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EMOTIONAL REGULATION AT WALT DISNEY WORLD:
DEEP ACTING VS. SURFACE ACTING

by

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B.S. University of Tampa, 2007

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Communication
in the College of Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the emotional regulation strategies used by Walt Disney World on-stage employees as a way to fulfill requirements set forth by the company. Ten Disney on-stage employees were interviewed off-property in Orlando. The emotional regulation framework was divided into several categories: (1) a distinction between deep acting and surface acting, (2) emotional deviance, and (3) emotional exhaustion. "Surface acting" is a strategy by which employees display company-imposed emotions not genuinely felt, whereas "deep acting" occurs when employees *do* feel the emotions that they are required to express (Hochschild, 1983). Throughout the data reduction process, five key themes surfaced as the most relevant to the initial research questions: (1) Self-Motivated Deep Acting, (2) Organizational Expectations for Surface Acting, (3) "Back-Stage" vs. "Front-Stage" Dichotomy, (4) Benefits of Emotional Training, and (5) Negative Effects of Emotional Regulation.

Overall, the researcher found that a key strategy of emotional regulation that Disney employees use frequently is surface acting, although deep acting was found to be more successful. In addition, while emotional exhaustion was a common problem among employees, very few of them will actually engage in emotional deviance in order to avoid the negative consequences of surface acting. Lastly, it was found that highly skilled Walt Disney World employees will have already internalized emotional regulation training and display rules that manage emotional behavior. Therefore, it becomes less essential for the Disney Company to formally monitor its employees' facial expressions and emotional behavior in the future.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Objective of this Analysis

The objective of this study is to examine the emotional regulation strategies used by Walt Disney World on-stage employees as a way to fulfill requirements set forth by the company. Ten Walt Disney World on-stage employees were interviewed outside the confines of the company in Orlando (in whatever place that suited the participants, such as a coffee shop or bookstore). This method was driven by the four research questions listed below:

        RQ1: How do Disney on-stage employees engage in emotional regulation as part of their occupation?

        RQ2: How do Disney on-stage employees control emotional deviance as part of their occupation?

        RQ3: How do Disney on-stage employees control emotional exhaustion as part of their occupation?

        RQ4: What do Disney on-stage employees tend to favor the most: deep acting or surface acting? And why?

This analysis employs an emotional regulation framework to examine the emotional demands of the Walt Disney World Company and the employees' styles of responding to such emotional regulation, which have been suggested as contributing to employee stress. Emotional regulation

can influence the employee's well-being in various ways (Phillips, Tsu Wee Tan, & Julian, 2006). The direct consequences of emotional regulation are (1) if they are positive, higher communicative and social skills for the employees and great satisfaction for both employees and customers, and (2) if they are negative, emotional deviance and emotional exhaustion (for the employees) and increased dissatisfaction for both employees and customers (Çukur, 2009).

In this analysis, the emotional regulation framework was divided into several categories: (1) a distinction between deep acting and surface acting, (2) emotional deviance, and (3) emotional exhaustion. "Surface acting" is a strategy by which employees display emotions dictated by their job description – these emotions are not genuinely felt by the employees (Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting can be achieved by meticulously presenting verbal and nonverbal cues – like proper facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice. On the other hand, "deep acting" is an emotional state in which employees *do* feel the emotions that they are required to express. Although it requires more effort, it eliminates the emotional dissonance experienced in the first place (Hochschild, 1983).

Emotional deviance refers to the expressions of an employee's truer emotions. In the case of emotional deviance, felt and expressed emotions are not met with required organizational display rules and may even challenge them (Mann, 1999; Rafaeli, & Worline, 2001; Zapf, 2002). A case of emotional deviance occurs when service employees, who are emotionally exhausted, carry negative job attitudes that customers can decipher and, ultimately, give rise to lower customer satisfaction with the service encounter (Grandey, Dickter, & Sin 2004). Emotional exhaustion is "the feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101). Emotional exhaustion can contribute to increased job

dissatisfaction and decreased organizational commitment (Mulki, Jaramillo, & Locander, 2006). Emotional deviance and emotional exhaustion are highly correlated.

The ultimate objective of this analysis is to conduct a thorough examination of qualitative interviews and attempt to find significant themes emerging across the Walt Disney World employees' accounts. No specific question will be privileged to extract these themes. On the contrary, these themes will appear "naturally" from the stories that the participants share. Themes are patterns that appear throughout the participants' interviews. Hence, they can facilitate the emergence of "generalizations" about the emotional regulation strategies used by Walt Disney World on-stage employees.

Rationale for Conducting this Analysis

Through case studies and qualitative methods, early emotional regulation studies have offered fresh, new data on different facets of emotional regulation processes within a variety of jobs and occupations (Hastings, 2004; Hochschild, 1983; Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998; Nias, 1996; Rafaeli, & Sutton, 1987, 1991; Van Manen, & Kunda, 1989). However, few studies have looked at emotional regulation (1) from a comparative perspective (i.e., the comparison between deep acting and surface acting) and (2) from an employee perspective. Rather, emotional regulation studies have tended to take job-focused approaches (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). A job-focused approach primarily highlights job characteristics that are associated with emotional regulation – the display rules, frequency of customer interaction,

variety, duration and intensity of emotions required during job related interaction (Kruml, & Geddes, 2000).

The employee-focused approach used in this analysis provides new, direct insights on (1) how Walt Disney World employees themselves feel, (2) their perceptions of improved interactive and social skills as a result of emotional regulation training and practice, and (3) the ups and downs of their constant performance of emotional regulation. In the emotional regulation literature, the focus has usually been on customer service, where interactions are less instinctively "emotional," yet significant emotional control is required to uphold a positive rapport with customers at all times and situations (Hochschild, 1983; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). Emotional regulation and display rules at Walt Disney World can be nerve-racking because they produce the need to handle emotional states that meet organizational objectives. Such emotional regulations are proximal predictors of stress. Also, having been an employee of the Disney Store, a different branch of the Disney Company, the researcher wanted to take a deeper look in the workings of Walt Disney World.

Finally, another purpose for this analysis was to research how customer service at Walt Disney World surpassed other companies or theme parks. Customer service goes hand in hand with emotional regulation, but what makes the Disney Company so unique and successful? This is what the researcher is striving to discover.

Preview of the Main Points of this Analysis

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This analysis begins with a rationale explaining why this study was conducted. In the literature review, the researcher proceeds to describe the Walt Disney Company in general, its origins, the Walt Disney World corporation in particular, and the employees working for the latter. Then, in the same chapter, a description is offered on emotional regulation, impression management, deep acting vs. surface acting, emotional deviance, emotional exhaustion, emotional regulation training, and emotional regulation at Walt Disney World. The third chapter of this study is the methods section. In this chapter, the researcher describes (**1**) the research questions, (**2**) qualitative interviewing and what it involves, (**3**) the objective as a qualitative interviewer, (**4**) the importance of member checking, (**5**) the reasons that explain why the qualitative interviewing method was selected (as opposed to a quantitative survey), (**6**) the participants (who they are and how they will be recruited), and (**7**) the interview protocol itself. The fourth chapter analyzes the interviews and discusses the themes found within the responses. The five themes found in the interviews consist of (**1**) self-motivated deep acting, (**2**) organizational expectations for surface acting, (**3**) "back-stage" vs. "front-stage" Dichotomy, (**4**) benefits of emotional training, and (**5**) negative effects of emotional regulation. The fifth and final chapter offers a summary of the findings of the study, along with its limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Walt Disney Company: A Description

The Walt Disney Company is a giant media and entertainment conglomerate best known for its film studio, the Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group – a massive, well-known studio in Hollywood. Disney also runs the ABC broadcast television network; cable television networks (e.g., Disney Channel, ESPN, and ABC Family); and publishing, merchandising, and theater departments. The company owns and licenses 11 theme parks worldwide. Its official mascot is Mickey Mouse (Shaffer, 2010). The Walt Disney Company has resorts worldwide – Disneyland Paris, Tokyo Disneyland, and Honk-Kong Disneyland. It will soon open new resorts in Shanghai and Hawaii.

History of the Walt Disney Company

Walter Elias "Walt" Disney was born in Kansas City, MO in 1901. In 1923, after borrowing $500 from an uncle, Walt and his brother Roy Disney moved to California and founded and started the Walt Disney Company on October 16 (Capodagli & Jackson, 2006). Walt created Oswald the Lucky Rabbit and made a cartoon series surrounding the character, making 26 cartoons in one year. However, his distributor had gone behind Walt's back and hired all of the animators so he could continue the series without Walt, making it cheaper (Company History). Because Walt did not own the rights to Oswald, there was nothing he could do. In

1928, he invented, and owned the rights to, the character Mickey Mouse. Mickey was an immediate sensation around the world (Company History). Mickey Mouse cartoons turned into full-length movies, starting with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in 1937. Many successful films were to follow, and after mastering the art of television shows and movies, Walt decided to take on the challenge of building an amusement park. As a father, Walt wanted to build a place where adults and children could have a good time together, and that was the start of Disneyland (Company History). After years of planning and construction, Disneyland opened to the public on July 17, 1955 in Anaheim, California. The park was extremely successful, but due to the fact that there was not much open space for Walt to expand in California. Therefore, he had to look elsewhere to continue his dream.

Walt Disney World

In 1959, Walt Disney Productions began searching for another location for a second resort to supplement Disneyland. Surveys showed that only 2 percent of Disneyland's guests came from the east coast (Fogleson, 2003). Also, Walt Disney did not approve of the businesses that were opening around the park and wanted a larger plot of land so he could control the surrounding area. There were many cities Disney considered building near such as Miami and St. Louis, however he chose Orlando after seeing the well-developed roads and nearby airport when flying over the site and Construction on the Disney World Resort began in Orlando in 1967 (Mannheim, 2002). To avoid a burst of land speculation, Walt Disney invented numerous fake corporations in order to acquire over 27,000 acres of land for the resort. Disney World opened in

1971, but Walt would never see the finished product. On December 15, 1966, Walt Disney passed away due to lung cancer. His brother, Roy Disney, opened The Magic Kingdom and named the resort Walt Disney World in Walt's honor (Fogleson, 2003). Soon after, Roy began construction on EPCOT Center, which was Walt's last plan before his death. However, less than three months after Walt Disney World opened, Roy passed away from a stroke (Company history). The park continued to flourish, with the opening of EPCOT in 1982, followed by MGM Studios in 1989, and finally Animal Kingdom in 1998. Present day, Walt Disney World covers over 30,000 acres and includes four theme parks, two water parks, 23 hotels, two spas and fitness centers, and other recreational venues and entertainment.

