

“In the total institution of a cruise ship, employee identities are constructed in relation to virtually incontestable and inescapable emotion labor norms.”

**BECOMING A
CHARACTER FOR
COMMERCE**

Emotion Labor, Self-Subordination,
and Discursive Construction of
Identity in a Total Institution

SARAH J. TRACY
Arizona State University

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I thank Patrice Buzzanell and three anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of this article. In addition, Stan Deetz, Karen Tracy, and Anne Nicotera provided valuable feedback on how to improve the manuscript. This article includes portions of papers presented at the 1998 and 1999 National Communication Association Conventions in New York and Chicago.



This study of cruise ship activities' directors analyzes emotion labor, self-subordination, and discursive construction of identity in the context of a total institution. It opens with a review of social theories of emotion and emotion work and Foucauldian concepts of power and identity. The case, based on fieldnotes, documents, and interview data, analyzes (a) the arbitrary nature of emotion rules; (b) the dispersion of emotion control among supervisors, passengers, peers, and the self; (c) employee self-subordination and privatization of burnout; and (d) identity as coconstituted through resistance and consent to emotion labor norms. The article concludes with a discussion of theoretical and practical implications.

When you wake up in the morning, turn your smile on.
Don't turn it back off again until you go to sleep.

—Pietro, Head Waiter

This advice, offered to a new assistant cruise director before she stepped aboard the *Radiant Spirit* cruise ship,¹ opened a window into the life in which she was about to embark. According to the company's service program, she would be expected to be friendly, helpful, and courteous and never say no to "provide the finest possible experience for our passengers, in every area of their ship, during every moment of their day." How was this level of emotion labor accomplished and what were its effects on employee identity? During my 8-month service as an assistant cruise director on the 1,600-passenger, 700-crew member *Radiant Spirit*, I observed and experienced the emotional struggles present upon one of the world's largest and most profitable cruise ships. This article investigates how power, self-subordination, and the discursive construction of identity are intertwined with issues of emotion labor and burnout experienced by cruise ship activities' directors.

Since Hochschild's (1983) groundbreaking study of Delta flight attendants, scholars have been intrigued with issues of emotion labor, a type of work wherein employees are paid to create a "package" of emotions. On a cruise ship, employee emotion is not just a response to work situations but actually is the work. As one cruise staff member said, "Our job is our personality."² However, little is

reported about cruise ship life in general (an exception is Foster-Wallis, 1996), let alone the particular emotion labor issues of cruise staff personnel. As an employee on the ship, I was poised to observe and personally experience the effects of emotion labor and burnout in this difficult-to-access, "total institution" (Goffman, 1961) work environment.

Total institutions control, in an unbroken way, the time and space of organizational members (Goffman, 1961). As such, the emotions of those within such institutions are regulated in a more totalizing manner than is possible in most 9-to-5 jobs. Furthermore, pressures that we might traditionally conceive of as either *public* or *private* become blurred if not entirely indistinguishable. Encapsulated in tourist luxury for 5- to 10-month contracts with no days off, cruise staff were unable to escape organizational emotion labor norms for more than several hours at a time. Increasing numbers of scholars are recognizing that the public-private boundary is artificial (Nippert-Eng, 1996) and that pressures from home and work are inextricably intertwined (Hochschild, 1989). In studying emotion labor on a cruise ship, pressures from both home and work can be analyzed in tandem, offering a richer understanding of how the two relate to each other. Such an analysis also provides implications for other total institutions, such as military units, prisons, and asylums.

This study examines the ways in which emotion labor and burnout are interwoven with issues of societal and organizational norms, power, identity, resistance, and self-control. Much of the current emotion labor literature glosses over the social and discursive forces that construct emotional experience. Analyses are often reduced to simple dichotomies between real self-fake self and internal feeling-expressed emotion. Waldron (1994) sums up this shortcoming, saying, "The dichotomous portrayal of emotion as real or expressed, private or public, genuine or fabricated, lends itself to oversimplification of the role of communication processes in the emotional lives of organization members" (p. 399). I argue that several key ideas drawn from French philosopher Foucault (1977, 1980a, 1980b, 1982a, 1988) can help theorists better analyze the complexities of organizational emotion rules—rules that

construct and appropriate the identities of those caught in their web of control. In particular, this case study of cruise staff illustrates the historical contingency and arbitrary nature of emotion rules, the dispersed nature of emotional control, the privatization of burnout, employee self-subordination, and the discursive construction of identity.

The article draws on field notes, documents, and interview data gathered during the 8 months I worked on the *Radiant Spirit* and focuses on the ship's cruise staff team. It opens with a review of social theories of emotion, emotion labor, and burnout as well as a summary of several Foucauldian concepts that frame the study. The heart of this study consists of the cruise staff case analysis, wherein traditional emotion labor conceptions are extended and problematized.

TOWARD A DISCURSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF EMOTION WORK

Emotions have typically been regarded as feminine, private, and irrational and thus are largely written out of the public, masculine world of work (Fineman, 1993, 1996). Another reason organizational scholars have ignored emotion is because much early research (e.g., Darwin, 1872/1965; Freud, 1953; Hume, 1739/1972) encouraged an understanding of emotion as personal, instinctual, and largely fixed. Despite these obstacles, a growing number of scholars have recognized the important role of emotion issues in the workplace (Fineman, 1993, 1996; Planalp, 1999). We have learned that emotion is not the opposite of rationality (Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Putnam & Mumby, 1993) or counter to cognition (Planalp & Fitness, 1999). In fact, emotion is often integral to getting the job done (Snyder & Ammons, 1993), and corporate excellence is dependent on a healthy experience of emotion in the workplace (Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998; Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

A social constructionist approach encourages an understanding of emotion as constructed by and managed within the constraints of interaction, communication, and local social norms (Armon-Jones, 1986; Averill, 1994; Harré, 1986; Oatley, 1993). From this point of view, emotion is not a separate object that can be detached from linguistic labels operative within the local moral order; we can only feel emotions that fit within a specific language and repertoire of social practices. As Heelas (1986) argued in his study of emotions across cultures, even if there are basic emotions, it is talk about emotions that gives them meaning. If historians and anthropologists have found culturally diverse emotion vocabularies, then it follows that there are culturally diverse emotions (Harré, 1986).

Several communication scholars have examined the ways emotion is social (for a review, see Andersen & Guerrero, 1998). Researchers have examined how facial expression has a small effect on emotional state (Cappella, 1993), the way people “catch” both positive and negative emotions from each other through a process called *emotional contagion* (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), and how people learn what to feel in part by referencing others (Klinnert, Campos, Sorce, Emde, & Svejda, 1983). Furthermore, talk shapes the way individuals label and (re)appraise emotion (Burlinson & Goldsmith, 1998; Tracy & Tracy, 1998).

A social constructionist perspective that is particularly helpful for understanding emotion in organizations is Goffman’s (1963/1980) dramaturgical approach. From the dramaturgical point of view, employees are organizational actors who perform their emotions with regard to explicit and implicit rules of appropriateness. Different rules exist in different arenas, and public or “front-stage” areas are typically thought to have stricter rules than private “back-stage” areas. Approaches such as these urge scholars to consider emotion as more than an internal, biological, or cognitive state. Emotion is a performance tied up with organizational and social norms, culturally specific linguistic labels, and continuous interaction among actors, directors, and audience members.

Social theories of emotion have been especially fruitful in the study of emotion at work. Hochschild (1983, 1990, 1993) is well recognized for her examination of the ways employees manage

their hearts. Her study focused on the ways employees serve as emotional actors within organizations and how inner feelings are commodified and instrumentalized for organizational profit. According to Hochschild (1983), nothing is inherently wrong with emotion *management* or the effort people expend on making sure that their private feelings are expressed in a way that is consistent with social norms or expectations. When this emotion system leaves the doors of private life and enters the gates of public institutions, however, it is “transmuted” to emotion *labor* and a “a profit motive slips in” (p. 119); emotion becomes “processed, standardized and subject to hierarchical control” (p. 153).

Hochschild (1983) detailed a number of potential problems with emotion labor, but her main concern was that it caused “estrangement between what a person senses as her ‘true self’ and her inner and outer acting” (p. 136). For instance, Hochschild (1983) argued that employees who identified too strongly with the company risked burnout and total depersonalization, whereas those who were able to separate their “real self” from their “fake self” risked blaming themselves for secretly being insincere or would rather *go robot*, a term employees used to describe being phony or faking it. In these situations, Hochschild argued that flight attendants felt emotive dissonance, a clash between inner feelings and outward expression that had a negative effect on their psychological well-being.

