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[COMMENTARY]

Poverty Tourism, Justice, and Policy

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ABSTRACT

Based on moral grounds, should poverty tourism be subject to specific policy constraints? This article responds by testing poverty tourism against the ethical guideposts of compensation justice, participative justice, and recognition justice, and two case descriptions, favela tours in Rocinha and garbage dump tours in Mazatlan. The argument advanced is that the complexity of the social relationships involved those tours requires policy-relevant research and solutions.

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Introduction

“Poverty tourism” is getting a lot of attention today as a practice that should be subject to ethical reflection.¹ Articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Huffington Post*, and some denounce the practice as morally repugnant. Recently, *The New York Times* posed questions about the ethics of “gang tours” in Los Angeles (January 17, 2010),

Bill Maher condemned mainstream media coverage of the effects of the earthquake in Haiti as “disaster porn” (February 16, 2010),² and media critics debated over whether the film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) is an exploitative cinematic version of a poverty tour (Selinger & Outterson, 2010).

Poverty tourism refers to cases where financially privileged tourists visit impoverished communities for the purpose of witnessing poverty firsthand. Many visitors expect their trip will prove educational and help alleviate poverty. Unfortunately, few scholarly contributions on the subject exist that shed light on its core ethical dimensions. Most of the work on niche tourism focuses on the following issues:

- ecological, indigenous, justice, and disaster tourism (Butler & Hinch, 2007; Gotham, 2007a, 2007b; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2007, 2008; Higham, 2007; Johnston, 2006; Lewis & Gould, 2007; Ryan & Aicken, 2005; Weaver, 2001; Whyte, 2010);
- the impact on poverty (Bennett, Roe, & Ashley, 1999; Goodwin, 2009);
- the cultural aspects (Bruner, 1996; Desmond, 1999; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Smith, 1989; Sturken, 2007).

Selinger’s “Ethics and Poverty Tours” (2009) and Selinger and Outtersons’ “The Ethics of Poverty Tourism” (2010) are among the first scholarly contributions to address the normative dimensions of poverty tourism.³ These studies question some of the premises found in typical arguments claiming that it is inherently wrong. They show how contextual considerations are crucial to assessing the moral permissibility of different forms of poverty tourism and the intentions motivating tourists.⁴

Although this form of tourism is a growing practice that involves participation from some of the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the world, few state, administrative, or private bodies have regulatory policies for governing the relevant interactions. Whether practices should be subject to specific policy constraints depends on whether it can be shown that good reasons exist for vulnerable parties to judge them as unfair. One way of testing for unfairness is to

determine if existing or proposed practices violate any of the following three ideals: “compensation justice,” “participative justice,” and “recognition justice.” Far from the simple application of ideals to practices, the argument here is that the complexity of the social relationships involved those tours requires policy-relevant research and solutions. The conclusion offers some recommendations of this kind that range from the production of tourism literature to social studies of hosts’ perceptions.

In the first section, “Fairness and Poverty Tourism,” the three ideals are outlined as “guideposts” that fair practices follow. The next section, “Applying the Guideposts to Poverty Tours,” explores the guideposts in relation to the complexities involved in poverty tours in Brazil and Mexico, and suggests possible approaches for policy-relevant research. Some ideas for policy are offered in the concluding section, “Recommendations.”

Fairness and Poverty Tourism

Policies respond to unfairness in many familiar contexts. For example, preventing unfairness requires managers in global pharmaceutical companies to abide by policies that regulate clinical trials in developing countries. Successful policies thus must be based on methods that secure reliable, affordable, and feasible results, and include procedures for assessing impacts. Policies also should be compatible with justice for all affected parties. Hence, pharmaceutical administrators, in conjunction with regulatory authorities, have formulated ethical codes that support fair treatment on issues such as informed consent for illiterate people, and access to follow-up treatment for poor patients who otherwise could not obtain needed care. In relevant instances, such as Australian indigenous tourism, policies are judged according to whether they protect vulnerable parties and promote economic development (Altman, 1989; Whitford, Bell, & Watkins, 2001).

If it is morally appropriate to design and mandate poverty tourism policies, then it has to be shown that the relationships among the financially privileged tourists, the tourism operators, and the potentially vulnerable members of the host community are unfair. The possible economic asymmetries among these parties warrant concern about the presence of unfairness. Indeed, communities become poverty tourism destinations for the sole reason that their members are destitute.