Social and Economic Impact of Walt Disney World

In Orlando, Disney also has an effect on the context outside of its theme parks and resorts. Almost everything obtains Disney flavor; even the gas stations have bushes trimmed in the silhouette of Disney characters. Disney retains its own police force and, since they are in charge of many areas of Orlando, Disney police can be seen frequently patrolling areas including parts of Orlando that are not Disney owned (Milman, Okumus, & Dickson, 2010). Since the 1960s, the Disney Company has been in an economic expansion marriage with the Orlando local government. Examples of Disney-Orlando collaborations include the city of Orlando granting Disney private government status (which includes tax and fee immunities); Disney's receiving of bond money to pay for new sewers, and Disney negotiating with the city of Orlando and the state

of Florida to build and utilize a nuclear power plant at the theme park (Chung & Schneider, 2003).

Walt Disney World is not only Central Florida's leading employer but also the overall biggest single-site employer in the United States with over 58,000 "cast members" (Milman et al., 2010). Since Disney's opening in 1971, Orlando has become one of the world's top domestic and international travel destinations (Zbar, 1995). According to Forbes magazine, 48 million people visited Orlando in 2009 making it the most visited city in America (Murray, 2010). The company is devoted to producing and organizing the entire experience. Its key strengths include managing the context, organizational policies and practices, and the well-built relationships that have formed within the community and local government in Orlando (Chung & Schneider, 2003).

Employees at Walt Disney World

In the beginning, Walt Disney would place specially trained guest-relations representatives at various places throughout Walt Disney World. These cast members wore white shirts, Mickey Mouse ties, and special name tags in order to be obvious for guests to identify. However, guests thought they looked too important to bother them with simple questions or concerns (Mertz, 1999). In response, Disney quickly made the custodial staff, the most approachable cast members in the park – a valuable source for guests. The custodial staff now spends two weeks going through training in order to familiarize themselves with the entire park so they can answer questions and offer directions for guests. The concentration and time given to

the individuals during the training process show the cast members they are a vital piece of the Disney team. Consequently, they perform at a higher level as they are more prideful in their work (Cockerell, 2008).

Initially, the theme of "creating happiness" for guests empowers cast members. The Walt Disney Company then offers extensive training, continuing communication, and reliable support systems to assist the cast in providing the proper guest service for each guest encounter (Johnson, 1991). The training is evident in the actions of "on-stage" cast members who work directly with guests, and in the performance of the "back-stage" cast members who work to keep the business functioning behind the scenes (Cockerell, 2008). In a nutshell, Disney employees have to engage in emotional regulation, a concept described in detail in the following section.

Emotional Regulation: A General Description

Hochschild (1983) first defined emotional regulation as the regulation of employees' emotions to fulfill occupational or organizational standards. Employees who maintain face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public are known as emotion laborers (Hochschild, 1983). Their jobs entail them to construct an emotional state in other people as a result of their communicating. Hochschild's research has typically found that emotional labor stems from the intensity and regularity of publicly exhibited emotions. Regulating emotions is associated with human life and helps people control their emotions after stressful situations through thoughts or cognitions (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001).

Emotional regulation strategies that have been examined as a way to handle fear include

disappearance, cognitive control, active coping, and reconsolidation (Hartley & Phelps, 2010). In

her qualitative work of U.S. flight attendants and bill collectors, Hochschild (1983) analyzed the

over-inclusion of human emotions and feelings in commercial relationships. She divided the

modern-day management of human emotions into two categories: (1) the real meaning of an

emotional system as part of an individual's private life at home (i.e., emotion work), and (2) the

commodification of private emotions exploited for a profit in a capitalistic society (i.e.,

emotional labor). In this study, emotional regulation is emotional labor: people undertake

conscious acts of evoking, forming, or suppressing feelings within themselves. They can achieve

this by modifying their thoughts, physical conditions, facial expressions, and body language

through both private surface acting and deep acting (Ashforth, & Humphrey, 1993, 1995; Brief,

& Weiss, 2002; Morris, & Feldman, 1996, 1997; Zapf, 2002). Emotional regulation was called

"impression management" or "performance" by sociologist Erving Goffman (1959).

Impression Management

Goffman (1959) uses the term "impression management" as a type of performance in

which individuals engage in activities in the presence of observers (i.e., an audience). The

objective is to influence the observers' perception of him or her and the social identity that the

individual desires to build. Impression management occurs on a front-stage area (Goffman,

1959). The front-stage refers to the physical and social space where performances are acted out.

It always involves the presence of audiences (Grayson, 1998). Goffman identifies other stages as

well, the most essential of which is the back-stage. On the back-stage, individuals enact "performance maintenance" practices – practices that allow for a careful preparation of front-stage performances. If they were enacted on front-stages, back-stage performances would ruin and stigmatize front-stage performances. For this reason, individuals make sure that back-stage behaviors do not become visible to their audiences (Grove & Fisk, 1992). Audiences are not to be found back-stage. The individual, then, will separate front and back-stages. For Goffman, particular situations are meant for front-stage, while others are meant for back-stage, which also depends on whether or not an audience is present (Balfe, Brugha, O'Connell, McGee, & O'Donovan, 2010).

As Klein and Ritti (1984) put it, impression management involves the ways individuals stage-manage their communications (i.e., voice, facial expressions, and appearance) to fashion a certain type of impression. The management of one's voice and face (which also includes the "telephone voice") has been considered the easiest and best example of impression management. Performers must prepare (beforehand) for possible contingencies and exploit the opportunities that linger. Unconfident performers try to select the type of audience that will give the least amount of trouble (Arndt & Bigelow, 1986). From a communicative standpoint, then, impression management is self-presentation; its objective is to grease the wheels of social interaction (Leary, 1996). The front-stage is the setting in which the fake performance (i.e., "surface acting," as explained in the next section) must be fully enacted. With the stress of emotional labor, expressing one's discontentment or exhaustion is only reserved for the back-stage (Preves & Stephenson, 2009).

As one can see, Goffman's impression management theory serves to convey the appearance of conformity to social norms (Paolucci & Richardson, 2006). The objective is to control how one is perceived by others (Leary, 1996). Goffman also called it Dramaturgical Analysis, a sociological worldview coming from symbolic interactionism. Dramaturgical Analysis is symbolic interactionism because the latter follows the same principles; it examines how people communicate through shared symbols, like words, definitions, roles, and gestures (Plummer, 1991). For Goffman (1959), communication becomes more meaningful and symbolic within social interactions because meaning is conveyed and received in the particular society or culture where people are located. George Herbert Mead, an American philosopher, sociologist, and psychologist, is the forerunner of symbolic interactionism. According to Mead (1934), interaction was communication through meaningful symbols. Meltzer (1975) and Plummer (1991) developed Mead's ideas: for them, interaction implies that behavioral interpretation is created in a particular society or culture.

Emotional Regulation: Deep Acting vs. Surface Acting

Two main strategies in emotional labor are known as deep and surface acting (Çukur, 2009). Goffman's (1959) Dramaturgical Analysis of surface acting was expanded by Hochschild (1983) who included the concept or method of deep acting – a term coined by the theater director Constantin Stanislavski in 1965. By his definition, a role is portrayed by an actor by authentically changing what he or she feels to become the part (Hochschild, 1983). This concept is then translated to be used in the workplace. Employees may use their instruction or past

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experience to invoke feelings they are required to portray when their emotions do not fit the situation (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). When an employee is experiencing feelings that do not match the circumstances, he or she has two options as to how to approach the situation. The employee can arouse emotions that are not truly felt and express superficial emotions (surface acting), or use internal feelings from past incidents or instruction to convey the required emotions (deep acting) (Çukur, 2009). While partaking in surface acting, employees fake or "paint on" emotions, whereas deep acting involves inner feelings that match their emotional expressions (Grove & Fisk, 1989, Hochschild, 1983). Both categories of acting entail a great deal of effort and are internally artificial, but epitomize diverse objectives (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Surface acting means that employees modify or control their emotional expressions by enhancing their feelings or faking a smile when assisting a demanding customer or in a bad mood (Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge, 1999; Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Pugliesi, 1999; Pugliesi & Shook, 1997). Displaying these false emotions requires emotional dissonance, or the anxiety that occurs when expressions and emotions differ (Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting may have the consequence of causing employees to become more displeased with their occupation – leading them to perform at the minimum level (Grandey, 2003). An employee attempting to change only his or her outward appearance and feelings to fit "organizationally required emotions" is said to engage in surface acting (Kruml & Geddes, 2000)

Deep acting is the progression of controlling inner thoughts and feelings to adhere to the commanded company rules. It works on altering stimulations or cognitions that are included in emotions through various techniques (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994; Folkman & Lazarus, 1991; Gross, 1998; Lazarus, 1991; Totterdell & Parkinson, 1999). While taking part in

deep acting, the actor attempts to transform his or her own feelings in order to complement the

mandatory displays. The objective, then, is to present authenticity to the spectators (Grandey,

2003). To some degree, both deep acting and surface acting reflect emotive dissonance, a

significant space between what emotions the actor is feeling and what they are expressing

(Brotheridge, & Lee, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Kruml, & Geddes, 2000).

Considering both surface and deep acting as emotional labor is valuable for a number of

reasons. First, surface and deep acting are not intrinsically value-laden. Although dissonance has

a negative connotation, the processes of surface and deep acting may have both positive and

negative results (Grandey, 2000). This research permits scholars to clarify negative effects,

individual anxiety, and health issues for example, and positive effects such as guest service.

Second, there is utility from conceptualizing emotional regulation with surface and deep acting.

If the two processes of emotional regulation have differences relating to their outcomes, stress

management courses and organizational instruction can be suggested (Grandey, 2000).

According to Hochschild (1983), an employee acting fake over time could result in feeling

disconnected from other people's feelings (as well as their own). This suggests a connection with

the dimension of depersonalization. Surface acting provides a lesser sense of personal success,

whereas deep acting adds a greater sense of personal usefulness at work (Brotheridge &

Grandey, 2002). Feeling reduced personal achievement is also probable if the employee feels the

displays were found to be aggravating by customers or were not effective (Ashforth &

Humphrey, 1993; Brotheridge, 1999).

Deep acting has potential benefits for employees and customer outcomes, but it is

important that organizations do not treat employees' emotions as a commodity (Hochschild,

1983). Research has found that performing expressions that are opposite from feelings leads to anxiety (Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge, 1999; Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Pugliesi, 1999; Pugliesi & Shook, 1997) because of the inner tension and the physiological struggle of repressing genuine feelings (Gross & Levenson, 1997; Morris & Feldman, 1997; Pugliesi, 1999). Human service professionals reported the greatest levels of emotional display and expectations for managing and expressing their emotions based on frequency, variety, intensity, and duration. Another occupation that has reported high levels of emotional demands is customer service employees (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Studies show that this emotional facade can cause emotional exhaustion in employees, which creates higher job discontent and worse organizational dedication. It also prompts them to engage in deviant activities (Mulki et al., 2006).