A number of theorists have echoed the negative effects of emotion labor. For instance, researchers have argued that maintaining a culturally prescribed happy face can lead to emotional numbness (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) and that suppression of feelings negatively affects organizational relationships (Pogrebin & Poole, 1991). A job that asks workers to give up control over their feelings and maintain an organizationally prescribed mask “can be fun; an exquisite drama . . . it can also be stressful and alienating” (Fineman, 1993, p. 3). Indeed, an issue that is closely connected to emotion labor is organizational burnout, a general wearing out or alienation from the pressures of work. Burnout is typically characterized by three dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization or a negative shift in responses to others, and (c) a

decreased sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1976, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout has been explicitly connected to emotion labor as burnout occurs when “workers can no longer manage their own or others’ emotions according to organizational expectations” (Copp, 1998, p. 300).

Hochschild’s (1983) work launched numerous emotion labor studies (see Waldron, 1994, for an excellent review). Most research has focused on employees who are paid to put on a happy face. This includes studies of Disney employees (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), supermarket and convenience store cashier clerks (Rafaeli, 1989; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), Mary Kay cosmetics agents (Ash, 1984), high-end waitstaff (Mars & Nicod, 1984), secretaries (Pringle, 1988, 1989), and wedding coordinators (Thompson, 1998). Other studies have focused on professions in which employees are encouraged to express negative emotion, as in the case of bill collectors (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991; Sutton, 1991) and police detectives (Stenross & Kleinman, 1989). Last, several studies investigate workers who strive to achieve a neutral emotional state, such as 911 call takers (Shuler, 1997-1998; Tracy & Tracy, 1998), health care workers (James, 1993; Sass, 1997-1998; Smith & Kleinman, 1989), and high-beam steel workers (Haas, 1978).

This literature has largely made use of Hochschild’s (1983) original conceptualizations of emotion labor. Although Hochschild submits that “in managing emotion, we contribute to the creation of it” (p. 18), she maintains the idea that emotion is something individual and real that is then made fake either through surface acting or deep acting. Hochschild considers both of these acts to be ultimately separate from a real self.

In surface acting, the expression on my face or the posture of my body feels “put on.” It is not “part of me.” In deep acting, my conscious mental work . . . keeps the feeling that I conjure up from being part of “myself.” (p. 36)

By engaging in emotion labor, Hochschild claims “we push this ‘real self’ further inside, making it more inaccessible” (p. 34).

Although Hochschild (1990) claims to study emotion labor from an interactional point of view, her explanations are riddled with dichotomies between a real self and a false self as well as between a private and public self. Emotions are considered more real in private life before they fall under the sway of organizational norms. This assumption is problematic because it perpetuates the idea that organizational rules are important only insofar as they affect the packaging or external display of emotions. Moreover, such distinctions have led to a focus on *emotive dissonance*—Hochschild's (1983) term for a clash between inner real feeling and external fake expression—as the central cause for emotion labor discomfort. The study of emotion within organizations demands an understanding of the extent to which “real” emotion is formed through interaction, dialogue, and societal and organizational rules. Principles from Foucault (1977, 1980a, 1980b, 1982a, 1988) can provide a bridge between the current emotion theory and organizational research. Foucault helps to explicate complexities glossed by past emotion labor research in several ways.

First, Foucault (1982b) offers an understanding of the arbitrary and historical nature of institutional structures that come to be seen as normal, natural, and incontestable. Foucault demonstrates how arbitrary forms of reason have been subjectively constructed and made feasible and how rules and laws are historically contingent rather than rationally or objectively necessary. Although Hochschild (1983) set out a good example in analyzing how the mid-1970s airline speed up changed the nature of emotion control for flight attendants, few others have examined the historical contingency and arbitrary nature of organizational emotion rules.

Second, Foucault's (1980b, 1982b) conception of power offers a fresh way of understanding emotion labor norms. He rejects the traditional conceptualization of power as a commodity or top-down structure. Rather, power is dispersed, manifest in language and everyday gestures, and apparent only when it is exercised (Foucault, 1980b, 1982b). It is seen in the persistent battle between authorities and those who they watch; it is unstable, localized, and multivocal (Foucault, 1977). In other words, power is a process, not a possession. It is unavoidable, present in every relationship and gesture but not inherently evil.

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: It “excludes,” it “represses,” it “censors,” it “abstracts,” it “masks,” it “conceals.” In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. (Foucault, 1977, p. 194)

This focus on the process of power informs a study of emotion labor because it becomes apparent that we must look beyond managerial emotional control structures as uncontested end states. Control is continually constructed and reproduced through interactions of domination and resistance. Furthermore, if emotional control is working, it is probably largely invisible, as the “perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary” (Foucault, 1977, p. 201).

Individuals play a large part in their own control. Technologies of the self “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). As one of three criteria, Hochschild (1983) contended that emotion labor is found only in jobs that have direct supervisory control over emotion (p. 147).³ This often seems to insinuate that control measures emanating from peers, customers, and the self are less repressive than traditional supervisor control mechanisms.

Last, Foucault (1977, 1980a, 1982a, 1988) takes the social construction hypothesis one step further. From a postmodern point of view, identity is overdetermined (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Laclau, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985); is the product of multiple, contradictory discourses (Hall, 1985); and consists of myriad subindividuals (Foucault, 1980a). Discourse transmits and produces power, which in turn continuously produces and constitutes the self (Foucault, 1977, 1982a). Although this understanding of the self as constituted has been critiqued by some as overly deterministic (Best & Kellner, 1991), Foucault (1988) indicates how the discursive production of self is both constraining and liberating; organizational discursivities both provide possibilities for and determine the limits of self-understanding. From this point of view, systems of domination are inherently unstable and vulnerable (Mumby,

1997a). Identity is understood through a dance of resistance and domination.

As discussed, the emotion labor literature (e.g., Hochschild, 1983) perpetuates the idea that identity and emotion are real only when they are private, personal, and free from the influence of organizational norms. Granted, Hochschild comes from a critical feminist tradition and so may rightly differ from postmodernist conceptualizations of identity. However, even self-described “feminist poststructuralists” Mumby and Putnam (1992; Putnam & Mumby, 1993) have been critiqued for conceptualizing self-identity in integrated terms, “assuming that a person has a single self that, transcending context, can be known” (Martin et al., 1998, p. 437). From a Foucauldian point of view, the self is fragmented and constructed through a number of discourses; different selves emerge in contextually specific manners. The private self is no more real than the public self. “Real” emotion is constructed in public, organizational forums.

In light of these Foucauldian concepts, the case analysis of cruise staff examines the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How are current understandings of emotion labor on a cruise ship historically contingent?

Research Question 2: In what ways are emotional control systems dispersed among superiors, peers, and passengers?

Research Question 3: How do employees play a part in their own emotional control?

Research Question 4: How is cruise staff identity constituted in relation to emotion labor norms?

METHOD

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND SITE

Data for the following study were collected over an 8-month period on the *Radiant Spirit*, one of the largest of 10 ships owned at the time by *Spirit* cruise line. The case study is focused on the ship’s

cruise staff team responsible for orchestrating shipboard activities and nonmainstage entertainment for passengers. As is true for most of *Radiant Spirit's* crew, cruise staff employees worked 5- to 10-month contracts during which time they never had a full day (24 hours) off. This team consisted of seven members at any one time, including a cruise director, deputy cruise director, social hostess, youth activities coordinator, assistant cruise director, and two junior assistant cruise directors. During the course of the study, I observed and/or interviewed 16 different cruise staff members, of whom 8 were male and 8 were female. The entire cruise staff team was Caucasian (British, American, and Canadian), heterosexual, and ranged in age from 23 to 45. Because the cruise staff members were considered to be officers, all but the junior assistant cruise directors had rooms of their own and all had the privileges of eating passenger food, using passenger facilities (such as the gym, beauty salon, and pools), and having a room steward clean their rooms daily. Despite access to these privileges, cruise staff were required to wear uniforms and name badges whenever they were in passenger areas and thus were "on duty" for up to 15 hours per day.

