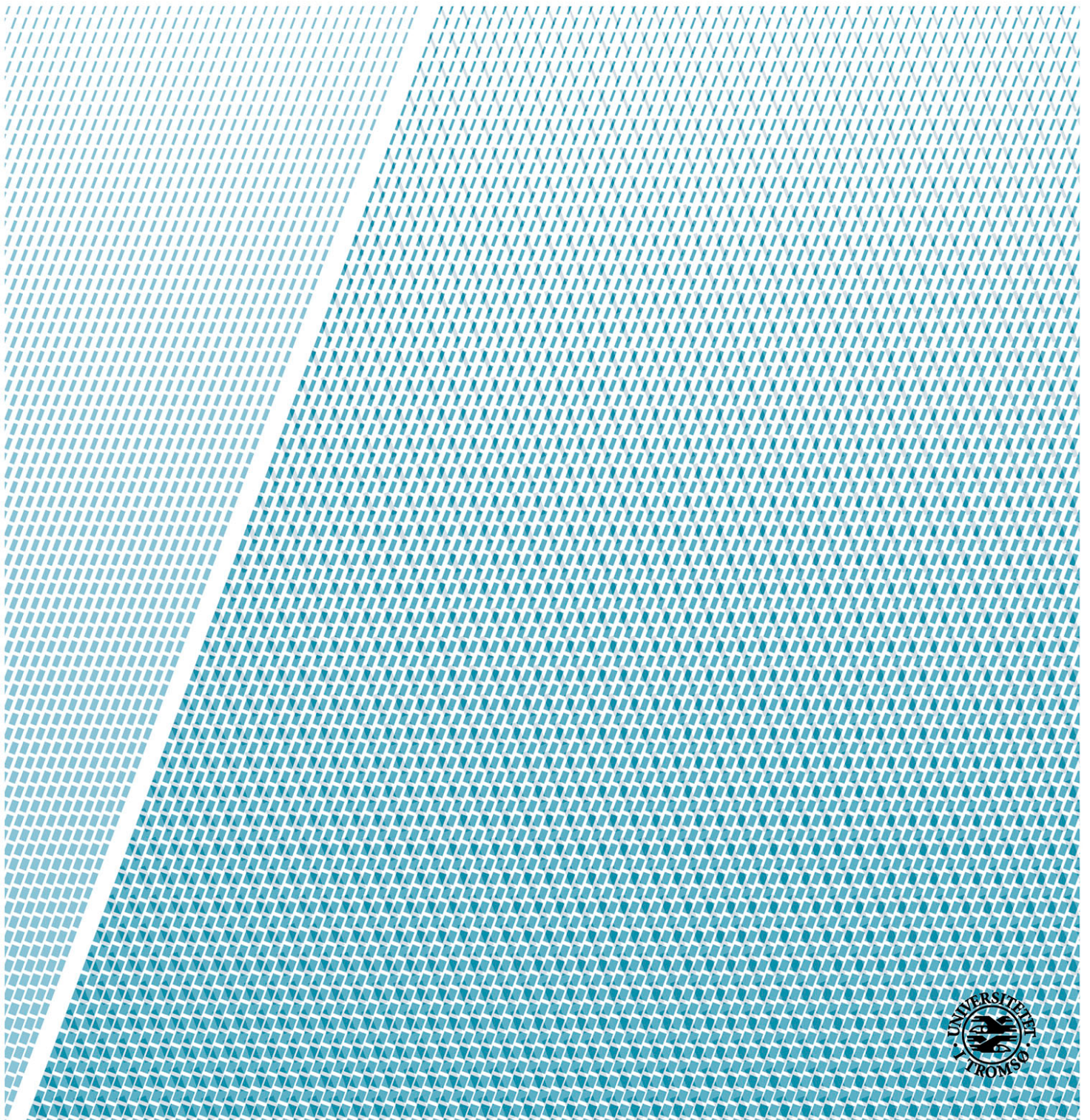# UiT
NORGES ARKTISKE UNIVERSITET

Performing Disney
Exploring guests' narratives of Disney theme parks

2021

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Spring 2021
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on performances in relation to Disney theme parks. The project asks: How do guests narrate their Disney theme park performances? This question is examined by conducting semi-structured interviews with people who had been to a Disney theme park within the last three years. The findings were analyzed looking at ways guests performed in relation to fellow performers, and the setting. The findings showcased multiple ways in which guest reported they performed while on their theme park holidays. Many performances began long before traveling by reviewing scripts and making preparations. Informants described both highly structured and improvised performances. Many performances were choreographed around dining reservations. Ideas as to what constituted a successful or unsuccessful performance are provided. Several types of performances are examined. Performances were influenced by navigating different settings and environments and enhanced by other actors. In conclusion there are a multitude of performances to be considered within these themed parks.

Keywords: performance, tourism, theme parks, Disney, themed spaces

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1   Introduction

1.1   Background

Themed spaces have been a part of human existence since the early cave dwellings (Lukas, 2008). Through time they have evolved and grown in their complexity and nature. Europe sprouted highly designed pleasure gardens for leisure. Coney Island in New York City developed the concept of an amusement park—an enclosed space with amusements and highly themed branding and attractions. Following World War II, several theme parks grew to popularity: Efteling which opened in 1952 in the Netherlands, Santa Claus Land which opened in 1946[1], as well as Knott's Berry Farms which opened in 1940 both of which were in the United States.

Disneyland (which opened in 1955) established theme parks as we know them today (Younger, 2016). Walt Disney's new theme park differed from others in that it was clean and suitable for families, utilized cross-promotion over multiple entertainment mediums, presented clear, cohesive themed lands, and was designed by artists (Younger, 2016). James Rouse, the city planner of Columbia, Maryland, hailed Disneyland as "[t]he greatest piece of urban design in the United States today[...]" (as cited by Schickel, 1968, p. 14). Following Disneyland's success, The Walt Disney Company opened more parks around the world. On the east coast of the United States, Walt Disney World (opened in 1971)[2] opened its doors first with the Magic Kingdom theme park. Three more theme parks would follow in the next fifty years. The Walt Disney Company's foray into international parks started with Tokyo Disneyland (opened in 1983), then continued with Euro Disneyland (opened in 1992)[3], Hong Kong Disneyland (opened in 2005), and Shanghai Disneyland (opened in 2016).

Since their opening Disney parks have gained attention from critics and academics. As one scholar suggested, "the [Disney] parks in particular seemed to be everyone's favorite example when it came to specifying the characteristics of postmodernity or contemporary tourism"

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[1] Currently known as Holiday World.
[2] Walt Disney World is the proper name for the Orlando property. However, I will often be referring to Walt Disney World as its colloquial name: Disney World.
[3] Currently known as Disneyland Paris.

(Bryman, 1995, p. viii). In theme park scholarship, "[…] you cannot escape of course Disney, since most parks do show elements of imitation, reference, reaction to what is done in Disney Parks" (Carlá, Freitag, Grice, & Lukas, 2016, p. 110). Additionally, Disney theme parks welcomed about 156 million guests[4] in 2019 alone (Themed Entertainment Association, 2019). Something about these parks garnered the attention of millions of vacationers and critics, including myself.

1.2   My interest in this project

My interest in studying theme parks started when my mother took me to the city of Orlando as a child. I was immersed and fascinated by the themed environments during our week-long trip. I started researching theme park design, especially as it pertained to the Disney theme parks. This developed into fervent reading of countless books about The Walt Disney Company, architecture, and theme park design throughout my life. I remember doodling theme park concepts in notebooks and reading a 500-page book detailing the corporate politics Disney (Stewart, 2005) in high school. I worked at Walt Disney World for two years, which launched my career in tourism. I traveled extensively through my twenties, visiting popular theme parks and most of the Disney theme parks around the globe. Additionally, I have sold Disney vacations, and wrote articles for Disney fan websites. Theme parks became a life-long source of passion and fascination that continues to enthrall me.

As my studying of theme parks progressed, I became particularly curious about performance theory. I drew parallels between performance theory and the language spoken by Cast Members[5] at Disney parks. The comparison of tourism being theatre was nothing new to me; when I worked at Walt Disney World, we commonly called the front-of-house, "onstage", called our uniforms "costumes," and were reminded that we were "putting on a show". The idea that performances were not just carried out by tourism workers, but also by guests, intrigued me. It demonstrated that tourist have agency in their own travels. During winter break, I went to Disneyland and observed how people performed. I pondered why tourists acted in certain ways. I wondered what performances they learned, and where had they learned to

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[4] A visitor to a Disney theme park is commonly referred to as a guest. For this thesis, the terms "visitor" and "guest" will be used interchangeably.
[5] Cast Members is a phrase used to refer to Disney parks employees

perform in that way. My Disneyland trip changed from a vacation to an informal case study in performance theory. This, in some ways, was the start of the thesis project.

1.3   Research question

This thesis will explore how guests reflect on the entirety of their Disney theme park performance. My primary research question is: *"How do guests narrate their Disney theme park performances?"* Further, I ask what people gain from these performances? By asking these questions, I build on current understandings of theme parks in academia, and elevate the voices of guests. Information on the guest performance may be applicable to other businesses and themed spaces. Performance theory is especially suitable to understanding the Disney theme park holiday as the theme parks are often explained in cinematic or dramaturgical ways (Rafferty & Gordon, 1996; Wright & Imagineers, 2005; Younger, 2016). This project broadens the conversations around theme parks to include voices from those who performed in theme parks.

1.4   Overview of thesis

This first chapter has provided brief background on theme parks, described my interest in them, and introduced my thesis question. The rest of the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter two contains the literature review in which I outline relevant performance theory contributions. Through exploring performance theory, I demonstrate how performance theory links to theme parks and how it became a framework for my research project.

Chapter three presents my methodological framework. Here I explain my qualitative research design, and elaborate on my use of qualitative semi-structured interviews. I expand on my analytical procedures, and reflect on ethical concerns and limitations to my study.

Chapter four covers the findings of my study, providing a detailed analysis of data. It is organized into three parts: guests' performances, other actors, and the setting.

Chapter five summarizes the overarching results of the thesis and includes a call for future research.

2 Literature review

In order to explore the question of *"How do guests narrate their Disney theme park performances?"* I will review literature on performance theory and connect it to the research question. The first section provides an overview of performance theory, its application to tourism, and further explains why it is an appropriate theory to describe vacations to Disney theme park. Section two explores social influences within the tourist performances. This includes scripts that guest might come across in preparation to their vacation. The final section illustrates the settings and stages of Disney theme park performances.

2.1 Performance theory in tourism studies

Goffman (1959) played a central role to the development of performance theory. He proposed that organizations and people behave differently in front and back regions in order to manage others' impressions of themselves. In the front region, people perform what the social context dictates of them. It is when people are alone that they no long put on a face for others, and can truly be themselves. Goffman (1963) as cited by Thurnell-Read (2012, p. 804) explained that people try to follow a set of normal behaviors based on individuals' contexts. Goffman also posited that these individuals could act differently in the same spaces given their individual readings of that space (Thurnell-Read, 2012, p. 804).

Performances clearly are influenced by the social realms. "Self-identity can be viewed as a reflexive project that unfolds as the life-course proceeds. Self-identity is produced and reproduced in social performances" (Hyde & Olesen, 2011, p. 902). Throughout the course of an individual's life, they construct their identities through the ongoing process of their social lives; they perform identity. Part of public performance is following normative performances that are contextually appropriate, then choosing when to depart from them, creating new performances (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005, p. 191).

If people are around one another, a performance is taking place. *"Performance* may be described as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serve to influence in any way any of the participants [emphasis in original]" (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005, p. 179). An individual partaking in different activities may influence other performers and their performances. In this definition, participants are always performing, and always being evaluated by others. The others learn what aspects of the performance they like and incorporate

them into their own performances. Successful performances occur when the performer is able to convey the message they want to share with their intended audience (Edensor, 2000, p. 327).

MacCannell (2013 [1973]) applied these perspectives on impression management to tourist sites. He claims that these sites "put on performances" for their guests; they stage experiences that allow tourists the impression of authenticity when they are actually experiencing controlled onstage performances. Adler (1989) deepened the concept of performance by applying it to the tourist themselves. She compared tourism to a performed art. Edensor (2000, p. 324) agreed with this concept, yet felt Adler failed to grasp that tourist engage in "more creative and critical performances, which are usually self-conscious, and ignores the playful and expressive, ludic qualities of much tourist performance". In this, Edensor stated that tourists are reflexive and include playful aspects as part of their performance. Edensor (1998) developed performance theory in his research at the Taj Mahal. Importantly, he observed that tourist performances must be learned to be well performed (p. 326), are context dependent (p. 323-324), and are shaped by culture (p. 325). Actors that have different performances and share the same stage, therefore they may have conflicting performances (Edensor, 2001, p. 60). "The idea of performance in the tourist studies literature is that ideas, images and 'facts' are made and remade through the actions of human beings such that they do not pre-exist such performances" (Hannam & Knox, 2010, p. 76). In this, touristic performances require action to come into being.

Performance theory and Disney theme parks

The dramaturgical, story-centric focus of the Disney theme parks lends itself to understanding the theme park experience through performance theory. Theme parks have previously been understood as shows (Lukas, 2008, pp. 134-171). Subsequently, placing the guests as actors in this performance fits particularly well. Guests actively participate in theme park performances. Long term Disney Imagineer[6] and artist Hench wrote of Disney parks that: "Walt[7] realized that a visit to an amusement park could be like a theatrical experience—in a word, a *show*" (Hench, 2003, p. 2). Disney theme parks utilize dramatological and film-centric language, and are based on a story-driven medium (Younger, 2016). Disney parks were conceived by filmmakers

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[6] Disney's inter-disciplinary team of theme park designers.
[7] Walt Disney, founder of the company. Part of The Walt Disney Corporation's company culture is that everyone goes by their first names.

(Thomas, 1994 [1976], p. 252). At the insistence of architect Becket, Walt Disney utilized his team of filmmakers to design his theme park instead of trained architects, because of their insights to storytelling (Wright & Imagineers, 2008, p. 19). As pointed out in Carlá et al. (2016), "[T]he basis for the design is indeed always a narrative, and not only a 'set' or a 'period,' and this must be considered thoroughly when analyzing a single ride, or a section of a theme park, or the entire park." (Carlá et al., 2016, p. 111). The use of dramaturgical terms and the emphasis on show at Disney theme parks complement performance theory. In fact, Carlá et al. (2016) posit that performance "may be one of the new directions in which studies of theme parks need to evolve in the future" (p.111).

Dramaturgical terms have also been used to explore consumer experiences at Disney and other experience-oriented businesses. Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested that the economy shifted away from consuming items to purchasing experiences. They cite Walt Disney and his company as the beginning of this shift towards experiences, and often use Disney theme parks as an example. This is a particularly relevant book to read in relation to my project. They described businesses as stages that create theatrical experiences for the audience to consume. For Pine and Gilmore, the actors are the frontline workers, while the customers are the audience. This is different from how tourism studies views performance theory.

2.2 Touristic performances

Within the performative turn, tourism is understood as a continuous performance that is learned from others (Edensor, 1998, p. 61). There are common ways to perform that are based on the destination, the actor's culture, the tourist space, and the structure of the vacation (Edensor, 1998, p. 61). Hannam and Knox (2010) asserted that guidebooks are consulted prior to travel to plan the movement of tourist, implying that the guidebooks help guide the choreography, yet did not define the term. For this thesis, I will utilize the term choreography to mean "the ways in which tourists' bodies are tutored in 'appropriate' ways and form patterns of collective and individual moment through tourist space." (Edensor, 1998, p. 106).

Edensor (2000) distinguished three different modes of performance. These modes are not fixed—tourists may act out each mode to varying degrees at different times during their travels

(p. 334). Pertinent to exploring how guests narrate their theme park experiences are disciplined rituals and improvised performances[8].

Ritualistic performances are highly structured and directed (Edensor, 2000). They follow a set of commonly agreed ritualistic behaviors such as gazing and taking photos. Usually, these rituals are highly choreographed and directed with little room for improvisation. Failure to adhere to them can have negative consequences with other actors and those who manage the performances (p. 335).

A second type of performance described by Edensor (2000) are improvised performances. These performances are free flowing. While guests will adhere to certain performances influenced by scripts and settings, they have more choices than a ritualistic performance. "While not necessarily participating in collective rituals, improvising performers *select* where to go, what to look at, and how to behave from a menu of scripts and stage directions" (Edensor, 2000, p. 335). This is thought to be a more reflexive practice with the potential to take travelers off the beaten path. Edensor (2000) explained "post-tourist" as falling into this mode of performance, and specifically points to Klugman (1995). Klugman (1995)'s *The alternative ride* flips the script on her own disastrous performance at Disney World and suggested that a way to overcome the control is to recognize it. Klugman's narrative reflexively explored the absurd and ironic performances which took place inside a Disney theme park.