Emotional Deviance

Emotional deviance refers to the expressions of one's truer emotions. Felt and expressed emotions are not met with required organizational display rules and may even challenge them (Mann, 1999; Rafaeli, & Worline, 2001; Zapf, 2002). As Rafaelli and Sutton (1987) state, "emotional deviance is the opposite of emotional dissonance because the organization member expresses inner feelings and disregards feelings rules. Again, however, the internalization of feeling rules may influence the effects of incongruence between felt and expressed emotions" (p. 33). Emotional deviance differs in quality or degree from what is anticipated in specific situations (Kemper, 1990; Thoits, 1990). An example of emotional deviance occurs when service employees, who are emotionally exhausted, carry negative job attitudes that customers can

decipher and, ultimately, give rise to lower customer satisfaction with the service encounter (Grandey et al., 2004).

Researchers such as Robinson and Bennett (1995) suggest that emotional deviance is a direct consequence of (1) emotional exhaustion in the workplace and (2) too much emotional regulation in the workplace. Emotional deviance, then, is synonymous with workplace behavior that violates important organizational norms and, therefore, jeopardizes the health and atmosphere of an organization. Observed symptoms of emotional deviance include behaviors such as decreasing effort, ignoring directions, working more slowly, and engaging in behaviors that ruin organizational values and exhaust productive resources (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Disgruntled employees have unflattering impressions of their work situations and may respond by abusing organizational norms, withholding effort, and creating business inefficiencies (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004; Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Mulki et al., 2006).

Emotional Exhaustion

As one can see, emotional deviance is highly correlated with emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is "the feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by ones' work" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 101). It frequently happens when employees perform "people-work" of some type (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Walt Disney World employees have a higher inclination toward emotional labor because many organizations require them to display organizationally-mandated emotions in their encounters with customers. This leads to emotional deviance, especially when desired emotions do not mirror the employee's true feelings

(Adelmann, 1996). In fact, service industry employees generally face negative customer reactions and verbal aggression, which can exacerbate their emotional exhaustion (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

Two factors have been reported as contributing to lowering emotional exhaustion and, therefore, increasing the ability to engage in emotional regulation: (1) the employees' perceptions that they have the ability to perform well – i.e., the person-job fit, and (2) the employees' convictions that a participative leader will treasure their inputs in resource allocation and offer sufficient resources to deal with job demands – i.e., participative leadership. In other words, when employees are convinced that they have ample and satisfactory personal capabilities to meet work demands, they are more able to control emotional exhaustion (Mulki et al., 2006). Person-job fit refers to the aptitude of an employee's knowledge, skills, needs, and values to tone with job requirements (Shin, 2004). Participative leadership boosts employees' faith in their own abilities, and curtails their sense of helplessness and loss of self-esteem – all of which decrease emotional exhaustion (Abraham, 1998).

Emotional Regulation Training

The degree to which organizations have clear and overt emotional regulation requirements and monitor employees' emotional and communicative behavior is contingent upon the level of training (and resultant skills) needed to perform the work. Often, a large piece of the training process for highly skilled employees involves learning the adequate display of emotion. Emotional regulation training is offered early in "stage-acting," "service," or other types of

career to meet the expectations for observable changes in the short term. A key objective of emotional regulation training is to introduce new ways of coping with stress, affective instability, and psychological vulnerability (Schuppert et al., 2009). In general, emotions are managed in response to the display regulations that are part of the job description (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983). These regulations about the expectations for emotional expression are either stated unequivocally in selection and training materials (e.g., Delta Airlines' "Guide to Stewardess and Steward Careers") or known as an unwritten rule or by observation of coworkers. In each case, training employees to improve their emotional regulation (through expression or suppression) leads to increased effective workplace interaction (Grandey, 2000).

By surveying part- and full-time student workers, Brotheridge and Lee (1998) reported significant relationships for the perception of emotion display rules with both surface acting and deep acting. Others have reported a correlation between display rules and emotional effort (Kruml & Geddes, 1998) and display rules and deep acting (Grandey, 2000). Consequently, it can be suggested that perceptions of organizational expectations *vis-à-vis* certain emotion displays create more management of emotion by employees, whether it is surface acting and deep acting (Grandey, 2000). Smith and Kleinman (1989) contend that an essential part of a doctor's first-year training entails learning "bedside manners" – how to interact with patients. Bedside manners involve how a medical practitioner handles a resident. Good bedside manners restore confidence and comfort to the resident. Apposite vocal tones, body language, candidness, physical presence, and suppression of negative facial expressions are likely to reduce fear and uncertainty (Butler & Johnson, 2008; Johns, 2008).

Hence, based on all these examples, it is more probable that display rules that govern facial expressions and emotional behavior have already been internalized by highly skilled employees. As a result, there is less need for organizations, in the future, to officially monitor their employees' facial expressions and emotional behavior (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Now, let us have a look at emotional regulation at Walt Disney World.

Emotional Regulation at Walt Disney World

Employee regulation is very important in Walt Disney World in order to uphold its reputation of the "happiest place on Earth." The Disney Company is well-known for providing exceptional guest service. The helpfulness and kindliness of theme park employees are things that guests often observe as something they like (Sorkin, 1992). This type of friendly behavior is expected of Walt Disney World employees and the constantly-smiling Disney theme park employee is now a stereotype in our present-day culture. Disney controls the situation from the perspective of the 1:70 rule; that is, it takes only one negative guest experience (e.g., working with a rude cast member) to counteract seventy positive experiences. Based on this philosophy, Disney constantly tracks the particulars (Chung & Schneider, 2003). Their unique Disney vocabulary, combined with their behavior, conveys the notion that Disney employees are not engaging in real work, but having fun (Bryman, 1999). This makes it imperative that cast members receive top-of-the-line training. What most organizations refer to as "human resources" is given top priority in the Disney universe. Typically, training is seen as no more than an expensive but sometimes necessary task, but Walt considered it as an essential investment in the

future of his company, and that viewpoint still thrives with the company today (Capodagli & Jackson, 2001).

In order to achieve this, new employees attend classes and use handbooks to help learn which emotions must be communicated to Walt Disney World guests (Kuenz, 1995). The importance of this was stressed by Walt Disney himself, after he witnessed behavior portrayed by the staff towards guests in Disneyland's very early days. The idea of a Disney University was also conceived by Walt Disney himself prior to Disneyland opening in the 1950s (Capodagli & Jackson, 2001). However, in the beginning many of the employees were hired by lessees and lacked the specific training offered by the Disney Company (Bryman, 1999). From that point on, Walt demanded that every employee go through official Disney training before going "on-stage." The company created the Disney University, which is known as a process – not an institution – to help instruct exactly what was expected of new employees, and to teach them the vocabulary used at the resort. Today, all new employees, from full-time senior executives to hourly desk clerks and tour guides, are required to go through training prior to taking on their everyday tasks (Capodagli & Jackson, 2001).

According to the Disneyland University founder, it was not only necessary to provide a friendly smile, but also friendly phrases (France, 1991). Disney has developed seminars to help executives from different organizations learn about the unique approach to human resource management (Eisman, 1992). This training is a large element to the sensation of the Disney theme parks (Connellan, 1996; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Zemke, 1989). This type of emotional regulation is particularly important at Walt Disney World because many employees (whose jobs required everyday contact with guests at the park) have described occasions where they

experienced notable differences between how they were expected to act and how they genuinely felt (Kuenz, 1995). A rude employee could potentially cost Disney future visitors. For this reason, supervisors at Disney must actively monitor employees to ensure they display desired emotions (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989).

Disney is known to be exceptionally careful about the people they hire, and whether these new "cast members" ascertain the service culture (Chung & Schneider, 2003). Disney often hires part-time employees due to the fact that the basis of their business is dictated by peak demands. With part-time workers, however, it can be difficult to build loyalty and a durable, sturdy culture. Because of this, Disney tries to search out applicants who will commit for at least two seasons when hiring employees to work during the busy seasons (Chung & Schneider, 2003). This provides cast members who are more stable and who obtain tacit knowledge (knowledge of the organization that passed on).

Consequently, there is constant expansion (and education) at every level of the company in order for the Disney brand to remain synonymous with excellent service (Cockerell, 2008). The training process is relatively thorough and begins with a course called Traditions, which educates new "Cast Members" about the history and legacy of the company and superlative guest service. Instructors for the sessions are current Disney Cast Members themselves. They share their personal experiences and stories working for Disney with new hires. Technical and executive sessions also use professional facilitators for this training (Pell, 1998). The training consists of learning about the company history and philosophy, what makes up the Disney Company and where Disneyland or Walt Disney World fit in, the standards that are expected,

and a tour of the park or property where they will work including back-stage and front-stage areas and operations (Chung & Schneider, 2003).

Next, employees learn specifically how to perform their roles along with basic lessons in the significance of being friendly with guests, smiling, and maintaining a clean environment. This is known as "immersion in division" training. The main goal of this training is to prepare employees to surpass guest expectations (Cockerell, 2008). This part of the training teaches employees about their specific role as well as the overall philosophy, policies, and procedures of their division in the resort (Chung & Schneider, 2003). A unique aspect of this program is that trainees are not only allowed but also encouraged to mingle among the crowds at the parks and examine Disney employees in action.

The result of this exceptional training is that Disney's front-line attrition rate is only 15 percent in comparison to the rest of the hospitality industry at 60 percent (Pell, 1998). There are seven guest service guidelines that are taught to employees at Walt Disney World in order to create a standard of friendly, courteous, considerate treatment for all guests. These guidelines include beginning and ending each interaction with direct eye contact and an honest smile, using proper posture, facial expressions, and a clean appearance to create a good impression, and complete each interaction with a "thank you" and a smile (Cockerell, 2008). Finally, the training for the actual job the cast member will be doing begins. The training facilities use the most up-to-date audiovisual media and are first-rate. Training is done by experienced educators, and to ensure that there are no problems on the job, a 30-day follow up is conducted to guarantee that the training is being maintained and reinforced every day on the job (Chung & Schneider, 2003).

Disney offers numerous activities and channels of communication in order to keep

employees involved. For example, there are recognition programs, picnics, Disney newsletters, and sports events (Chung & Schneider, 2003). When it comes to maintaining the Disney culture, managers also play an important role. On occasion, Disney executives can be found working side-by-side with other employees in the theme parks. Behavior such as this conveys several ideas about the culture: they are not afraid to get their hands dirty, and they desire to stay within close proximity to their employees and guests (Chung & Schneider, 2003).