During the span of the study, the *Radiant Spirit* ran several itineraries, including 7- to 15-day Alaskan, trans-Panama Canal, and Caribbean cruises. About 80% of *Radiant Spirit's* 1,600 passengers were American, with an average age in the mid-60s, whereas only about 1% of the 700 crew were American. Officers and crew were divided into five departments, each headed by a four-stripe officer. These included deck and/or navigational, engineering, purser (includes guest services normally found in a hotel such as front desk personnel, room stewards, and waiters), entertainment, cruise staff, and medical.⁴

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Although I did not specifically enter the *Radiant Spirit* site to conduct an academic study, I began taking fieldnotes and making journal entries immediately upon my employment. When burnout and emotion labor emerged as salient issues in the field, I sought

and received permission from the ship's cruise director to conduct recorded interviews and continue writing field notes. Cruise staff were aware of the study, and those who gave interviews signed informed consent forms.

Data gathering. Data for this study draw from three main sources. First, as an employee on the ship, I observed and fully experienced the cruise staff role. I experienced the interview process, on-the-job socialization, front-stage duties, and backstage griping. As Lindlof (1995) maintains, "certainly, there is no better path to knowing the feelings, predicaments and contradictions of the 'other' than to be with the other in an authentic relationship" (p. 142). As a participant, I was able to gain access to inside motivations and behaviors that cruise staff are well trained to regularly hide from the public. Of course, as a full participant, I risked losing analytic detachment and "going native." However, I kept some distance through consistently writing field notes. These field notes recorded front-stage and backstage behaviors and conversations as well as preanalytic interpretations and personal reactions. Although some scholars suggest keeping a separate journal for such reflections (Anderson, 1987; Lindlof, 1995), I typically included such musings within the field note itself to preserve context.

The second sources of data were formal and informal interviews. Throughout my time on the ship, I conducted hundreds of ethnographic interviews (Lindlof, 1995) with the cruise staff, passengers, and other crew members, during which I was able to informally query people on their reactions to the ship's service program, certain incidents, and other aspects of ship life. In addition, I conducted 10 hours of formal recorded interviews with 6 different members of the cruise staff: a female junior assistant cruise director, 2 male assistant cruise directors, a female youth activities coordinator, a female social hostess, and a male cruise director. Formal interviews focused on emotion labor and burnout issues that were conspicuous in my field notes. Among other questions, I asked employees, "Is part of your job to fake being happy?"; "Which areas of the ship do you consider to be on-duty and off-duty?";

“Does burnout happen in the job, and if so, why?”; “How would you describe [the company’s service program] and what are your feelings about it?” Field notes and transcribed interviews yielded 125 pages of typewritten data.

The third sources of data were organizational documents. These included *Spirit’s* joiner booklet, shipboard job appraisal form, a press kit, customer comment cards, and the company’s service credo information—including credo card, credo pin, official explanation of the credo, and credo posters that plastered backstage crew areas.

Data analysis. I began in-depth analysis of the data after I was out of the field for several months. This break allowed me time, space, and perspective to critically reflect on my own discursive construction on the cruise ship. To analyze the data, I used as a guide Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) methods of developing grounded theory via the constant comparative method (for a review, see Charmaz, 1983). Field notes, transcribed interviews, and documents were read and reread for recurring, emergent patterns (hence, grounded theory). The first stage of this method calls for assigning data-text incidents to categories. As the researcher adds new incidents to a category, he or she continually compares it to the initial category and adjusts the definition or circumscription of the category to fit the new incident. Emergent categories related to this analysis included the following: historical contingency of emotion labor norms; emotion labor mechanisms emanating from management, passengers, and peers; the normalization of these mechanisms through passenger focus; acts of resistance; acts of consent; and issues of “faking it.” Because any reading and production of knowledge is socially constructed, these categories are not necessarily exhaustive or mutually exclusive. As such, this analysis does not attempt to mirror or reflect reality. Denzin (1997) explains, “There are no stories out there waiting to be told and no certain truths waiting to be recorded; there are only stories yet to be constructed” (p. 267). This case analysis is the result of a committed in-depth study, with a privileging of subject voice and understanding and self-reflexivity about my research role—components that

are often considered to be signs of a good qualitative study (Denzin, 1997).

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Anyone who has watched the U.S. television series *The Love Boat* has a general, if idealized, notion of cruise ship life. Today, cruise ships are vacation destinations in themselves. As one of the characters in the premier 1998 episode of *Love Boat: The Next Wave* said, “The only difference between this ship and a five-star hotel is that we don’t have valet parking” (Hampton & LePard, 1998). One important aspect about cruising—highlighted in glossy brochures, television spots, and travel agents’ sales spiels—is the omnipresent smiling staff. The cruise staff serve in roles that are a combination of activity director, performer, host, ombudsperson, and friend. A typical day of work is described in a junior assistant director’s holiday letter sent home to friends and family.

On a sea-day, I usually wake up at 9 a.m., run a brush through my hair and teeth and run off to Ping Pong or shuffleboard, and try to referee it while reassuring the passengers that it’s only a game and that they don’t need to kill their competitor in order to have fun. Then I might have a 40-minute break until Bingo at 11 a.m., where I call the numbers and tell jokes about them. Then I’m off to golf putting, where I create a course for the (usually) male passengers on the foyer carpet. After lunch in the “officer’s mess,” I usually try to take another quick nap before heading off to lead a trivia quiz for ship’s prizes. Then I’m up to the sun deck to lead a rousing afternoon game of pool Olympics or water volleyball—the main concern being that none of the 70-year-old passengers drown themselves. Then I would probably take another break or exercise (in the gym or run outside on deck) before showering and changing into my evening outfit (a ballroom gown, *Spirit*-issued suit, or costume, depending on the night). Our evening activities consist of leading line-dance parties, performing “funny” shows on the main stage, running the karaoke machine for passengers (and performing ourselves when the passengers insist, “We just came to watch”), and leading little game shows. In between it all, I “swan”—which means walking around and talking to passengers, buying them drinks, and often-

times listening to them complain. My day ends each day at about midnight, when I usually head into the crew disco, “veg out,” and have a few drinks before going to bed.

As illustrated in this brief description, the cruise staff job demands public speaking abilities, interpersonal skills, and the capacity to be patient and warm with large groups of people for extensive periods of time. Although widely accepted as natural and reasonable by service employers and employees alike, this level of emotional control has not always been the norm.

HISTORICAL CONTINGENCY OF EMOTION RULES

The first research question asked, “How are current understandings of emotion labor on a cruise ship historically contingent?” According to Foucault (1988), “A lot of the things . . . that people think are universal—are the results of some very precise historical changes” (p. 11). In an archaeology of medicine, for instance, Foucault (1973) explained how a shift from a speculatively based medicine to an empirically based rational art is neither linear nor necessarily progressive. Rather, changes such as these are discontinuous and based as much on economic and class convenience as on a causal progression. An entire archaeology of the cruise ship industry is not a purpose of this article (for an archaeology of the tourist gaze, the reader should refer to Urry, 1990). Nevertheless, in respect to Foucault’s philosophy that an emphasis should be placed on historical understanding, “stemming not from an interest in the past, but from a deep commitment to understanding the present” (Burrell, 1988, p. 225), it makes sense to consider several aspects of *Spirit’s* history.

According to company documents, *Spirit’s* primary business in the early 1970s was running ferries to popular American vacation spots. In the mid-1970s, however, *Spirit* began to experience financial difficulties due to an oil embargo, a recession, and the fact that Americans were turning to airplanes for quicker, more cost-effective transportation. In response to declining sales, *Spirit* needed to

change the image of its ships—from that of transportation to one of vacation destination. After nearly 150 years in the shipping business, *Spirit* began to construct ships specifically designed for luxury vacations. In addition, the original *Love Boat* television series set sail in 1975 and attracted a worldwide audience to cruising. Through slick characters and romantic (if unlikely) plot lines, Hollywood instantly created the expectations many passengers still hold about cruise ships, including the presumption that cruise staff are omnismiling, slightly goofy, and always willing to please.