Ethical ideals can be used to assess whether the parties affected by any practice are receiving fair, or *just*, treatment.⁵ Ideals are “guideposts,” or simple tools or heuristics that can be used as (1) cues for picking out features of a practice that should be characterized as unfair, and (2) justifying the moral appropriateness of distinctive policy solutions. The guideposts considered here are referred to as “compensation justice,” “participative justice,” and “recognition justice.”

In the ensuing discussion of these guideposts, poverty tourists will be referred to as “tourists.” Other actors, like merchants or tourism operators, will be referred to with specific designations. Crucially, the guideposts should not to be understood as perfect indicators of justice; adapting a practice or policy to support justice is not an exact science. However, the guideposts can be used to identify blatant injustices and to help clarify whether a given policy supports fair outcomes.

The first guidepost is compensation justice. It reflects the moral principle that, in every human transaction, each party should be compensated fairly for any services rendered. Compensation can be understood in three ways: direct financial or material compensation; indirect financial or material compensation (for example, compensation through a non-governmental organization working in the area); and, immaterial compensation, such as the

benefit of a destitute person knowing that by hosting tourists, he or she is making a meaningful contribution to alleviating poverty.⁶

The challenge is how to determine what compensations are fair in the eyes of all affected parties, especially those who are vulnerable to being exploited. Determining what compensations are fair requires information about the particular values of those who stand to be compensated. Values include personal and cultural preferences, such as conceptions of fairness and the relative importance of money, and they extend to identity based perceptions of what is at stake in a particular situation. In ordinary transactions, compensation justice is premised on free exchange between a willing buyer and a willing seller, neither being under any compulsion, with full information. Poverty tourism potentially fails many of these conditions, which suggests the possible need for policy.

As a guidepost, then, compensation justice flags any compensation schemes that are not anchored in the relevant values research. In some cases, failing to do research is just “bad business.” Many draft policies include market research on client values for this purpose. Apart from instrumental purposes, research of this kind has a justice aspect. For example, in some transactions people will accept compensation under terms that challenge their values because they desperately need the funds or fear the compensators cannot understand their preferences. Social tensions thus can arise when members of one party feel that their consent was obtained under unfair terms of exchange. To minimize the likelihood of this discordance arising, two salient questions need to be considered when drafting poverty tourism policy that is intended to promote compensation justice: are profits justly allocated and distributed, and does injustice occur as a consequence of communities adapting to the demands imposed by their interactions

with tourists, as in cases where market demand requires the community to conform to tourist expectations? Put differently, is the exchange characterized by compulsion?

The second guidepost is participative justice. It concerns whether or not all parties are consulted in decision-making and whether or not they have given their consent. Participative justice is grounded in the idea that the potential outcomes of human transactions are only morally acceptable if all affected parties have endorsed them through a meaningful opportunity to give their consent. As a guidepost, participative justice is part of evaluating draft compensation schemes. Not only do these schemes require a basis in relevant research, but they also have to be embraced by those who stand to be compensated. Consent that is “express” and “informed” requires that the process of obtaining consent does not rely on manipulation, coercion, duress, or information that is false, absent, or incomprehensible to those consenting. To the extent that information asymmetries exist in poverty tourism, participative justice is threatened.

The second, participative justice, can be used in terms of two kinds of consent, “express” and “tacit” (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009). Consider the example of a tourist who stays for several days in a host community and is actually being housed by the members. Gaining informed consent here has to be “express” insofar as those who are doing the hosting should sign off directly and with full information on what they are about to do. The second kind of consent is “tacit.” Suppose a tourist goes to a country to simply wander through poor neighborhoods to witness actual poverty. One way of looking at this scenario is that the tourist is simply strolling through the neighborhood as an individual or in a small group, is not looking particularly at anyone, and is bringing tourism dollars to the local merchants that indirectly contribute to that neighborhood or country’s welfare. In such a scenario, express consent cannot be secured. But,

consent can be tacit if there are no direct objections by the community members or merchants to the presence of the tourists. Parties are, in effect, giving their consent.

In the case of poverty tours, tourists may go to a particular area simply to walk through the neighborhoods and view the poverty (or humanity) of the community members, and there may be adequate channels for the residents to express their possible objections. If there are no such channels, then it would be impossible to know whether the community members object to it other than if they engage in public agitation. As a guidepost, it should be acknowledged whether express or tacit consent is possible. In the case of express consent, there has to be a way to secure it for all affected parties, with sufficient disclosure of relevant information. In the case of tacit consent, then efforts need to be taken that show that channels for expressing objections are known and available.

