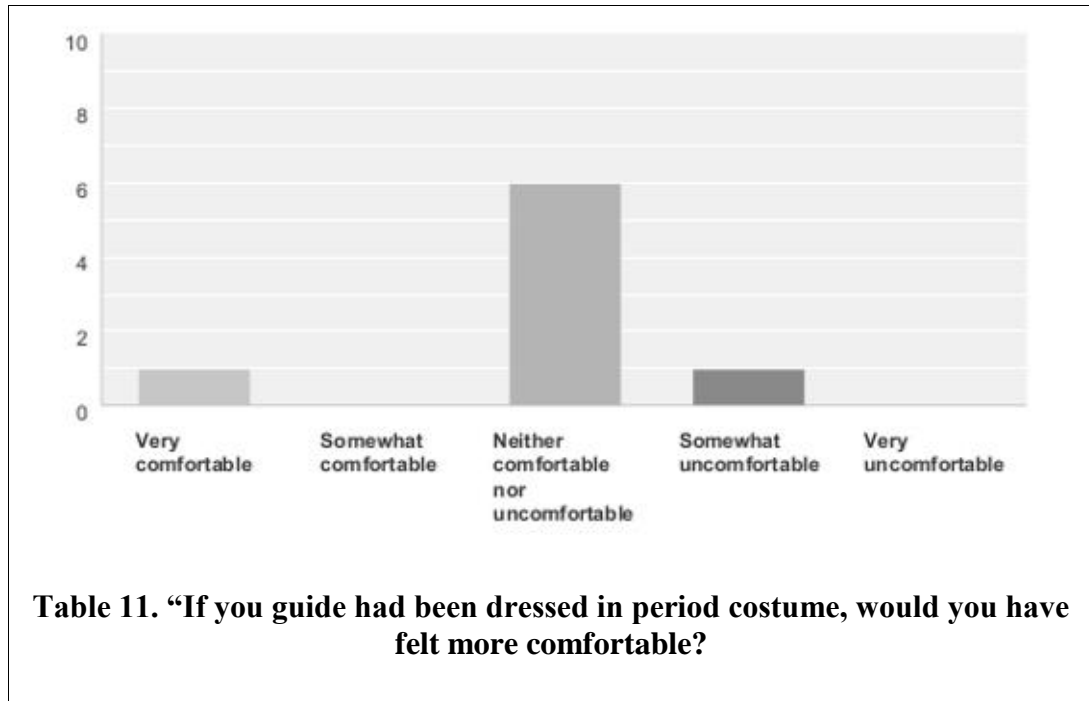
Of the nine surveyed patrons who followed a non-costumed tour guide, five were visiting Boston or Cambridge for the first time, and four had visited the area previously. The reasons for choosing their attended tour varied greatly. Two patrons chose the tour for convenience, two "like learning from a tour guide", two had been given a recommendation for the tour by a third party, one found the tour information on the company's website, and the last felt that choosing the tour "was not my decision." When asked if the clothing worn by their guide altered or changed their perception of the information they heard, five patrons had a neutral response, and the other four experienced a "very insignificant change." Five of the patrons saw their guide as a connection to history, while four did not (Table 10). This is a noticeably



different result than that from the same question asked of patrons of costumed tour guides (Table 9).



All nine respondents felt comfortable interacting with the guide, with eight feeling very comfortable and one feeling somewhat comfortable. When asked if they had ever attended a historical tour led by a costumed guide, three said yes and six said no. The patrons were then asked if they thought a guide dressed in period costume would increase their comfort level. Most of the patrons had a neutral response, and one patron felt they would be more uncomfortable (Table 11). On the other hand, one patron felt they would have been more comfortable with a guide in costume. Seven patrons were between the ages of 18 and 39 years, and two were between 60 and 79 years of age.



Several of the respondents took advantage of the “Additional comments” section of the questionnaire. One patron indicated that if the guide had been dressed in costume, it “may have been entertaining, not necessarily improving the tour.” Another indicated that a guide in costume “would feel tacky” and prefers non-costumed guides. Similarly, another patron commented that they did not want to follow a tour during which the guide would “speak or act as if in the Revolutionary time.” Two patrons commented that they had assumed that the tour would be led by a guide in costume.

### **Non-Costumed Guides**

Since the non-costumed tour company did not require uniforms or specific dress, only one guide and one company official were interviewed. The guide, a veteran docent and member of the new volunteer training staff, stressed professionalism and maintaining a professional image for the company. He dresses in “business casual”

attire for each of his tours. “I feel like we should make a professional image to the touree. I think you have, really, two good ways to go: you can either do the theatrical with the costumes, or you can do professional. If you’re dressed poorly or sloppily, as some do, I think it can be a turnoff. So I have chosen to go, what I consider a kind of uniform, of khaki pants and a nice golf shirt” (non-costumed guide 8469). Guides in this company receive various pieces of gear emblazoned with the company logo to help their visibility before and during tours. Each guide is required to wear a company badge, complete with their name for tours. Other accessories with logos, such as baseball hats and tote bags, are often gifts for each volunteer at the end of each season, and they are encouraged to wear or use these items during tours. The company also has a range of retail polo shirts, button down shirts, sweatshirts and vests with the company logo, mostly in hues of blue, the company color. While the company does not currently enforce a dress code, the idea of creating a simple, business-casual dress code has been mentioned and discussed, since “sometimes people have more...questionable...fashion choices” (company official 5656).