Disney theme parks have previously been written about as rituals, but not in the way that Edensor (2000) defined them. Moore (1980) compared trips to Walt Disney World to a pilgrimage. Moore suggested that guests are faced with a set of "symbolic and commercial barriers" (p. 211) which slow them down as they enter the liminal space of the theme park. The attractions could be viewed as rites of passage. "In each attraction, then, the visitor effects a passage and is exposed to a marvelous array of symbols evoking myths—historical, literary, and scientific narratives—already known to the passenger-spectators" (Moore, 1980, p. 213). Attractions symbolically remove the guests from the familiar and into a new narrative, only to return them back to their previous life at the end of the experience. The pilgrimage to a Disney theme park is viewed as a mandatory performance for citizens of the United States (King, 1981,

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[8] A third type, unbounded performances, was explained by Edensor, but was not relevant to this project.

p. 117). These articles are interesting to read because they describe the pilgrimage as a performance. When discussing rituals within this thesis, I will be using it to describe Edensor's mode of performance.

Performance and identity

Edensor (2001, p. 74) stated that the ways in which people choose to travel is a way to convey identity. "Culturally coded patterns of tourist behaviours [sic] partly emerge out of dispositions that evolve around class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality[...]" (Edensor, 2001, p. 60). Many factors influence the tourist performance such as normative tourist behaviors in any given context (Edensor, 2001, p. 60).

Packing is a crucial part in preparing for the tourist performance (Hyde & Olesen, 2011). The items that tourist scripts suggested to pack were used for identity construction, maintaining the body hygiene, and keeping oneself healthy. In other words, the scripts suggested items that in different ways allow the performer to be comfortable in their performance.

Performing identity at Disney parks has previously been discussed in relation to clothing (Lantz, 2019; Schiffler, 2019). These articles discussed costumes as a vehicle to express identity with unique styles. They included Disneybounding[9], Disneyland Social Clubs (often seen wearing different club-related paraphernalia), and Dapper Days[10], yet do not mention more mundane ways which others dress in theme parks performances.

Cast member performances

This project explores the theme park performances of guests, however there are also other performances taking place around these guests which must be considered. Specifically, stage managers and directors are other performers who are playing important roles in terms of the guests' performances.

Some writings on performance theory in tourism focused on the employees of tourist sites as performers. Bruner (2005) described how Maasai peoples put on performances for both their

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[9] The act of dressing up in everyday clothes in a way that evokes specific Disney characters. For more information see https://disneybound.co.
[10] An event where guests dress in a way to evoke a bygone era. For more information see https://dapperday.com/pages/events-overview.

employers and tourists. Salamone (1997) described the different performances given by the employees in sister San Angel Inn restaurants. One of the restaurants is in Mexico City and caters mainly to Mexicans, while the other is inside Epcot[11] and caters to theme park tourists. Based on the audience, the employees acted differently at each restaurant. Salamone (1997, p. 317) compares how the employees at Disney World act differently in their different contexts to other studies which showed that the Masaai acted to dupe their employers.

Cast Members are taught that they are in the production of the theme parks, and that they have to "act" when they are onstage. This is illustrated in the following quote:

> '[W]e don't hire for jobs here,' the training program's head, Van Arsdale France, told a reporter, in keeping with the theme that this was not a park but a set, 'so much as we cast for parts, especially the onstage roles—ticket takers, ride operators, tour guides.' As a Disney training manual would say '[Y]ou can't go on stage unless you are set to give a pleasant, happy performance' (Gabler, 2006, p. 528).

Cast Members are instructed to perform in specific ways as part of their work performance. This is a helpful way to understand the nature of performances that occur at Disney theme parks. Cast Members are actors in their own performances, taking direction from their own set of directors.

In addition to Cast Members being actors in their own work performance, they could be seen as taking on the additional roles of directors and stage managers in guests' theme park performances. Edensor (2000, p. 326) defined stage managers as "[…] those who tend to the set, cleaners, gardeners, etc.". The stage managers maintain the setting. Several Cast Members have specific roles geared towards taking care of the setting such as Edensor's suggested custodial and gardening staff. Additionally, Cast Members are taught that every Cast Member is part of the custodial team, and should work to maintain the parks' cleanliness (Theme Park Tourist, 2017). This suggests that every Cast Member takes on the role of stage manager.

Another role that Cast Members take on is that of director. Doorne and Ateljevic (2005, p. 183) defined directors as the creators of tourism spaces and employees that help support tourist

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[11] Epcot is one of the four theme parks at Walt Disney World. It consists of two lands—Future World and the World Showcase. Eleven countries are represented in pavilions within the World Showcase.

performances. Edensor (2000, p. 326) described directors are those who choreograph performances, and whom suggest specific ways of competent performances. Tour guides are clear examples of directors as they direct actors where to go, and suggest sites to look and photograph (Edensor, 2000, p. 326). It follows that those who build the tourist spaces are directors in the eyes of Doorne and Ateljevic (2005). While I do not disagree of the importance of those who build, design, and create the atmosphere of the tourist space, I will be primarily discussing directors in terms of those individuals who are directly interacting with the guests— the Cast Members. Cast Members match the description of directors since they constantly instructing tourists what to do, where to go, how to get there, and more.

The importance of scripts

In addition to relying (directly or indirectly) on the guidance of Cast Members, tourists rely on other aspects in finding out how to perform. Importantly, tourists may review scripts that suggest certain performances (Hannam & Knox, 2010, p. 85). Edensor (2001) said "guidebooks are also repleted with cues about what to look at, what information to consider" (p. 73). These guidebooks put forward a template for a successful tourist performance. Further, Edensor (2001) described the scripts as instructing the tourist how to perform and suggests competent performances. Guidebooks suggests ways for tourist to perfect their performance to be perceived as a good traveler. They include what tourists must see, and how to be the most successful in their performances. Similarly, "[w]e are told constantly how to feel about each WDW [Walt Disney World] venue […] The language for describing our experience is preempted by the Company. Everything is magical. Guidebooks, advertisements, and commemorative literature drip with description" (Fjellman, 1992, p. 13). Fjellman suggested that these scripts tell the performer that they must feel specific feelings in their performances in order to be carried out successfully.

The supplied scripts are not limited to guests. Bryman (1995, pp. 107-108) suggested "the language seems to convey the impression for employees and visitors alike that the former are at play rather than at work" (p. 107). Disney Cast Members are given a language that they use while working. This is similar to language used in performance theory as Cast Members work to put on a show.

This section demonstrated how actors hone their touristic performances by listening to directors, and observing other performances. Tourist workers may act as stage managers in that they are trying to maintain the set of the tourists' performances. They could also be viewed as directors in that they instruct performers. In addition, tourist read scripts that give them suggestions on how to carry out successful performances. Since many performances occur within the same stage, some performances may not be complementary.

Critical voices

One of the prominent criticisms of Disney parks is linked to overarching critical views on consumer culture and a concern that this kind of consumer culture undermines a person's agency. Eco (1986) thought Disney parks strove to create a better version of reality for the sake of consumerism. *Adventures in Hyperreality* (1986) featured embodied experiences, yet despite this still asserts that guests are not in control of their theme park performances. "The Main Street façades are presented to us as toy houses and invite us to enter them, but their interior is always a disgusted supermarket, where you buy obsessively, believing that you are still playing" (Eco, 1986, p. 43). Eco's theme park tourists are duped into mindless consumerism, thinking that spending their money is a game. Similarly, Bryman (1999) identified that Disney parks are disguised shopping malls, whereas shopping malls are increasingly becoming more like theme parks. King (1981) disagreed with the critique that Disney theme parks are cesspools for consumerism because purchasing souvenirs is not mandatory during a guests' performance. She pointed out that guests pay a one-time entry fee, and can enjoy the rest of their days without spending additional money.

Perspectives in research shifted from seeing the tourists as being controlled by the themed environment to instead view the guests as actively participating in their performances. "At the heart of these interpretations of the Disney theme parks lies the issue of who controls the visitor's experience or, more precisely, where the locus of control for this experience really sits" (Clément, 2012, p. 1). This is an example of how research changed from assuming guests were being controlled by the Disney Corporation to understanding tourists as acting out of their own agency (Clément, 2012).

Some went farther, describing guests actively engaging in performances rebelling against the controlled nature of themed spaces. Kokai and Robson (2019), while using dramaturgical terms

associated with theatre studies, addressed such guest performances. They identified examples of guests performing rebelliously by taking and posting photos to social media documenting events that the Disney corporation presumably would not want published. These included photos of a parade float catching on fire, guests hopping from ride vehicles to take pictures of themselves in the ride scenes, and sneaking into backstage areas[12]. These examples illustrate that theme parks do not ultimately have full control over their public performance, nor over the guests' performances.

2.3 Setting the stage

Adler (1989, p. 1369) stated that a key factor in a tourist performance is how tourists move through tourist places and through time. Enclavic tourist space suggests specific tourist performances (Edensor, 2001, p. 63). Edensor (2007) defined tourist spaces as "realms in which particular kinds of tasks are accomplished and reproduced, constituting the *work* of tourism" (p. 204). It follows that Disney parks can be considered tourist spaces as they are spaces where people work to continuously co-create the performance of tourism. While a big portion of this thesis occurs within Disney theme parks, it also explores the entirety of the theme park performance, including aspects that occur outside of the parks such as planning and reflecting on the vacation.

Settings are components to tourist spaces. Doorne and Ateljevic (2005) defined different performance theory terminology in their writing on backpackers' performances on the Fiji Islands. Particularly helpful to this discussion of the space of Disney theme parks is their differentiation between setting from the stage. Setting is used to define the physical features and materialities of the place (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005, p. 179). Settings are contained, organized, and maintained to suggest tourist practices (Edensor, 2001, p. 63). Settings in the Disney parks include the rides, the trash cans, park benches, and the pavement walked on.

To illustrate how guests must navigate the setting during their theme park performance, I draw on Fjellman (1992, pp. 205-212) observing guests' performances of waiting in line. He

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[12] Another infamous case of a rebellion performance occurred when the Youth International Party (Yippies) invaded Disneyland in 1970 to protest the Vietnam war. More recently, viral videos have shown broken audio-animatronics without heads and Trump banners unfurled in the Magic Kingdom.

described the maze-like queues as eliciting specific performances. Due to the design of the queue, the line moves often, allowing the guest to advance. The maze required guests to see each other many times, causing guest to "entertain and police themselves" (Fjellman, 1992, p. 207). In this way, the guests as actors are constantly changing their audience, with a likelihood they will reencounter an audience member who they had previously seen. Due to the potential of repeat performance, the guest behaves in a way that they deem acceptable in that situation. Despite being designed to elicit a fair process in which people wait their turn, Fjellman points out that some guests still cut ahead, enacting a different performance than that which the setting asks them. This example illustrates how a setting at Disney theme parks does influence, but not control, a guests' performance.

The stage is different from the setting. "*Stage* [emphasis in original] is essentially a bounded region, bounded that is by limits to perception. Boundaries can by physical, cultural, social or temporal" (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005). A stage can be bounded by a physical barrier, such as the berm that bounds the Disney theme parks. It could be a cultural barrier—in the case of the interviewees, they are bounded by a United States cultural performance. Temporal barriers are a bounded time in which the guests organize their vacations, go to the theme parks, then reflect on their memories as time passes. Finally, the stage is bounded by those whom you share the stage with. "Thus when tourists enter particular stages, they are usually informed by pre-existing discursive, practical, embodied norms which help to guide their performative orientations and achieve a working consensus about what to do" (Edensor, 2001, p. 71). Specific stages suggest specific performances, often that are embodied and known.

Edensor (2000) described the tourist stages as a continuum between enclavic and heterogeneous spaces. Enclavic spaces are highly controlled and designed to influence tourist performances, but do not fully control them (Edensor, 2000, pp. 341-342). On the opposite end of the continuum, heterogeneous spaces are less controlled, public spaces, where tourists and locals can mix (p. 331). Unlike heterogeneous spaces, enclavic spaces can keep people out who are undesired (p. 328). These spaces "depend upon continual policing and monitoring for their coherence with and their distinction from other stages" (Edensor, 2000, p. 328). They are often referred to as the "environmental bubble" (p. 330). Tourists are aware of the controlled nature of these spaces, but often disregard that in exchange for quality control (Edensor, 2000, p. 331).

Disney theme parks fall towards the enclavic side of this continuum. A berm surrounding the parks indicates the boundary of control. Disney parks designers said of the parks that:

> Control of the environment is considered from without and within. A berm, an earthen wall thickly planted with trees, surrounded most of our parks, so that the distractions of the outside world—both sights, and to a lesser extent, sounds—are shut out. (The Imagineers & Malmberg, 2010, p. 64)

The parks have a berm which keeps out visual intrusions and those that are not welcome and only those that can afford to enter. It literally creates the physical boundary of the stage in which specific actions take place. In this quote, the idea of control is at the center. The Disney parks are monitored and highly staged managed to ensure a high service quality. This suggests that Disney theme parks are more enclavic.

What I find interesting about these conversations is that the Disney Company has not hidden information on how Disney parks were designed to influence specific performances. Walt Disney once said in reference to the motels popping up right outside of Disneyland: "The one thing I learned from Disneyland was to control the environment. Without that we get blamed for the things that someone else does" (Disney, 2001, p. 73). His reflection suggests that his own public performance was impinged on due to other organizations' performances. The ability to control the experience was necessary to ensure a positive performance for himself.

As previously discussed, Disney parks were designed by filmmakers with the idea that guests would move through a three-dimensional story. "Imagineering design rich environments that immerse Guests into a story. Nothing is allowed to break the mood. Large vistas are controlled and visual intrusions are camouflaged, ideal sight lines are created, and scale is manipulated" (The Imagineers & Malmberg, 2010, pp. 31-32). The control over the set is for a reason; to immerse guests into their performances. Books on Imagineering often talk about using a "weenie" or a large visual structure to influence guests to walk towards it (Hench, 2003, p. 50; Wright & Imagineers, 2005, p. 13). When discussing the history of dark rides, the partially enclosed Omnimover ride system is discussed as a method to control the tourist gaze. "The Omnimover […] can spin, turn, and tilt to point guests in any direction narrowly focusing their attention just as a film directors do with their cameras" (Surrell, 2009, p. 30). Disney does not hide that they are trying to direct certain guests' performances.

Theming is often part of these enclavic spaces (Edensor, 2001, p. 66). Gottdiener (2001) examined how symbols and themes are prevalent throughout history and how these symbols have made a resurgence in the form of theming different settings in the United States of America, not just within theme parks. Gottdiener offered a history of how themed environments evolved in the United States and how they impact guests' ways of interacting within themed spaces. "Theming imposes a visual order; a predictable spectacle of few surprises, generated by the need for the large retail outlets to capture the attention of consumers" (Edensor, 1998, p. 51). Theming lends itself to organize spaces, yet is also a source of differentiation.

The concept of theming is well played out within Disney parks. "In theme parks, the visitor is encompassed by narratives in the form of stories or of linked attractions which relate to particular motifs" (Bryman, 1995, p. 84). These motifs are prevalent in the different themed lands of the park. Each park is divided into different "lands," or areas, which are categorized around themes. The themes help organize the park, and provide variety between different areas in the parks and resorts. For example, the Magic Kingdom is organized into six different lands: Tomorrowland (the area of the future), Frontierland (the American West in the time of cowboys), Adventureland (colonialist views of warm exotic places—a hodge-podge of the Middle East, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, islands in the Pacific Ocean and more), Fantasyland (fairy tales), Liberty Square (revolutionary United States) and Mainstreet (small town United States during the turn of the century). These themes facilitate the layout and assist guests in the navigation of the park. One would not find The Enchanted Tiki Room in Liberty Square, or Space Mountain in Frontierland, as it would go against the theming.

In addition to theming, Lukas (2007) explained how use of the five senses and 'microtheming'— theming so subtle that it is not easily recognized—is used to great success in the Las Vegas Casinos. Within this article, Lukas talked about how employees' performances and the microtheming lend themselves to the performance of the casinos and mentioned how the setting affects the embodied experience moving through a themed space. The article is most helpful in that it declared "[t]he deployment of the sense as a means of connecting the worker and patron body to the theme relates to deeper aspects of the self" (Lukas, 2007, p. 80). Lukas then continued to explain that themed environments led the individual to believe that they are having a unique, individual experience, even within a mass themed tourism setting. This article is an

informative stepping-stone towards better understanding why people perform as they do in theme parks.

Countless books and articles have been written about the Disney theme parks (Baudrillard, 1988; Bryman, 1999; Eco, 1986; Hiaasen, 1998; Klugman, Kuenz, Waldrep, & Willis, 1995). While these writings are interesting and provided valid points, few scholars have focused on guests' perspectives of these parks[13]. Lukas (2016, p. 160) identified several gaps in themed park scholarship, two that I am particularly interested in: the lack of researchers' familiarity with and physically inhabiting themed tourist spaces, and the absence of certain voices such as guests to theme parks. Learning about guests' performances, those who have been to Disney theme parks, is a logical step towards addressing those gaps.