The third guidepost is recognition justice. It captures that idea that affected parties will see a practice or policy as unfair if it privileges others' cultural terms over theirs without any relevant reasons being offered or discussed.⁷ This type of justice is easiest to understand through an example of procedures for obtaining consent. In the United States, consent is often acquired through the use of contracts that the individual consenter signs with his or her signature, and recognizes as legally binding and enforceable documents. The meaningfulness, binding power, and enforceability characteristics present in the American context may not exist in other communities. Indeed, in the case of poverty tourism, the community members may not value contracts and signatures in the same way that tourists and tourism operators do. The residents may indeed consent and sign on the dotted line; however, they only do so because they do not want to lose the opportunity for their community to receive financial compensation. In this case, the American procedure of obtaining consent is privileged over that of the community—whatever

culturally specific procedure theirs may be. The only reason for this privilege is that the tourism operators have more financial power. The fact that there are wealth inequalities is not a good reason for privileging one way of obtaining consent over another and avoiding the task of having to negotiate cultural differences in order to strike upon a consent procedure that everyone considers to be fair.

Privileged cultural terms can occur in more scenarios than obtaining consent.

Recognition injustice will also take place when the way in which a tour is conducted does not attend to community members' feedback or the operator does not take efforts to find out what local people and other parties think about the tour. When feedback is ignored and no efforts at communication are made, then they are subject to a practice conceived entirely from the cultural terms of the tourists or tourism operators. A practice that imposes one set of cultural terms onto another runs the risk of being unfair to those whose cultural terms are ignored.

In short, compensation justice, participative justice, and recognition justice are guideposts that can gauge whether, at first glance, policies and practices are likely to be considered fair in the eyes of all affected parties. The guideposts can be summarized as follows:

- Compensation Justice: Are compensation schemes free from coercion and sustained by research on the values of those who stand to be compensated?
- Participative Justice: Have all affected parties given their express or tacit consent to the compensation scheme, the possible outcomes, and the expected activities?
- Recognition Justice: Are any cultural terms unjustifiably privileged?

Practices that include clear violations of any three of these guideposts may not be viewed as morally legitimate or responsible in the eyes of the vulnerable parties who may sense they are being treated unfairly by the tourists and operators. By contrast, practices that meet the demands of these standards are more likely to support justice and reflect legitimacy and responsibility.

Can these guideposts be applied to poverty tours in order to assess whether governments or organizations should create policies for them?

Applying the Guideposts to Poverty Tours

If any of the guideposts have been violated, good reasons may exist for advocating regulations. Unfortunately, the guideposts cannot be applied algorithmically because numerous social relationships mediate the interactions among tourists, hosts, and the other parties in poverty tours. Hence, without new policy-relevant research, it is hard to determine the nature and extent of unfairness, even when strong suspicion about its presence exists. The following discussion of favela tourism in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Exhibit One) and garbage dump tours in Mazatlan, Mexico (Exhibit Two) identifies some of the social complexity.

Guided tours of Brazilian favelas are advertised in hostels and other places where tourists frequent. Guides take tourists through the favelas, providing an array of opportunities to purchase locally-produced goods and talk to locals. In the Rocinha favela tours (Exhibit One), the complexity of social relationships makes it difficult to assess compensation justice because the affected parties are compensated in diverse ways ranging from purchases to donations to charitable organizations. Since some of the compensation does not go directly to residents, room exists for improving how the affected parties are compensated. Tourism operators concerned with this issue can change the situation through research, which may identify practical compensation schemes that are consistent with community members' values, even though it can be difficult to tell *who* to consider and how to undertake the needed inquiry. Viable possibilities include case studies and interviews that gauge what the residents think (if anything) about the fairness of the compensation and what improvements (if any) they favor.

[Exhibit One here]

In terms of participative justice, Rocinha residents lack a clear mechanism of consent. Neither community associations nor powerful drug gangs officially endorse tourism. Nevertheless, the visits have been conducted for many years, without significant internal opposition. Although in some highly disorganized communities, lack of opposition is not tantamount to consent, in Rocinha, the tours could not occur if either the drug gangs or the residents' association opposed them. It thus seems significant that strident opposition is absent. Additionally, shopkeepers, motoboys (see Exhibit One), artists, and NGOs are the groups who interact most directly with tourists. They engage in voluntary market transactions that are at least as favorable as any other commercial exchange that Rocinha residents experience; for the artists and NGOs, the benefits are particularly salient.