### **Costume Guides: Trends Observed**

Of the thirteen costumed tours attended by the researcher, eight were conducted by a guide assuming a character role and speaking primarily in the 1<sup>st</sup> person. Two guides conducted tours solely as themselves (3<sup>rd</sup> person), and the remaining three guides used a combination of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Similarly, eight guides appeared to advertise their tour while in character by adopting a dramatic voice or manner. The remaining five guides did not.

Ten of the thirteen guides provided detailed information concerning the time period leading up to the Revolution, and nine of the guides addressed their groups and asked for additional questions throughout the tour. Six guides took the time to explain an aspect of their costume at some point during the tour. Three cases involved a question from a patron concerning the guide's clothing, and three cases appeared to be premeditated by the guide as part of the narrative. When asked if patrons inquire about their costumes, one guide volunteered the repetitious phrases "Aren't you hot in that?" and "You must be dying in that!" This is likely the most common patron comment or inquiry. Another common inquiry from the public is "Who are you supposed to be?", rather than "Who are you?"

Nearly all (twelve of thirteen) guides acknowledged the surrounding urban environment in some way, either through purposeful, informative dialogue, or exclamations of precaution. Each of these instances involved busy streets and traffic, though four guides also indicated the surrounding modern population, particularly the large groups of people in places like the Boston Common or Faneuil Hall. Six of the thirteen tour guides also interacted physically with modern technology, most often traffic lights.

### **Effects of the Urban Environment**

The urban environments of Boston and Cambridge present challenges for tour guides, both in modern dress and costume. Both the visibility of and the ability to hear a guide plays a significant role in determining locations for addressing a tour group.

Finding “quiet niches” (non-costumed guide 8469) in which to speak to tour patrons can be difficult, especially when historic sites lie between restaurants and businesses. “I’m a pretty loud person, so in the sense of connecting, it’s difficult in terms of space. I don’t want to disrupt other tours, I don’t want to block people’s progress... so it’s a challenge when I’m managing a group of, say 40-50 people, that I’m in a place where I can be seen and heard, and where they feel that I’m connecting with them. I think we—especially those that are used to performing—are pretty much accustomed to the fact that we’re going to stop somewhere, we’re going to get attention, and we’re going to be loud. And very visible. As a matter of fact, I’ll usually seek out the height of land, the most prominent place that I can be” (costumed guide 2643).

Sirens, loud vehicles, tour vehicles such as buses and Duck Tour boats, groups of nearby people, street performers and other tour groups often force guides to pause their narration or shout to make themselves heard over the din. In these circumstances, both costumed and non-costumed guides are forced to acknowledge the urban environment, though verbal recognition varies with each individual guide. Ten tours with costumed guides and both of the two non-costumed guides were affected by surrounding noise. Even in the Granary Burial Ground, which is surrounded on three sides by buildings and hosts vegetation that helps to dampen sound, the number of groups within the space and the noise they create, can affect other groups. Traffic and the more than occasional siren on nearby Tremont Street can easily remind the listener that they are in the middle of a city.

For any tour guide, navigating with large groups of patrons through the streets of downtown Boston can be challenging, as particularly seen in cases when tour

groups include more than 20 patrons. Patrons may follow the group and ignore precautions when crossing roads, or may be taking pictures of a site or marker and fall behind. Oftentimes tour groups arrive and guides speak about the same landmark at the same time. One guide mentioned that “sometimes getting a large crowd [of patrons] through the crowd of tourees and non-tourees can be a minor issue” (non-costumed guide 8469). This is especially true in the Granary Burial Ground, which has only one narrow gate that serves as both the entrance and exit, and tour groups of every kind are forced to follow small paths through the graveyard. “Especially when there’s a lot going off at the same time and you know the regular tour is getting there and the first tour is there and there’s a massive group with four guides as well, and they’re all converging at the same time. And that’s just like Freedom Trail. And if that regular tour going off is like a big one, and it has two guides on it, there could be like seven Freedom Trail [tours] converging on the same time. Navigating that is sometimes a total nightmare” (costumed guide 5165). It is in situations like these that the visibility a costume provides for a guide can assist a tour patron to find and follow their group, as seen in earlier patron comments.

### **Effects of the Surrounding Public**

Observations and behavior trends among the surrounding public were also noted during each tour. Twelve tours attracted non-paying “listeners” while stopping in at least one location per tour. This was particularly common in the Granary Burial Ground, where space for visitors to walk and stand was limited. Most listeners were single persons or pairs, though some families of three or more would pause to listen to the guide. Listeners who attempt to join the tour group mid-tour and avoid paying,

often called “barnacles” by some of the guides, were not nearly as common, with only one tour affected.

The costumed guides for all thirteen tours received odd glances from passers-by on the street, and ten of the fifteen total tours received looks of annoyance and inconvenience from other pedestrians. With the number of people who travel through Boston on a daily basis, it is sometimes difficult to separate other tourists from residents who live and work downtown.