The literature review laid out the theoretical framework behind this thesis. It tied the performative turn to tourism studies broadly, and Disney theme park experiences specifically.

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[13] The closest reference I came across is Burbank (2015) which is a memoir recounting his experience as a Disney parks fan. Schiffler (2019) and Lantz (2019) discusses the ways in which guests dress in the parks.

3 Methodological framework and research design

This research project explores narratives of Disney theme parks' guests. In order to accomplish that, it is imperative to talk to guests who had visited these parks. This chapter begins with an overview of the research design. The next section explains why I chose interviews to answer my question, how I conducted my interviews, who I interviewed, and why I chose those people. Section three discusses how I analyzed the interview transcripts. Section four outlines ethical concerns. Section five concludes with limitations of the research.

3.1 Research design

Qualitative methods were appropriate for learning about tourist performances at Disney theme parks. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to "investigate the detail of the relationship of a specific behavior to its context, to work out the logic of the relationship between the individual and the situation" (Kvale, 1996, p. 103). This allows plural realities and the ability to dive into specificities that are particularly interesting.

Qualitative research relies on interpretation data, instead of proving hard facts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 12). Instead, qualitative methods lend themselves to "meaningful relations to be interpreted" (Kvale, 1996, p. 11). Architect Grice observed of theme park research that "[...] subjective human experience is notoriously resistant to quantitative analysis" (Carlá et al., 2016, p. 110). Since this thesis is focused on guests´ perspectives on theme parks, dialogue is a valuable way to gather relevant information.

In this research, I am looking to build knowledge about performances in theme parks and themed spaces in a specific context, including information on the planning aspects of these trips. I approached this project from a constructivist perspective. Constructivists place different data in conversation with each other to reveal new knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivists draw conclusions based on the interactions between the researcher and those being researched (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). This is fitting since I participated in qualitative data collection by doing interviews. Constructivist researchers are "passionate participants" in which their voices are included in their research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 112, 115). With my embodied understanding of Disney theme parks my voice is prevalent in this thesis.

3.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews were used to gain insight on guest performances. Interviews allowed me to continue doing my research regardless of what happened with the pandemic since they could be completed online. Interviews have their advantages and drawbacks. Interviewees have the potential to change their answers in order to be perceived in a certain way (Alvesson, 2011, p. 2). However, interviews also allow researchers to learn about a subject through another's perspective (Kvale, 1996, p. 1). By interviewing, absent voices are added into the conversation around theme parks.

I will be taking a romantic view on interviews as it can lead to "a more 'genuine human interaction' […] thus turning the interview into a 'warm' situation" (Alvesson, 2011, p. 12). This type of interview helps instill trust in the interviewer and is thought to help interviewees open up more (Alvesson, 2011, p. 12). This view is suitable for my project because Disney "provides visitors with an intense personal experience […]" (Gottdiener, 2001, p. 143). By approaching interviews in a warm fashion, it follows that more genuine responses were reported.

The interviews were conducted mostly one-on-one (there was one instance of a surprise second person entering during an interview) on video calls. Semi-structured interviews enable the interviewer to have a sense of what they want to cover, yet the flexibility to reorganize and add questions in response to what the interviewee provides (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). Since my focus was on guest narratives, semi-structured interviews allowed the flexibility to go where the guests wanted to go, and the ability to adjust based on the conversation.

Due to the restrictions surrounding Covid-19, I conducted the interviews using Zoom video calls. Alvesson (2011, p. 10) believed that interviews via telephone or computers are likely to lead to a poorer quality interview. That being said, Alvesson suggests that face-to-face is the preferred form, which may indicate that at the time of publication video interviews were not common. Early in the history of video calling, it was reported that young adults were less likely to participant in video interviews (Weinmann, Thomas, Brilmayer, Heinrich, & Radon, 2012). Benefits to video interviews include a smaller environmental footprint, and the ability to conduct interviews across long distances (Hanna, 2012). They allow both parties to choose the location of the interview, which results in higher amounts of comfort and privacy (Hanna, 2012). Despite the benefits, there are some drawbacks such as technical glitches (Hanna, 2012),

and interviewees to not show up for the interview (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014, p. 613). Times have changed dramatically since these studies were conducted. Meeting in person for an interview was not feasible during the age of Covid-19. Video calling is now regularly used for classes, work, meetings, and socializing. People have gotten more use to using video calls. I found using video calls particularly helpful when interviewees needed to reschedule. In addition, I was easily able to find interviewees since I did not have to limit the interviews to those who were physically present near where I live.

Participants

The number of participants for research projects should be large enough to be able to see patterns, yet small enough to be able to dig deep into the interviews (Kvale, 1996, p. 102). At some point new interviews yield little to no new information (Kvale, 1996, p. 102). I aimed to get fifteen people to agree to interview with the expectation that around ten of them pull through. Ten seemed like manageable number of interviews with the time restraints of the thesis, yet a big enough sample size to reveal patterns. After about eight interviews, much of the information I received reinforced what others had said, however I continued to conduct the interviews since they had already been scheduled.

I located interviewees in three ways. First, I posted on my personal Facebook, and a Disney-centric Facebook groups page looking for people to interview. Secondly, I posted to my Twitter feed. The posts asked for people who had been on multi-day holidays to Disney theme parks in the last three years if they would be willing to be interviewed for this project over Zoom. Using Twitter enabled me to further expand my reach outside of the circle of people I know. Third, I asked those I interviewed to share that I was searching for people to interview. Again, I did that to expand beyond my own group of acquaintances. These were inexpensive ways to pursue participants during the Covid lockdowns. I was surprised to have gotten the number of responses that I did with my first Facebook post on a Disney fans groups page and my personal Facebook page. In the end I completed ten interviews, eight of which were from my personal Facebook account, one from a Twitter follower, and one was recommended by another interviewee.

I had three main requirements for the interviewees. The guests must have gone on a multi-day vacation to a Disney theme park within the last three years, be eighteen years old or older[14], and speak English[15]. Specifying that the trip had to be a multi-day vacation ruled out a study of locals who regularly went for a day to the parks—I was looking specifically at informants' touristic performances. As participant Sybil described of Disneyland "Honestly it just feels normal. Like going to Target." Sybil described one Disney park as normal in her life, as normal as going to a grocery store. This differs from what I am interested in, the person who is vacationing. Using the time frame of having visited a Disney park in the last three years allowed me to capture some visitors who do not regularly go to Disney parks. Disney trips are an event trip for United States citizens—with many adults going once or twice in their lives. By giving a larger year limit, I was more likely to find people who had made their once-in-a-lifetime trip. This came with a drawback. Many interviewees had lost some of the details of those trips that took place three years ago.

In addition to the original criteria, I realized quickly that I would need to come up with clear-cut criteria to identify those who were too close to me to be interviewed. Kvale (1996) warned that relationships with those being researched may cause bias and remove professionalism (p. 118). I decided that I would define "too close" as somebody who I had regular contact with within the last two years.

In total, I had twenty-one people volunteer to be interviewed. Of those people, I rejected six people because they were close friends. I rejected two because I was conscious of having a diverse spread of participants. I sought out variety in age groups and people traveling with and without children. I also hoped to have a higher mix between high and low affinity guests. I suspect this could be down to statistics. There are people who make vacations to Disney theme parks an annual event. However, if the average adult in the USA takes their family to Disney once, it is a lot less statistically probable that they would have gone in the past three years. This would have been especially so since many of the parks were closed for the duration of one of those years.

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[14] Eighteen was the minimum age as it is the legal age for adults within the United States who to be able to give written or oral consent to recording.
[15] They must speak English as this is the language the interview was conducted in.

One person did not respond to my proposed interview times. Another person, I ended up rejecting as an interviewee. The potential interviewee ended up over-questioning what I was researching. It became clear through answering several questions that this person was looking for a colleague or friend, and I felt that it was ethically wrong to include this person in the studies, and politely told the person they were no longer needed.

To better provide anonymity for the interviewees, interviewees were given aliases instead of their real name. I kept the scramble key on a piece of paper on my desk. The chart below provides an overview of the guests interviewed. I included the genders of the interviewees, the age range, and whether they had traveled with their children on their trips. The asterisked (*) theme park resort was the main focus of the interview, though other Disney theme park resort performances were often discussed and therefore added to the list. I included information on whether the guests were high-affinity guests (H) or regular-affinity guests (R). I defined high affinity guests as people who annually or semi-annually go to Disney parks. "R" stands for Regular-affinity guests—people that had gone as a children, and maybe once or twice as an adult. No low affinity guests were represented in this interview.

Table 1- Overview of informants

Alias	Affinity	Gender	Age Range	Traveling with children?	Resorts Visited
Abby	H	F	18-30	Yes	Tokyo Disneyland* Disneyland Walt Disney World Disneyland Paris
Emily	H	F	18-30	No	Walt Disney World*
Charlene	H	F	45-60	Have in the past, children are out of the house	Walt Disney World* Disneyland
Lori	H	F	30-45	No	Walt Disney World* Disneyland
Claire	H	F	30-45	Yes	Walt Disney World* Disneyland
Sybil	H	F	45-60	Yes	Walt Disney World* Disneyland
Dawson	H	M	18-30	No	Walt Disney World* Shanghai Disneyland Disneyland
Lilly	H	F	30-45	Yes	Walt Disney World*
Tom	R	M	30-45	No	Tokyo Disneyland* Disneyland Walt Disney World
Pam	R	F	18-30	No	Walt Disney World
Jack	R	M	30-45	Yes	Walt Disney World* Disneyland

All interviewees were United States citizens. All except one person interviewed went on vacation with their family members. At the time of interviewing, five of the interviewees were currently or have been Cast Members. A of the interviewees had all been to Disney theme parks as children with their family.

Overview of interview guide

The Interview Guide (Appendix A) was designed to generate information on the guests' tourist performances in Disney theme parks. The questions started with focusing on the pre-trip, continued with the vacation, and ended in reflecting on their performances.

Section A titled "Getting to know you," is designed to put the interviewees at ease, and allows the interviewees to open up about their experiences (Kvale, 1996, p. 125). It also is designed to gauge and learn about the interviewee's performances with theme parks, including Disney theme parks.

Section B focused on planning for travel. This is designed to look at what scripts the guests are reading prior to their travels. Section B also asked the guests what they expected their performances to look like and how they prepared for them.

Section C provided an overview of the trip. It asked what performances were carried out at the theme parks.

Section D and E asked what roles the individuals took when traveling, and what roles other actors played in the performances. This enabled the interviewee to also offer information on how they perceived other people performed their own roles.

Section F and G questioned what impacts material objects and props had on their performances. Section G focuses more on reflecting on memories and asked what meanings are embedded in souvenirs.

Section H examined how people enacted the tourist performance of taking photos.

Section I asked what impacts technology has on touristic performances.

Section J was intended to provide interviewees with an opportunity to reflect on their own performances.

Reflections on the interviewing process

I conducted three practice interviews, all of which were incredibly valuable to revising the interview guide. In the first practice interview, I learned that I needed to be more familiar with my questions prior to asking. The second interview made me realize that I had several yes or no questions. After consulting with my classmates, one classmate explained how she was doing very open-ended questions. I completely revised my interview to include fewer questions, all of which were open-ended questions with several probing follow-up questions. I did a final practice interview, which confirmed that this format worked significantly better for me. The simplification of the interview also allowed me to respond more freely to the interviewees, while knowing which points I wanted to hit, which was much easier than me trying to focus on the minutia of the questions.

Overall, I found the interviews went rather well. I started transcribing interviews as soon as I started interviewing people. I did not realize at the time how helpful this practice would be to me. This practice allowed me to learn how to be a better interviewer, as I was able to reflect on my own interview performance. I identified some of the pitfalls I fell into and reflected on times when I may have led the interview. As I transcribed interviews, I highlighted lines that were particularly interesting to me. I started taking notes when somebody mentioned something closely related to performance theory or another point of interest. If I heard an item that someone else had mentioned, I would make a note to cross-reference with the other interview.

I was originally interested in shopping and how people performed when taking pictures. Getting this information proved challenging when interviewing. Several people forgot to bring souvenirs. In discussing the souvenirs, few interviewees offered information as to their reasoning behind purchasing items. Several people did not bring their photos but ended up describing their favorite pictures. I found this helpful as it prompted interviewees to tell stories and reflect on happy memories. Instead of analyzing the photos, I was able to draw on their narratives, which is suitable to answer my research question. This is in line with other studies, which concluded that tourists sometimes use photography as a tool to collect memories on holiday (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2017 [2004], p. 122).

The interviews lasted between 55 minutes-100 minutes. The longest involved a couple. This is not surprising since the interviews were semi-structured. The online interviews were often interrupted. I experienced siblings piping in, parents looking after young children, and poor internet connections during the course of the interviewing process. While there were distractions, the interviewees seemed very focused, and were able to recover easily from the interruptions.

Relevant theme park background information

The informants were instructed to discuss their planning and execution of their most recent trip to a Disney theme park resort. This resulted in targeted discussions about both Tokyo Disneyland Resort and Walt Disney World. While these two resorts are very different stages, there were enough similarities in their performances that it seemed fitting to include both in this project. In addition to Walt Disney World and Tokyo Disneyland Resort being discussed in depth, informants included other performances within additional Disney theme parks.

To understand the guest performances, I believe it is important to have a basic understanding of the complexities of these Disney theme park resorts. Throughout my life, I have come across many people and writings that believed that Walt Disney World is one theme park. In actuality, the resort is like its own city. Walt Disney World (which opened in 1971) is in Orlando, Florida. It has its own government and is spread out to cover an area the size of the city of San Francisco. Within this area is a collection of four theme parks—Magic Kingdom (1971), Epcot[16] (1982), Disney's Hollywood Studio[17] (1989), and Disney's Animal Kingdom (1998), as well as two water parks. Disney owns and operates around twenty-five resorts hotels (depending on how you count them) within this area. Walt Disney World also has a non-ticketed shopping center, Disney Springs, that contains several restaurants and shops. Additional recreation activities include two full-sized golf courses, two miniature golf courses, fishing, horseback riding, boating, parasailing, and a sports complex[18]. Within the resort, Disney's public transportation

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[16] Formerly EPCOT Center.

[17] Formerly MGM Studios.

[18] Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex is home to the Atlanta Braves Baseball team's spring training. The complex also hosted the 2020 National Basketball Association games, forming what they referred to as "the

system includes buses, ferries, monorails, and gondolas. In 2019, all four of Walt Disney World's theme parks were on the top ten most visited theme parks in the world (Themed Entertainment Association, 2019).

Tokyo Disneyland Resort is much smaller than Walt Disney World. Unlike Walt Disney World where there is ample space, Tokyo Disneyland Resort is located in the city itself. Once leaving the parks' boundaries, guests are in the heterogeneous mixed space of Tokyo. Tokyo Disneyland Resort contains two parks: Tokyo Disneyland (which opened in 1983) and Tokyo DisneySea (which opened in 2001). The Tokyo Disneyland theme park is very similar in design and layout to the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World. This property has four hotels that Disney operates. Ikspiri, a mall that Disney owns, can be visited without an admission fee, and features mostly non-Disney shops and restaurants. There is a monorail that goes between Tokyo Disneyland, Tokyo DisneySea, a cluster of non-Disney branded (but Disney approved) hotels, and the Tokyo subway system. It is about a two kilometers walk between the two parks. The Oriental Land Company, the primary owners of Tokyo Disneyland, requested Tokyo Disneyland be heavily influenced by American culture (Bryman, 1995, p. 75). Yoshimoto (1994, p. 197) as cited by Bryman (1995) suggested that the overlap between Disney culture and Japanese culture, coupled with the demand from the Japanese developers, was not a sign of "American cultural imperialism" (p. 76). In 2019, Themed Entertainment Association (2019) reported Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo DisneySea to be the third and fourth most visited theme parks respectively in the world.

3.3 Analysis procedures

Transcribing the interviews was the first step in my analysis process. While transcribing, I started making notes on sections of the interview I found particularly interesting, and if any interviewees said something that another interviewee mentioned. I transcribed the interviews verbatim at first, only omitting parts of the interviews that had nothing to do with what we were discussing or that included personal identifiable information. This switched as the interview process went on, Kvale (1996) explained that transcriptions do not have to be verbatim, only

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bubble". This concept in itself was interesting as Edensor (2000) was the person, who referred to enclavic tourist spaces as "environmental bubbles" (p. 330).

that they need to "state explicitly in the report how the transcriptions were made" (p. 169). Kvale went on to suggest that transcribers "imagine how they themselves would have wanted to formulate their statements in writing" (p. 170). This changed the way I transcribed. In doing this, I decided to eliminate filler words. Removing certain filler words and rewording sentences for their dialogue to make sense was appropriate since we speak differently than we write.