Recognition justice, here, has to do with whether the residents are forced to accept the tourists's cultural terms. Since tourists assume it is acceptable to go to Brazil, pay a tour operator, and go to Rocinha, they may presume that residents should be passive. Another point to consider is whether operators narrate their tours with stories that residents would claim are untrue and misleading. Recognition justice requires that residents have opportunity to give constructive feedback to the operators and tourists about how the tours should be conducted, what the narratives should be, and what the tourists should expect to see. Whether recognition injustice requires relief through a policy is an open question, and further research examining these narratives could serve as an important basis for policies that could correct injustices at the level of discourse.

In sum, in favela tours several contain several unknowns related to social complexity that make it difficult to determine whether flagrant injustices abound. These unknowns should be subject to research that examines how residents perceive compensation schemes, what channels

exist (or do not) for discontent to be expressed, and whether narratives about the community are unfairly biased. The contextual inquiry ought to assess whether the guideposts are followed or violated, and when violations occur, policy responses should be considered.

Some poverty tourism occurs alongside ongoing volunteer or other service-oriented tourism, as is the case in Garbage Dump Tours in Mazatlan, Mexico (Exhibit 2). The La Vina church group drives tourists to Mazatlan's largest dump to feed a hot lunch to scavengers who pick up trash. Because the church also permits participants to photograph the scavengers, the tour blurs the distinction between poverty and volunteer tourism. The compensation justice aspects in this case are clear. The specific garbage dump tour takes place in a larger context of social relationships in that region. Unlike the Rio favela tours, the dump tour is run as a non-profit spiritual enterprise, with most of the funds going directly to the intended recipients. In one sense, La Viña runs the tour as a "loss leader" to introduce tourists to its larger social and religious missions in Mazatlan. But those efforts are also geared towards establishing fair compensation for the community members, mixing social justice with religious teaching.

[Exhibit Two here]

Consent and participative justice are more problematic in the Mazatlan context, given the more extreme poverty at the dump, and the complexity of the social relationships among the many actors. Officials clearly allow La Viña to operate; the mobile kitchen drives past the guard shack without hindrance. It is also explicit that the scavengers welcome the truck. Unlike some U.S. soup kitchens, the food offered at the dump lacks any explicitly religious programming; coercion thus is not present. And yet, there is something troubling about presenting options to people who are so desperately poor that they lack the capability to make unconstrained choices.

In all likelihood, food will always be accepted, even when tourists take pictures. It is possible to imagine other—less principled—groups could take further advantage of the scavengers.

Two characteristics of La Viña are worth noting here: first, the goal of fair compensation does not necessarily insulate them from problems with participative justice. Second, while the church is rooted in the community, and includes a vibrant local membership, much of the money and leadership comes from abroad. La Viña has feet in both worlds, which allows it to serve as a bridge and conduit for resources, but also complicates its role in participative justice. While operators of these tours should carefully reflect on whether there are sufficient communication channels to at least ensure that tacit consent is secured for the voyeuristic aspects of the tour, it is difficult to conceive of further mandates that could be imposed in this context. A set of interviews and focus groups with church members, employees, and residents that used the guideposts as lead questions could reveal new strategies for addressing the participatory issues.

Recognition justice may also be quite problematic because of the high stakes experience by community members. The only reason why their existence is of interest to tourists is because they are dramatically underprivileged. Since the high stakes may allow for the benefits to overshadow feelings of discomfort, it is reasonable to wonder how sensitive the tourists are to their privileged relation to cultural assumptions. Perhaps visitors should be urged to consider not just the conditions of poverty experienced by the residents, but also how the latter might view the tourists from their cultural standpoints. Perhaps the garbage dump workers could be asked how they would prefer to receive help, or what they think about being photographed. It would be important to find out how the tourists' etiquette is looked on by those subject to the tour in order to see whether policies should be enacted, perhaps by the church, to change it.

In sum, the garbage dump tour poses some challenges regarding how to think about justice given the position that the scavengers are in. Research should seek to draw out information about what strategies could be used to limit the degree to which the extremities involved in such cases inevitably compromise justice, especially in terms of participation and recognition.

Recommendations

Having reviewed these two cases, recommendations will be offered for how to use the research outlined as the basis for poverty tourism policies.