*Just regular people, if they're from Boston and they work in the city or they're there on a regular basis, they pay no mind, they pay no heed to me and I pay no heed to them. They see me every day, and they don't really think anything of it. But if they're visiting, or they're like from Massachusetts but don't come into the city very often, or if they're like tourists but they're not on the tour, I mean yes—you are a celebrity, in essence. You have people who will stop in front of your group, they will take pictures and they will interrupt and they will have no heed or regard to the fact that you are in the middle of making a speech of some incredibly interesting variety. Honestly, the best way to do it is like ignore them as much as you can, because if you give them notice, you immediately lose your group. Because if you notice them, the group notices them. You'll see...like I have crazy sirens going by, people screaming—I will never turn my head. Of course, I am aware that it is there, but if I feel that it is far enough away, that it is not a risk to my group, if I turn my head, they're lost (costumed guide 5979).*

Other common distractions or interjections come from members of the homeless population. “You’re in a city. There’s all sorts of people. We, unfortunately, have a growing homeless population and they often are intoxicated on something. You always have to keep them in your side mirrors, your rear mirrors—you have to be aware of your surroundings. I purposefully take a longer route to ensure that they do not go near homeless people because they are so often drunk and rowdy and will taunt and heckle the groups” (costumed guide 5979). Many of the tours which follow the Freedom Trail originate on the Boston Common, where there is also a large number of homeless inhabitants. “You’ll occasionally walk by the bum that’s like ‘That guy

gives the best tours!’ you know, thank you! He’s heard your tours, and some of those guys are educated, highly. So they actually know what they are talking about... you know, you’re out there where they live.” (company official and guide 2358).

### **Photography and Unwanted Attention**

Eleven costumed tour guides out of thirteen were targeted by non-patron tourists and their cameras. Some people approach the guide and ask for a picture, most often during the pre-tour time in which the guide is advertising their tour. Many people, however, take pictures of the guides without their permission, and often try to do so without the guide observing their attempt. Several interviews with guides indicated that non-patrons will interrupt guides during tours to ask (and occasionally not even ask) to have their picture taken with the costumed guide.

*Sometimes you make a joke of it, but I’ve even stopped doing that. They’re not worth...these people are not paying for me to make jokes about people who are taking my picture without permission. I prefer to just stick to my state of mind, stay to my horses, stay straight ahead, stay on the straight and narrow path. But yeah, you do know what it’s like to be a celebrity. Because I understand why like celebrities are horrible like to ...paparazzi, because it’s horrible—it’s like a complete violation of your personal space. But you know, it’s what you sign up for (costumed guide, 5979).*

Opinions regarding these photography tactics vary between guides. They can range from simply off-putting to vehemently frustrating.

*“It depends on how it’s done—if you’re polite, you can have the picture. And you’re not interrupting the tour. I had this one woman, 24 or 25, and she’s with her dad. And as I’m speaking, I have maybe a dozen people in front of me, she runs up between the people on the tour and puts her arm around me for a picture that her dad’s taking. I said, ‘Excuse me, what are you doing?’ She says ‘I need a picture.’ I say ‘I’m at work, sorry,’ but she’d already got the picture, and her dad found that satisfactory. I thought—‘This is what you’re teaching your daughter’ (costumed guide 4481).*



Such attention can come from other tourists, but occasionally people thought to be average citizens of the city can make a guide uncomfortable or embarrassed.

*...one of my (fellow guides) was talking about how some business guys that came up and wanted a picture and interrupted her while she was speaking. She explained that she was in the middle of something, and they just called her a bitch and walked off, right in front of everyone. It was quite terrible. People always come up and sort of stand right by you and take pictures. And we have different ways of dealing with it, like....very enthusiastically, while speaking, flailing [our] canes and parasols around in the general direction of those people. Or just stopping, and drawing attention to it (costumed guide 5165).*

Many guides understand that they cannot control the behavior of those around them, and are simply resigned to such interactions. Some even attempt to use the time to promote their tour or company.

*If you're standing in a public space, it's not possible for me to mediate who is standing there or what they're taking pictures of. So I try not to get reactive about it. If I'm selling my tour, or otherwise out and about, and someone comes up to me and asks me to take a picture, I will always say yes. I won't necessarily go over to where their friends are, if I'm on my way to someplace, but I'm more than happy to pose with people for pictures. I take it as an opportunity to talk about what I'm there for, and I pretty much always make them take a flyer. If people are being all...paparazzi, I sometimes might just turn the other way or something like that, because it's weird. It's just strange, being strafed by people. But I'm a lot less reactive to it than I used to be (costumed guide 2643).*

This common theme appeared in nearly every interview with a costumed guide. This uncomfortable attention goes a step further for some guides. Three guides presented examples of unprovoked, unwanted physical contact initiated by members of the surrounding public.

*(A guide) had someone sit next to him the other day on a bench, he was sitting there, minding his own business, not trying to engage the public, foreigner comes up to him, sits next to him, does a*

*selfie, and grabs his hat off his head. And he's like 'You can't do that.' And she's like 'You're rude' and walked off"* (company official 2358).