With the transformation of cruise ship from transportation to destination, the role of passenger changed as well. Whereas passengers in the early 1900s turned to cruise ships primarily for transportation, contemporary passengers come for the gourmet food, shipboard activities, orchestrated port tours, onboard gambling, and 24-hour-a-day pampering. In this transformation, the passenger mutated from in-transit traveler to entertainment consumer and swelled the focus on the crew's service orientation. According to Foucault (1980a), power and knowledge are intertwined, and when knowledge is secret, it holds power; "Knowledge invents the Secret" (Foucault, 1973, p. 163). In other words, knowledge that seems specialized and scarce holds more power than knowledge that seems common. When passengers relied primarily on the navigation function of the crew, the crew's job was largely a mystery, and thus it held some power. Today, however, the primary cruise ship product is crew service—something that passengers define. Passengers have become a second boss.

Tourists have also changed the way they "gaze" at service staff. A service class (Urry, 1990)—similar to what Bourdieu (1984) termed the *new petit bourgeoisie*—currently saturates the cruise ship business. According to Bourdieu, whereas the "old petit bourgeoisie" based its life on a morality of duty with a fear of pleasure, this new middle-class group "urges a morality of pleasure as a duty. This doctrine makes it a failure, a threat to self-esteem, not to 'have fun'" (p. 367). In viewing pleasure as a duty, today's tourist has thrown responsibility for pleasure into the gloves of service providers. A scan of completed *Spirit* comment cards indicates that passengers are critical when staff perkiness does not match their

expectations—expectations socially created by television shows, advertising slogans, and the transformation of cruise ships from transportation to vacation destination.

How does this history affect the way we understand emotion labor today? From a Foucauldian perspective, one of the most important tasks of organizational work is to criticize the workings of institutions that appear to be neutral, the assumption being that if we know how power is manifest through relationships and arbitrary rules, it can then be better understood and possibly altered. In looking at the history of cruise ships, and *Spirit* in particular, we begin to see that service orientation now evident on cruise ships and in most Western tourist arenas is not inherently normal or natural but is historically contingent. In the transformation of cruise ships from transportation to destination and the petit bourgeoisie's shift in viewing pleasure as duty, the expectation of emotion labor has heightened. Nevertheless, *Spirit* cruise staff seemed to accept as natural the expectation that they should always feel happy and be smiling. As one assistant cruise director said, "Our job is to be happy, and there will be times when you don't feel that way. You have to put it aside and look as though you're enjoying your job."

DISPERSED EMOTIONAL CONTROL STRUCTURES

The second research question asked, "In what ways are emotional control systems dispersed among superiors, peers, and passengers?" Before cruise staff even stepped aboard a *Spirit* cruise ship, they underwent a screening process that queried them about the emotion labor demands of the job. During interviews, prospective staff were asked how they would deal with demanding or older passengers. Management also told employees that they were "public property" whenever they set foot in a passenger area on the ship. One interviewer told a prospective employee, "Basically, we're looking for young people who can deal with old people." Presumably, cruise staff were only hired if they adequately responded to management's questions about the emotional demands of the job.

However, it was impossible for cruise staff members to know the extent of this public property mentality until they were actually in the scene.

Management's hand in emotional control extended beyond *Spirit's* land-based headquarters to crew-member hallways, cabins, and bathrooms. The most blatant and obtrusive emotional control system was an elaborate service program, created when *Spirit* management learned through postcruise surveys that *Spirit* was falling behind in passenger service ratings compared to competitors. The program, designed to increase passenger's perception of crew service, included a number of different control mechanisms. First, two copies of the service credo were adhered via a sticker to the inside of crew cabin and bathroom doors. The credo included mandates such as "We never say no," "We smile, we are on stage," "We are ambassadors of our cruise ship when at work and at play," and "We use proper telephone etiquette . . . and answer with a smile in our voice." Second, the program required employees to carry a service credo wallet card or wear a small lapel pin etched with the service program's logo. Supervisors could "write up" crew if they caught them in a passenger area without the card or pin. Perhaps to prevent the loss of the credo card, or perhaps so its guidelines could permeate employees' dreams, special laminated holding pockets were adhered just inches from each crew member's headboard. Third, crew areas were plastered with posters reading (among other things), "We must always speak English," and "Always greet passengers; say hello ma'am, good morning sir," and "We always say please and thank you." The cruise staff did not know exactly who pasted up the hallway posters or cabin stickers, giving an impression that they appeared almost magically. Halfway through my 8-month contract, the posters and stickers just as mysteriously magnified in size. Finally, the service program included a management-sponsored monthly drawing for service suggestions. The winning crew "suggestors" received a small monetary prize. An example of a winning suggestion was to place mirrors in the crew elevators so staff could double-check their appearance before going "on stage."

Although this service program was the most blatant of the control mechanisms on the ship, systems of emotion control were saturated throughout the cruise ship experience. As written in the opening of this article, I was warned by another staff member my 1st day of work that I should turn on my smile in the morning and not turn it back off again until I went to sleep. Throughout my contract, peers played an integral role in emphasizing emotional control. My roommate told me, "The best way to deal with stress is to never show it to the passengers or to the rest of the cruise staff. Instead, come back to the room and talk it out with me." Another said, "Just smile and say hello all the time." Passengers also played a large role in controlling cruise staff's emotions, a finding consistent with past emotion labor studies (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli, 1989) and analyses of concertive control (e.g., Barker, 1993; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Consider the following incident recorded in my journal just days after I had begun work:

Last night in the disco, I was "swanning" (strolling around making conversation with passengers), and I yawned—it was about 11:30 p.m. A male passenger glanced my way and said in a joking, yet accusatory tone, "Hey, you can't do that." I quickly covered my mouth, smiled, and apologized.

This passenger's discursive penetration (Giddens, 1979) of my behavior could be viewed as offering temporary relief from the emotion labor norms in that his comment showed that he "understood" or was "on my side." In practice, however, the passenger's comment reinforced the multisourced power of emotion labor norms. Through a facade of a joke, the passenger was able to publicly correct my behavior without encountering any resistance from me.

In traditional jobs, work conflicts are couched in terms of employee versus supervisor interests. Nevertheless, in crew member-passenger relationships, passengers essentially are the bosses, and as such, supervisors are no longer the enemy. This situation is immediately apparent in the role of passenger comment cards on the *Radiant*. Our cruise director kept a detailed record of the number of passenger comments each employee received, subtracting

negative ones from positive ones, and used this as a basis for cruise staff evaluation and promotion. No one complained to the cruise director about this evaluation method—or the somewhat strange effects it had on our behavior. For instance, the deputy cruise director, Paul, performed cartwheels at all his activities in the hope that passengers would remember to name him in the comment cards. When I asked what I could do to improve my chances at quick promotion, the cruise director said I needed more comments. Because I was from Wisconsin, he suggested I purchase and wear a foam hunk-of-cheese hat to my activities and tell the passengers to call me “cheesehead.” After seriously considering this suggestion, I declined. Nevertheless, I did choose to cut my hair so that I could be distinguished in the comment cards from the other blonde American. This “personal choice” might not have been so easy if I had not viewed the passenger focus as absolute. Just as the perfection of surveillance may be the panopticon—in which the “inmate . . . never know(s) whether he is being looked at any one moment, but . . . sure that he may always be so” (Foucault, 1977, p. 201)—the watchful eyes of passengers and peers unobtrusively created for cruise staff a state of permanent visibility and a virtually incontestable system of control.

SELF-SUBORDINATION AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF BURNOUT

The third research question asked, “How do employees play a part in their own emotional control?” Self-subordination occurs when employees actively engage in self-surveillance and subordinate themselves on behalf of management goals, even when management is not looking (Burawoy, 1985). Doing cartwheels, cutting one’s hair, and even wearing a cheesehead may be considered harmless, if ludicrous, acts of self-subordination. Nevertheless, the cruise staff’s uncritical drive to please passengers led to problematic incidents. A junior assistant cruise director, Cassie, communicated the following experience involving unwanted advances from a male passenger:

There was this man at the disco and he asked me to dance. He was grabbing and holding me close . . . and saying these weird things . . . [like] "have you ever thought about coming to the dark side?" I just played dumb and acted as though I didn't understand what he was talking about. In this type of situation . . . you don't want to piss someone off. I had been on the ship for only a few months, and I didn't know what I could get away with and what I could not. I was so frustrated that I had no control. I took it as if he had paid for the cruise and that we, as cruise staff, are part of his cruise. [After the dance,] I just had to vent. [The cruise director] was just furious and said if anything like that ever happens, we don't have to deal with it, we just have to walk off.