With analysis in mind, ensuring I asked some specific questions during the interview was very important. The specific questions were meant to result in specific codes. For example, the information I gathered about the significance of food in a theme park performance was easily grouped together. After I had the basic groups, I coded further if needed. In addition to these specific questions leading to specific codes, I read through all of the transcripts with the idea of performance theory in mind in order to get more implicit readings of the interviews.

In my coding, I was inspired by three of the four boundaries of the stage established by Doorne and Ateljevic (2005, p. 179): the setting, the people, and the cultural. I was analyzing for guest performances, and how the guests perceived other performances they encountered. From my readings on performance theory, and my fascination with themed enclavic tourist spaces, I sought information on how the guests perceived the setting was impacting on their performances. When coding with an eye for the social elements, I paid attention to anything interviewees learned from other actors, hints of conflicting performances, complementary performances, and any social interactions. I was particularly interested in the performances that interviewees had between other guests and Cast Members. I searched for any differing cultural performances, whether it be from participants traveling outside of their own country, or experiencing new cultures within the United States. With all of this in mind, I kept notes on frequency of visiting Disney theme parks, and vacation length.

3.4 Ethical considerations

My role as a researcher

It is important to understand my role as a researcher and how my background may have influenced this project. The constructivist perspective includes personal values and ethical concerns regarding their work (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 112, 114-115). As mentioned in my introduction, I am very passionate about theme parks. Passion for the subject does not negate my ability to be academically rigorous and subjective. Fjellman (1992), Bryman (1995), Lukas

(2008) all stated their passion for the theme parks, and were able to write academically rigorous texts which are regularly referred to in scholarly writings on theme parks. Indeed, Kokai and Robson (2019, p. 6) even pointed out that most scholars that have written about Disney theme parks will clearly state their passion or hatred of the topic.

Many people I interviewed know me through a mutual love of Disney. While this may be considered cause for bias, I believe it is of benefit to this particular subject. Theme parks are often looked over as being childish or criticized for being fake and inauthentic. By the interviewee knowing my passion, it potentially rebalances the power dynamic and allows people with an interest in Disney theme parks to speak openly, honestly, and be more relaxed in the process.

Another benefit to having interviewees knowing my background in Disney, is that we were able to speak the same language filled with jargon. For example, Interviewee Lori explained her trip like this: "We did Le Cellier. We had a breakfast at Garden Grill. I had those two ADRs. I think I grabbed a couple of Fastpasses."[19] For someone who is familiar with Walt Disney World, this is very common language. With someone who is not familiar with the parks, these simple sentences recounting her schedule would have to include a lengthy of explanation of the two restaurants mentioned, that ADRs stands for Advance Dining Reservations, and that Fastpasses are reservations to stand in a shorter line for popular attractions. It would have altered the conversational nature of the interviews having to explain these terms

I am also acutely aware of my own professional performance as a tourism worker and academic in the writing-up of this project. What I decide to include or exclude in this project, if read by some potential employers, could reflect negatively on me. In contrast, as a student and researcher, I am responsible to be academically rigorous, and I am obligated to include fair and balanced perspectives. That being said, this project was not focused on critiquing the company, rather it is focused on listening to the perspectives of those who visit the theme parks.

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[19] Fastpasses are digital passes that makes a reservation for an expedited line for limited shows and attractions, and only during a specific time window. For example, a guest may book a Fastpass at Space Mountain, which would allow them to wait in an expedited line for Space Mountain between 1:05pm-2:05pm. Guests are able to pre-book three Fastpasses per day of their trip.

Consent

Obtaining participant consent is ethical in researching others. I created a consent form (see Appendix B) that I provided for and collected from participants. Included within the consent form were ways to contact myself and my supervisor. It allowed the participants to withdraw their consent at any time, for any reason, without repercussion. In addition to written consent, I got verbal consent from each participant orally prior to their interview (see Appendix C). This proved important to obtain consent when I had a surprise second interviewee. I explained both in written and oral form that I would be focusing on performance theory and briefly explained the term to them.

Processing and storing data

When processing personal data in research in Norway, it is recommended to register the project to Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata (NSD). This project was successfully registered with NSD. See Appendix D for more information on that process.

UiT classifies information based on levels of sensitive information. I identified that my research would be public or restricted information, with the chance that an interviewee might volunteer certain personally identifiable information without prompt. I followed UiT recommendation of using Sharepoint to store and transmit word documents.

One concern I had when analyzing the type of data I was processing was the possibility of collecting personal data unintentionally. This happens sometimes during interviews as "the openness and intimacy of the interview may be seductive and lead subjects to disclose information they may later regret" (Kvale, 1996, p. 116). Since data processing includes collecting, it is impossible to conclude what people will say in their interview. Especially when people are talking about their vacations, they include names of those in their travel party, sexual orientation, the cities they live in, and other bits of personal identifiable information. Because of this, I requested my interviewees not to include any personally identifiable information, and that if a combination was given that could identify the subject, I redacted this in the transcripts to the point where if reading the transcripts no one would be able to identify the interviewee. Despite my request, people included personal identifiable information, which was redacted in the transcripts.

3.5 Limitations

Interviews in this research project were conducted after theme park visits. This was the only way to conduct the interviews due to travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic. That being said, there might be other advantages to this design. Lukas (2016, p. 160) mentioned an instance involving a security guard preventing him from doing research on private property. Additionally, *in situ* interviews interrupts the informants' holiday. Edensor (1998, p. 119) explained the difficulties of getting interviews with tourists that were a part of tour groups because of time restraints.

4   Findings and analysis

The research question that has guided this project focuses on how guests narrate their theme park performances. In this chapter I present my findings and analyses. In the first section, I analyze how guests discussed their own and others' theme park performances. The second section focuses on the roles of Cast Members in the guests' performances, and the cultural contexts in which the performances took shape. Additionally, this section discusses some performances that were conflicting with the informants' performances. In the last section, I discuss ways guests navigated their performances in relations to the materialities of Disney theme parks.

4.1 Peaking behind the curtain on guest performances

This section begins with reflecting on preparation for guests' trips which includes reading scripts and planning. Performers then described their touristic performances, replete with how they performed. The interviewees recounted their thoughts on what makes a poor performance to Disney World. Finally, I review how guests narrate two types of consumeristic performances: eating and shopping.

Reading scripts

Disney parks' scripts are produced by the Walt Disney Company as well as independent media producers.[20] This section highlights how the guests I interviewed consulted scripts for their Disney theme park performances.

Prior to traveling, the guests reported reading scripts that informed their performances. Interestingly, no interviewee mentioned using a guidebook to help them with their most recent trips. Instead, those who did research consulted social media. Six interviewees mentioned that they use social medias to inform their theme park performances. This included YouTube vloggers (Jack, Claire, Abby), travel agents posting on Facebook (Lori, Sybil), and official and unofficial Disney blogs (Lori). For instance, Claire mentioned that she regularly watches different YouTube channels to learn what food she wants to try. Abby specifically looked at

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[20] Non-Disney entities write and publish their own scripts of which informants reviewed to address specific concerns.

YouTube channels to help her learn how to perform competently in the Japanese parks with a baby in tow. Additionally, she explained she used YouTube instructionally to learn how to purchase theme park tickets after she faced challenges buying them online.

This relatively heavy use of social media in the planning phase could indicate a growing trend towards free information online. Also, social media is a stage in itself where other performers are enacting their own identities. Reading information by a supposed expert allows the guest to see another tourist performance, evaluate it, and incorporate relevant elements into their own performances.

Sometimes, specific expertise was brought up as key to the maneuvering of the Disney visit. For instance Sybil mused about possibly using travel agent to book future trips. Sybil, who acts as a tour guide to her friends visiting Disney World, viewed her own performance as having some degree of expertise. Yet when she looked at the travel agent's Facebook page, she read unfamiliar scripts that she evaluated positively. She said, "you don't think you need an expert, but you realize, maybe they're an expert for a reason." Reading a script which included new information on how to perform surprised Sybil. Sybil posited that she might be able learn how to improve her own performance by engaging with the travel agent.

On a related note, Abby, who visited Tokyo Disneyland, she sought out scripts that prepared her for an unfamiliar performance due to a change in travel party and venue. Guests also gathered information that would allow them to script their performances around changes taking place in the theme park they were going to. For instance, Lori read blogs about construction updates to manage her expectations about her own performances. In these instances, interviewees actively sought out scripts to inform their own performance.

Claire, who is a former Cast Member, shared a story which speaks to how the scripting might become very important to the experience that a guest has at a resort. Claire explained that there used to be a very popular guidebook that many guests consulted before visiting the Disney resort. The guidebook recommended specific rooms to request at this resort. Claire said:

> "Disney guests across America were buying [the guidebook], and they were told that you want a second or third floor room […] and if you don't get that view, why vacation? Your vacation is ruined." (Claire)

In this example, visitors to Disney consulted a script suggesting that a competent performance included staying in specific rooms in the resort. Many guests followed this script, requesting for the room. In this a non-Disney controlled entity is having a direct impact on the overall theme park performance.

The most common script consulted by the participants in my study, is one that the Disney corporation operates: the My Disney Experience app. This app enables guests to schedule Fastpasses[21], manage dining reservation, order food, view menus, keep track of their itineraries, check wait times, and view maps. Some used other apps as well. For instance, Lilly utilized a paid-for app called the Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World[22] in addition to the official Disney app. These apps were consulted mainly during the visit to the theme parks, in contrast to the social media scripts that were often sought out prior to the visit. For example, some of the informants reported reviewing wait times at attractions on the app, and adjusting their movements based on the information they received.

Some of the guests were quite reflexive in terms of the "cost" of using these apps actively. For example, Sybil noted in relation to the My Disney Experience app that Disney is likely gathering data to track her movements through the park. Indeed, the online program contains an outline of the performer's tentative choreography as it manages reservations, so this is likely. Disney having access to the guests' choreographies makes sense as a business practice. Knowing roughly when a set amount of people are going to be at any given spot allows for better deployment of Cast Members to those areas. In this way, the Disney corporation reviewing the choreography may be advantageous in individuals' theme park performances, as key personnel would be around to assist in those performance. That being said, this can also be read as an invasion of privacy. While this might have been underlying Sybil's reflection, she chose to make use of the app, regardless of this "cost".

Importantly, not all guests rely as heavily on scripts. For example, neither Tom nor Pam consulted many scripts prior to their theme park visits. They did however each have a list of

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[21] At Disney World their Fastpass system is called Fastpass+. For this project, I will be using the colloquial term Fastpass, to describe the reservation systems available at all of the Disney resorts.

[22] This app utilizes algorithms designed to beat the lines. Factors such as walk times between each attraction, years of historical wait times, days of the week, days of the year, special events, and more are computed to guide the guest that allows them to minimize their waiting.

attractions that they wanted to go on and in a sense used that as their script. It seemed like a more private or personal planning process, for instance as Pam consulted her childhood memories of trips to Disney World with her grandparents to gather an idea of what her performance would be like.

All in all, the findings indicate that with this group of interviewees, the Disney company has little direct influence on preparing the guests for their performances. Instead the guests themselves have a hand at scripting the performance while the guests are in the parks. The guests indicate that the preparation for a performance before their vacation is more influenced by actors who are perceived as excelling at their Disney performances. Then within the theme park itself, the guests are reading scripts provided by The Walt Disney Company. Perhaps this indicates that guests are more concerned with their own performances in the moment and do not wish to evaluate the performances of others, rather just read scripts that give them the information they need.

Prep work

Part of any trip includes some extent of planning—purchasing air tickets, hotel nights, rental cars, and occasional attraction tickets. Guests to Walt Disney World are no exception. It was made very clear throughout the interviews that visits to Walt Disney World required extensive planning beyond the standard vacation. This section highlights the sheer prep work that went into several of the informants' theme park performances.

Several interviewees expressed those competent performers at Disney theme parks minimize their wait in lines and eat at their desired restaurants. To successfully enact this type of performance, reservations must be secured. Booking windows for reservations for hotels, resort packages, dining, Fastpasses, and special events open on different days prior to the travelers' arrival. For example, Claire mentioned that she booked her hotel room 499 days prior to arrival, which is as soon as the reservations were made available.

> "When we initially book, we want to be able to stay at the properties we want, but when you're booking, you're booking rack rate[23]. And the promotions are going to come later.

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[23] Common jargon in hotels in the United States, rack rate is an undiscounted hotel room rate.

We're the type of travelers where we don't mind booking far out to secure space, and then watch for promotions because we're the type that—this sounds really geeky—but there's some joy in getting to call Disney reservations and change your reservations and re-calculate everything. It becomes almost like a part time job." (Claire)

Claire showed competency when she said that she knew when different booking windows become available to book different parts of the vacation. She planned several months in advance to secure the spaces, then had learned to keep an eye out for deals in order to change her reservation and save money. Moreover, in stating "It becomes almost like a part time job" Claire emphasized the amount of time that was spent in preparation for what she perceived as a good performance—the ability to secure the reservations she wanted, while also saving money. As Claire said, "we're also the type" which could be read as a reflection of identity performance. That is, while she plans and prepares in a certain way, it can be understood as part of how she performs on a broad scale, also when outside a Disney theme park visit. She is classifying herself and her mother as the "type of travelers" who have learned that particular competence in their performances.

Similarly, Charlene reported that the process of booking her entire vacation revolved around securing a spot in a half-marathon. Prior to the race being available to book, Charlene reviewed the hotels and had a good idea of the places she might want to stay. She recalled her booking process:

"You have to be there right at noon on the day. I always sign up for the notifications, so you get the email that says 'race openings in four hours'. You always sit there with your form pre-loaded so once you get into the queue, you're not typing in all of your race information. Yes. It's all tied around whether you can get into the race or not get into the race." (Charlene)

Charlene explained the stages of signing up for email notifications, waiting for a countdown clock to go off, and having a pre-loaded form ready for when the race opens. At this point in the conversation, I clarified that registering for the race is competitive. She said:

"Yes, yes. Like the Star Wars weekend races. I mean, I don't know who gets into that race, but I've never managed to get in, even though you're sitting there waiting. That one fills up pretty quick." (Charlene)

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Charlene confirmed that it is hard to get a spot. She provided the example of one race that she had never been able to get into. Due to the popularity of these races, it was possible that she may be unable to secure a spot.

> "The second you've registered for a race, later that night or within a day or two, you better be on the phone making your hotel reservations. I mean, you can make them online but with the military and the military discount. You must make them on the phone. They don't do the military discount on the website. You must talk to somebody." (Charlene)

Once registering for the race, Charlene secured her hotel reservations. With a family member in the military, Charlene had learned that she was eligible for a discounted rate at all hotels. She had to call Disney instead of making these reservations online. Ultimately, she chose her hotel based on the best rates. Charlene continued to review the order to create the rest of the bookings; secure the hotel, then book the flights, then make dining reservations.

These examples demonstrate a learned knowledge about how to plan a successful performance in the context of a Disney park visit. Charlene suggested that securing the RunDisney races are competitive tasks. Claire indicated that there may be elements of competition to securing the reservation for the hotel that she wants since she is booking that far in advance. Her early booking could also indicate that the further in advance she books, the more time she must find the deals which allow her to save money. In addition, both examples outlined an order in which the tasks should be performed. Emily was recruited by her parents to secure Fastpass reservations the moment they became available. This indicates that many actors have learned the importance of booking early. This reinforces and expands on Fjellman (1992) who states that, "[m]uch of the information about WDW [Walt Disney World] presented in commercial guidebooks concerns strategies for minimizing the amount of time spent in line while maximizing access to attractions. Much of the lore picked up by veteran visitors consist of such strategies" (p. 205). Additionally, Claire and Charlene both placed an emphasis on saving money. These examples indicate that there may be a competitive nature in securing reservations to help facilitate a competent theme park performance. The competition suggests that many people have learned the performance of planning for their vacations early. As a result of booking reservations in advance, many informants reported having varying degrees of a schedule for their trips that were mostly arranged around dining and Fastpass reservations.

Importantly, we see how these tourists described their performances taking shape prior to the actual visit to Walt Disney World. This will be further explained in the next section.

Starring you!

In this section I will explain the modes of performance which are enacted throughout the Disney theme parks. Building on Edensor (2000)'s concept of modes of performance, I will focus on what disciplined rituals and improvised performances occurred, and the informants' reflections on those modes. Additionally, informants reflected on how their performances changed based on their travel party.