*The one time I was kind of like walking down School Street, down where King's Chapel is, and the Boston Lantern School—and I was kind of backing down, yelling to people and I felt someone pressing against me from behind me, and I was 'It must be one of my friends' because they do come down and heckle me. I whipped around, and it was two women I had never seen before in my life, grinding up on me. I thought "What is happening?" and I was kind of playing it cool, made a quip to my...crowd, and made them laugh. Inside I was 'Come on, I just got sexually harassed, assaulted basically on the street by these women—'oh, it's a guy in a costume, not like a real human being' (costumed guide 5165).*

*Harvard Square is brutal to people. It's psychologically difficult, like...there are days when my guides come in and are just like, everybody was awful to us today. And it's...you put the costume on, and people de-humanize you. Suddenly, you're a freak, if you're willing to dress in 90 degree heat in this clothing, you must be some kind of nut-job, and I can abuse you. Nooo...even if I were a nut-job, that's not how you treat other people. Brutal. And yep, I've had my fair share of negative experiences. I think I've had less than most people because I'm tall and intimidating and ....you know, not ugly, anyway. So I think people are more reluctant to....I mean, I have no fear of people, and if somebody comes up to me, I do everything I can to show them I'm a person, to humanize myself" (company official 5662).*

In these cases, it can be argued that the audience or surrounding public see the costumed guide and see him or her as an object in more than one “world,” as such interactions occur during the performance state of costumed dress and the time between performances, perhaps seen as the “dressing room” world—an “actor” in costume but not yet a “character” or “performance” role as a guide.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### **A Visible Connection**

Costume makes the tour guides visible and draws attention to them, before, during and after tours. According to the patron surveys, costumes worn by guides had a positive effect on patron interest in guided tours (Table 6, page 42). As noted by several patrons, guides who wear costumes are easy to see and differentiate from the rest of a crowd, an important factor when leading large groups of people through densely populated areas. Lindholm noted this fact in his look at historical parks and heritage sites, where “new items of period clothing had to be ‘discovered’ in order to differentiate the actors from the paying customers” (2008, 46). Guides in costume also appeared to effect the interest of patrons looking for an interesting way to spend their day in Boston, as many paying customers decided to take a specific tour after observing, and sometimes speaking with, the costumed guide.

The difference between the number of patrons who saw costumed guides as a “connection to history” and the number of patrons who saw their non-costumed guide as a connection to history is noteworthy (see Tables 9 and 10), despite the large difference in the number of respondents in each case. The collected data suggest that the visual image of a person in 18<sup>th</sup> century garb serves as a sign for observers to use as a marker for a time in the past. This directly connects to both Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels’ view of cultural heritage as a forging of relationships between the past and

present (Samuels 2014) and the process of tourism as a collection of signs (Urry, 1990, 3).

But if the costume can transport the audience into the past purely through visual cues, as non-verbal communication, does the supportive dialogue used by the guide have to be in from that historic world as well? More study concerning the difference between guides who interpret a character and those who do not is required to fully answer this question, including a comparison between performativity and imparting historically accurate information, not to mention the educational backgrounds of guides. However, speculation suggests that data collected in this study that a character interpretation and dialogue is not essential, since every respondent who followed the costumed guide who did not present a character saw their guide as a “connection to history.” Additionally, one of the four non-costume patrons who responded “no” to the connection question made comments favoring costumes for guides, stating that “costumes might have been entertaining, but not necessarily improving the tour,” and two of the four had previously followed tours led by costumed guides.

Another respondent who did not see their guide as a connection to history noted that they had assumed that the tour would be led by a guide in costume, suggesting that the respondent had actually researched a different tour company with the same starting location. Pieces of information like this support the argument that the costumes worn by guides can be effective, non-verbal communication tools that help the audience to enter a constructed historic atmosphere, and make the guides a tangible connection to history. The positive comments made by respondents in relation

to a guide's costume also touch upon the concept of performance used "to evoke emotion for the purpose of learning" presented by Tess Bridal (2004, 4).

## **Education**

As pointed out by several company officials, the garments worn by costumed guides primarily serve as a way to establish a "historic feeling" for the patrons, and give them a visual focus to hold onto as they are led through a modern city, rather than for the purpose of education. For at least one company, the costumes worn by guides are not meant to serve as educational tools themselves, but simply to evoke an era. Another company official feels that the guides themselves are "directly educating, through performance," and that the costumes worn by guides are not "an essential part of that... It helps trigger the imagination. Not everybody has that instant, go-to, 'I'm going to trigger my imagination' thing, so any tools you can give them to up the ante, really promote that imagination, is going to benefit not only their education, but also, the business... I just think costumes are a really easy way to trigger that... if you're a good enough tour guide, you might be able to trigger that with your words alone" (company official 5662).

The point in which the costumes worn by guides become a medium of education in their own right occurs when patrons ask questions about the clothing and/or the guide uses what he or she is wearing to solidify a concept or point in the historical world they are representing. This is not to say that each guide should be required to discuss their costume with patrons on every tour. But if the opportunity arises, guides have an opportunity to establish a teachable moment with solid evidence immediately about their person. As observed in the field, six of the thirteen tours

included some sort of dialogue concerning the guide's costume. Three of these instances were triggered by patron inquiry, while the other three explanations by the guides were unprompted by the audience. As noted by the founder of one costumed company, costumes are "great props, if you want to use that term" (company official 2358).