Above all else, Cast Members are trained to treat guests as individuals. They use a science called "guestology" to study their guests (Schueler, 2000). In order to understand their needs and wants of the individuals who visit the resort, the company uses every research technique accessible including face-to-face surveys, focus groups, and telephone surveys. Disney employees make every effort to create magic moments out of tragic moments (Schueler, 2000). One example of this takes place at the end of the day when guests exit the theme park and cannot locate their cars. An attendant, simply by finding out when the guests arrived, can identify where they are parked within three rows. Service such as this allows parking attendants to be heroes and keeps guests satisfied (Schueler, 2000).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The third chapter explains the methods used to examine the emotional regulation strategies used by Walt Disney World on-stage employees. Ten Disney World on-stage employees were interviewed outside the confines of the company in Orlando in places that suited the participants. Each interview consisted of a collection of open questions (see interview protocol). The objective of each interview was to gather information on their perspectives about emotional regulation in general – emotional exhaustion, surface acting, deep acting, and emotional deviance. This section describes (**1**) the research questions, (**2**) qualitative interviewing and what it involves, (**3**) the objective as a qualitative interviewer, (**4**) the importance of member checking, (**5**) the reasons that explain why the qualitative interviewing method was selected (as opposed to a quantitative survey), (**6**) the participants (who they are and how they were recruited), and (**7**) the interview protocol itself.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do Disney on-stage employees engage in emotional regulation as part of their occupation?

RQ2: How do Disney on-stage employees control emotional deviance as part of their occupation?

RQ3: How do Disney on-stage employees control emotional exhaustion as part of their occupation?

RQ4: What do Disney on-stage employees tend to favor the most: deep acting or surface acting? And why?

Qualitative Interviewing

General Description

In-depth, face-to-face interviewing is a methodological approach using a meticulous analysis of a particular setting (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The analysis of qualitative data entails exploring a subject or experience to research its elements and inner workings. In doing so, the researcher fabricates a pattern for the whole by mending categories or themes in one piece (Schwandt, 2001). From this perspective, meaning is deduced from the data gathered during the interviews. All qualitative interviews with Walt Disney World on-stage employees were conversations – not between "equals." Rather, it was asymmetrical. Part of the *raison d'être* of in-depth interviewing is that the researcher sets the tone – he or she determines and controls the situation. For instance, the topics of surface acting, deep acting, and emotional deviance will be introduced to them by the researcher. This is an example of influencing the situation.

The "answers" to the interview questions should be regarded as stories or accounts. A story is a recounting of a sequence of events (Atkinson, 1998). An account is a way of describing an event through a type of storytelling, with believability. It is an extended "telling" of some knowledge or past experience (Riessman, 1993). It was anticipated that Walt Disney World on-stage employees would tell the researcher about events and memories at their own pace and in

their own manner. Interviewing is a conversation – accounts are being told in a conversational fashion (Wengraf, 2001). So, participants used stories or accounts to explain their own actions or actions of others (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The Objective as a Qualitative Interviewer

To conduct in-depth, face-to-face qualitative interviews, the researcher generally lives within the interview experience, concurrently participating in and controlling the conversation (King & Horrocks, 2010). The success of the interviews depends on the researcher's knowledge, understanding, and empathy (as a research tool). Reflexivity is important at every level of the research process. Because the researcher is a qualitative research tool, the majority of what happens in the research reflects the qualitative interviewer's thinking.

The objective is to contemplate what the participants tell and provide an analysis subsequently. After the participants told their accounts of emotional regulation strategies used by Walt Disney World on-stage employees, the researcher judiciously analyzed their accounts by "making sense" of them. The researcher looked for themes that appeared across the participants' responses (as explained in detail later). Themes were created based on the repetition of words, terms, or subject matter throughout the interviews. The research is reflexive throughout the entire analysis. Reflexivity implies that the researcher is mindful of all the stages that he or she goes through; particular attention was continuously paid from the beginning to the end. As a qualitative interviewer, the researcher has a saturated role. It ranges from the largest perspective

of the entire analysis to the tiniest focal point on the moment of the interview. All are included by the researcher's own experience of the matter that is under study (Roulston, 2010).

The substance of the participants' accounts was thoroughly tested. Data collection and analysis procedures were documented (thanks to a digital audio-tape recorder). Essential steps in the analysis of the accounts consist of the transcription and analysis/interpretation stages. Transcription refers to translating from verbal language, with its own set of rules, to written language, with other rules (Kvale, 1996). After everything was transcribed, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data – in great depth, he or she made sense of the coherence, logic, and comprehensibility of the participants' accounts. Here, the researcher is shifting from the account to the research text: notes and interpretations coming from the field text. At that moment, the field text was remade as a working interpretive document and included the researcher's preliminary attempts to make sense of what was learned. It is the researcher's hope that a thematic analysis will be done, hoping to find patterns coming out across the participants' responses. Lastly, a public text will be the final product for the reader (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The goal is to deliver a clear and intelligible report for readers – both laypersons and scholars. Please heed that the analysis of the accounts is to be differentiated from Labov's and Walestky's (1967) framework of narrative analysis. For Labov and Walestky, narrative analysis is interpretation of its clauses and its overall structure (i.e., its grammatical consistency, abstract, orientation, evaluation, resolution, and coda). Yet, over forty-three years later, other qualitative researchers have discovered new methods for analyzing qualitative data. Again, in this study, the participants' interviews are to be viewed as "stories," "responses," or "accounts." They are not narratives.

Member Checking

The analysis of participants' accounts represents an omnipresent process in the research. The qualitative scholar has to figure out how to analyze qualitative interview data. He or she should fully comprehend that methods of improving research validity and reliability must be taken into account. "Member checking" is such a method of validity and reliability. It is a first measure to understand the significance of the validity and reliability of qualitative methods (Kuzel & Like, 1991). Member checking is a method by which the researcher repeats, recapitulates, or paraphrases the information obtained from participants. The aim is to ensure (i.e., "check") that words and statements made during the interview are accurate. Logically, member checking is to be done after data collection and consists of reporting back preliminary findings to participants, requesting crucial critiques on the findings, and perhaps including commentaries into the analysis (Mears, 2009). The researcher engaged in member checking with as many participants as possible.

Why Qualitative Interviewing?

Three reasons have been acknowledged for using qualitative methods of interviewing instead of quantitative. The first reason is that, with qualitative interviewing, each participant's point of view can be comprehended by the researcher through interviewing (Brenner, Brown, & Canter, 1985). However, with quantitative methods, the researcher needs to fall back on more

isolated, inferential experimental materials and therefore could barely gain the respondent's perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The next reason is that interviewing allows the researcher to probe or extract supplementary information should the participant need clarification or explanation when responding to questions. For example, when a Walt Disney World employee was not familiar with the jargon or objective of the study, informal discussion was used at the beginning of the interview to determine whether or not the subject acquired the required knowledge of the topic. To make certain that the participants comprehend the purpose and terminology of the study, the researcher stayed away from using the terms *emotional deviance*, *deep acting*, and *surface acting* (as these terms are unusual in daily conversations). Rather, layperson's terms were be used by the researcher. For example, to clarify surface acting, the terms "impression management" or "performance" were used. Another option was for the researcher to use the proper terminology, but also provide a definition of each term. Mutual understanding and complete communication between the participants and the research is the key objective.

The final reason for using qualitative interviewing is that, unlike quantitative research, interviewing has more structure. While quantitative scholars "leave the field with mountains of empirical materials and then easily write up his or her findings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 29), the qualitative interviewer initially generated notes. After each interview was recorded, it was re-created as a file that included the original attempts to comprehend and understand what the researcher had learned (Brenner et al., 1985). Ultimately, the researcher generated the outcome (i.e., the text) for the reader. The latter learns from the carefully reflexive perspective and incident/interpretation of the researcher (Silverman, 1993).

Participants

The participants involved in this study consisted of on-stage employees working for Walt Disney World. First, in order to recruit participants the researcher directly spoke with Walt Disney World employees and inquired if they were willing to participate in the study. Second, the researcher asked employees if they could provide names of on-stage employees who would be able to participate in the study. Once an adequate number of participants were acquired, the researcher informed each of them about the purpose of the study and scheduled appointments for conducting interviews. The interviews were conducted separately in a public environment, such as a coffee shop.

Before conducting the interview, the researcher explained the informed consent form from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to each participant and asked him or her to read it. Participants were also informed that the interviews would be tape-recorded. If they refused, notes were simply taken. To insure protection of the participants, the researcher promised them that their names would remain confidential, that they can use a nickname or alias, and that the tapes would be destroyed after the information was transcribed. Lastly, the researcher gave participants her phone and email address as well as the contact information for the professor directing the thesis. The following statement was included: "You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions." If they had any questions about their rights as a research participant, they could contact the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board. They were given

a copy of this information to keep for their records. If they were not given a copy of this consent form, they could request one.

Themes across the Participants' Accounts

An important objective is that the final analysis of the qualitative interviews yielded significant themes emerging across the participants' accounts. No specific question was privileged to generate these themes. To a certain extent, these themes emerged "naturally" from the participants' stories. In all cases, the researcher identified each theme based on the number of times it emerged across the participants' responses. If the same argument or story was heard at least 60 percent of the time (i.e., at least in six narratives out of ten), then it was a signal that a common theme was about to emerge. Most themes in this analysis were evident across the vast majority of the interviews. In regards to the number of themes in qualitative interviewing, the typical number is five, as demonstrated in numerous studies (e.g., Chang, Li, & Liu, 2004; Godinez, Schweiger, Gruver, & Ryan, 1999; Grant & Stephen, 2005)

Participants' accounts symbolized the wealth of the qualitative data obtained. Such wealth of information enabled patterns (i.e., themes) to emerge, which, in turn, smoothed the progress of "generalizations" about the emotional regulation strategies used by Walt Disney World on-stage employees. In qualitative interviewing, "generalizability" implies that the data are consistent and can be "transferred" – i.e., they are applicable in other contexts – i.e., other service theme park industries (Oberle, 2002). Thanks to meaningful themes, the ultimate goal

was that the qualitative results from this study would be used as a solid foundation for future

studies on emotional regulation in the theme park industry.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA AND ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the responses told by the participants. Once the interviews with the ten participants were recorded, listened to thoroughly, and individually transcribed on the computer, the accounts were color-coded based on themes. All ten participants are from diverse backgrounds, yet, they all worked at Walt Disney World in Orlando. Most of them worked in different areas of the park in order to collect a variety of information. Three of the participants were trained to be character performers and the rest were trained for various occupations around Walt Disney World. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher compiled a Microsoft Word document of categories, each supporting the specific findings significant for the dominant themes that occurred in the interviews. Throughout the information analysis process, five key themes emerged as the most pertinent to the original research questions: (1) Self-Motivated Deep Acting, (2) Organizational Expectations for Surface Acting, (3) "Back-Stage" vs. "Front-Stage" Dichotomy, (4) Benefits of Emotional Training, and (5) Negative Effects of Emotional Regulation.