This incident illustrates several important issues. First, although *Spirit* bombarded Cassie with a service program that included the mandate "We never say no," they failed to help her know how to deal with inappropriate advances from passengers. Employees were provided with neither written nor on-the-job training about sexual harassment with regard to either passengers or other employees. Second, the only way Cassie thought she could protect herself from this man was by pretending to be dumb, an action that maintains and normalizes the societal myth that an older, paying man has intellectual superiority and virtual ownership over a younger, less-affluent woman. Third, Cassie seemed to internalize and blame herself for the situation, saying that later in the contract she would have known better. In fact, Cassie later praised the organization for standing behind her. Ironically, although she felt support from her supervisor, the cruise director never said anything to the passenger or made an effort to change *Spirit's* service program to include more information about sexual harassment. In blaming herself and claiming support from the organization, Cassie played a part in her own subordination and permitted the continued degradation of staff by passengers.

Active self-subordination is also evident in the way employees internalized the norm that negative emotion was an individual problem that should be taken care of during one's own private time and space. Cruise staff, like the majority of crew who worked aboard *Spirit* ships, were hired as independent contractors. As

such, they signed contracts to work for a certain period of time and then took a break (during which they were neither paid nor received health benefits). Employees unquestionably accepted the independent contractor status and even celebrated it, saying that it gave them the freedom to leave the company after a short time if they did not like it. Nevertheless, this status served to control the staff. From day one, they accepted the fact that they were public property for the length of the contract. As an assistant cruise director, Blake, explained it, "I'm on call 24 hours a day—that's what my contract says. Some people don't like this, but I say if you don't like it, get off the ship."

Indeed, *Spirit's* service program continually reminded cruise staff via posters and credo cards that "we smile, we're on stage," and employees perpetuated this norm in their talk. Kelly, a youth activities director, said, "It's a tough job, but when you walk out the door, it's show time. If you can't handle it, go home." Nan, a social hostess said, "You're performing from the minute you walk out your cabin door. You're acting a role of chirpy, cheerful staff member out to give the passengers the feeling of being happy." These comments indicate that employees agreed that negative emotion should be kept backstage. However, other comments revealed that employees seemed unclear about where backstage began. For instance, when asked what constituted off-duty places on the ship, an assistant cruise director, Harry, said,

The only off-duty areas are cabin and the cruise staff office. Well, then again, in the office you can do what you want, but you're still kind of working. It's off duty but on duty. You can watch TV, put your feet up, and relax. You don't have to smile, you can swear. But, you still do some of your work back there. Officer's mess is on duty because we still got to be polite, be happy, can't get on people's nerves. That's part of the job, to get along with other crew. . . . The lines are blurry. We've got to get along with people in crew bar, but we're not working. It's different with bar staff—if they're not serving drinks, they're not working. But with the cruise staff, we're on duty all the time, because our job is our personality, our job is to have a smile on our face and greet people. . . . We use similar greetings in the crew bar.

Harry's response exemplifies the cruise staff's general confusion about where their jobs ended and where they began and where and when they could ever be their "true selves." This confusion is problematic when considered in relation to the ways cruise staff conceptualized employee burnout.

Although *Spirit* organizational documents said absolutely nothing about burnout, employees often spoke of being stressed and emotionally drained. As Cassie said, "Burnout starts at about 4 months. . . . You have to really dig down deep and pray, God, let me get through this, because I don't think I'm going to." It is not surprising that most employees felt burned out to some extent considering that when interviewed, most had worked on the ship for at least 4 months without 1 full day off. It is interesting, however, to examine the way cruise staff conceptualized burnout as a private problem caused by off-stage relationships and personal issues.⁵ Admittedly, passengers were labeled as *irritating*, *asking stupid questions*, and *telling stupid jokes*, but the big problems were deemed to be private, nonorganizational issues. One cruise staff member said, "I think burnout happens to people when they're unsatisfied with their life . . . it continues if people keep going to crew bar and drinking and getting up early. People need to have time on their own and get exercise." The cruise director referred to burnout as "a hazard of the beast" and said, "You just have to shake it off." Cassie explained that the lack of contact with friends at home was stressful. Blake said,

I think it's [burnout] an individual problem . . . and the cause of that is relationships going sour . . . If there's anyone who ever says, "I hate this job, I don't like this job," I don't think they should be in the job.

Understanding burnout to be personal and private is problematic when it functions to disregard the ways burnout is largely an organizational issue caused by long hours, little down time, and continual peer, customer, and superior surveillance. In addition, the obvious question arises as to where and when employees possess private space or time in a total organization to deal with burnout. In interviews, staff cited having to be on in passenger areas, the cruise staff

office, the officer mess, crew bar, and sometimes even on the street or in restaurants in port cities. The only place they all agreed constituted backstage was their 10-by-12-foot windowless cabins, where they spent an average of 9 hours per day sleeping, showering, and dressing. In other words, backstage served as an organizational myth that effectively regulated burnout issues to a time and space that did not exist. Burnout was a “private problem,” although private space and time were virtually nonexistent. Cruise staff bought into and perpetuated this myth in their talk and, by doing so, never interrogated organizational management about burnout. Curiously missing from my data, for instance, is any concerted effort to encourage management or superiors to offer employees time off *within* contracts.

IDENTITY AS COCONSTRUCTED THROUGH RESISTANCE AND CONSENT

The fourth and final research question asked, “How is cruise staff identity constituted in relation to emotion labor norms?” So far, much of this analysis has focused on the ways employees were controlled by passengers, peers, and themselves. However, cruise staff were not passive receptacles of managerial or passenger control. Wherever there is domination, there is also resistance (Foucault, 1977), and although power is omnipresent and active in every human relation, it is not omnipotent (Best & Kellner, 1991). Hegemony is dialectical (Mumby, 1997b), and thus identity is not an individual given but rather is always in process, created in relation to something else (Cheney, 1983; Clegg, 1989). Through resistance, cruise staff were able to define themselves as superior to passengers and other crew. For instance, when passengers complained to *Spirit’s* cruise director that others were saving seats in the show lounge, he would shake his head and say with forehead furrowed,

Isn’t it a shame that some of the people don’t follow the rules . . . it’s really not fair to the other passengers, is it? All I can suggest is that you ask them to move—or you might try the balcony.

Through this creative strategy, the cruise director was able to feel clever, appear sympathetic, and subvert the complainer's anger onto other passengers rather than dealing with it himself.

Cruise staff also developed hidden transcripts (Murphy, 1998; Scott, 1990) in which they secretly made fun of passengers. For instance, cruise staff continually repeated "stupid questions" (e.g., "A passenger asked me today if the ship generates its own electricity") and told what-if stories (e.g., "What if I would have told him, 'No, we run an extra-long electric cord all the way back to shore!'"). Cruise staff also mocked *Spirit's* service program. They said it was "patronizing" and designed for the "more ethnic" and "nonofficer level" of staff. When asked about the program, Blake said,

[The service credo]. That's what's written on our pin, that's what it says on the wall, that's what it says in our shower, that's what is tattooed on the back of your head. They've tried to jam this program down our throats . . . I do exactly what [this] program is all about and more . . . I don't need [this] program.

The ship's social hostess said,

I do think that the opportunity for service suggestions is very good. It asks those of us who are actually in the field to make improvements instead of people in their ivory towers who haven't been on the ships for years making all the decisions. [But] the posters and the plastic taped to our walls is becoming a little bit like a Hitler youth camp.

Although hidden transcripts did little to change the emotion labor control patterns on the ship, they provided staff with an impression of control over the "stupid punters" and the "useless credo." In other words, cruise staff made sense of their identities largely through resistance to the norms. However, they were also controlled and tied to them.

The self is both constituting and constituted, motivated by self-agency yet produced and created by historical and discursive forces (Foucault, 1982a). Cruise staff made fun of the service program as a way to deny that management was controlling them but spoke and

acted in line with the service program. As Kelly, a youth activities coordinator, said, “Our problems should be behind closed doors not in front of passengers. You can’t walk down the hall without a smile on your face because you have a tummy ache.” This type of consent to the organization’s emotion rules as if they were incontestable and unchangeable is problematic because it “often appears in direct forms as members actively subordinate themselves to obtain money, security, meaning, or identity—things which should result from the work process itself without the necessity of subordination” (Deetz, 1998, p. 159).