One guide did use the "prop" he was wearing, after a question about his garb was presented by a patron. Gesturing to his own costume, noting that it was his best suit of clothes, he explained to the group that members of the colonial community we would consider "middle-class" might own only two sets of clothes at any given time, since cloth was so expensive. Knowing this, he was able to explain the wealth of John Hancock to the group by describing how much clothing Hancock owned or could have afforded. The creation of such moments is possible on any tour, as long as the guide is knowledgeable about what they are wearing and why. While this form of education is comprised of verbal interaction rather than non-verbal signs, it solidifies the costume as a usable educational tool for any guide, and allows them to become "active agencies of change," as described by Turner.

### **Authenticity vs. Practicality**

When it comes to authenticity and accuracy of the costumes used by guides, cost, time constraints, longevity and comfort are the primary reasons used to purchase items not fitting the standard placed by reenactment groups. Those who follow the Battle Road Authenticity Standards (see footnote on page 31), such as reenactment troupes who work with the National Park Service, must wear garments with no visible machine sewing, no synthetic materials, and follow the style of the specified date

precisely. Even such detailed and regulated items still fall short of being truly authentic, as they are not original objects from the time, and the exact materials used for clothing in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century cannot be found for such pieces today. Most of the methods for producing 18<sup>th</sup>-century textiles and ornaments are no longer used. Similar modernly produced materials and their labor requirements still make such “accurate” garments very expensive, and limits the availability for companies with many guides requiring costumes. Newly made garment pieces that would in the past have been made of linen or wool, are now most often made of cotton, making them less expensive and easier to wear and clean.<sup>12</sup> “I wear nothing but cotton. All cotton. Well, I think over the last few years...when I first started, we may still...have had some synthetics. And I know that our folk, our office folk, were stunned when they heard a comment about us being referred to as ‘the polyester patriots.’ So this is...I’m sure you know...this is a tension between...there are some serious re-enactors for whom ANY slight detail that’s off is really, really off. But we just can’t...we couldn’t possible maintain our costumes with the wear and tear they get and the level of comfort of the players if we went as much in for wool and linens” (costumed guide 2643).<sup>13</sup>

Another guide mentioned his experience with the uncomfortable, restrictive armscye required for accurate period jackets.<sup>14</sup> “The tailor was making me a jacket, and I said ‘You know, it’s....tight through here. You know, I believe I’m going to need some room in here.’ She said ‘They didn’t have room in the arms. You want this

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<sup>12</sup> While cotton garments are permitted by many reenactment groups, cotton garments are not strictly historically accurate for the time period. Linen was most commonly used for shirts, shifts and some gowns, and wool was the primary fabric used for both men and women’s outer garments.

<sup>13</sup> Wool garments can be itchy, too warm for some guides, and require dry cleaning regularly.

<sup>14</sup> The seam which connects the sleeve to the body of a jacket or shirt.

done right? You want to be 18<sup>th</sup> century?’ ‘Yes, but I’d also like to move. I’d like to be able to move my arms a little bit....’ She goes, ‘This is what it was. This is the material. This is proper and it’s the way it should be.’ ‘Okay,’ and I backed down... She knows her stuff, and I know I’m asking for something that is, to a small degree, and impropriety... Accurate though it is, it’s a pain in the butt. And where there’s pants—and I like my clothes tight—but I also like to breathe” (costumed guide 4481).

Foot comfort is also important for guides who walk several miles a day over pavement, cobblestones and grass alike. The cost and discomfort of period shoes, which do not resemble the contoured shoe options we find in stores today, make modern shoes a desirable alternative, for both guides and company officials. “The legendary Bob Jolly, who was the premier guide that the Freedom Trail ever had—all of his kit was self-purchased, researched, and he talked about once getting a pair of straight-laced shoes.<sup>15</sup> He said the first step he took on them, he almost fell right on his can, and that was the end of straight laced shoes. Now I (the interviewed guide) have bad knees, I have plantar fasciitis, and so the number one concern for me is I have to have shoes that are absolutely state-of-the-art. Supportive, good walking shoes” (costumed guide 2643). Comfort also plays a significant role during the summer, where the hot, wool jackets worn by male guides are often removed, much to the chagrin of those who preach authenticity and historical accuracy of dress. “We should be strict about how we portray ourselves. We don’t take our coats off. But a lot of (other) people—those hats immediately come off, the neck stocks are gone, and they open their waistcoat. We don’t do that—we just sort of suffer through it... that’s not

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<sup>15</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, shoes were not yet shaped specifically for the left or right foot, but were straight and required a great deal of wear to contour at all to the foot.



how they behaved in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were more subdued” (costumed guide 4481).

For others, the heat can be a deciding factor. “(The costumes are) incredibly hot, and from what I understand, basically a hurdle for the middle classes to walk around with...just shirt sleeves.<sup>16</sup> It’s like walking around in small clothes, right? Like walking around in your underwear. So I’ve been really trying not to do that, basically this whole summer, and kind of unnecessarily determined, walking around in the 90 degree weather with full suit, while my tour groups were probably not concentrating on what I was saying because they were afraid I was going to pass out at any moment. I finally caved, and kind of like did one without the coat on recently. It was so much easier. The others—there was an element of that too. I don’t know how they did it back then—just suffered, I guess” (costumed guide 5165).