As previously mentioned, some interviewees reported having a highly scheduled trip (Claire, Sybil, Jack, Lilly). These schedules all revolved around dining and Fastpass reservations. By doing this, informants were able to creatively construct their own choreography for their trips. However, it also meant that the performers were tied to a more rigid performance. For example, Sybil explained:

> "[…] my [partner] has us pretty scheduled. I don't like that. Things happen. I like to go with the moment, and feel the beat. But he has us pretty scheduled. I have seen what happens when you get off schedule. [sighs] It's hard to explain. […] You need to have reservations. And that kind of sets the tone for the day. From there you start backing it up, and you get your Fastpasses, because now your Fastpasses must coincide. Everything revolves now around those reservations you have for dining. And unfortunately, what we found is when we've gotten off schedule, or something—You can't easily find a replacement reservation. You're SOL[24]." (Sybil)

Jack also spoke to the issue of planning and scheduling in this way. He said:

> "[…] the schedule, the overly scheduled nature of 'in order to be there by 6, we have to leave there by 5:15, which means we need to be ready to go at 5, which means we have to go out of this next place by 4.' You just start working backwards in time a lot and it's

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[24] Slang for 'Sadly Outta Luck.'

necessary because if you don't make a reservation ahead of time, you're never going to get to that spot that you want to go to." (Jack)

Sybil and Jack expressed frustration over highly scripted disciplined performances. They described choregraphing their performances around reservations. They expressed negative consequences should they deviate from the script. These consequences included long lines and not being able to eat at good restaurants. Sybil said that unless you wanted to eat generic theme park food, you needed to follow the plan. Dining and Fastpass reservations seemed to dictate the mode of performance of disciplined rituals. That being said, both Sybil and Jack, though they had a hand in scripting these disciplined ritual-type performances, are thinking reflexively about these rituals. They were frustrated by the restraint. Yet they give into the performances because there are negative ramifications for failing to perform in certain ways; bad food, a fee for skipping out on dining reservations, and long lines.

Not every guest perceived planning around dining and Fastpass reservations as restricting, nor did everyone have the same idea of what was considered as having a scheduled during their trip. Lilly explained how the ability to plan everything ahead of time let her relax on her vacation:

> "I am somebody who gets very, very stressed out. Disney is great for me in that I can do all my stressing before. By the time we get there, I know exactly what's going on. I don't have to make any decisions. The dinner is taken care of. Hotel reservations are made. Fastpasses are done. And we decide little things on the fly, but all the big stuff is figured out before we get there." (Lilly)

Lilly reflected that the ability to plan for her trip allowed her to relax on vacation. Whereas Sybil and Jack were irritated by the schedule, Lilly took comfort in it. The fact that different informants reflected differently on structured nature of their performance shows reflexivity. These interviewees demonstrated that some guests found the need to stick to a restrictive schedule, while others found the structured nature as freeing. Planning served to relieve the stress of an improvised performance. The amount of control Lilly was able to exercise over her own performance allowed for her to relax on a holiday. This viewpoint allows for multiple readings of the control within theme parks. While some informants viewed the reservations as

controlling their performances, Lilly interprets the reservations as being within her control. She is then able to relax as a result of this.

Similarly, Emily and Charlene reported elements of disciplined rituals. They explained how their families strategized what attractions they went on based on minimizing their waits and when the shows were running. This indicates some amount of competency in their performances as they report having an idea as to what rides to go on and in what order to do them. Emily reported that for her successful performance to occur she has to watch the nighttime spectacular *Fantasmic* and ride *The Tower of Terror.* These performances allow for some rituals and order, yet can also be viewed as improvised to some extent.

Dawson, Tom, Abby, Pam, and Lori opted for more improvised performances at Disney parks. Dawson, Lori, Charlene often visits these parks. They expressed that they are less concerned with getting things done. One boundary of the stage that actors perform on involves a temporal aspect (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005). Perhaps because of their frequent visits, they were less concerned with fitting everything in.

Tom had booked their vacation on a week where there were low crowds, and did not have difficulty completing all he wanted to achieve in his performance. For Tom, the stage was empty, enabling a successful performance. Tom, Abby, and Pam described having a list of attractions (their script) that they wanted to ride, and jumping on attractions based on what they saw. In this, the informants chose what to do based in part on what they saw. This is an example of how the tourist space may cue the guests to enact specific performances. Interviewees acknowledged their reflectivity regarding how the setting influenced their performances.

There was a correlation between those who frequented Disney theme parks often with a more improvised performance. Dawson, Charlene, and Lori regularly go to the Disney parks and have lower expectations of their theme park performances. Dawson explained:

> "We have very low expectations. We understand lines. We understand the park reservations. We have more understanding in terms of the circumstances that we're currently in at the moment [referring to Covid]."

Similarly, Lori said:

"When you go that often, it's like, 'Oh well, Spaceship Earth is a 20-minute wait, I don't want to wait for 20 minutes.' It gets to the point where it's a little more wandering. It's munching on food and snacks and people watching and enjoying things like the shows and the fireworks rather than doing the rides." (Lori)

Dawson explained that he did not have expectations other than to relax and enjoy meals—any time in the parks was a bonus. He gets that due to the pandemic that parts of his regular performance may be different. Lori reflected that as time as passed, she has become more interested in changing her performance. These interviewees were less concerned about fitting everything in as they knew they would soon return. This suggests that those who regularly enact theme park performances may be altering their performance. Instead of rushing, they slow down.

Life changes shifted some informants' performances. For example, as soon as Charlene's adult children stopped joining the trip, she and her partner threw their schedule out the window. In the past, Charlene would go along with her children's strategy for attacking the park. Charlene mentioned how she goes to Disney World at least once a year, so if she does not complete everything she wants to do, it does not bother her. On a related note, Abby switched to a more improvised performance partly because of bringing a child for the first time. Abby explained that she used to have a routine when she traveled to Disney parks before becoming a mom. This performance involved waking up in time for the opening of the park, presumably to minimize time spent in lines. Now that she has a child, her travel party based their days around the child. Thrill rides were ridden when the child was napping using the rider swap[25] system. The pace was slower than what Abby had previously experienced. In both examples the informants are performing their identity of being a mom within a family performance. Charlene traveling without children enabled her to enact a different performance.

Dawson questioned the level of stress put into planning. He observed of other Disney guests:

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[25] Rider swap is a program designed for adults who have children that do not hit the height requirement. One parent goes and waits in line for the attraction, while the other parent says with the child/children. The first parent is given a "rider swap" pass that allows the second parent to get access to an expedited line so that both parents don't have to wait in the full line.

> "They need to do everything right away. They need to have everything pinpointed down to a tee. [redacted] I've seen people have their whole ass schedule planned out. I'm just like 'hello?'"

Dawson did not understand the stress that was put into overplanning schedules. He did, however, stress the importance of needing to make reservations for dining and Fastpasses. Dawson travels to the parks often. He reported traveling through the parks at a more relaxed pace because he did not have the boundary of time. Dawson saw benefits in some of the disciplined rituals, but not the full schedule.

This section has identified that the actors had two main modes of performance through the parks—ritual and improvised. Additionally, it reflected on how different performances are enacted based on temporal elements and the cast of characters.

Shoes shoes shoes

Tourism scholars have pointed out that actors use props and costumes to hone their touristic performances (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005, p. 183). In my study, shoes proved to be a particularly important element to peoples' performances and informants often brought up shoes during their interviews. This caught my attention because of their prevalence in conversations. I will first review findings of how shoes were used as a costume in guest performances, then move on to discuss how shoes impacted one informant's performance.

Comfortable walking shoes were commonly mentioned in response to what guests wore in the theme parks. Claire and Emily explained that they brought extra pairs of shoes due in part to this. Emily further explained that if it rained, she likes having a backup pair of dry sneakers. The additional pair allowed them to switch between pairs, which helped the pain in their feet associated with the walking. For example, Claire says:

> "You're on your feet so much that you, I can't wear the same pair of shoes every day. My feet get sore."

A couple of informants mentioned how much they walked during their vacation, for instance Tom, who said:

"[…] I looked at our pedometer and over the day and a half that we were there, that we had already walked thirteen miles."

Such reports of walking extensively, on top of stressing the importance of comfortable shoes suggests that many Disney theme park performances are active, further placing importance on comfortable shoes. The mentioning of the importance of good shoes by other informants indicates that this is so.

Some informants criticized the performance of those who wear the "wrong" type of shoes—namely sandals. The informants expressed the consequence of pain if they wore the incorrect pair of shoes. For example, Emily evaluated the performance of those who she deemed wore the wrong choice of shoes:

"People who do sandals in the parks are frightening and I am afraid of them. They must have a significantly higher pain tolerance than I do." (Emily)

Emily did not understand why anyone would wear sandals because of the pain they cause. She reflected that she would not use the same prop to hone her own performance. That being said, two respondents stated that they wore sandals. Charlene stated that she packed flip-flops in passing, but did not elaborate further on her footwear choices.

But shoes have meaning beyond the level of comfort they provide, they indicate a skilled performer. To this end, Pam told a story that gets at my additional interest in shoes. In the interview she reflected on that she would wear a different type of shoes if she returned to the theme parks. She recounted a story from her trip when she wore the "wrong type" of shoe:

"It was funny, when we were on the boat going to Magic Kingdom, some old man on the boat said something about the fact that I had on sandals. And he was like 'Is this your first time at Disney?' And I was like 'No, why?' And he's like, 'the pros wear sneakers.' And I looked around, and everybody had sneakers on. Like gym sneakers. Except for like a very small handful of people, and I was like 'oh my god, this guy is a genius.' Like he clearly had a method to Disney. I think I would do that next time." (Pam)

This encounter is particularly interesting to me. Pam had an interaction with another actor whom Pam perceives had gained a degree of competency in their performance. The actor singled her out as an actor who has not yet learned the performance. It was only after he pointed out that "pros wear sneakers" that Pam looked around and realized most people were wearing sneakers. Tourism practices are learned (Edensor, 2001, p. 72). The example that Pam provided demonstrates a way in which she learned how to enhance her Disney theme park performance. When the man asked Pam "Is this your first time at Disney?" he noticed that she was failing to wear the appropriate costume. This left the impression with him that she was inexperienced in her Disney theme park performance. When the man said "the pros wear sneakers" he instructed Pam how to act like a "pro" in the performance. Additionally, he indicated that he himself is a professional actor. Pam reacted by looking at the other tourists on the boat. She immediately self-monitored; several other actors are wearing sneakers. Pam understood that her choice of footwear was displaying a part of her identity, that of someone who does not go to these theme parks often. She immediately thought 'oh my god, this guy is a genius.' This surprised me that Pam did not take offense to someone calling her out on utilizing the 'wrong' costume. The man's skill level is further reinforced when she said, "he clearly had a method to Disney." Pam ended her story saying "So I think I would do that next time. My feet really hurt." In this she reflected that she would use a different costume because she was displeased with how her body reacted to the performance. The man made an impression that caused Pam to reflect on her own performance, leading to a new skill for future performances.

Much like Walsh and Tucker (2009)'s backpacks, shoes allow the performance of a theme park visit to take place successfully. This section began with identifying that guest stressed the importance of having good shoes during their theme park performances. Shoe selection was important because theme park performances are active. It suggested that sneakers are perceived as costuming to wear in this particular space, for this particular performance. Those who wear comfortable shoes in theme parks are transmitting a level of competency in their Disney theme park performance.

Boo! Get off the stage!

In addition to guests wearing the wrong choice of footwear, it became clear when discussing holidays at Disney World that there were theme park performances informants deemed to be poorly acted. Informants reported two things that guests "do wrong" when it comes to performing a Disney World trip: they do not plan, and they have too high expectations. I now

explain these findings more fully, before moving on to examining what these poor performances may mean.

To begin, I would like to share the following quote:

> "[G]uests were upset because they spent all this money. You know, 'I went to this park, and it was a waste of time. It was crowded. I couldn't do anything.' You know what? I've been to the Magic Kingdom on the busiest Saturday in July and I still hit all the rides and all the things. I'm always concerned for the guest who's showing up and buys their park tickets when they're checking in with the front desk. Because it's not a vacation you can take by just winging it. I mean, if that's what you're looking for, it's great, but it's not going to be the full-on Disney experience. Sometimes people do want to go there to relax a little bit more, but you definitely have to plan ahead of time." (Claire)

This quote particularly struck me because it summarizes this section perfectly. "Guests were upset because they spent all this money." This suggests that people the high cost of entry indicates a high-quality experience. "You know, 'I went to this park, and it was a waste of time. It was crowded. I couldn't do anything,'" Further illustrates the entitlement and unrealistic expectations of their performance in Claire's perception. "You know what? I've been to the Magic Kingdom on the busiest Saturday in July and I still hit all the rides and all the things." Claire described going to the world's busiest theme park during peak season, yet having a successful performance because she has gained competency in maneuvering around the crowds. This demonstrates that there is a learned performance at Disney parks. "I'm always concerned for the guest who's showing up and buy their park tickets when they're checking in with the front desk. Because it's not a vacation you can take by just winging it." Claire suggested worry over other guests not understanding how much there is a need to plan their theme park performances. Claire then clarified: "I mean, if that's what you're looking for, it's great, but it's not going to be the full-on Disney experience. Sometimes people do want to go there to relax a little bit more, but you definitely have to plan ahead of time." In this, Claire admitted that tourist do go on their vacation without planning, but they lack what she views as the proper Disney experience. Once again, Claire stated the need to plan, even if the plan is to have a relaxing trip.

Lilly, Sybil, and Claire all said people's biggest mistake was not planning. I asked Lilly if she thought people knew they needed to plan their Disney vacation, to which she responded that people do not generally know until they go. Lilly and Claire had eerily similar answers as to how guests perform poorly:

> "You can't just walk up to Disney and decide on the fly that you want to go to a park one morning, and you have no Fastpasses, no dinner reservations, and then you get upset because you're waiting in line or because you don't have anywhere to eat, etc." (Lilly)

> "You have these people who show up with no pre-set plans, and guess what?! You can't get a dining reservation. You don't have any Fastpasses, and there are no Fastpasses to get." (Claire)

They both stated that guests show up and cannot eat where they want, nor can they get Fastpasses. Out of the guests interviewed, all the high affinity guests to Walt Disney World stated that they usually reserved Dining and Fastpass reservations. This indicates a learned performance, whereas those who are not in the know, show up unaware of the competitive nature to getting reservations. This once again reinforces the sheer number of people who know this performance of booking reservations at a *theme park* far enough in advance that several informants felt very passionately about planning ahead.

Pam, in contrast, went to Walt Disney World without a plan. Pam and her partner decided to get the app that had the Fastpass reservations. However, she found that there were hardly any passes available because they were already booked by others, which reinforces the competitive nature suggested. Pam first learned about the app from her partner's co-workers, but did not immediately use it because she thought there was an additional cost involved. In this case, Pam was offered a script to help plan her performance, but she rejected it, believing that the script came at an additional price. As such, Pam stated that during peak season they stood in long lines—an hour and a half for Splash Mountain, and three hours for Space Mountain. Contrast this to Lilly, who sought out a trip during low season on a "non-descript weekend in October". Lilly said of this trip where she did not plan anything: "I would say because I know the crowds, know where everything is, generally speaking I don't think we waited more than twenty minutes for anything." Lilly and Pam are at the extremes end of their performance. Lilly picked out a time of the year when things were not busy, and understood how the crowds work, whereas

Pam went right after New Year, did not plan, and faced large crowds. This example once again reinforces that planning for the trip is a learned competence for some theme park performances. That being said, Pam expressed several times that she understood part of the performance of a Disney trip was waiting in line, and therefore was not disappointed in her own performance. This suggests that while some plan far in advance, others are able to show up without plans and still complete a performance successfully.

It is when the performance fails to follow the script where performances truly go awry. Several interviewees mentioned how guests have too high a set of expectations for their performances of their Walt Disney World vacations. More specifically, they expect their vacations to be perfect.

> "[…] on a Disney vacation things can go wrong, and do go wrong. And as magical of a place it is, it's also reality. I think people need to be prepared for that." (Claire)

> "[Y]ou understand that things happen. Not in the Cast Member's control. You can't really do anything about it." (Dawson)

Claire mentioned things can go wrong on vacation to Disney, and that guests should anticipate that. Dawson said that he has learned Cast Members are not going to be able to solve all of the challenges. These interviewees expressed that guest have high expectations of their performance—that the guests would be able to get the hotel room they requested, not have to wait in line, have zero guest service complaints, and be able to eat where they want to eat, when they want to eat. As Fjellman (1992) suggests, "[…] The language for describing our experience is preempted by the Company. Everything in magical" (p. 13). Drawing on Fjellman, it is possible that these poor performers consulted specific scripts which suggested an automatically magical performance; they may have only received sanguine messages produced by the Disney media. Additionally, like Pam, it is possible that they refused scripts because of skepticism that they were being sold something. They did not, however, read the same scripts as Pam, who had mentally prepared for long lines and crowds.