Theme 1: Self-Motivated Deep Acting

During the interview process with on-stage Walt Disney World employees, participants referred to the idea that while the Disney Company did not force the method of deep acting, they were self-motivated to use the technique in order to maintain positive emotions between employees and customers. A common thread among responses from participants was that it was

essential for them to come across as genuinely happy, as opposed to appearing fake or superficial. Responses pointed to the importance of a positive attitude, not only for the sake of their own mental state but also for the sake of the customer's experience overall.

In the first interview recorded in late January 2011, a 23-year-old male from Orlando, described the benefit of deep acting:

"You don't want to come off too fake. If you 'surface act' too much, people can tell. So, if you're just calm, you need a mix. You need to blend in. You can judge, like with a guest, if they're not really paying attention to you. You can kind of 'surface act;' you can fake it, but if they're really trying to talk, you need to be positive from a deeper level."

This excerpt echoes the core of deep acting ("you need to be positive from a deeper level"). This validates Hochschild's (1983) belief that actors, or in this case cast members, should authentically change their feelings in order to become the part. Many participants noted that it was up to the employees themselves to strive to create the "magic" of the theme park. As a 25-year-old female from Stillwater, MN explained,

"It was every Cast Member's duty to go above and beyond to create a magical environment that guests can lose themselves in. It's not acting, it's real. I really want them to have a good time, and I treat them how I would want to be treated on vacation."

Most participants felt that while it was not an expectation from the company, there needed to be a more genuine level of emotions on-stage in order to provide exceptional customer service. Many of the participants had a previous emotional attachment with the company, and wanted to create the same memories for other families in the park. This information parallels the objective

of deep acting, which is to present authenticity to the audiences (Grandey, 2003). One of the

participants, a 22-year-old female originally from New Jersey, stated:

"Most of the shifts were like either from 11 a.m. to like 11 p.m. or anywhere past that,

like my longest was from 11 a.m. to 5 a.m., so there was a lot of like drained feelings. So

I would try to remember why I wanted to work for Disney, 'cause like I've been going

since I was two. That's why we moved down here was Disney, so it would just be times

like that that I would just look outside and remember that I like this place, that's why I'm

here!"

Situations such as the quote just mentioned, where employees remind themselves of a happy

memory or articulate positive feelings from the past, support Çukur's (2009) findings regarding

deep acting. Çukur defines this type of deep acting as the use of internal emotions from past

instances to express the desired emotions. This method is particularly significant for those

employees that must literally play a role while working in the park. According to a 23-year-old

female from Puerto Rico, deep acting was helpful, for the reason that,

"Particularly when I was a character performer, they always said that you have to believe

that you are like the character. So, you have to pretty much be always there, not really

fake it like the bad ones. The bad character performers are the ones that never really felt

it."

As the participant states, when one is playing a role, it is beneficial that one's sincere feelings

match those of the part one is playing, specifically in a setting such as Walt Disney World where

many employees literally take on a role. Deep acting enhances on-stage performances, as it

involves inner feelings that match assigned emotional expressions (Grove & Fisk, 1989,

Hoschild, 1983). Many participants found this to be easy, as the customers in the theme park had the same feelings instilled in the employees. It seems that guests flock to Walt Disney World to experience the reputation of the "happiest place on earth," and bring positive emotions with them. As stated by a 22-year-old-female from Wellington, FL:

> "I would say like three fourths of the people that walk into Walt Disney World, they're pretty happy, you know. I mean, they're supposed to be in, like, the happiest place in the world, so it makes me happy. It definitely rubs off on me and it puts me in a better mood."

When the overall setting in the park is optimistic and joyful, it seems to be easier for cast members and guests to have a positive experience. According to participants, the fact that customers come into the park with a predetermined positive attitude, deep acting may not be difficult to achieve. However, it was clear that the long hours implemented by the company made it difficult to maintain these positive feelings. As said by a 23-year-old male from Orlando, FL:

> "For me it's just like smiling. After a long day, I don't tend to talk as much, but I'll smile at guests; I will try to appear positive and happy, but I try to be earnest on set. If I'm really tired, I'm not going to be able to hide when I'm really tired. So I will be as nice as possible, but I won't try to fake being peppy. 'Cause I won't be able to be peppy If I'm not well rested, or if I've been there 14 hours. And I think people appreciate the fact that you're not being fake. As long as you're not being a jerk."

The emphasis here is on the importance of expressing true feelings, even while trying to suppress feelings such as emotional exhaustion. There was a clear commonality among responses

stressing the importance of authentic emotions. Some responses stressed the importance of being authentic in order to please guests, and others stressed it in order to perform to the best of their ability. Emotional facades have the tendency to lead to emotional exhaustion among employees, which creates higher job discontent (Mulki et al., 2006). Deep acting offers a technique that not only pleases customers and employees but also maintains and even enhances the reputation of the company. As said by one Orlando-native, "Even if it's a tough day, it always feels good that you made someone else's day better."

Theme 2: Organizational Expectations for Surface Acting

The second theme of this analysis addresses the organizational expectations for Cast Members and how they use surface acting to meet those standards. For this theme, the researcher found parallels among participants who felt they had to mask their emotions to live up to the expectations set by the company. The responses illustrate how employees apply emotional regulation, which supports Hochschild's (1983) findings. According to Hochschild, emotional regulation is the regulation of employees' emotions to meet organizational standards. Participants discussed how they accomplished successful emotional regulation by utilizing surface acting. They discussed the importance of a positive guest experience, specific expectations upheld by the Disney Company, personal definitions of surface acting, and physical attributes of surface acting. First, participants explained how Disney's standards are set in place in order to enhance guest experiences. According to a 28-year-old female from Clermont, FL,

> "I think at Disney they teach you to care about other people more than yourself because there is such an emphasis on the guest and the guest experience, that I don't feel that you are as important as an employee there."

This quotation illustrates how important the guest is to the company and how the expectations are made to enhance the guest experience, no matter how it affects employees. The Disney Company is known worldwide for its exceptional guest service, and in order for Walt Disney World to uphold the reputation of the "smile factory," "manufacture friendliness," or "synthetic personalization" (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2010), it is essential for employees to maintain the positive attitudes that attract tourists from all over the world. Disney focuses on producing and organizing the entire experience, and strives to be in full control of all aspects of the company, including employees (Chung & Schneider, 2003). In order to provide this magical experience, employees must do whatever they can to fulfill these expectations, even if that means they have to surface act. When asked how often she utilizes surface acting, one 23-year-old female from Puerto Rico responded:

> "Just pretty much all the time, you always have to be like smiling and happy 'cause that's just the way that they want it to be: the happiest place on earth. So, you have to portray that. You have to be smiling or singing along to songs or whatever. And like when I was a character, I was Tigger, so you know even when I was exhausted I still had to act really energetic and such."

The participant provides information that parallels Goffman's (1959) definition of impression management. According to Goffman, "impression management" is a type of performance in which employees engage in activities in the presence of, in this case, an audience. This

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participant discussed activities such as singing or smiling in order to alter the audience's

perception, and to convince them that employees are constantly having fun. While impression

management is a way to keep guests happy, it is also a way to comply with the regulations set by

the Walt Disney World Company.

There are many aspects that make up the guidelines set by the Disney Company, and in

the interviews participants discussed how Disney implements said guidelines. The first step to

regulating employees and their emotions starts with the hiring process. According to a 25-year-

old female from Stillwater MN,

> "It seems as though Disney goes through a really extensive process to ensure that they
>
> employ individuals who have, like, a great interest in participating in, I don't know
>
> putting on "the show" which is all aspects of Disney. It's all about the show."

This idea of putting on a "show," combined with the theater jargon that is used throughout the

theme park creates an atmosphere that promotes acting on the job. No matter what the cast

member may have going on, or how they might be feeling, they are forced to exude a positive

persona. This starts with the person Disney chooses to hire, as a 26-year-old male from Fremont,

CA said in his interview, "I think they find people that, in general, are relatively upbeat and

wanting to help others have a 'magical experience.'" By hiring individuals with an existing

positive attitude, they will be more likely to portray the proper emotions that make people

believe that employees at Walt Disney World are not working, per say, but simply having fun

(Bryman, 1999). The magical experience that Disney is so well known for is not easy to create,

and some participants discussed the specific regulations implemented by the company. For

example, according to a 22-year-old-female from Orlando, "They would always be walking

around and if you were leaning, you would be yelled at. You aren't allowed to lean." Regulation goes beyond emotions, as employees in Walt Disney World are trained to control their physical attributes as well in order to exude a welcoming attitude. As explained by a 20-year-old female from West Palm, FL,

> "You're not supposed to stand behind the register that much if there's no guests, and we have to like make sure it's neat at the store we're in, and we have to stand outside and 'merchantain.' That's like just playing with stuff with the guests, even if they're not buying anything."

Let us analyze the word "merchantain," as uttered by this participant. "Merchantaining" is like "entertailing" or "shoppertaining." It refers to the modern trend of mingling business and entertainment opportunities for guests (Morgan & Rao, 2003). The objective is to add excitement to the merchandizing experience or, at least, turning it into an engaging and interactive experience. The outcome of merchantainment is the appearance of a fun environment for not only guests but also on-stage employees (Taylor & Labarre, 2008). Such guidelines inherently contribute to greater surface acting and include physical aspects of exuding happiness. The objective of impression management is to control how audiences perceive others (Leary, 1996), and these specific regulations ensure that the impression employees give off is a positive one.

A majority of the participants gave their own descriptions of surface acting, and discussed when, how, and why they engage in the technique. When asked when he engages in surface acting, a 23-year-old male from Orlando, FL responded:

> "A lot of times, at the beginning of the day, it will be a lot of surface acting 'cause you haven't really gotten in the groove yet or if you've had a long day and you're really

irritated or really fed up, uh, and you know that either a manager is around or someone is really looking at you, you can surface act."

It is important for employees to recognize when surface acting could benefit their situation. This description offers insight into which times of the day employees might exercise surface acting. Many participants included times that their feelings did not match the circumstances they were involved in, where they were forced to arouse superficial emotions that were not legitimately felt, which corresponds with Çukur's findings in 2009. Some participants also included their own explanations of situations where surface acting was beneficial. As a 28-year-old female from Clermont, FL said,

"Most of the time when you're surface acting it's like that. It's somebody's not being nice to you and you have to pretend that you're still their friend or you're still there to help them, and it is the most draining experience ever; or when people cuss at you. 'Cause they will cuss at you as well and that's kind of hard to take. My friend got spit on one time. It was definitely harder being in merchandise because I'm on-stage as myself and I'm being judged as myself and I have to be friendly."