### **A Costumed Commodity**

It would seem common for a costumed guide and their costume to become a single entity in the eyes of the audience. This idea is supported by the evidence collected in the field, as guides wearing period costumes become objectified by the public at large. As presented by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “ethnographic objects are made, not found. They became ethnographic through processes of detachment and contextualization” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1988, 3). Modern tourists may experience this detachment as an inability to connect directly with period clothing, and the contextualization of the costumed guide as a part of the constructed tourism industry separates the guide from the rest of society. This can also be connected to Monk’s

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<sup>16</sup> Eighteenth century propriety required all men and women to be covered at all times in public. Removal of one’s jacket and exposing the sleeves of the linen shirt was considered a state of undress and was unacceptable behavior in public.

view that the costume is “the spectator’s means to access the actor’s body” (Monks 2010, 20).

Most often, guides found themselves being photographed without permission, particularly by members of the surrounding public rather than the patrons in their tour group. A few guides also described the interruption of their tour by outsiders wanting a photograph with them, some with and some without permission. All thirteen tours with costumed guides included notes concerning non-patron tourists taking pictures of the guide without permission.

Several guides noted feeling “dehumanized” while in costume, as unwelcome contact and attention was directed at them by complete strangers. This also can connect to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s view on exhibiting living people, who by the simple act of being on display become “specimens.” “Live exhibits as a representational mode make their own kinds of claims. Even when efforts are taken to the contrary, live exhibits tend to make people into artifacts because the ethnographic gaze objectifies” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 55). One guide vehemently expressed his view that the costume he wears makes him (and other costumed guides) a target for attention, among adults and children alike. “What do you think if you’re an actor on stage—that can’t be. That has to be annoying. So...that’s the only annoying thing about children—overwhelmingly, they’re pretty good, but you get some .... that just think...and they’re testing boundaries, and they see us, and they want to test them with us. I don’t think that would ever have occurred were I not in 18<sup>th</sup> century clothes. That’s not going to happen if I’m sitting there in, like, a jacket and a hat-- they’d never approach me. Just like that, they think to some degree you’re like Mickey at Disney”

(costumed guide 4481). Speculation suggests that many people may see all costumed individuals in a public space as accessible, much like the figures in theme parks like Disney, where visitors are encouraged to interact and be photographed with the characters. These characters are seen as spectacle for entertainment, rather than for education like the costumed guides of Boston, though it is probable that they may experience, on some level, a similar type of dehumanization.

Costumed guides can receive similar attention even when they are no longer “on stage,” as the objectification of the guide/costume unit, once established, can occur anywhere in public. Guides who remain in their costume when not leading a tour attract the same kind of attention, which can be frustrating. One guide, who often remains in costume after the conclusion of his tours, relayed such an experience. “We’re at the (restaurant), at the window, and they came up, and ...we’re obviously not thinking this through...wanted pictures, and we said ‘We’re going to eat here.’ ‘Well, then you shouldn’t dress like that—we’d expect pictures!’ I said ‘Ahhh, I’m ASKING for it by the way I’m dressed? Do you really want to go there right now?’ And they apologized, said ‘You’re right, you’re right.’ I said ‘See how easy it is?’” (costumed guide 4481).

These testimonies give credence to the idea that the consumption of costumed guides through photography is a sign that the costume and guide are viewed as a single object. This can be tied to the increase of tourists, and even everyday people, living through the lens of a camera rather than experiencing the world around them. As members of the tourism industry, which is part of the larger customer service industry, and the face of their tour company in the eyes of patrons, costumed guides do not have

the opportunity to voice their displeasure of this objectified treatment directly to the source. While several guides expressed their displeasure in this situation during an interview, such moments do not discourage them, and most find their work, and many of their patrons, enjoyable.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The efficacy of costume in drawing the audience's attention into narrative and maintaining a connection to the past during a historical tour can be seen as follows; Firstly, costumes worn by historic tour guides in Boston and Cambridge serve as a visual connection to the past for those observing it, and as a visual marketing tool to promote the company's tours. Secondly, guides can be influenced by the costume they wear, creating a connection to the people and events of the past for the guides themselves. It is unclear, however, whether this comfort and connection with a character or the time period influences the view of patrons. Thirdly, costumes can be utilized verbally for educational benefit by the guide, either when a patron asks a question about the costume or in a prepared section of dialogue. Opinions regarding the authenticity or accuracy of a costume and the quality of the performance displayed by each guide varies with each audience, with a narrow possibility for total satisfaction of all parties involved due to the complexity of each encounter. Most of the criticism regarding authenticity and accuracy comes from fellow guides working for competing tour companies, and is not a focus or concern for most guides. A separate study of the perceived, practical, and actual authenticity and accuracy of costumes used in guided tours of Boston and Cambridge should be encouraged by these findings.

The non-verbal clues (signs) created by the costumed guide can also be interpreted or seen in several ways: The costume can act as a connection to history or

help facilitate a historical atmosphere for tour patrons. It can also be viewed as a curious occurrence, which tourists deem worthy of documenting with photography. This can be taken to the extreme by some tourists, however, who see the guide in costume as another historical object to be consumed, like the many historic buildings and markers found throughout the city's "touristic space" around them (MacCannell 1976). Like children encouraged to hug their favorite character at Disney World, some tourists heed no boundaries, which often leads the costumed guide to uncomfortable contact with curious and sometimes clueless (or simply thoughtless), members of the population, who interrupt tours in progress or approach guides when they are not in guide mode. This conclusion only mentions the three predominant reactions to costumed guides observed in the field or mentioned in an interview. More research is needed to expand these findings further, especially in relation to the non-tour patron public.