Some poverty tours do not directly compensate residents and other affected parties. In these cases, more should be done to understand how indirect compensation would be beneficial to the community members in terms of their values and preferences. It should not be assumed that all affected parties view positive economic change as morally acceptable. Depending on the findings, tourism organizations, associations, and relevant government units could set standards of compensation that operators would have to meet in order to be “certified” to guide tours. The standards envisioned here would be sensitive to the social complexities described in the previous sections. Operators, for example, would have to show that their businesses donate a certain percentage to charity, provide sufficient opportunities for tourists to make local purchases, and keep local merchants and others who stand to benefit informed about the tourists’ preferences. These standards also would add a stamp of responsibility for tourists who are concerned about the impact of their presence in the community.

Some practices do not occur in situations where express consent is possible. In these cases, operators and charitable organizations working in the area are responsible for setting up channels for tacit consent. One of the problems with some poverty tours is that it is simply not

known what the residents think about it. Part of what makes this a problem is an absence of communication channels between the different parties. Depending on the situation, there should be mandates that require organizations to explore whether such channels are possible and how to set them up in contextually appropriate ways. Government orders and rules may also include “consultation” requirements that can be applied to poverty tours.

It is likely that some poverty tourism practices violate recognition justice and actions should be taken as remedies. Operators should strive to create tours that are more sensitive to residents’ feedback, even when the stakes are high for the community. Another side to this where policies can be crafted has to do with narratives describing poverty and the tourists’ etiquette. Tourism organizations, associations, and government units should be able to review and assess these narratives in order to ensure that residents are not harmed by their representation. Tourists’ etiquette can also be nudged through publications like pamphlets and articles in tourism books that give some brief information about picture taking and other activities that might appeal to some tourists, but be offensive to the residents.

The recommendations just offered must be applied within the socially complex worlds of many poverty tours. Improving poverty tours should involve research that is designed not only with the guideposts in mind, but also some of these recommendations. This kind of “policy-driven” research would be especially helpful for addressing the unique vulnerabilities that some people may be exposed to in poverty tours. Having not exhausted all angles, others hopefully will contribute further to this discussion of poverty tours, justice, and policy.

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Exhibit 1: Favela Tourism in Rocinha

Rocinha is one of the largest favelas in Brazil, located on a steep hillside in Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps 100,000 or more people live there, mostly without formal land titles and modest municipal services. But Rocinha is much more developed than the archetype of a squatters' settlement: most of the structures are substantial multi-story buildings, many with reinforced concrete construction. As favelas go, Rocinha has some advantages that others do not have. It is a desirable place to live for workers in the beachfront hotels of Rio, since the commute to work is modest. Nevertheless, sewage runs in some open gutters and drug gangs

brandish weapons on busy street corners. It is a place that upper class Brazilians are loathe to visit.

Many are shocked that foreign tourists would want to participate in poverty tours of the favela. But tourists are flocking to Rocinha, particularly young people staying in Rio's youth hostels. Most hostels advertise favela tours, with rival operators selling various tour options. Favela tours are offered on the same terms as hang gliding, or tours of the National Park, Sugar Loaf, and the Christ the Redeemer statue. Tourists are encouraged to bring their cameras on bealocal.com, a website advertising the tours. The leading tour owners do not live in Rocinha, but use their profits to live in much wealthier Rio neighborhoods like Leblon, Ipanema, or Botafogo. Some of their direct employees live in favelas, including some of the men who drive the vans and the motoboy (motor bike taxis) who take the tourists up the winding main street of Rocinha to the top of the mountainside. If the books of tour operators were audited, it should be suspected that only a small percentage of the fees paid by tourists ends up in Rocinha. A significant percentage is paid off the top to the hostel owner, as a commission for directing the tourists to particular tours. These tours are for-profit enterprises by local entrepreneurs, not charitable endeavors.

Nevertheless, many people in Rocinha do benefit economically from the tours. Each motoboy is paid the going rate for the taxi ride. Tours stop at small shops and bakeries during the walk down the hillside, and tourists buy sodas and Brazilian donuts. A few children make crafts from discarded materials that are sold in the narrow alleys. Some tours also offer more significant shopping opportunities in Rocinha, including an art gallery co-op featuring local Rocinha artists. The artwork is not inexpensive—generally much more expensive than the tour itself, but the artists are indeed favela residents. The tour operators facilitate these purchases by

bringing the tourists to the co-op, and by arranging for both the delivery of the artwork back to the hostel and payment, since the foreigners are unlikely to have brought much cash into the favela. For these services, the operator earns a hefty commission and perhaps an exclusive relationship with the artists. In private conversations, the artists do not report any feelings of being exploited; they seem genuinely pleased to sell to tourists at fair prices, even with the commissions. Their alternatives are to sell on the streets of Copacabana and Ipanema, generally at lower prices and greater inconvenience to their studio work. Some favela tours also support local charities. NGOs are active in Rocinha, including several that are founded and operated by local residents. Some tours visit these NGOs and observe their educational work with children. Tourists are then given an opportunity to donate funds directly, and many do. Over the years, repeat visitors see the effect of these donations as programs grow to serve more children.