This quotation gave insight into the conflict that goes on within some employees of the Disney Company as they are trying to uphold the Disney reputation. This conflict can cause tension within employees, which is what makes emotional regulation so important. Disney has obviously managed to successfully manage their employees to handle this stress by instilling the importance of guest service. It is necessary for a company to introduce new ways of dealing with stress. Consequently, it is of utmost importance for Disney to invest in their employees (Schuppert et al., 2009). As said by a 23-year-old male from Orlando,

"It can lead to being very stressful 'cause you're constantly having to suppress any

emotions, but I think it keeps the guests more positive so that I think it really does make

people happier when we even fake it because they're not seeing that unhappiness from

us, even if we're really unhappy, it keeps them happy."

It seems Disney promotes the importance of the guest experience, which can be seen through

their employees' actions. As stated previously, the Disney brand is synonymous with exceptional

service (Cockerell, 2008). These responses offer examples of employees demonstrating the

success of the company's "guestology" practices (Schueler, 2000). Through their extensive

research they have been able to understand every want or need their guests have, and these

responses are perfect examples of this. According to a 28-year-old female from Clermont, Fl,

"It's putting your emotions aside, so it's really putting them aside and thinking about

others first. So, I don't' think that I'm controlling myself necessarily-I mean of course, if

you have an angry customer you're going to control your emotions and just be like

[makes aggravated noise], and you do become a better communicator because you can do

that."

Employees understand the goals of the company and are willing to set aside their emotions in

order to provide the best experience for the guest.

One area that literally all of the participants responded unanimously was regarding

communicative behaviors used to surface act. While participating in surface acting, most

participants discussed ways in which they could present happy emotions, through nonverbal

actions and behaviors, when their feelings did not correspond with the company expectations.

Employees must literally fake or "paint on" their emotions (Grove & Fisk, 1989, Hoschild,

1983). Smiling was the most universal response when asked how to display happy emotions, and was described as an example of positive body language, among other things. As explained by a 20-year-old female from West Palm, FL:

> "You smile all the time, all the time like my cheeks hurt at the end of the night. I guess like smiling is the biggest thing as long as you have a smile on your face the guest will come up to you smiling. And I guess just like if you want you can come here and just use gestures to make them feel welcome. And you can't point-you can't point with one finger; you have to use two fingers or the whole hand. I guess it's offensive to some cultures, and I guess if I'm like pointing this way, someone could think that I'm pointing at them."

This includes another important aspect of guest service, which is globalization. The Disney Company now has resorts in multiple countries, and welcomes visitors from all over the world. It is imperative that no guest is offended while in Walt Disney World, and the organization takes great precaution in order to achieve this (Matusitz, 2010). By negating all gestures that could be taken offensively, Disney not only protects itself but also pleases the diverse demographics that are found among their guests. This example is also a perfect illustration of impression management. When individuals manage their communication such as facial expressions, appearance, and voice on-stage, they can accomplish this by giving off a specific impression (Klein & Ritti, 1984). A 23-year-old female from Puerto Rico gave another example of physical ways she appears happy:

"Like my eyebrows would always have to be up. And some days I would be like really

tired and falling asleep, so I would have to be like to keep like my eyes really wide open,

so that's pretty much what I do."

Facial expressions appear to be the most powerful tool while engaging in surface acting. It seems

that no matter how an employee is feeling, facial expressions can help convince guests that cast

members are always happy. As discussed previously, successful surface acting typically includes

modified physical conditions, body language, and facial expressions (Ashforth, & Humphrey,

1993, 1995; Brief, & Weiss, 2002; Morris, & Feldman, 1996, 1997; Zapf, 2002). One major

characteristic of Walt Disney World is the inclusion of character performers around the parks.

How do they come across as happy when they are tired, if they cannot show their face? This is

best explained by a 27-year-old female from Panama City, FL:

"Since my face is covered for the most part I do that with my hands and body language.

So, it's either me doing full out body language, this that and the other, that's how I

express myself. 'Cause I can't use my face to do it, I'm expressing through body

language. I have to get myself hyped up after a 15 hour day."

For occupations such as this, it is very important for employees to use body language in order to

uphold the expectations held by the company. Proper use of body language can be explained

Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism, whereby the use of symbols and gestures are to be

understood within a specific culture. Participants agreed that the characters were the most

important role on-stage, and if these employees were not up to the standard, the company would

suffer greatly.

While most of the responses were about staying positive and upbeat on the job, there were also times where employees needed to regulate emotions on a more serious level. While working in a park full of children, it is important to act properly in certain situations. For example, as told by a 25-year-old female from Stillwater, MN:

"As an I-Greeter [information greeter], we often had to deal with parents that were frantically looking for their children who they misplaced in the water park. As we called out the information for the missing child, parents sometimes became even more upset and vocal. It was in these times that we had to keep the most composure, or control, and it was important to stay even keel and concentrating on controlling our tone of voice with the guests."

While the reputation of the Disney Company is built on employees and their positive attitudes, it is important to remember that it is not always appropriate to act happy, and Disney ensures that their employees' emotions are regulated to adapt to any situation.

Theme 3: "Back-Stage" vs. "Front-Stage" Dichotomy

The layout of Walt Disney World is structured specifically to ensure that there is a clear difference between how employees act while they are front-stage versus back-stage. The main difference between the two stages is whether or not the guests are permitted to roam. The front-stage, or as known in Disney jargon "on-stage" area, consists of any part of the park that guests are allowed to roam. This is where employees work directly with guests within the resort or park. The "back-stage" section is the space that is behind the scenes, where cast members can be

themselves (Cockerell, 2008). When asked if their back-stage behavior was different from their on-stage behavior, there were unanimous discussions about their actions back-stage and how they use that area as a place to vent or relieve stress. It is often used as a place for employees to "talk about anything, rant, and rave about the company." According to a 23-year-old male from Orlando, FL:

> "The entire thing with back-stage is you put on this face on-stage. So when you're back-stage at work, you're off the handle. It's like a stress relief. 'Cause you build up all that on-stage and you're so happy or try to be positive, so when you're back-stage you can finally let it all out."

This information expresses not only the importance of the back-stage area, but the stress that can build while on-stage. The front-stage area is defined as a place that constantly involves the presence of an audience – the physical and social space where actors deliver their performance (Grayson, 1998). As this participant states, stress is created while acting on-stage, and the benefit of a back-stage area is to release the stress in order to successfully perform for the remainder of the day. This is further supported by a 27-year-old female from Panama City, FL:

> "You come off set and just relaxing for 30 minutes or however long it is, you're just you're there, you're relaxing before you have to get ready again. It's good stress relief. If we didn't have those breaks as characters, I wouldn't be able to do it for so many years."

This response shows that the back-stage area is beneficial for all employees, including character performers. Even though their faces are covered, as discussed earlier, they are still forced to act through nonverbal communication. According to this participant, having those breaks back-stage offers enough relief to continue working, even though the job is exhausting. This confirms

Goffman's (1959) notion that the back-stage is a place where individuals can practice their "performance maintenance," which prepares them for front-stage performances. Using the area to release negative emotions and reinstate positive feelings was a common response, as said by a 22-year-old female from Wellington, FL:

> "If like a guest is like annoying me I'll like go in the back and just start, like I don't know, just letting it all out. I'll go in the back, and like let it all out, and it's more to let out my real feelings. And then I come back and I'm like great, turn it on. It's more of a venting area"

This idea of having the back-stage as a "venting area" was a very common response among participants. The reason that Walt Disney World has a back-stage to begin with is in order for cast members to have a place where they can stop performing the show. The back-stage is reserved as an area where individuals can practice behaviors the company forces them to suppress while on-stage. As Grove and Fisk (1992) contend, individuals ensure that behaviors they use back-stage do not become visible to their audiences, or in this case, to guests in the park. Some of the participants offered specific examples of their behaviors back-stage, and how they differ from their behaviors on-stage. According to a 20-year-old female from West Palm, FL:

> "You immediately go back-stage and you're different, like most the time. You're obviously not supposed to curse on-stage, and I curse back-stage. And um you go on your cell phone, you talk about guests, um yeah, it's a lot different but I'm still happy back-stage."

Employees such as this one use the back-stage area to act more natural, and more like themselves. While these cast members are on-stage, they are forced to act happy and proper. As discussed earlier, they use surface acting, or impression management, to appear upbeat and happy even when they are not. According to Klein and Ritti (1984), the management of one's voice and face is considered the most successful illustration of impression management. This can include tone of voice or the vocabulary used by employees, so they often utilize the space back-stage in order to release those tendencies so they do not include them in their on-stage behavior. This is further supported by a 26-year-old male from Fremont, CA:

> "I also remember that language use was a bit loose as well, in the sense that we wouldn't have to focus as much on being proper. We could say whatever we wanted-it was like you know the filter came off."

This idea of using a filter on-stage was very common among responses, but some employees also discussed using the back-stage area as a place to release emotions brought on by guests. According to a 28-year-old female from Clermont, FL,

> "If you have a lot of people that are mean that day, and then you like go home I mean I went home a few times or just went back-stage and just cried. Because they are so mean and you just can't even handle it anymore. But then you have to just like, ok wipe the tears off and then ok go back and do it again."

Working in a field that involves great amounts of customer service can weaken the spirits of an employee, and some participants defined this back-stage area as a place to get away from guests, or a place to "rant and rave" about certain individuals. In an industry such as this, it is not always the company that causes stress among employees, but the demand of the guests. All of this

information stresses the importance of the difference between back-stage and on-stage behavior, but our 28-year-old female participant from Clermont put it simply: "Back-stage behavior differs drastically from on-stage behavior because back-stage behavior would get fired for if we were on-stage behaving that way." Most of the employees included in this study agreed that they needed to utilize the back-stage area in order to be successful on-stage. As Goffman expressed in his research, certain situations are intended for front-stage, while others are intended for back-stage (Balfe et al., 2010). This was best explained by the previous participant:

> "You learn to control all of your behavior on-stage just so you don't get in trouble. It's not that you're learning how to regulate it, you are being taught what the rules are and you're learning how to adapt to them so you don't get in trouble, but back-stage still being sane and you feed off of everybody else and of course in entertainment the bitterness. It's a complete different experience back-stage, it's night and day."

The next theme deals with the benefits of emotional training. As discussed earlier, the Disney Company places a great deal of importance in their training of cast members.

Theme 4: Benefits of Emotional Training

Employees go through extensive training in order to learn the rules and regulations regarding which emotions they must communicate to Walt Disney World guests (Kuenz, 1995). Disney employees are trained to use specific vocabulary, behavior, and gestures that convey the notion that they are not in fact working, but participating in magical moments and having fun (Bryman, 1999). According to a 27-year-old female from Panama City, FL:

"There are a lot of things people never really notice about Disney, like a lot of little

things that go on that really add to the experience. Little magical moments that make it

happen and it just frustrates me when they don't happen. We as cast members are

expected to create it or participate in it, and I hate it when it just doesn't happen. It's a

beautiful thing. It really honestly is."