A series of interview questions and responses also shed light on the ways cruise staff conceptualized their identities in relation to *Spirit*’s emotion labor norms. When asked if part of their job was to fake being happy, some cruise staff claimed they sometimes felt a discrepancy between *Spirit*’s emotion labor norms and their true personalities. Harry said, “Part of being a cruise staff person is faking being happy. If you don’t feel that way, you have to pretend.” On the other hand, a couple of longer tenured employees claimed that their true personalities fit into the company’s emotion labor norms. For instance, one such employee said, “It’s really me, I’m not performing. You’ve got to be ‘Blake, the cruise staff member,’ but I like to think that this is me anyway.” The employees who cited having to fake it seemed more dissatisfied with their jobs. For instance, Cassie, who claimed she had to regularly fake her emotion, also reported that passengers got her upset at least 10 times during a 10-day cruise. On the other hand, the employees who described themselves as nonfakers said they rarely “allowed” passengers to upset them.

When we analyze this situation in light of the Foucauldian notion that identity is constituted in relation to surrounding norms and discursivities, it makes sense that longer tenured staff members do not cite major differences between their personalities and institutional emotion norms. Of course, some may argue that people who initially fit the norms naturally stay in the job. However, people understand their individuality and emotions precisely from the social and organizational roles they play (Goffman, 1961): “To foster a true self apart from the performance is a maneuver that some

people try; however, its effects are not to maintain individuality, but to be disengaged and alienated, suffering a sense of emptiness and pointlessness" (Oatley, 1993, p. 350). In other words, whereas some employees may differentiate among real and fake selves, to do so is alienating. From this point of view, longer-tenured cruise staff members likely did not cite having to fake it because they aligned their identities with institutional discourse. In doing so, they avoided the dissatisfaction experienced by self-described fakers. Living an illusion is difficult.

In the theater, the illusion that the actor creates is recognized beforehand as an illusion by actor and audience alike. . . . On stage, illusion is a virtue. But in real life, the lie to oneself is a sign of human weakness, of bad faith. It is far more unsettling to discover that we have fooled ourselves than to discover that we have been fooling others. (Hochschild, 1983, pp. 46-47)

In other words, faking it is painful. However, we should question the source of this pain. Consider the following incident, recorded several hours after I found out my grandmother had died:

Grandma Tracy died today. I found out this afternoon when I called Dad from Cabo San Lucas. Just several hours later, I was back on duty. Doing [a passenger stage show] was o.k., but once I got to stage door disco for [a theme night entailing interaction with passengers], I could barely stand it. I could be a happy person on stage, but the dance floor was too much like faking the real Sarah. I wasn't overcome with grief, but I felt stupid and kind of guilty for dancing around in [costume] with a bunch of drunk passengers right after grandma died. Every once in a while, I ran over to [several of my close friends sitting in the disco] and said things like, "I'd rather be doing anything right now but dancing." . . . I actually felt proud of my good acting job since that one group of people knew I was acting. That was very important.

On its face, this excerpt reveals that I felt uncomfortable in this situation. What is more difficult to explain is why I felt discomfort. Hochschild would likely say I was experiencing emotive dissonance, a clash between my private real self and public fake performance. One might also turn to Rafaeli and Sutton (1989), who

argue that emotion labor is uncomfortable only when people disagree with the norms—what they call faking in bad faith. However, I was proud of my ability to appear untroubled—something that would be difficult if I did not agree with the organization's norms that I should smile and be on stage. Although I couched my discomfort in terms of having to fake my pleasant attitude on the dance floor, my discomfort was caused as much by an obsessive need to let others know I was not enjoying myself as much as by grief. We might ask then which was the act, and why did I feel uncomfortable?

The above incident illustrates a desperate attempt to jump between two discourses at once—the organizational mandate to be happy and unaffected and the societal expectation that one should feel grief after the death of a family member. Some might say that my dancing was a fake performance whereas my intermittent visits with friends were backstage respites in which I could show my true feelings. However, both were performances, one not any more important or real than the other. This understanding parts ways with Hochschild's (1983) conceptualization of surface and deep acting, wherein emotion labor is considered ultimately separate from a real self. From a Foucauldian point of view, employees largely come to understand their identity precisely through acts of resistance and consent to emotion labor. My discomfort in this particular performance did not arise from feeling one emotion and showing another (emotive dissonance) or disagreeing with the emotion labor norms (faking in bad faith). Discomfort came in trying to perform two acts at once. Although the need to negotiate competing discourses is not unique to a cruise ship (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996), total institutions decidedly limit the discourses (acts) available for employees to understand and make sense of their identities.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this project was to provide a picture of emotion labor and burnout in a total institution and problematize several long-standing assumptions about emotion labor. Specifically, this study illustrated (a) the arbitrary and historically contingent nature

of emotion labor rules on a cruise ship; (b) how emotional control mechanisms were dispersed among management, peers, and passengers; (c) the ways employees self-subordinated themselves to emotion labor norms and privatized burnout; and (d) how staff identity was discursively constituted through an interplay of resistance and consent to emotion labor norms.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this project lies in its generalizability to other organizations as well as to other cruise ships. The total institution context is vastly different from many other service environments, and my data were localized to 16 cruise staff members on a single ship in a single fleet. Our understanding of emotion labor on a cruise ship would be enhanced through future research on a variety of ships, examining a larger subject pool. Furthermore, it is difficult to know the extent to which my subjective experiences as a *Spirit* employee affected data collection and interpretation. I urge future researchers who are not as intimately connected with the cruise ship site to conduct further studies. Despite this possible limitation, my role as a past employee does offer an alternative conceptualization of emotion labor in a difficult-to-access environment. Richardson (1995) explains that "people make sense of their lives through the stories that are available to them and they attempt to fit their lives into the available stories" (p. 213). The identification of readers with such a collective story opens the door for understanding, action, and change.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical implications. Foucauldian theory poses three central challenges and/or extensions to the current emotion labor literature. First, emotion theorists can contextualize studies and denaturalize long-standing assumptions about emotion labor by historicizing emotional control mechanisms. In this case, emotion

labor norms that management, passengers, and cruise ship employees considered universal and normal were actually naturalized through specific changes in the cruise ship industry, expectations constructed by advertisements and television shows, and a shift in the way tourists view responsibility for their pleasure. By understanding how emotion rules and expectations are historically contingent, we begin to deconstruct the power structures that normalize organizational life.

Second, emotion labor control systems were dispersed among myriad sources including obtrusive supervisory organizational programs, the tourist or customer gaze, peers, and self-control mechanisms. These data suggest that we need to reframe Hochschild's (1983) contention that emotion labor can categorically only occur in jobs that include direct supervisory control over emotion. Similar to several other analyses (e.g., Barker, 1993; Deetz, 1998; Tracy & Tracy, 1998), this study indicates that peer, customer, and self-control mechanisms can be stronger and more repressive than traditional management control programs. Despite the strength and saturation of the cruise staff's emotional control programs, however, Foucauldian theory reminds us that power is not omnipotent; this case illustrates how employees are able to find creative ways of resisting emotion labor norms and, in so doing, structure the construction of their own identity.

Third, this study raises questions about the dichotomous portrayal of a real self and a fake performance, a distinction past researchers have used to explain the discomfort associated with emotion labor. Hochschild (1983) explains the pain through emotive dissonance. Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) claim it is caused by faking in bad faith. These concepts, however, rest on the assumption that individual identity exists externally to organizational discursivities and that pain occurs when the real self conflicts with the fake performance. When we begin to understand the emotional experience as discursively created, the self becomes more complex and an alternative theory emerges.

According to Foucault (1980a) and a postmodern theoretical approach (Hall, 1985; Laclau, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Martin et al., 1998; Mumby, 1997a, 1997b), identities are fractured and

overdetermined through continual and varying organizational and societal discourses. All discourses are real in their enactment and reproduction of self-identity, yet they are conflictual and competing, providing alternative understandings for reflection (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996). What is considered normal and right at work, for instance, often differs from that which is considered important at home or valuable in one's extracurricular activities. In other words, most people make sense of dialogues in light of and in contrast to dialogues from other parts of their lives. This opportunity, however, is severely constrained for people who work in total institutions.