It is also common for guides and the costumes they wear to be seen as a single entity, when on public display. This increases the likelihood of the costumed guide being objectified and de-humanized, which can lead to physically and psychologically uncomfortable encounters with members of the public, even when the guide is not "on stage" in front of a crowd of tour patrons. Interacting with the public is a delicate and complex task for costumed guides, with each group of patrons a new challenge. While costumed guides may not have full control over the non-verbal messages patrons and the public may perceive from their period clothing, they can control the educational information they provide on tours. This uncontrollable element of the costume is the magic of theatricality, the suspension of disbelief inherent in theatrical performance,

the “liveness and impermanence (that) allow for a process of exchange—between artists and audiences, between past and present—where new social formations emerge” (Roman 2005, 1).

Though this research sampled only a small number of participants in the world of costumed interpretation among urban Massachusetts tour guides, those who shared their experience and expertise helped to lay the foundations for effective creation of both “historical space” and an educational atmosphere for future visitors to enjoy. Further research in this vein could only increase the understanding of costume as a tool for communication between people. For those guides who feel they are teachers or historians rather than performers, the encapsulation of the historic costume with other tools for education is a tantalizing possibility.

## APPENDICES

### 1. COSTUME TOUR PATRON QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle your response:

1. Is this your first time visiting Boston, Cambridge or Lexington?

Yes

No

2. Why did you decide to take this tour?

I like interacting  
with people in  
costume

I like learning  
from a tour  
guide

It seemed like  
the best option

Cost

Recommended  
by a third party

Part of a  
vacation/trip  
package

It was not my  
decision

None of the  
above

3. Did the costume worn by your tour guide influence your interest in the tour?

Very significant  
influence

Somewhat  
significant  
influence

Neither  
significant nor  
insignificant  
influence

Somewhat  
insignificant  
influence

Very  
insignificant  
influence

4. Did the costume worn by your tour guide alter/change your prescription of the historic information you heard.

Very significant  
change

Somewhat  
significant  
change

Neither  
significant nor  
insignificant  
change

Somewhat  
insignificant  
change

Very  
insignificant  
change



5. Did you see your tour guide as a connection to history?

Yes

No

6. Did you feel comfortable interacting with your tour guide?

Very  
comfortable

Somewhat  
comfortable

Neither  
comfortable  
nor  
uncomfortable

Somewhat  
uncomfortable

Very  
uncomfortable

7. If your tour guide was dressed in modern clothes (ex. Polo shirt and khaki pants) would you have felt more comfortable?

Very  
comfortable

Somewhat  
comfortable

Neither  
comfortable  
nor  
uncomfortable

Somewhat  
uncomfortable

Very  
uncomfortable

8. Please indicate your age:

18-39 years

40-59 years

60-79 years

80 years +

9. Additional comments?

**Thank you for your participation!**

## 2. NON-COSTUME TOUR PATRON QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle your response:

1. Is this your first time visiting Boston, Cambridge or Lexington?

Yes

No

2. Why did you decide to take this tour?

I was in the area  
and found this  
tour convenient

I like learning  
from a tour guide

It seemed like the  
best option

Cost

Recommended  
by a third party

Part of a  
vacation/trip  
package

It was not my  
decision

Other:

3. Did the clothing worn by your tour guide alter/change your perception of the historic information you heard?

Very  
significant  
change

Somewhat  
significant  
change

Neither  
significant nor  
insignificant  
change

Somewhat  
insignificant  
change

Very  
insignificant  
change

4. Did you see your tour guide as a connection to history?

Yes

No

5. Did you feel comfortable interacting with your tour guide?

Very  
comfortable

Somewhat  
comfortable

Neither  
comfortable  
nor  
uncomfortable

Somewhat  
uncomfortable

Very  
uncomfortable

6. Have you ever attended an historical tour with a costumed guide?

Yes

No

7. If your tour guide today had been dressed in period costume, would you have felt more comfortable?

Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable
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8. Please indicate your age:

18-39 years

40-59 years

60-79 years

80 years +

9. Additional comments?

**Thank you for your participation!**

### APPENDICES 3

#### TOUR OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

##### Pre-tour

- Costumed guides interacting with others in costume
- Costumed guides advertise tour
  - As selves
  - As a character
- Guides pose for pictures
- Guides say no to pictures
- Guides using technology/eating lunch
- Costumed guide answers questions of non-patron
- Patrons attempt to take pictures of guides without their knowledge

##### Guides

- 1<sup>st</sup> person
- 2<sup>nd</sup> person
- 3<sup>rd</sup> person
- “confusion” of modern phrasing
- Linen shift/shirt
- Petticoat
- Corset
- Coat
- Waistcoat
- Fall front pants
- Tricorn hat
- Modern shoes
- “period” shoes
- Explanation of costume
  - Unprompted
  - Prompted by patron question
- Breaks in character
- Interaction/acknowledgment of urban surroundings
- Traffic
- Other people
- Homeless people
- Interaction with modern technology
  - Cell phone
  - Traffic light
  - Vehicles
  - Other
- Visible makeup or faux hair pieces
- Explanation of character
- Explanation of time period
- Posing for photographs
- Break in dialogue or interaction to address non-patrons
- Asks for patron questions at sites