Many people are not aware of the extensive steps taken by the Disney Company to train their

employees in order to create "magical" moments. Emotional regulation training is exceptionally

important in a theme park such as Walt Disney World, because a great deal of employees, whose

jobs required daily interaction with guests, have described instances where they experienced

prominent differences between how they genuinely felt and how they were expected to act

(Kuenz, 1995). This is done by providing days of training that is literally planned out based on

the science of "guestology" (Schueler, 2000). Employees may not even realize that the training is

done to regulate emotions. According to a 28-year-old female from Clermont, FL:

"They're very, very good at developing their training strategies and putting you through

everything like you do traditions first, and you have to you have to be dressed well

everything has to be professional but you're going through like an overall training about

the company and everything that's happened in the company, and it's completely

scripted, it's actually a little play that they have to put on. So it's hard as an employee to

point out exactly what they do that's trying to make you regulate your emotions, but I

think they just try to make you feel happy all the time and that you should be excited to

work there, and that was the feeling."

As discussed previously, it appears that the Disney Company specifically hires individuals who have a predetermined positive disposition. As explained by Morris and Feldman (1996), it is likely that display rules managing facial expressions and emotional behavior have previously been internalized by experienced employees. Therefore, for the Walt Disney World on-stage employees, it may not be clear, at face value, that they receive specific training in emotional regulation but, after a while, learning how to build up and maintain positive attitudes becomes synonymous, in their mind, with emotional regulation training. A 23-year-old female from Puerto Rico reflected on this:

> "Well during orientation, they kind of like brainwash you, 'cause they pretty much like in character performing it was even worse, 'cause they pretty much you have training and they show you these videos with like guests who have had experiences with like characters and how impacted they've been, so they try and keep you in mind of all of that."

By showing these videos and providing example of positive guest interaction, the company successfully instills the significance of a positive attitude without deliberately suppressing emotions. Disney emphasizes the importance of creating magical moments out of negative situations, and uses these optimistic stories as encouragement (Schueler, 2000). It is crucial to remember that such training is not just for new, entry level on-stage employees. Whether they are full-time senior executives or hourly desk clerks and tour guides, all new employees are obligated to engage in training prior to beginning his or her everyday responsibilities (Capodagli & Jackson, 2001). The universal training that every employee must participate in is known as "Traditions" (Cockerell, 2008). This stage of training involves employees learning the "Disney

Way." This includes the history of the company and the basic regulations set in place by the company. According to a 22-year-old female from Orlando, FL,

> "They go over like, the Disney look, the Disney smile, the Disney attitude, and give you specifics about it, like they actually show you examples of different situations and how you should deal with it. And one is the ok way, one is the bad way, and one is the Disney way. And every so often like you'll just be looking and they'll come up and give you a card and be like it's time for more training for you and you like go to a place in Magic Kingdom and get more of that, you know, happy training."

This information gives insight into how much Disney actually controls for employees who are on-stage, and how important it is to continue the training in order to maintain consistency. Training is not a one-time-occurrence in Walt Disney World. The latter offers courses to refresh employees and remind them of the importance of the "Disney persona." There are also multiple resources for employees to stay involved and continue their training if they so please. For example, Disney offers recognition programs, classes individuals can take, Disney newsletters, and sports events (Chung & Schneider, 2003). According to a 25-year-old female from Stillwater, MN:

> "They offer lifetime learning resources throughout the property where Cast can take online classes, select from a plethora of books and other resources. So you can keep learning, or I guess training, while you're working there."

According to this employee, not only are there training sessions that employees are forced to attend throughout their time working at the park but, also, there are resources available to employees should they choose to further their training individually.

One major branch of training was specifically designed for character performers. While all employees go through training, these individuals needed to learn how to literally become different characters. As said by a 27-year-old female from Panama City, FL:

"I'd honestly say all five days of training in some form is emotion training. 'Cause we have to become not one, not two not three, I have to become five different characters. So you're having to learn a great deal, so yeah. Five days is in some form emotional training."

Such training for individuals is imperative to continue the magic of Walt Disney World. The characters that can be found in the park are the essential attraction for many visiting guests and become one of the reasons that training is given top priority in the Disney Universe (Capodagli & Jackson, 2001). However, to recognize whether or not individuals are portraying a character, there is one aspect of training that matters to all of them: safety. The Disney Company ensures that all employees are constantly paying attention to their surroundings to keep guests happy and safe. By going through training on-stage before they officially begin their role in the show, they learn first-hand how to work with the guests and maintain a positive environment (Cockerell, 2008). According to a 27-year-old female from Panama City, FL:

"That's one thing when we're taught in training is that you need to focus on your guest, since they can't see you and they can't see that you're constantly looking around, you need to be checking out not only the guest in front of you, your attendant or attendants."

This quotation expresses how vital it is for employees to be constantly paying attention to their surroundings, and how Disney trains them to do so. While this may not seem like emotional regulation training to most employees, the main feature in training at Walt Disney World is

managing the emotions of employees to adhere to their job description (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983). While emotional regulation training may seem to be a negative feature of training, it is essential to the success of the company. As said by Schuppert et al. (2009), occupations involving a large amount of customer service can lead to stress and psychological vulnerability. One crucial objective of emotional regulation training is to introduce new methods of managing stress. By the same token, this training has obviously been successful for the Disney Company based on their current reputation. As said by a 25-year-old female from Stillwater, MN, "I think they [Disney] have the reputation they have because of how they train their cast members. They obviously know what they're doing."

Theme 5: Negative Effects of Emotional Regulation

The Disney Company is universally known for its customer service and its constantly-upbeat employees. However, this is not always the case. In order to portray constant happiness, many employees of the Walt Disney World are forced to "surface act" while on-stage. One vital consequence of surface acting is causing employees to become more dissatisfied with their profession, which may lead them to perform at a lower level (Grandey, 2003). As said by a 27-year-old female from Panama City, FL:

> "It can really get underneath your skin sometimes, and you know I don't want to be, I don't want to be happy, but you have to push that aside sometimes 'cause people paid a lot of money to come and see you and just to have that experience and you don't want to ruin it for them."

This is an example of an employee who has learned to engage in surface acting to create a magical guest experience. Yet, too often, participating in surface acting can lead to emotional exhaustion, or even emotional deviance. This may not be due to organizational expectations, but due to unhappy guests. Surface acting is frequently utilized by modifying or controlling emotional expressions – e.g., by faking a smile while assisting a demanding customer (Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge, 1999; Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Pugliesi, 1999; Pugliesi & Shook, 1997). Many participants responded that they found themselves in multiple situations where a guest was very rude or unhappy, but they were forced to appear positive and do their best to control their reactions. According to a 22-year-old female from Wellington, FL:

> "If someone is like yelling at me for something ridiculous I just want to like let it out but
> I have to just turn it on and be like this is my job. So it's like really emotionally draining
> on myself like I want to just come home and lay in bed after. Just shut my brain off."

This supports Maslach and Jackson's (1981) definition of emotional exhaustion, which is the feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. While this is vastly common with a company such as Disney, as one 26-year-old male participant from Fremont, CA put it: "As with any job in which you are working you know 8 to 10 hours a day there will always be a level of exhaustion." According to participants, being forced to "surface act" for long periods of time is extremely draining, no matter which company one is working for. Employees in the service industry typically face negative customer reactions or verbal aggression, which can intensify their level of emotional exhaustion (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The idea of being "fake" on-stage was the most draining to participants, as said by a 22-year-old female from Florida:

"Definitely 'cause when you have to be like, like there were times that I wasn't being

fake like, I liked to be there and stuff, but, having to be fake for like 12 plus hours a day

just kills you really. That's why I actually, by the time I was done I liked doing like

drinks or trays or something that didn't involve people 'cause then like I didn't feel like I

was being fake."

High levels of emotional exhaustion could potentially lead to employees partaking in

deviant activities according to Mulki et al. (2006). Studies have shown that this emotional

concealment can generate higher job dissatisfaction and inferior organizational dedication, which

causes employees to lash out. In fact, Kuenz (1995) reported that long-term "surface acting"

employees at Walt Disney World were more likely to experience emotional exhaustion or

describe situations in which they suffered tensions between what the company expected of them

and what they actually felt. While none of the participants reported that they had ever taken part

in emotional deviance, some admitted to being tempted. The participant that said the previous

quote went on to say:

"At the counters [in a restaurant], there are two levels, and here it gives you lists of

questions to ask people like where are you from, how's your day, what rides have you

gone on just like all these questions you're supposed to ask people. Which is helpful in

terms of you always have a question but you feel like a robot after a while like you ask

them they move on you ask the next person the same questions…and over the course of a

day you're like 'I don't care where you're from!'"

This is an example of how emotional regulation could lead to emotional deviance. According to

Grandey et al. (2004), emotional deviance occurs when emotionally exhausted service

employees give off negative job attitudes that customers can interpret and, ultimately, result in lower customer satisfaction with the service experience. Some behaviors that may occur during emotional deviance are mistreating organizational norms, creating business inadequacies, or withholding effort (Colbert et al., 2004; Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Mulki et al., 2006). One example that was given by a 23-year-old female participant from Puerto Rico was;

> "Sometimes I would be so exhausted 'cause it does take a lot out of you to be so exhausted all the time and to be so [fake smile] all the time so people um there were times I could have done something for someone but I didn't do it, I was like "eh I don't feel like it" but then again most of the time it was because they were rude or whatever. So it makes me pick and choose like who I want to be nice to, sometimes, or just who I want to be sarcastic to, or just ignore completely, which I did sometimes too."

By suppressing effort while on-stage, this would technically be considered emotional deviance. Many participants admitted to holding back on-stage due to being emotionally exhausted. Robinson and Bennett (1995) suggest that emotional exhaustion and an excessive supply of emotional regulation in the workplace can lead to emotional deviance. Emotional deviance can not only tarnish the reputation of an employee, but it could also endanger the well-being and atmosphere of an organization. However, a majority of the participants discussed ways they would "cool off" or release frustrated emotions on-stage without deviating. According to a 28-year-old female from Florida:

> "Well, even though I don't think I'm the biggest emotional regulator, sometimes and there you couldn't because you were going to get fired. You couldn't be like "oh, fuck

you" and tell somebody off, because your job depended on it. And, but there were certain

things you knew you could get away with."

Most of the participants responded that they never contributed to emotional deviance, as they

truly did enjoy their occupation and did not want to lose their job. As said by the same

participant: "We don't deviate to the point where we could get fired-we might get a stern talking-

to, but it's not deviate as retaliating against someone that was mean to you."