This section has reviewed different types of performances that interviewees believed to be poorly performed. It suggested the ways that informants believed other tourists did not perform

well when they did not plan and set too high of expectations for their own performances. This suggested that guests anticipate that their performance will be successful without planning, or that they are unaware that planning is necessary at all. Additionally, it indicated that there is a learning curb to Disney World performances. Some of the interviewees suggested that guests expect the performance to be flawless, only to find that they are let down for one reason or another.

Food, glorious food

While other tourism scholars have focused on food in performances at touristic sites, I had initially not reflected much on how prominent food would be in Disney theme park performances. Delicious and unique foods are perhaps not what most people think about when they think about theme parks. Even though I did not anticipate talking about food at the start of my project, after my three practice interviews, it became clear that food played a huge part of theme park performances for many informants. Several informants stated something along these lines:

> "Apparently food is a big part of our Disney—but there's just so much good food that it's those things that you like to do every time you're there." (Lori)

> "[…] I know a lot of people who get obsessive about what rides they're going to ride, and what order, you know what I'm excited about? Reading the menus." (Claire)

Lori and Claire shared their excitement over food. Lori was listing things she enjoyed during her theme park performance, and surprised herself when she realized that most of them were food related. Claire suggested that enjoying food was a bigger draw for her than the rides. A handful of interviewees identified themselves as "foodies". This indicates that a Disney theme park performance is a stage on which these informants can act out their identity of a foodie.

As previously examined, guests' schedules are largely arranged around dining reservations. Additionally, the timing of some vacations was influenced by food itself. Interviewees mentioned their fondness for the Food and Wine Festival[26]. Claire, Jack, Charlene, Lori and

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[26] The Food and Wine Festival is an annual festival held at Epcot during the fall. Guest purchase small portions of food and drinks from booths that represent different countries.

Lilly all arranged trips around this festival. While Sybil did not talk about the Food and Wine festival, she did mention that she was drawn to food festival events in the theme parks. To plan an entire vacation around food clearly indicates that food is an important part to many Disney World performances.

Eating and trying new international foods was a big draw to many informants. Lori explained how she would try foods that would normally intimidate her. The portion sizes at Food and Wine Festival allowed her to try smaller portions, which made it more manageable. Lori stepped out of her comfort zone, testing herself, and reflexively decided what new foods she would integrate into her life going forward. Sybil explained that she seeks out French and African cuisines during her vacation. Jack referred to how the spices were used in unique ways. Both Jack and Sybil traveled internationally in the past. Enjoying these foods could be viewed as performing identity as it reinforced their past travel experiences.

Interviewees (Charlene, Dawson, Lilly) placed emphasis on slowing down and savoring the food.

> "All the planning during the day—what parks we're at, what rides we're at—that's about my kids. The dining is about my [partner] and I. And yes, the kids are there, but it's about—'hey we're going to eat this type of food that we don't have at home. We want a really nice glass of wine with this nice steak'. All morning in the park is go go go go go, and the dining is about stop, sit back, talk about our day, have a glass of wine, eat some good food. Dinner is about my husband and I. The rest of the trip is about the kids. That's kind of how we see it." (Lilly)

Lilly reflected that most of the effort she puts forth in the vacation is for the sake of her children's' performances, but the dining is for the adults. She stressed that they get food that is not available at home. They used the dining as a time to relax, slow down. Lilly and her partner are actively engaged in a family performance on this vacation, centering around the enhancing their children's performances. During the meals the focus of their group performance shifts momentarily towards the parents.

Curiously, some of the interviewees mentioned enjoying the same restaurants. I find this curious because there are over 200 restaurants on property, and with a limited sample size, it is surprising that repeats came up at all. California Grill and Le Cellier were mentioned as

favorites for fine dining and date nights. 'Ohana was a favorite for dinner. 1900 Park Fare was mentioned in three interviews as a favorite character meal. Even more specifically, two people mentioned eating the strawberry soup on the 1900 Park Fare menu.

Not all participants were engaged in the foodie performance—Tom, Emily and Pam said that they were more apt eat a quick meal and get back to the rides.

This section revealed how integral food is to a successful performance to Disney World for many interviewees. For some, the act of eating is so important to the performance that many informants' days, and sometimes the timing of their vacations, are organized in part around dining. Interviewees saw dining as a way to slow down and take part in new cultures.

Big spenders?

Most interviewees reported that shopping was not a big part of their theme park performance. I asked interviewees to share what they have purchased on past Disney vacations. Their answers ranged from not having any items to share, to sharing stories about why they bought items and why they were so important to them. Interviewees purchased items that were practical, that would add value to their theme park performance, that facilitated interactions, and that added to their collections. Some informants did not care whether they purchased items, but enjoyed looking through the gift shops.

Interestingly, several interviewees mentioned various souvenirs that they had left in their closet, had packed away, or had no clue where the souvenirs were. Charlene explained that as she has gotten older, shopping has become less important to her theme park performance. "Throughout the years, now that I have gotten older, I've bought more art. You know, watercolor paintings and that sort of thing of wherever we're at." Sybil also said that shopping did not play a big part in her performance. Lori said shopping was not a big part of her performance, other than pins. Since she goes often to Disney World, shopping is reserved for commemorating special events or buying gifts for others.

Interestingly, Claire mentioned that they did not make many purchases in gift shops, but enjoyed looking:

> Jack: I don't even know if it's even about purchasing the items. It's as much fun for her to look at everything that's in the shops. Right? Am I speaking out of turn?

Claire: Yeah

Jack: You enjoy just perusing. And if you find something you like, great, but you're just as happy leaving without a purchase.

Claire: Empty handed. Because it gets back to the theming.

In the conversation between Jack and Claire, Jack suggested that Claire just likes looking at the shops, even without purchasing. Claire confirmed and suggested that she often leaves without buying anything, but enjoys how the merchandise reinforced the theming of the theme park. She views the merchandise as part of the setting for her performance at the park. In this case, the buying and owning of the objects were not important, but rather the process of gazing was important to her performance. The souvenirs reflected the theming, further immersing Claire in her performance.

Pin trading was described as a part of two interviewees theme park performances (Lilly, Lori). Lilly purchased pins for her children to trade with Cast Members to keep them engaged while she and her partner enjoyed food and beverage around the World Showcase.

"It's not about 'I want to keep this pin' or 'I've been looking for this pin' or 'I want this particular pin.' They like the interaction and the talking with Cast Members, and 'oh this pin is pretty,' and then next week they find a prettier one. Or the next day or the next hour. So, I think for them it's just the act of doing it, not about the pin itself." (Lilly)

Lilly described her children as not caring about the pins, but enjoying interacting in a performance with Cast Members. She emphasized that it's the performance of pin trading that her children take pleasure in, rather than the items themselves. Lilly's children didn't care much about the pin. In contrast, Lori did pay attention to the actual pins:

"They're small. And they're fun. They don't take up a lot of space. […] It's the hunt, right? […] You're trying to find that one that you're missing in this set, that you're hoping will magically appear on your trip. And I like talking to Cast Members because they're nice." (Lori)

Lori suggested that the pins do not take up much space. She described searching for the pin as a performance in itself. The joy of pin trading stemmed in part from the joy of searching. This

indicates that Lori engaged in scavenger hunt performances. Yet Lori also mentions that she enjoyed pin trading because it facilitates interactions with Cast Members. In these examples, the interviewees paid attention to the social nature of the performance, not just the purchasing and owning the items. These interviewees wanted to collaborate in performances with the Cast Members, and viewed the pins as props to facilitate such interactions.

Nearly all interviewees reported that their purchases were to add to their collections. Abby and Claire mentioned they collect Mickey ears. Half of interviews mentioned purchasing Christmas ornaments. Most of the Christmas ornament collectors specified that they bought Christmas ornaments on every vacation, not only the Disney ones. Abby collected key chains. Then there were the mugs; Emily collected princess mugs, Pam and Lori collected mugs, Claire and Jack collected dining plan refillable mugs. Dawson collected items from *Big Hero 6* and *Frozen*, spirit jerseys, and button up shirts. This indicates that for many adding to their collections is part of their normative tourist performances.

Some interviewees (Claire, Jack, Dawson, Abby) described emotional attachments when it came to specific souvenirs. Abby described her affection for a mug she purchased that broke:

> "I just loved that it encompassed everything that is in the parks. Funny story: in April, I broke it. I broke this mug. And my [partner] being the wonderful human that [they are], found on eBay a replacement. This is not the one that I bought but it was shipped. Somebody went and bought a duplicate of it in the park and shipped it to me, and I got it back in June. So this is an important mug to me. I was devastated and I cried when I broke it. […] I think sometimes I get emotionally attached to souvenirs [chuckles]. It has so many details in it about the parks and characters and there are ride vehicles on it, and it represented my trip for me. It was this big giant memory that I had that broke."

Abby expressed why she loves this mug—different symbols reminded her of her trip. However, last April the mug broke, which upset her. Her partner found the same mug and gave it to her. The gift added new meanings to Abby. Now the mug is not just a reflection of her trip, but a sign of the relationship with her partner. In this example the interviewee discussed deeper meanings that were tied with their purchases. Abby described her mug breaking as feeling like her memories had broken. This is similar to Dawson who described how important the *Frozen* and *Big Hero 6* films were to him as they provided comfort to him emotionally, which spurred

his collection of items related to these stories. Guests narrated these items as being emotionally laden and tied to their memories, and reinforcing their identities. The items are a way to help them reflect on their theme park performances when they have returned to their normal life.

4.2 Sharing the stage

Tourist performances are social performances. Theme parks are filled with stage managers, directors, and other actors, all of which have potential to influence guests' performances. This section begins by analyzing the role that Cast Members played in the guests' performances. Then I examine performances taking place in a different country than the informants' home country. Lastly informants describe performances that conflicted with their own ones.

Cast and crew

Interviewees viewed their performances with Cast Members overwhelmingly favorably. Charlene and Sybil recounted specific details of Cast Members whom they had sought out year after year. In fact, Pam cited Cast Members as a reason she and her partner ended up going to Disney World. She knew that they would receive a high level of customer service and cleanliness. Interestingly, Emily mentioned how the high service standards upheld by Disney Cast Members was a part of the feeling of magic.

Several guests recounted times when customer service went well above what was necessary. Claire and Lilly both recounted stories of service recovery. When Claire's battery-powered misting fan needed a new battery, the Cast Member offered to replace the entire unit. This surprised Claire, because the fan had been damaged by her child. Claire believed she would partake in a normative performance in which she would be buying batteries. Instead of the performance she was used to, the Cast Member offers a differing one. The Cast Member provided a new fan, free of charge. Claire was surprised by this, pointing out: "you just don't get that everywhere!" Instead of an exchange involving money, she was handed a repaired prop. The Cast Member acted not in their role as a merchandise Cast Member, but instead became a Prop Master. They took the broken prop and replaced it, fixing the damage. Claire reflected how rare that is in life and it made for an important part of her visit. Lilly also explained that she had things go wrong during the visit, and had gotten them resolved with chatting calmly to a Cast Member. The Cast Member went above what was necessary to resolve their situations, Claire said.

A few interviewees mentioned how they or someone in their party had dietary restrictions. They marveled at the number of offerings available for them, despite their restricted eating. One guest described an instance where a chef special made something for her. In these cases with guests food allergies and dietary restrictions are engaged in an exchange which enables them to successfully partake in what may be a stressful performance in other settings. Instead of being made to feel difficult and given one option, they are presented with multiple choices. They are able to partake in a performance which may not be common in their everyday lives.

Interestingly, Claire, who herself used to be a Cast Member, talked about how Cast Members might have to do some important negotiation in order to ensure guests expectations are met. As mentioned before, there was a very popular guidebook which recommended specific rooms to request at this resort, causing many guests to request the same rooms. Claire explained how she as a Cast Member then learned a specific performance to redirect guests' disappointment if they were unable to secure their requested room. This room request happened with so much frequency that Claire developed her own performance to reassure the guest that they still could have a successful stay. In a sense, she stepped in as a director when the guest was unable to follow their approved script. It is not surprising that this happened as it is discussed in the literature review that Cast Members can be viewed as both directors and stage managers of the Disney parks. In all these instances Cast Members subtly prevented an informant's performance from going awry. In this sense, they are maintaining the stage as they are trying to keep the tourist happy. They enhance the performances without being asked. They had complementary performances.

A bit of pixie dust

The Disney parks were designed for guests of all ages to enjoy, not just children. Bryman (1995, p. 87) pointed out that one of the reasons the Disney parks are so successful was because Walt Disney focused on what would allow the adults to enjoy their day as much as the children. "You're dead if you aim only for kids. Adults are only kids grown up, anyway." (Disney, 2001, p. 136). Out of the people interviewed, five of the ten interviews that took place were adults traveling to Disney without children. Walt Disney was quoted as pointing out that there is a 4 to 1 adult to child ratio at Disneyland (Disney, 2001). Fjellman (1992) describes Disney World as a liminal space for "the visitors' playful pilgrimage. One's passage through the various gates and barriers leads over the threshold into liminal space" (pp. 221-222). In this space, "Children

and adults mingle, and latter often acting more childlike than the former" Fjellman (1992, p. 222). There is less of a divide in age as guests access their child-at-heart state. This section proposes that some people take on child-like roles when they are enacting their Disney theme park performances. I explore this specifically in relation to interactions with characters and with the act of "pixie dusting."

Before I dive into this performance of acting child-like, I would like to clarify the idea of what I mean when I say child-like. Often in the English language, calling an adult a child is an insult. It is not my intention to insult any of these peoples' performances. I view being child-like as embracing wonder, being playful and unfettered. My research indicates that for some people this kind of performance is what they want as part of their visit to Disney theme parks.

Some of the information of the kind of playful performances came out when I asked each interviewee to reflect on meeting characters. I find the notion of looking at character interactions particularly interesting when applying performance theory as the interaction is between an actor in a dramaturgical sense, and an actor in their touristic performance. Every interviewee reported collaborating with a character as part of their theme park performance. This may indicate that meeting characters is a normative performance at Disney theme parks. Charlene told how her children rode Dumbo with Chip and Dale. Sybil recounted Chewbacca making fun of a member of her travel party's balding head. Tom reported awkwardly shaking Genie's hand. Dawson laughed at the time Baymax[27] took his over-sized Baymax stuffed animal and walked away with it. Pam described confusion over her partner's drive to meet Cinderella.

Dawson and Emily both reported their enthusiasm for meeting characters.

> "I like having fun with them. Going with their storyline, things like that […] It's very fun to see what they come up with in terms of whatever material I give them and how they respond back." (Dawson)

> "I enjoy visiting characters very much. They're probably one of my favorite things there […] I enjoy just chatting with them. I don't often come in prepared with questions, even

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[27] A title character from Disney's *Big Hero 6* (2014)

though I do occasionally have questions I'm dying to ask […] But I don't want to give off the energy that I am one of those people who's trying to get them to break character." (Emily)

The interaction impacted the guests' performances in different ways. Emily and Dawson expressed that they enjoyed the element of playing into their world. They asked questions of the character, and delighted in the responses. They engaged in conversations. Notably, Emily described her hesitancy to ask a character a hard question for fear that the illusion would be broken, or that she was giving off the impression that she was being rude to the character performer. "Most adult visitors to a Disney themepark [sic] are perfectly aware that Mickey, Donald and company are all being played by human beings in costume, but something of the enjoyment would be lost if we could see how the shows or parades were put together"(Hannam & Knox, 2010, p. 75). This quote suggested that there is amusement in buying into the illusion. Similarly, Emily and Dawson buy into the illusion, engaging in a level of play with the character, knowing fully they are trained actors. They get something out of these collaborative performances.

In some interviews, I specifically asked about interacting with characters as an adult without children in tow. As an adult who loves meeting characters myself, I was particularly interested in what other adults had to say about this performance. Those who were into the interactions described it was fun to play along with the performance of the Disney character:

> "If the performer is really great, I will get starstruck… I cried when I met Anna last time because I love her so much. And she was great." (Emily)

Emily cried when she met Anna. She indicated that the performance of Anna is believable. The fantasy triggered something in her that causes her to cry. When asked what role the characters have in the Disney parks, Abby responds:

> "[The characters are] part of what makes people feel like they're home there and feel welcomed. You're interacting with the character from […] the movie that you love. It's getting that face-to-face interaction with a character that you hold close to your heart." (Abby)

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Abby drew a thread between characters meeting with guests to growing up watching Disney animated films. She believed the characters stirred feelings, causing the guests to feel at home because the emotional attachments formed with the characters. Similarly, Emily appeared starstruck meeting Anna because she had an emotional attachment. There is something going on between guests and these characters they meet. The Disney films could be seen as scripts that are consulted prior to travels. Emily and Abby were familiar with these characters, which triggered strong emotions.

This element of play was carried out from the liminal space of the Disney parks for Lori.