##### Patrons

- Group size
  - 0-5
  - 6-10
  - 11-15
  - 16-20
  - 21-25
- 26+
- Families (<4)
- Families (>4)
- Young children
- Boston clothing or gear
- Foreign tour groups

- “walk-ups”
- Questions about costume
  - To guide
  - To other patrons
- Questions about character
  - To guide
  - To other patrons
- Questions about time period
  - To guide
  - To other patrons
- Want to interact in 3<sup>rd</sup> person
- Leave before tour ends
- Adult patrons using technology
  - Cell phone
  - Camera
  - iPod or iPad
- Teen/children using technology
  - Cell phone
  - Camera
  - iPod or iPad
- Non-tour patrons are inconvenienced and annoyed by tour group
- Passing another tour group w/ costumed guide
- Loud traffic

### **Other public**

- Noisy
- Catcalling
- Other tourists who interrupt guide
- Listeners- other people who stop to listen at a site
  - Single person or couple
  - Families of 3 or more
  - Foreign
- Cling-ons (barnacles)
  - Single person or couple
  - Families of 3 or more
  - Foreign
- Homeless people
- Yelling homeless people
- Odd glances toward costumed guide

**APPENDICES 4**  
**COSTUME GUIDE PRE-INTERVIEW AND POST-TOUR QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Please circle your response:**

What is your age?

18-29 years

30-49 years

50-69 years

70 years +

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other

How many years have you worked as a costumed tour guide?

0-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

21+ years

How do you identify yourself while working as a costumed guide?

Actor

Docent

Guide

Historian

Interpreter

Player

Reenactor

None of the above

Did you earn a post-secondary degree of any kind?

Yes

No

I attended college but  
did not graduate

If so, what did you study?

History

Theatre

Literature

Education

Other

Major or specialization?

--

**Thank you! Please return this questionnaire to the researcher at your scheduled interview.**

APPENDICES 5  
**COSTUMED GUIDE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- How do you define your job?
- What is your background? Theatre, historian, tours, museums?
- What attracted you to this job?
- Do you participate in any historic performance outside of this company?
  - Reenactments, school groups, etc?
- How do you discover your character?
  - Assigned? Researched yourself?
  - Are you the only one playing this character?
  - Do you portray more than one character?
- How do you interact with your tour groups?
  - 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person?
- What kind of audiences do you get?
  - School groups? Groups with their own supervisor/guide? International tourists? Tourists with a language barrier?
  - Do specific groups react differently?
- What do you wear while giving tours?
  - Where did this costume come from? How much do you know about it?
  - Who designed your costume? Did you have any input in the design choices?
  - Pulled from a stockroom?
    - Did you have fittings, or did you alter it yourself? Were alterations necessary?
  - Purchased from an outside source?
    - Fittings?
  - Made for you?
    - Did you have fittings? With whom?
  - Made yourself?
    - How did you research your costume?
    - Was this part of your training prior to leading tours?
    - From what materials is it made?
    - Shoes? Underpinings? Corset?
- How do you feel about wearing your costume?
- Do you see large differences in interest between your patrons and the public around you?
- Does giving tours in a large public space make communication difficult for you?
  - Heckling from non-tour persons
  - Cling-on tourists who did not pay
- Do patrons ask you about your costume?
- Do patrons ask you about your non-historic life (out of character)?

**APPENDICES 6**  
**COMPANY OFFICIAL PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Please circle your response:**

How many years have you worked with this company?

0-5 years      6-10 years      11-15 years      16-20 years      21+ years

What is your position title?

How do you define the costumed guides in your company?

Actor	Docent	Guide	Historian
Interpreter	Player	Reenactor	Other

If "Other", please list title: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you work as a costumed guide in addition to your managerial duties?

Yes                      No                      I have in the past

What is the approximate yearly budget for costume purchase or construction?

\$0-\$1,000      \$1,001-\$2,500      \$2,501-\$5,000      \$5,001-\$7,500      \$7,501+

What is the approximate yearly budget for costume maintenance?

\$0-\$250      \$251-\$500      \$501-\$750      \$751-\$1,000      \$1,001+

**Thank you! Please return this questionnaire to the researcher at your scheduled interview.**



**APPENDICES 7**  
**COMPANY OFFICIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Questions for directors of programs**

- Why do you utilize costumed interpretation?
- How do costumed performers/interpreters embody/advance the company's mission statement?
- Who wears them?
- Have you always used costumes? If not, why the change?
- How do costumed performers interact with visitors?
- What is the intended goal in these interactions?
- How are costumed performers interpreters connected with the company's education programs?
- Is the production of the worn costumes part of the educational experience?
- How much do the performers/interpreters know about what they are wearing and why?
- Do interpreters use 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person identities?
- Technical Questions
  - How much do you budget for costume purchase/construction and maintenance?
  - How do you research garments for your interpreters?
  - Who designs each costume?
    - What level of reality is considered in the design? Social strata/certain class? Distressing so it doesn't look new?
  - Where do these costumes come from? If created on site, how? Historical accuracy?
    - Who makes the garments?
    - What materials were used? Fabrics?
  - How many interpreters?
  - How many costumes each?
  - Where are costumed stored?
  - Where do guides dress for tours?
  - How are the costumes maintained?
    - Interpreters are responsible?
    - Wardrobe crew?

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