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study has collected new data on the complex paradigm of emotional regulation at

Walt Disney World. In this conclusion, the researcher describes, in detail,

(a) the summary of the findings (and, above all, addressing all four research questions of

this analysis),

(b) the limitations of this study, and

(c) suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1 (RQ1), "How do Disney on-stage employees engage in emotional

regulation as part of their occupation?," was addressed through the participants' responses and

the researcher's analysis of them – as interpreted in the first two themes especially. RQ1 was

dealt with, in part, through the use of deep acting versus surface acting. It is clear from the data

that employees of Walt Disney World are not constantly upbeat and positive. As this study

shows, particularly through all five themes, most of them turn to surface acting to achieve the emotions they are forced to emit. A certain number of responses, however, also pointed to the utilization of deep acting as a way to engage in emotional regulation. Most of the employees commented on how they remind themselves of their training regarding the importance of the guest's experience at Walt Disney World. Responses showed that participants felt that guests did not respond as well to fake happiness. Because of this, employees would strive to achieve deep acting in order to keep interactions with guests more genuine. Nevertheless, RQ1 was mostly analyzed through the benefits of using surface acting while engaging in emotional regulation. Many participants discussed the process of dealing with an unhappy guest, and how surface acting would allow them to keep their composure and respond in a positive way in order to maintain Disney's expectations. While this was less sincere than deep acting, a majority of the responses revealed that surface acting was used more often while dealing with negative situations or guests.

For Research Question 2 (RQ2), "How do Disney on-stage employees control emotional deviance as part of their occupation?," it is clear from the findings (especially in the third and fifth themes) that while many employees are tempted to resort to emotional deviance, very few of them actually engage in this type of emotional strategy. While some participants admitted to not paying as much attention to guests or not going above and beyond for all guests, rarely did any of them intentionally deviate from the company's expectations. It appeared that utilizing the back-stage area helped reduce potential deviance by providing an area for employees to vent their frustrations. After relieving their negative emotions and taking a break from the pressures

of being on-stage, employees were able to revitalize themselves and return to the on-stage area rejuvenated and emotionally prepared for all situations, be they negative or positive.

Vis-à-vis Research Question 3 (RQ3), "How do Disney on-stage employees control emotional exhaustion as part of their occupation?," it was found, based on information found in the third, fourth, and fifth themes, that emotional exhaustion was a common problem among employees at Walt Disney World. It seemed to be due to the long hours given to employees. Yet, because they were allowed to go back-stage and collect themselves, they could control their emotional exhaustion and maintain their expected standards. To their eyes, having time to discuss situations or guest issues with other employees back-stage played a vital role in how employees maintained a positive attitude in front of customers. One key aspect of the Disney Company that helped decrease emotional exhaustion was the emotional regulation training provided for every employee. While this training is designed to implement the rules and regulations of the Disney Company, it also offers ways for employees to deal with situations that could lead to emotional exhaustion. By educating individuals about the values of the Disney Company and instilling the importance of a positive guest experience, Walt Disney World on-stage employees have a sense of loyalty and commitment to the guests that they strive to uphold. Through responses from participants, it seemed that, while many of them faced emotional exhaustion, they were able to overcome it.

In regards to Research Question 4 (RQ4), "What do Disney on-stage employees tend to favor the most: deep acting or surface acting? And why?," the participants' responses revealed that surface acting was the most commonly used method among employees, and this was seen in all five themes. While many of them felt that deep acting would be ideal, due to the long hours

and stressful situations, most of the participants resorted to surface acting. They also expressed their desire to use deep acting, but at times were aware that it would fail because they knew they were faking it. As one participant said, she would enjoy deep acting because it was a "more genuine feeling, but it usually didn't work." This offers an example where deep acting, in effect, causes the opposite reaction. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that neither employees nor guests responded well to employees who were not genuinely showing their emotions. Many participants expressed the importance of the "smile factory," whether they were feeling the smile or not. While partaking in surface acting, smiling was the most effective way to successfully portray happiness even if those were not the true feelings of the employee. Many of them were able to keep a happy face while on-stage. Nevertheless, once safe in the privacy of the back-stage area, they were able to let off steam and look as frustrated as they desired. It seemed to be very important to employees not to let their personal emotions known to guests. As one said, "It's not their fault we might be having a bad day." Surface acting was perhaps not the desired method of emotional regulation, but certainly the method used most frequently. Due to their extensive training, employees are taught how to appear happy, whether that includes positive jargon, keeping a smile on their face, or using upbeat nonverbal communication. Surface acting allows Walt Disney World on-stage employees to uphold and maintain Disney's reputation as the "happiest place on Earth."

Offering the big picture of this analysis, the ultimate finding is that a key strategy of emotional regulation that Walt Disney World on-stage employees use is surface acting. From this vantage point, emotional regulation training and display rules that govern emotional behavior will have already been internalized by highly skilled Walt Disney World employees, after

working for the company for a while. Consequently, there is less need for the Disney Company, in the future, to officially monitor its employees' facial expressions and emotional behavior. As we have seen in the literature review, the result of extensive training in surface acting is that Disney's front-line attrition rate is only 15 percent as compared to the rest of the hospitality industry at 60 percent (Pell, 1998).

Limitations

Three limitations were found when this study was conducted. The first limitation deals with difficulties finding a sufficient number of Walt Disney World on-stage employees to interview. While the researcher was able to get ten successful interviews, it would have been beneficial to find more participants. In actuality, while some participants were willing to participate in the interview process, they were either unavailable or reluctant to sitting with the researcher. The reason for their refusal lies in the fact that they are presently working in Walt Disney World and did not want to incur the risk of speaking too openly about their experiences.

The second limitation relates to time constraints. In some cases, having only a couple of months available, scheduling ten interviews and locating a dwelling to hold the interview proved to be difficult in a city as large as Orlando. Similarly, in order to take part in the study, participants had to meet specific constraints. These include the requirement of being a Walt Disney World on-stage employee, having enough experience to reflect on their involvement with emotional regulation, and so forth. In spite of these limitations, it was vital to this analysis and research questions that this specific group of employees be interviewed.

The third limitation deals with the method utilized in this study: in-depth, face-to-face qualitative interviewing. Not all ten interviews provided copious amounts of information on concepts such as deep acting, surface acting, emotional regulation training, emotional deviance, and emotional exhaustion. With qualitative interviewing, there is always a possibility that a few participants may have altered their accounts for unidentified reasons. On the same note, when piloting in-depth, face-to-face qualitative interviewing (even after audio-taping full conversations), there is a chance that the researcher could have distorted interpretations of the interviews.

Future Research

Emotional regulation training has proven to be a relatively effective means for Disney employees to adapt to their work situations. For future research, it may prove interesting to investigate the cultural side of emotional regulation. For example, while Disney is renowned for being the "happiest place on earth," its "smile factory" strategy did not carry well among the Chinese crew personnel at Hong Kong Disneyland. A major reason lies in the fact that, in Hong Kong, people who look "too friendly" are viewed as suspicious. From this vantage point, a smile is not necessarily perceived as a positive feature in other cultures (Matusitz, 2009). Yet, no scholarly studies have examined the effects of emotional regulation enforcement on Walt Disney World employees across racial groups. It would be useful to compare the long-term effects and emotional reactions of those employees.

In a similar vein, according to responses from several participants, emotional regulation can be more difficult to enact depending on where one works within the theme park. For example, working in the food and beverage side tends to be more emotionally draining than working in entertainment. In addition, responses revealed that guests are more likely to be happier when dealing with character performers than employees who are not playing a specific character. Guests are more likely to be rude and impatient with employees working in merchandise compared to those dressed as characters. No scholarly research has been done to examine whether or not certain occupations within the service industry are more emotionally demanding than others. As such, it would be beneficial to investigate emotional regulation across various occupations within the theme park.

It is the researcher's hope that this extensive analysis of emotional regulation at Walt Disney World has enlightened laypersons and scholars alike. It is also researcher's anticipation that emotional regulation studies will continue to be conducted in the workplace, whether it is a theme park or the airline industry. As late Edward T. Hall (1959) once remarked, communication is always more important when it is the "silent language." Clearly, using emotions to control both employees and customers testifies to the powerful force of impression management.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1) Describe situations in which you engage in surface acting, as an employee within the Walt Disney World Company?

2) As part of your daily routine at work, what does surface acting involve in terms of communicative behaviors (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, etc.)?

3) Are there any moments of deep acting as part of your emotional regulation requirements? If so, can you please explain?

4) How much emotional regulation training do you get?

5) Describe moments whereby your back-stage behavior differs from your front-stage behavior?

6) How much emotional control is required to maintain a positive rapport with customers at all times and situations?

7) How do your emotional regulation strategies at the Walt Disney World company improve your situation overall?

8) How do your emotional regulation strategies improve your communicative and social skills with customers?

9) Do emotional regulation strategies lead to emotional deviance? If so, can you please explain?

10) Do emotional regulation strategies lead to emotional exhaustion? If so, can you please explain?

11) Looking at the big picture, what works best for you: surface acting or deep acting?

12) Do you have any recommendations for changing emotional regulation requirements within the Walt Disney World company?

13) Do you have anything else to add?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT PROCESS

EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: Emotional Regulation at Walt Disney World: Deep Acting vs. Surface Acting

Principal Investigator: Anne Reyers

Other Investigators: N/A

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jonathan Matusitz

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

The purpose of this study is to examine the emotional regulation strategies used by Walt Disney World on-stage employees as a way to fulfill requirements set forth by the company. Ten to fifteen Walt Disney World on-stage employees will be interviewed outside the confines of the company in Orlando (in whatever place that suits the participants, such as a library or bookstore). The method of in-depth, face-to-face qualitative interviewing will be used.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things. I will use the method of qualitative interviewing. I will ask you to answer general questions about Walt Disney World's strategies in both deep acting and surface acting.

The interview will last 45-60 minutes. An audio-tape recorder will be used to record the interview because I need to transcribe the information that you will give me. Your name will NOT be mentioned. Your department and job title will NOT be mentioned either. Your participation is confidential. You can use a nickname or pseudonym.

Participation in this study is voluntary and free.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device/video recording device. Participants have the right to refuse to allow such taping without penalty.

The records of this study will be kept private. Participants will use pseudonyms. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify the research participant. Research records will be stored securely. I will store the transcriptions of the data and keep these transcriptions safe by locking them into a program file that can only be opened with a password. I will keep the audio-tapes in a private room that has a safe. I will destroy the audio-tapes as soon as I transcribe all the information recorded on those tapes. Only approved researchers (i.e., my thesis advisor) will have access to the records.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at 651-592-1408 or areyers@knights.ucf.edu (for Anne Reyers, the principal investigator) and (407) 708-2830 or jmatusit@mail.ucf.edu (for Dr. Jonathan Matusitz, the faculty sponsor). You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions.
If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Central Florida – Institutional Review Board at (407) 823-3778.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University of Central Florida

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Anne Reyers**

Date: **January 24, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 1/24/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Emotional Regulation at Walt Disney World: Deep Acting vs. Surface Acting
Investigator:	Anne Reyers
IRB Number:	SBE-11-07389
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 01/24/2011 09:35:14 AM EST

IRB Coordinator

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