> "Last time we ate at Park Fare, the Mad Hatter—or Alice, asked what tea we were having, and I said 'coffee.' And she was like 'Oh! Bean tea!'. So now I refer to coffee at bean tea because apparently that's what coffee is." (Lori)

Lori told the instance of visiting engaging with characters from *Alice in Wonderland* during a character dining. In this story, a collaborative performance between characters and tourist-actors had an impact that lasted past the touristic performance. The characters said something silly, which Lori took into her normal life. The performance of play passed from the specific instance into her normative everyday performance. This included referring to the actor as a character in conversations outside of the stage at Disney theme parks.

While several guests' described positive interactions with characters, three informants, those who are regular affinity guests, did not enjoy character interactions. These informants who visited Disney less commented that they would not have met characters if they had not been with someone else who wanted to meet them. They were dragged into the performance, as opposed to willingly joining it.

> "I think it was weird because they—It's not like you just go in and take the picture. They talk to you. They engage like they're the character. I remember—I think it was Cinderella—talking about my shoes. 'Oh look at those pretty shoes that you're wearing' and I was thinking 'I'm not a five-year-old.' I found it awkward." (Pam)

Pam described the interaction itself as awkward, suggesting that maybe if it was just a picture, it would not be so uncomfortable. She was irritated by the character treating her like a child. If the characters are viewed as directors, directing guests into a child-like performance, these

regular affinity guests do not want to engage in such playful encounters. Each regular affinity guests pushed back on this performance, instead of giving into the playful nature.

Pam was surprised at seeing how her partner responded to their trip to Walt Disney World in general. She described him as a "big kid" but also as someone who hates waiting in lines, and was a bit apprehensive about their days in the theme parks because of this. What happened there surprised her:

> "My [partner] was really excited about [meeting Cinderella]. And we got pictures taken with Cinderella, and he was like 'I want to make sure we print one of those.' It was something that was really exciting for him. And I couldn't tell you why. I was really surprised[…] I didn't know if he was going to like Disney at all because he hates lines. And crowds. He gets really impatient, so the fact that we were waiting in line to meet an actor dressed as a Disney princess, when he hasn't even seen a lot of Disney movies—that really blew my mind."

Pam's partner got excited about meeting a princess, which shocked Pam, who did not think her partner would even like Disney World due to the other people. Unlike Emily and Abby, Pam posited that her partner did not have an emotional attachment to any character, as he is not familiar with Disney films. This is interesting to me because despite the assumed lack of familiarity of Cinderella, Pam's partner is engaged in this childlike performance. He even wanted a photo record of his performance. She did describe him as "childlike." This may indicate that her partner was simply performing his own identity.

Most of interviewees did not bring up the fact that the characters were portrayed by actors. Interestingly, all interviewees maintained this idea of character integrity, in which the character performer *is* the character. Interviewees used the character names instead and this could indicate that the performance of the Disney theme park is carried out long after interactions with individual characters.

I discussed adults encountering characters as a part of their theme park performances. But how do these adults describe their children's character interactions? For children the interaction with

the character is less a performance on the child's end, as they appear to fully believe in the fantasy. Lilly recounts a story of her child engaging with Tinker Bell:

> "[S]he ended up spending fifteen minutes with our kids. She spun them around and was like 'do you feel that, do you feel that?' And she was pointing to their shoulder blades. And they're like 'what?!' And she's like 'that's your wings! They're just under there, and they haven't come out yet.' Well I think for probably two or three years, my middle child thought her wings were coming out. Tinker Bell was so excited for her, and so enthusiastic, that for longer than I would care to admit, my child thought that [they] had wings coming." (Lilly)

Tinker Bell spent extra with Lilly's children, engaging in play with them. Lilly reported that the performance of Tinker Bell was so believable that it convinced one of her children that they were a fairy. These children engaged with the Tinker Bell fully believing in her. The actress portraying Tinker Bell directed the children to play. Adults, while they realized the characters are actors, played along with the performance, much in the same ways that adults maintain the performance of Santa Claus for the younger generations.

Claire and Jack mentioned that Cast Members added to the immersive quality of their theme park performances. They explained how the magical setting and performing Cast Members helped their shy child out of their shell during a pirate makeover.

> Claire: From the moment checking in, the people checking you in were in character. They were talking like pirates. And then the person who made [the child] up spoke like a pirate the whole time. Every single person in there was talking like a pirate. It was so perfect and—
>
> Jack: It was so immersive.
>
> Claire: Immersive, yeah that's a great word for it.
>
> Researcher: What impact do you think that has on guests?
>
> Jack: So we talked a little about how [the child] is a shy kid. [They] were brought out of [their] shyness a little bit because [they are] in a magical land filled with pirates, right? Like it wasn't a bunch of adults that [they] must be careful about what [they] talk

about. There's this magical land filled with pirates, and it's okay if [they are] funny and [age of child].

Claire: A little bit silly.

Jack: Yeah a bit silly. It's not a—it's not like [they] were standing in line at a local theme park and had to be on good behavior. Not talk to strangers. [They] could be [themselves].

In this illustration, Claire and Jack drew a direct connection between the immersive quality of the land and how their child came out of their shell. Claire identified that the Cast Members are performing like pirates. Jack thought the immersion into fantasy allowed his child to be playful and goofy instead of having to perform in a certain way. According to Claire and Jack, the complete fantasy of the parks let their child feel comfortable in performing identity. This idea is reinforced more with Cast Members playing into the theme. This further illustrated how the theming enacted by tourist workers directed children that it is safe to be playful. In these accounts we have an actor playing characters (Tinker Bell, pirates). They act as directors. They used language and engaged in play, which is influencing the child to engage in fantasy, and connect to themselves.

Another childlike performance that a couple interviewees mentioned was that of being "pixie dusted". At the Magic Kingdom, one can find a Cast Member waving a "magic wand" (a plastic toy wand) over the guests' head, sprinkling "pixie dust" (glitter) while the guest makes a wish. Emily and Dawson brought up their love of this performance. When I asked them why they loved it, they responded:

"It's just fun. It's fun to pretend and to believe. And when they commit to the same illusion it feels significantly more real." (Emily)

"I just think it's such a small thing, but it brings magic to people. I know that pixie dust is just glitter, but it's the meaning of it. It's the act of having to be pixie dusted. It just feels fun, it just feels magical[…] You feel the magic of youth. You know Disneyland and Disney World itself, you come to the park to escape realities and you feel like a kid again. That's what I feel like. Just the little magic of pixie dust amplifies that just a bit more." (Dawson)

Emily explained that she likes engaging in make believe. Dawson elaborated further. He stated that it is a small thing to do, but it brings magic. "Fjellman (1992) suggests that even though people can distinguish the real from the fake, they do not greatly care about the distinction and in fact often revel in signs of artificiality" (Bryman, 1995, p. 173). The act of pixie dusting demonstrated this. Dawson clarified that he understood that the pixie dust is not real—he is not being tricked. For him it is not about the act, but about the *meaning* of the act itself. He described it as magical, and tied the performance back to being young, and ultimately back to why people go to Disney; to be a child again. The act is not just about being childlike, but having other people encourage his performance. Being pixie dusted heightens that performance for him. He is reveled in the fake, but also the intangible. It placed him in the mindset of this playful performance. Much like the character-directors, the Cast Members sprinkling pixie dust on guests are re-enforcing this wide-eyed performance.

Cast Members reinforced the practice of a theme park performance by committing to their roles as directors. "Thus, 'appropriate' behavior and performative procedures are regulated by these key personnel [directors and stage-managers], who by synthesizing meaning and action reinform a common-sense praxis and re-encode enactive norms" (Edensor, 2001, p. 69). Cast Members reassured that this playful behavior is normal in their Magic Kingdom, reinforcing that it is okay for guests to engage as well. Guests explained they collaborate with characters as part of their performances at Disney theme parks, along with other playful performances. In each of these examples, we saw the key personnel instructing guests how to act, reassuring them that it is okay to play, to give into the fantasy and immersion of their performances.

Foreign exchange

One of the boundaries in which tourists act within is cultural (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005). While several interviewees touched on their international trips, this section focuses specifically on Tom and Abby's trips to Tokyo Disneyland to show how the intercultural elements came to play a role in their performances. I found it interesting how different guests performed between cultures.

Both Abby and Tom explained how visiting the Disney parks spurred their travels to Japan:

"[O]ne of the deciding factors for a couple of countries I wanted to go to, wanting to go to a Disney park was a factor. I chose to go to France with my mom because I wanted to go to Disneyland Paris. And one of the reasons I wanted to go to Japan was to go to Tokyo Disney. And I wanted to visit China and Hong Kong someday, so that I can go to those parks." (Abby)

"[W]e go and we do the Disney theme park and then we get to experience the rest of the culture of the country outside of that. Versus when you go to one of the theme parks in the US it's the culture you're from. There's no point in leaving the park when you're on that trip." (Tom)

Abby wanted to go to Japan in part because of Tokyo Disneyland. She is also interested in going to all of the Disney theme parks around the world. Tom expressed that going to a foreign Disney park is an added value, as there is no reason to leave the theme parks in the United States. Abby and Tom both mentioned how they enjoyed learning about Japanese culture during their travels.

For both Abby and Tom, their trip to Tokyo Disneyland was one act in their larger performance of visiting Japan. That being said, the Disney parks was the catalyst for going to these new countries. It was also an important step in incorporating new elements into their performance outside of the theme parks:

"For Japan especially, it [Tokyo Disneyland] was a good, soft introduction to the culture. Because there's enough about the—there's enough similarities to where it's still comfortable. But enough differences where you kind of start to pick up on the cultural norms. Without jumping both feet in without realizing you've offended someone." (Tom)

In this discussion, Tom revealed how he was learning a new cultural performance by observing where the two cultures met—the Disney theme parks. Being familiar with Disney theme parks, he was able to bring that performance with him into the international theme parks. He felt safe in learning a new performance within the boundaries of the theme parks. He looked to other guests to learn Japanese cultural norms, which he would be expected to follow throughout the rest of his trip. He liked getting an opportunity to learn this performance while being in a place he felt safe, where he might not embarrass himself should he perform poorly. He recognized

that he was on a new stage, with a new cultural performance. Edensor (1998, p. 67) explained that in heterogenous tourists places, the performances is unknown and is cause for doubt. By taking note of the differences while at Tokyo Disneyland, Tom removed the doubt that Edensor describes when entering in a new culture, and was able to better fit into the heterogeneous spaces of Japan.

Both Abby and Tom had traveled to the Disney parks in the United States prior to their trips to Japan. In talking about their trips to Tokyo Disneyland, they reflected on how different the performances were from those within their home country. They both observed that guests to Tokyo Disneyland had different performances than those which they had previously observed in the United States. They evaluated these performances more positively than the performances with the United States theme parks. For example, Tom shared an interaction with a Cast Member in which they asked himself and his partner, both of whom he noted are tall, to sit in the back of a seating section so they did not block anyone's view that was shorter than them. This interaction Tom viewed positively as it was a way that would allow more people to have positive performances. Additionally, Tom noticed how different his experience was when watching shows:

> "One of the things that amazed me was the way crowd control worked throughout shows and parades and things like that was everyone sits on the ground[28]. If you have a stroller, the stroller gets collapsed and put on the ground beside you all to make sure you don't block somebody's view behind you. It was very much an entire culture of people that are looking out to make sure that they're not being rude in some way."

Tom expressed shock in how the crowds act. They sat on the ground during parades and shows, props are put away, all so that more people can see. He posited that the differing performance are because of the collective culture in Japan. Abby shared similar positive review of guest performances at Tokyo Disneyland as it pertains to a greater collective performance. She recounted exiting Tokyo DisneySea at the end of the day while a firework display was going off:

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[28] In the United States it is common practice for guest to stand while watching parades and fireworks.

"[T]here was no waiting. There was no bottle neck. There was 'this is where you stand if you want to watch. This is where you go if you want to walk out of the park'[…] Everybody is like 'okay these are the rules. These are the expectations. We are all going to follow them and be respectful of everybody.' I have never, never once experienced that in a Disney park." (Abby)

Abby reflected that she was able to leave the park easily. She noted that she had never seen a tourist performance where people were that well-organized, allowing her performance to not clash with theirs. The guests followed the rules, and expected one another to act in a way that was mindful of all the guests. Tom noted how the culture and instructions by Cast Members influenced the order. In this performance, the Cast Members act as directors, reinforcing this normative performance. The actors of Tokyo Disneyland performed on the stage which bounded by Japanese culture. This suggests that there are differing collective performances in Tokyo Disneyland in comparison to that of the United States parks in part due to the culture. These performances are re-enacted by the guests and reinforced by Cast Members. Both Abby and Tom were pleasantly surprised by this, and preferred this performance.

This section has demonstrated that Tom and Abby took part in different cultural performances at the theme parks. This is illustrated by Tom's example of learning Japanese culture while being in an "in between" space. The interviewees were motivated to go and explore these different cultures in part because of wanting to go to international Disney theme parks. They were able to try on different performances during this travel. Additionally, they learned new cultural performances, and reflected on how these normative performances differed from their own.

Well that is irritating…

In contrast to the interviewees visiting Tokyo Disneyland, those who visited Disney World reflected on other guests' performances interfering with their own performances. This follows because performers can utilize the same space in different manners (Thurnell-Read, 2012). Despite Disney's control over their theme parks, and presumably wanting to minimize conflicts between guests, some interviewees expressed how other's performances impinged on their own performances. This next section discusses a few conflicting performances that arose between informants while sharing the stage with other guests.

One praise of the Disney theme parks is that they are very inclusive of guests with disabilities (Bryman, 1995). That being said, Lilly reported guest taking advantage of the accommodations provided to peoples who use wheelchairs by those who do not require them:

> "We would get on rides, and hear people say 'who's turn is it in the wheelchair now? Let's go run to the front of the line!' And see kids switching through rented wheelchairs. And we started to notice that Cast Members[…] not that they did not treat others well, but we noticed a definite difference when people were clearly in wheelchairs that they owned."

Lilly described an instance where people were taking turns pushing each other in a wheelchair to skip lines[29]. She noted that Cast Members were aware of this scam, and reacted. These other guests had learned a performance, the performance of pretending to have a disability or injury, to gain access to an accommodation that they did not need. This is a conflicting performance because it causes longer lines for guests who are waiting their turns and prevents guests who do have probable reason to need a shortened line to have a longer wait. The Cast Members knew this performance, and did not treat those guests as nicely in responding to their performances. Once again, Cast Members are acting like stage managers by maintaining the space. They did not discipline the people who were faking a disability, but instead treated another guest who own a wheelchair extra well.

Dawson expressed his frustration with other guests performing in a way he feels is inappropriate:

> "Obviously, there are those who are just assholes, and are like 'here's my giant iPad, I'm going to record the fireworks, that are a few miles away'. So that can get pretty annoying. Or when people have flash on their camera."

Dawson is annoyed by people using flash photography, and holding up iPads, blocking others' views, during the fireworks. In this, we see that the other guests are enacting a common tourist performance, that of photographing (Bærenholdt et al., 2017 [2004]; Edensor, 1998). While

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[29] This commentary was echoed in a news story that broke, which reported rich people in New York City hiring people with disabilities to accompany them on vacation so that their family could wait in shorter lines (Palmeri, 2013). Shortly after this article being published Disney World revised their Guests with Disabilities systems.

these tourist enacted their own performances, Dawson suggested that using flash photography and filming the fireworks prevented others from taking part in their own performances successfully. In these conflicting performances, Dawson wanted to enjoy his experience in person, not through a stranger's iPad. Fjellman (1992) suggested of others taking photos at inappropriate times that "one sometimes wishes for even more corporate control over human activity" (p. 212).

In the World Showcase area of Epcot, eleven pavilions representing different countries are laid out around a lake. These pavilions feature the nation's foods, major touristic symbols, shopping, and alcohol. As such, a tradition of "drinking around the world," has become a moneymaker which the Disney company has not condoned. While many people enjoy enacting a performance of imbibing at a permanent festival center with multiple drink offerings, Lori expressed frustration over inebriated guests at Epcot.

> "For me it might be a glass or two of those little itty bitty tiny little things that they give you that's not even really a fully glass of wine. Then there are the bachelor parties, the bachelorette parties, the family reunions, the 'let's all just go get drunk' where they're wearing t-shirts and checking off every single country that they're drinking in [...] It makes it too crowded, there are big groups of people, they're oblivious to other people."
> (Lori)

Lori wished to enjoy the park, and did enjoy having a few glasses of wine during the festivals, but she did not appreciate the large crowds of drunken people acting like fools. In this we see Lori who is trying to enjoy a few glasses of wine, yet she must share the stage with the groups of people who are binge drinking around the world. This is similar to Thurnell-Read (2012)'s look at Krakow in which locals became frustrated with Bachelor parties getting out of hand in their public squares. In both, there is an appropriation of space in which celebratory groups take over, sometimes in opposition to other performances. It has become so out of hand that Lori no longer goes to the Food and Wine Festival during the weekends because Lori does not appreciate these performances.