As illustrated in the case of the cruise staff, individuals within total institutions tend to coconstruct a single dominant discourse that essentially blankets dialogue and suffocates conflict. Most employees find it an arduous task to maintain conversations or ideas that are inconsistent with the homogeneous discourse. Therefore, whereas this study extends the long-standing argument that emotion labor can be painful, it parts ways with explanations that rely on a dichotomy between real self-fake self. Through a Foucauldian lens, the pain of emotion labor in a total institution has less to do with losing the real self and more to do with having to understand and construct one's identity in an arena wherein a conflictual landscape and a dialogic conversation are relinquished. Of course, employees may talk about a real self, cut off from organizational discursivities, but this may only be an attempt to keep from feeling as though they are lying to themselves or being brainwashed. Foucauldian theory tells us that "real" identity is produced and constrained through disciplinary forces and organizational norms.

Practical applications. This study raises three central practical concerns applicable to cruise ships and service organizations in general. First, the case illustrates the strength and potential abuse of customer-based control of service personnel. In the case of the cruise staff, passengers (and their comment cards) essentially served as a stand-in for management. In addition, employees were continually blitzed with the acontextual service credo message, "We never say no." This situation engendered cruise staff confu-

sion about the level of tolerance expected in regard to passenger demands. For instance, Cassie did not know how to deal with the man who was grabbing and holding her too close on the dance floor. Sexual harassment is considered to include any unwanted or offensive sexual advances or derogatory remarks made from a person in a hierarchically superior position to an unwilling subordinate. When managers choose to use customer evaluations to reward and punish employees, customers essentially become a second boss. As such, customers could be categorized as committing sexual harassment and other abuses traditionally reserved for organizational superiors. Especially in job situations in which much of the organizational product consists of employee personality, organizational leaders must temper and contextualize customer service programs with information that helps employees recognize and negotiate the boundaries between selling a smile and accommodating customer abuse or harassment.

Second, this analysis challenges current assumptions about the front stage–backstage dichotomy in regard to emotion labor. Professionals and scholars have traditionally maintained the idea that front-stage areas are inherently more stressful than backstage areas (Goffman, 1963/1980). On the *Radiant Spirit*, however, cruise staff often considered private, nonorganizational situations and relationships to be more stressful than front-stage performances. In fact, some employees found their personal life more difficult than their public life and essentially “escaped to the public.” This finding is not unique to total organizations. In an in-depth qualitative study of a “family-friendly” Fortune 500 company, Hochschild (1997) found that increasing numbers of men and women are avoiding marriage and family responsibilities by fleeing to the workplace—a phenomenon she termed the *time bind*. I urge future researchers to continue to examine how this escape to the public–time bind phenomenon is fundamentally changing employees’ notions of work, leisure, and what it means to be burned out.

Third, cruise staff expressed the idea that burnout was a private, nonorganizational problem that should be dealt with during individual, personal time. Nevertheless, cruise staff signified confusion about the boundaries between front stage and backstage. Although

they maintained a myth of backstage in their talk, they were unable to pinpoint where and when they were ever not “on.” This act of cognitive gymnastics essentially regulated burnout to a time and space that did not exist, leaving the problem to go underinterrogated and unresolved by individual employees and organizational leaders alike. Granted, in the short run, employees’ privatization of burnout may save organizations some time and trouble. In the long run, however, burnout leads to high levels of employee turnover (DeCarlo & Gruenfeld, 1989), lost work days (Elkin & Rosch, 1990), and dissatisfaction (Maslach, 1982)—situations that are estimated to cost American organizations more than \$150 billion per year (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Especially in total institutions, leaders should consider instituting structures that prepare for and address employee burnout, whether that is through job training, employee stress seminars, counseling, or offering a day or two of vacation *within* contracts.⁶

This article paints a picture of emotion labor and burnout on a cruise ship—a representation that contrasts with popular understandings and assumptions of life on a “love boat.” Although some might argue that cruise staff members are lucky to have their identities shaped on a luxury cruise liner, we should ask, “How are our identities (subjectivities) constructed, and whose interests are served (and not served) by the privileging of some constructions over others?” (Mumby, 1997a, p. 22). In the total institution of a cruise ship, employee identities are constructed in relation to virtually incontestable and inescapable emotion labor norms implemented for the economic purposes of pleasing customers and increasing profit. On a stage where the curtain never falls, employees become characters for commerce.

NOTES

1. Names of company and employees are pseudonyms.

2. Although most employees and passengers agree that a main part of the cruise staffs’ job is emotion labor, cruise staff also hold official roles as “muster station” directors during cruise ship emergencies. Therefore, cruise staff are similar to

flight attendants in that safety is a primary official responsibility, yet staff are rarely required to use this expertise.

3. Hochschild (1993) expanded her original conceptualization of emotion labor, but because of the popularity of her flight attendant study in 1983, many ensuing studies still rely on her original emotion labor criteria.

4. Departments were unmistakably marked by gender and ethnic lines—a phenomenon that is common in many cruise ship companies and an issue I would highly recommend for future research. Navigation and engineering crew as well as waiters were primarily Italian men; pursers were a mix of British, Australian, Canadian, and American; bar staff were primarily British and Jamaican; room stewards were mostly Filipino men; cruise staff, entertainment, and medical staff were primarily British, Australian, and American. During the time of study, all but one of the four-stripe officers on the *Radiant Spirit* were male.

5. Although personal issues are regularly part and parcel to organizing (e.g., Blau & Meyer, 1971), the personal and private is often viewed as inconsistent with, oppositional to, and divided from the supposedly rational and professional world of work (Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Pringle, 1989).

6. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that a tension exists here. To organizationally address burnout is to simultaneously publicize and institutionalize one of the only emotions staff feel is private and personal. Therefore, it is integral that supervisors engage in dialogue with employees about how issues of burnout and stress may best be addressed.

REFERENCES

- Andersen, P. A., & Guerrero, L. K. (1998). Principles of communication and emotion in social interaction. In P. A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion: Research, theory, applications, and contexts* (pp. 49-99). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Anderson, J. A. (1987). *Communication research: Issues and methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Armon-Jones, C. (1986). The thesis of constructionism. In R. Harré (Ed.), *The social construction of emotions* (pp. 32-56). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Averill, J. R. (1994). Emotions unbecoming and becoming. In P. Ekman & R. J. Davidson (Eds.), *The nature of emotion: fundamental questions* (pp. 265-269). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ash, M. K. (1984). *Mary Kay on people management*. New York: Warner.
- Barker, J. (1993). Tightening the iron cage: Concertive control in self-managing teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 408-437.

- Best, S., & Kellner, D. (1991). *Postmodern theory: Critical interrogations*. New York: Guilford.
- Blau, P. M., & Meyer, M. M. (1971). *Bureaucracy in modern society*. New York: Random House.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction*. Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul.
- Burawoy, M. (1985). *The politics of production: Factory regimes under capitalism and socialism*. London: Verso.
- Burleson, B. R., & Goldsmith, D. J. (1998). How the comforting process works: Alleviating emotional distress through conversationally induced reappraisals. In P.A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion: Research, theory, applications, and contexts* (pp. 245-280). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Burrell, G. (1988). Modernism, postmodernism, and organizational analysis: Vol. 2. The contribution of Michel Foucault. *Organization Studies*, 9, 221-235.
- Cappella, J. N. (1993). The facial feedback hypothesis in human interaction: Review and speculation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 12, 13-29.
- Charmaz, K. (1983). The grounded theory method: An explication and interpretation. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary field research* (pp. 109-126). Boston: Little, Brown.
- Cheney, G. (1983). The rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69, 143-158.
- Clegg, S. (1989). *Frameworks of power*. London: Sage.
- Copp, M. (1998). When emotion work is doomed to fail: Ideological and structural constraints on emotion management. *Symbolic Interaction*, 21, 299-328.
- Darwin, C. (1872/1965). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DeCarlo, D. T. & Gruenfeld, D. H. (1989). *Stress in the American workplace: Alternatives for the working wounded*. Fort Washington, PA: LRP.
- Deetz, S. (1998). Discursive formations, strategized subordination and self-surveillance. In A. McKinley & K. Starkey (Eds.), *Foucault, management and organizational theory* (pp. 151-172). London: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Elkin, A. J., & Rosch, P. J. (1990). Promoting mental health at the workplace: The prevention side of stress management. *Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Review*, 5, 739-754.
- Fineman, S. (Ed). (1993). *Emotion in organizations*. London: Sage.
- Fineman, S. (1996). Emotion and organizing. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (pp. 543-564). London: Sage.
- Foster-Wallis, D. (1996, January). Shipping out: On the (nearly lethal) comforts of a luxury cruise. *Harpers*, 292, 33-56.