Exhibit 2: Garbage Dump Tours in Mazatlan

Mazatlan is a Mexican beach resort town. In addition to short-term tourists, it attracts a number of U.S. and Canadian retired couples (“snow birds”) who spend the winter months on the pleasant Pacific coast. In a pattern similar to Rio and other resort towns, the beachfront hotels are supported by a low-wage workforce of cleaners, cooks, and service employees. These workers cannot afford to live in Mazatlan’s Zona Dorado (the “Golden Zone”). Some live in dusty colonias on the outskirts of Mazatlan. Some of these colonias are quite impoverished. The La Viña church building is in the Zona Dorado, with two related congregations sharing the building: Mexican families from nearby neighborhoods, worshipping in Spanish; and a “snow bird” English-speaking congregation of wealthier retirees. The church solicits funds for outreach projects to the colonias, including new churches, youth education events, donations of water

purification equipment, mobile kitchens that provide a hot lunch for children, and primary care health clinics. Many of these activities are staffed by short-term volunteers from the U.S. and Canada, who take vacation days to come to Mazatlan to serve residents of the colonias. Other volunteers are “snow birds,” whether members of La Viña or not, who develop longer-term relationships in the region. Some donate substantial amounts of time, energy and money to the outreach projects.

The most unusual La Viña project is the garbage dump tour, which involves a dozen or more tourists being driven to Mazatlan’s largest dump. At the dump, dozens of scavengers pick through the trash as it is dumped, looking for valuables and recyclable materials. An informal network of brokers at the fringes of the dump purchase plastic, metal, paper and other recyclable materials from the pickers. The dump is a sad, smelly place. The workers have no access to clean food or water, or sanitary facilities of any kind. It is a hot, dusty and hazardous landscape, utterly bereft of shade. It seems an unlikely tourist destination, especially when the beaches of Mazatlan beckon in the distance. And yet, each year hundreds of wealthy people take these tours. They come to the dump to serve lunch to the trash pickers. The La Viña mobile kitchen drives up the compacted trash mountain to the area where new trash is being actively dumped, and sets up shop nearby. About an hour later, hot lunches and cool water are ready for all of the scavengers—up to a hundred people. They welcome the mobile kitchen, but know to wait until the food is ready before setting their work aside.

¹ The authors are listed alphabetically and equally contributed to the writing of this article.

² This story and video is accessible at <http://rawstory.com/2010/02/maher-haiti-disaster-porn/>.

³ Poverty tourism should be distinguished from “reality tourism” (Di Chiro, 2000; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008) and “volunteer tourism” (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). The focus of reality tourism is for the tourists to understand a particular community’s viewpoint on a historical or present injustice against them. Volunteer tours are when tourists use their vacation time to provide needed volunteer services in a particular place. It is a distinctive characteristic of poverty tourism that its primary purpose is to witness poverty. This characteristic also makes it different from “pro-poor” tourism, the goal of which is to alleviate poverty, whether it is witnessed or not (Goodwin, 2009).

⁴ Since Selinger (2009) and Selinger and Outterson (2010) focus on the moral conduct of poverty tourists, the present essay will avoid redundancy by addressing matters of just policy.

⁵ The guideposts are intended to apply to any tourism practice, even tours of wealthy communities. However, violations of the guidelines would be less likely in such situations owing to the wealthy community’s privileges.

⁶ For example, in negotiations between tourism operators and community members, it might come out that one of the benefits of hosting tourists might be the recognition that doing so plays a part, albeit small, in alleviating poverty. In several poverty tours that Whyte was part of in Haiti in 2001-2002 through the organization Beyond Borders (www.beyondborders.net), this kind of compensation was emphasized by both tourism operators and community members.

⁷ The development of recognition justice is derived from an interpretation of Nancy Fraser’s concept of recognition (Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Honneth, 2003). The distinctness of compensation justice (sometimes called distributive justice), participative justice, and recognition justice is analytic. On the ground, the distinctness is blurred. For example,

injustices in how people are compensated is caused by their lack of participation and of being recognized by the other parties (Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990).