- Foucault, M. (1973). *The birth of the clinic: An archaeology of medical perception* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1980a). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977* (C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, & K. Soper, Trans.). New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1980b). *The history of sexuality: Vol 1. An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1982a). The subject and power. In J. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 208-226). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1982b). On the genealogy of ethics. In J. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 229-252). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman & P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self* (pp. 26-49). Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Freud, S. (1953). *The complete works of Sigmund Freud* (J. Strachey, Trans. & Ed.). London: Hogarth.
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums*. New York: Anchor.
- Goffman, E. (1963/1980). *Behavior in public places*. New York: Free Press.
- Haas, J. (1978). Learning real feelings: A study of high steel ironworkers' reactions to fear and danger. In J. Haas & W. Shaffin (Eds.), *Shaping identity in Canadian society* (pp. 227-245). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hall, S. (1985). Signification, representation, ideology: Althusser and the post-structuralist debates. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2, 91-114.
- Hampton, B., & LePard, C. (1998, April 13). Smooth sailing (D. Dugan, Director). In A. Spelling, E. D. Vincent, & J. Schmock (Producers), *Love boat: The next wave*. Los Angeles: United Paramount Network.
- Harré, R. (1986). An outline of the social constructionist viewpoint. In R. Harré (Ed.), *The social construction of emotions* (pp. 2-14). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Rapson, R. L. (1994). *Emotional contagion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Heelas, P. (1986). Emotion talk across cultures. In R. Harré (Ed.), *The social construction of emotions* (pp. 234-266). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feelings*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Hochschild, A. R. (1989). *The second shift*. New York: Avon Books.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1990). Ideology and emotion management: A perspective and path for future research. In T. D. Kemper (Ed.), *Research agendas in the sociology of emotions* (pp. 117-142). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1993). Preface. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations* (pp. ix-xiii). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1997). *The time bind: When work becomes home and home becomes work*. New York: Metropolitan.
- Holmer-Nadesan, M. (1996). Organizational identity and space of action. *Organization Studies*, 17, 49-81.
- Hume, D. (1739/1972). *A treatise on human nature*. London: Fontana/Collins.
- James, N. (1993). Divisions of emotional labour: Disclosure and cancer. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations* (pp. 94 - 117). London: Sage.
- Karasek, R. A., & Theorell, T. (1990). *Healthy work: Stress, productivity and the reconstruction of working life*. New York: John Wiley.
- Klinnert, M. D., Campos, J. J., Sorce, J. F., Emde, R. N., & Svejda, M. (1983). Emotions as behaviors regulators: Social referencing in infancy. In R. Plutchik & H. Kellerman (Eds.), *Emotion, theory, research and experience: Vol 2. Emotions in early development* (pp. 57-86). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Laclau, E. (1990). *New reflections on the revolution of our time*. London: Verso.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy*. London: Verso.
- Lindlof, T. R. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mars, G., & Nicod, M. (1984). *The world of waiters*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Martin, J., Knopoff, K., & Beckman, C. (1998). An alternative to bureaucratic impersonality: Managing bounded emotionality at the Body Shop. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43, 429-469.
- Maslach, C. (1976). Burned-out. *Human Behavior*, 5, 16-22.
- Maslach, C. (1982). *Burnout: The cost of caring*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). *The Maslach burnout inventory*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Mumby, D. K. (1997a). Modernism, postmodernism, and communication studies: A rereading of an ongoing debate. *Communication Theory*, 7, 1-28.
- Mumby, D. K. (1997b). The problem of hegemony: Rereading Gramsci for organizational communication studies. *Western Journal of Communication*, 61, 343-375.
- Mumby, D. K., & Putnam, L. L. (1992). The politics of emotion: A feminist reading of bounded rationality. *Academy of Management Review*, 17, 465-486.
- Murphy, A. G. (1998). Hidden transcripts of flight attendant resistance. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 11, 499-535.

- Nippert-Eng, C. E. (1996). *Home and work: Negotiating boundaries through everyday life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Oatley, K. (1993). Social construction in emotions. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (pp. 341-352). New York: Guilford.
- Planalp, S. (1999). Communicating emotion: Not just for interpersonal scholars anymore. *Communication Theory*, 9, 216-228.
- Planalp, S., & Fitness, J. (1999). Thinking/feeling about social and personal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 16, 731-751.
- Pogrebin, M. R., & Poole, E. D. (1991). Police and tragic events: The management of emotions. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 19, 395-403.
- Pringle, R. (1988). *Secretaries talk*. London: Verso.
- Pringle, R. (1989). Bureaucracy, rationality and sexuality: The case of secretaries. In J. Hearn, D. L. Sheppard, P. Tancred-Sheriff, & G. Burrell (Eds.), *The sexuality of organization* (pp. 158-177). London: Sage.
- Putnam, L. L., & Mumby, D. K. (1993). Organizations, emotion and the myth of rationality. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations* (pp. 36-57). London: Sage.
- Rafaeli, A. (1989). When cashiers meet customers: An analysis of the role of supermarket cashiers. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32, 245-273.
- Rafaeli, A., & Sutton, R. I. (1987). Expression of emotion as part of the work role. *Academy of Management Review*, 12, 23-37.
- Rafaeli, A., & Sutton, R. I. (1989). The expression of emotion in organizational life. In L. L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 11, pp. 1-42). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Rafaeli, A., & Sutton, R. I. (1990). Busy stores and demanding customers: How do they affect the display of positive emotion? *Academy of Management Journal*, 33, 623-637.
- Rafaeli, A., & Sutton, R. I. (1991). Emotional contrast strategies as means of social influence: Lessons from criminal interrogators and bill collectors. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34, 749-775.
- Richardson, L. (1995). Narrative and sociology. In J. Van Maanen (Ed.), *Representation in ethnography* (pp. 198-221). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sass, J. S. (1997-1998). Emotional labor as cultural performance in a nonprofit nursing home. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58(08), 2907A (University Microfilms No. AAG98-03590).
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Shuler, S. (1997-1998). Emotion 911: Communication and emotion at a county emergency communication center. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59(03), 664A (University Microfilms No. AAG98-27537).
- Smith, A. C., & Kleinman, S. (1989). Managing emotions in medical school: Students' contacts with the living and the dead. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 52, 56-69.

- Snyder, E. E., & Ammons, R. (1993). Baseball's emotion work: Getting psyched to play. *Qualitative Sociology*, 16, 111-132.
- Stenross, B., & Kleinman, S. (1989). The highs and lows of emotional labor: Detectives' encounters with criminals and victims. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 17, 435-452.
- Sutton, R. I. (1991). Maintaining norms about expressed emotions: The case of the bill collectors. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36, 245-268.
- Sutton, R. I., & Rafaeli, A. (1988). Untangling the relationship between displayed emotions and organizational sales: The case of convenience stores. *Academy of Management Journal*, 31, 461-487.
- Thompson, A. L. (1998). Unveiled: The emotion work of wedding coordinators in the American wedding industry. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59(04), 1341A (University Microfilms No. AAG98-29827).
- Tompkins, P. K., & Cheney, G. (1985). Communication and unobtrusive control in contemporary organizations. In R. D. McPhee & P. K. Tompkins (Eds.), *Organizational communication: Traditional themes and new directions* (pp. 179-210). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Tracy, S. J., & Tracy, K. (1998). Emotion labor at 911: A case study and theoretical critique. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 26, 390-411.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze: Leisure and travel in contemporary societies*. London: Sage.
- Van Maanen, J., & Kunda, G. (1989). Real feelings: Emotional expression and organizational culture. In L. L. Cummings and B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 11, pp. 43-104). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Waldron, V. R. (1994). Once more, with feeling: Reconsidering the role of emotion in work. In S. A. Deetz (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* (Vol. 17, pp. 388-416). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sarah J. Tracy (M.A., 1996, Ph.D., 2000, University of Colorado, Boulder) is an assistant professor at Arizona State University. Her scholarly work focuses on emotion labor and burnout issues within organizations. Research sites have included a 911 emergency communications center, two correctional facilities, several public relations agencies, and a commercial cruise ship. Her work has appeared in the Journal of Applied Communication Research and Human Communication Research; she is coauthor of the book Leading Organizations Through Transition: Communication and Cultural Change.