These performances all shared a common theme: a complete disregard for other performers. A couple of informants called out that they often saw other guest actors acting entitled.

"[…]it was like every man for himself [at Disney]. Not in like a mad frenzy, but in like a 'this is my Disney experience, and I'm gonna do what I want!'" (Pam)

"Because we've turned into a culture of 'Me First.'[…] It's "me me me me me. What I want. What's going to benefit me. This is my vacation, you need to do what I say. What do you mean I need to wait in line?' [….] The only people I've seen being nasty to Cast Members are Americans." (Lori)

Pam described an attitude she noticed from other guests in which they are only thinking selfishly of their own performances, and were ignorant of those around them. Lori posited that this attitude is a reflection of United States culture. For her, this culture puts the individual self as more important than the collective whole. She stated that the guests who are mean to Cast Members are never from outside the country. As aforementioned, one of the boundaries in which tourist perform is their culture (Doorne & Ateljevic, 2005). This is an interesting idea when juxtaposed to the performances witnessed by Tom and Abby in the previous section. Perhaps a future area of study includes an examination of cultural differences between theme park performances.

Additionally, a few writings have noted that theming is tied to positioning guests at the center of their own performances. "In the theme park […] each guest is their own main character, with a story that is directly happening to *them* [emphasis in original]*"* (Younger, 2016, p. 83). "By engaging the five senses and their combinations in synesthetic ways, the themed space creates an experiential ground for the consumer that appears to be individualistic[…] she is told, essentially, that Vegas is about *her* [emphasis in original]" (Lukas, 2007, p. 81). These scholars suggested that the designs within the park give a sense of an individual performance within themed spaces.

4.3 It's material

In order to address the question "how do guests narrate their Disney theme park performances?" having an idea of how guests interact with the setting is important. Enclavic spaces can influence specific performances (Edensor, 1998, p. 68). I was surprised that discussions on the setting came up organically in most interviews, even though there were not any questions that explicitly asked about this. The following section will attempt to capture some of the sentiments the interviewees reflected on in relation to the setting of the Disney theme parks.

Change of scenery

Most interviewees had visited multiple Disney resort areas throughout their life. In the interviews, the reflections often resulted in some comparisons and skipping around to different trips. Interviewees mentioned differences between the Disney parks around the world and their performances within them.

Both Abby and Tom had some rather similar reactions to Tokyo Disneyland Resort as far as the setting in the parks were concerned. Both Abby and Tom stated that they were amused by going on familiar rides where a different language was being spoken than what they were used to hearing. This relatively small element of difference enabled a feeling of a novel performance. As Tom said:

> "Splash Mountain in Japanese was a totally new experience. Because you know the music […] And it being sung in a foreign language that I don't understand was a neat little cognitive dissidence."

Both Abby and Tom were amused by hearing the attractions in other languages that were not English. Abby took videos both at Tokyo Disneyland and in Disneyland Paris, pointing to the differing language as the reason for her recordings. Tom's quote was the continuation of a response to me asking about what his must-dos were. He found amusement in hearing a familiar song in a foreign language. These interviewees enjoyed the novelty of their performances. This interested me from the standpoint of Edensor (2007), who suggested that tourism has become more entwined with our everyday lives. Carrying this idea to Disney theme parks, the guests were treated to both the novel and the mundane. They got a little taste of new materialities, yet experienced the familiarity of Disney theme parks. They are enacting a performance that they could have chosen to do in their own country, but chose to do otherwise.

While Abby and Tom loved their new performances in Tokyo, Lori was unsettled by a change in her performance at a theme park she frequently visited. Lori reflected on her last trip to Epcot where she tried to make sense of new choreography. At the time of her visit, Epcot had several construction walls up. The construction walls caused her to re-route her movements, which threw her off since she is so familiar with the parks. She was not able to partake in her regular chorography. Lori talked for a few minutes about this occurrence—during which she circled

back a few times to try to explain how she was feeling. "[I]t's like trying to get a way—it was almost like—there were parts where you were going backstage in order to get to places." Lori tried to explain, then switched directions in trying to iterate the feeling. "You know, since you have worked at Epcot. You know the park like the back of your hand." By this she suggested her familiarity with the theme park, suggesting that a change in direction is something worth pointing out. "Trying to do anything in Future World[30] was really difficult to navigate" She ended up comparing the performance in Future World to that feeling of the time she took a trip to Disneyland. She says:

> "… you think you know where things are, but they're not where you think they are. We were walking into Epcot, and they're doing all of this construction and you're like 'but I need to go this way,' and they're like 'no you have to go that way and then that way.'"

Lori reflected on her trip to Disneyland, which has a similar layout to the Magic Kingdom park which she frequents. The difference in the setting is unsettling to her. This same unsettling feeling comes up in Epcot where construction walls were preventing her from going on her main path. This was not what she wanted. Things were not where they were supposed to be. This is similar to what Tom described as cognitive dissidence. He was in a place that was familiar in materialities, but the sound was not what it was supposed to be. Tom and Abby are amused; perhaps because they are in a theme park with which they are less familiar with. Lori, on the other hand, is in a familiar place but must do new choreography. She finds it "difficult to navigate" in a park with which she deemed she is very familiar with.

All of the informants took part in new performances that were informed by the settings. Lori had to change her choreography of her learned performance in Epcot. Whereas Tom and Abby were first timers to Tokyo Disneyland, and perhaps anticipated a differing performance. Something like a new construction wall or a familiar song being sung in a different language, throws off the interviewees. This section discussed some material changes which guests noticed which enabled new performances.

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[30] Future World is a land in Epcot that showcases future technologies.

Every little detail

In the literature review, I outlined Disney theme parks as mostly enclavic themed tourist spaces. This section highlights how guests become immersed in their performances in part due to the theming and details. The details in the setting of the Disney theme parks came up naturally without prompts during the interviews. This delighted me as the details are one of my favorite things in any theme park. The first portion of this section discusses what details do for the informants' performances. The latter portion details one informant's narrative in which the tiniest detail impacting their future theme park performances.

Abby, Jack, and Emily all described that the setting immersed them within their Disney theme park performances. Specifically, guests mentioned how the details helped them feel immersed in a magical space. Two informants referred to this sense of immersion as a "bubble".

> "[…] you're in this bubble. The outside really doesn't exist. And it's very easy to forget that reality is happening. […] so you can go and shut your brain off to everything that's going on. All of the outside noise and chaos and—everything. And escape into fantasy for a day or two or seven or however long your trip is." (Lori)

Lori described a metaphorical bubble which blocks out the real world. She enters Disney and goes into this liminal space where instead of the normal stresses of life, she is engulfed in a fantasy.

Many informants loved the details at Disney theme parks. Abby delighted over the Mickey Mouse-shaped handles on the monorail at Tokyo Disneyland; Charlene in the attention put into the flowers. Two interviewees mentioned in approval specifically how the story elements of the land were carried through into the restrooms (Jack, Charlene). When the interviewees mentioned their love of the details, the discussion often followed the same pattern: the details helped the guests become more engaged in their own performances. Alternatively, some informants suggested the details helped them become more immersed in the magic.

> "And even when you're waiting—you know what it's like waiting in some of the lines. The detail that goes into the queue. What are you seeing? What music are you hearing? […] All to keep you amused, entertained, engaged, whatever you want to call it." (Charlene)

"It was always cool trying to find—the Hidden Mickeys[31] are always fun to begin with. But trying to find—when there's that much detail for you to find, you can be more engaged in looking for the little hidden details." (Tom)

Charlene expressed that the details amused guests while in line. She reflected on actively engaging two of her senses, and suggested that this engagement kept her immersed in her theme park performance. Tom mentioned that he enjoys searching for Hidden Mickeys. The details captured his attention, also immersing him in his theme park performance.

Some interviewees suggested that they were more than just immersed in a theme park performance. Near the end of our interview, I asked Abby is she had anything else she wanted to say regarding her trip. She described enthusiasm over the details in the Tokyo Disneyland Resort. I asked her what the details did for her. Her response is as follows:

"[Slowly] I think [my partner] fell more in love with a Disney park just from going to Tokyo DisneySea because that is truly the most amazing Disney park I've ever seen.[…] It just didn't feel theme park-y. […] you just are fully immersed—more immersed than I ever thought I could be in a particular land. And everything was so well made. It was so much fun. […] And walk into this big volcano, and you're just surrounded completely by a big mountain, and it just feels like you're on an adventure"

Abby attributed the attention to detail as the reason her partner fell in love with the theme park. Abby was amazed by the park and described it as being so detailed that it was teleportive. No longer was Abby in a theme park; she was on an adventure next to a big volcano. She felt so engrossed in her performance than she no longer felt like she was in a theme park, but in another world. This indicates that the details immersed her fully into a playful, fantastical performance. Similarly, Emily pointed to the importance of the details when it comes to allowing for the performance she seeks, and explains how "all the details line up and help create that story telling." A handful of informants discussed immersion into the setting. In all of these stories,

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[31] Hidden Mickeys are details shaped like Mickey Mouse. They are commonly found throughout Disney theme park resorts.

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the informants suggested escaping and immersing themselves into a fantasy world. This may indicate that the setting enabled the informants to bypass the concept of a theme park performance and additionally engage in a fantastical, playful performance.

In passing, Tom mentioned that Disney World seemed like a corrupted version of Disneyland. When I pressed him for why, he expressed that Disneyland seemed like they were trying to build a repeat customer base whereas he felt that Walt Disney World was trying to elicit consumeristic performances from guests and did not care if they ever saw them again. Tom used the lack of attention to detail and theming to illustrate why he felt Walt Disney World was corrupted in comparison to Disneyland and Tokyo Disneyland:

> "[I]t might seem stupid but the paper cups when you get a drink were always themed differently depending on where you were […] When we went back in 2013, it was everything's the same because it costs us two cents less a cup to do it this way […] It seemed like they were pinching pennies. And losing more and more sight of what the original plan—what original Disney felt like." (Tom)

Tom reflexively examined his impressions of the Disney parks he visited. He used a small detail, the design on disposable paper cups, as an example of distracting him from his performance. He felt that the details were an indication of quality. Tom perceived Disneyland and Tokyo Disneyland Resorts as caring because of their details, while Walt Disney World as cold and corporate. He used details in the props to illustrate this differing setting, and how it reverberated throughout their entire trip. Tom used the feeling he got when looking at the generic cups as a reason why he does not plan on ever returning to Disney World. To clarify, it was not the cup itself that caused him not to want to return, but how the cup was indicative of what he views as cost-cutting methods throughout the parks. Cost cutting was not what Disney *felt* like.

This section demonstrated how the setting aided the guests' performances in the theme parks. It began by examining how details in the setting immersed guests into their performances, and how the lack of details detracted from their performance. Guest described the details within the setting as immersing them in their theme park performances. The immersion was so strong that to some, it created a protective bubble between them and the real world. I suggested that the setting may cause the informants to act out fantastical performances. Interviewees pointed out

lack of details—they notice when things are cheap. This reaffirms the whole notion that tourists are not cultural dupes; they notice when corners are being cut. They also reveled when the corners were not cut. The details and uniqueness of material has the ability to radically enhance the informants' performances. The differences in settings can delight and discomfort patrons. Details in the setting helped guests immerse themselves in the performance by enhancing the storytelling and theming. Settings pulled guests into their performances. Lastly, the setting, particularly the details, immerses guests in their holidays.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I addressed the question "How do guests narrate their Disney theme park performances?" I explored answers to this question by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with people who visited the Disney theme parks. I examined three main themes. First, I discussed how guests enacted their own performances. Second, I showed the social interactions wrapped in these performances. Lastly, I dove into how these informants navigated different settings.

In the findings, I discovered that guests undertake multiple different performances. The stories from the guests were meaningful, interesting, and at times deeply touching and personal. The informants were able to reflect on their different performances, and voice how they will enact their future performances. They did not see their vacations through rose colored glasses; they were aware of the structures in place. I also showed that guests do have agency and ability to undertake an improvised performance and that their creativity must be read as part of their theme park experiences. The different performances within the Disney theme parks led to a better understanding of the complexities and nuances of these performances. This project has made clear that additional readings and a broader understanding of what happens with guests in theme parks adds value to the overall understanding of theme parks as tourism destinations. Earlier in this thesis I asked what was happening with guests that drove millions of people to Disney theme parks globally. The answer to that is simple: happy memories.

This project has broadened my perspectives, and enhanced my knowledge on performance theory, theme parks, and themed spaces. Finishing this project is a culmination of all my studies since that first trip to Orlando. It gave me context and helped me understand some of the theoretical perspectives of books I read in high school. Though it is at an end, I know that I will continue to study theme parks and themed spaces throughout my life.

5.1 Call to future research

Research into themed spaces is a developing area of study for urban planners, architects, designers, businesses, anthropologists, culture critics, and sociologists. As such, there are ample areas of the subject that are yet to be explored, especially when focusing on guests going to theme parks. This thesis felt like the tip of the iceberg with regards to potential areas of future study. I will highlight two areas that I hope to study in the future.

Some topics touched on during interviews included tourists with disabilities, tourists with food restrictions, and LGBTQA+ guests. Interviewees suggested these different groups of peoples travel to Disney because it is an inclusive space whereas other tourist destinations may not be welcoming or accommodating. Fjellman (1992) reflected on how Walt Disney World was purposedly designed with guests with disabilities in mind. A better understanding of inclusive spaces could further our capability as tourist industry actors with respect to how to become more inviting to more groups of peoples.

This thesis was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many peoples' disciplined rituals described in this thesis were suspended. During the process of writing this thesis, there were times when all the Disney theme parks worldwide were closed. As the parks re-opened, the Disney Corporation directed guests to change their performances. Guests were no longer able to make dining or Fastpass reservations. The introduction of a costume piece (a mask) was required for entry. New set pieces were introduced that performers had to navigate such as Plexiglas barriers and ground markers. Instead of being able to visit multiple parks at once, visitors to Walt Disney World were required to make a singular reservation to visit a singular theme park, then told when they were able to switch to a new theme park. It seems that there is more control over the theme park performances. As more vaccinations are available, and as the Disney theme parks worldwide re-open, research should continue to observe how Disney theme park performances change, and how that impacts the overall guest experience.

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APPENDIX A-Interview Guide

A) "Getting to know you" questions

1) Tell me a bit about yourself. *What do you do for fun?*

2) Can you talk a bit about what sort of travel you enjoy doing? *Tell me about a few of your past trips.*

3) When was your first trip to a Disney theme park?

B) Reading the script (pre-arrival)

1) Tell me about the planning process for your last trip

i) Talk me through the decision-making process of going on your last trip to Disney?

ii) Why did you choose to go on your last trip to Disney for vacation? *What decision making factors went into your last trip to Disney?*

iii) What did you anticipate? *What did you think your trip would be like?*

iv) What did you research and plan in advance of your trip? *Did you consult any resources to help plan your trip?*

v) What were your concerns? *Was there any challenges you anticipated during your travels?*

C) During Travel

1) Tell me about your trip? *Where did you stay, how many days, who did you travel with, etc.*

2) What did you want to do on your trip?

3) What routines/rituals did you develop during your travel? *Did you fall into any patterns during your trip such as getting up at specific times, nighttime routines, etc.*

4) What were your "must-dos"? *What were your goals for the trip?*

D) The Actor and Troupe

1) Tell me about the dynamics of your travel party. *What role did you take on within your travel group? Cheerleader, leader, follower, debbie downer, etc.*

2) What impacted your decisions on what to do next? *With so many things to do at theme parks, how did decide what to do next?*

E) Other actors

1) Tell me about any interactions you remember with Cast Members.

2) Tell me about any interactions with characters?

3) Tell me about any interactions you remember with any individual guests or groups of guests? *What impacts did other tourists have on your trip?*

4) Tell me about any people watching you did? *Did anybody stand out?*

F) Props

    1) What did you bring with you on vacation?

        i) What's in your purse or backpack with you when you went on this vacation? *Tell me about what your brought into the park with you?*

        ii) Which of these items do you not regularly carry with you? *How does what you brought differ from your day-to-day purse or pack?*

    2) Tell me about your park wardrobe? *What do you remember about the clothes you wore while you were in the parks?*

        i) Why did you choose those clothes? *What thought process went into choosing your vacation wardrobe?*

        ii) How did your clothing choice impact your day? *Did you receive extra attention because of how you dressed? Have difficulty with any item do to comfort?*

G) Purchasing—Please bring out your souvenirs from your last vacation!

    1) Please show and tell me about your purchases

        i) What compelled you to make these purchases?

    2) What do you collect on vacations? (On Disney vacations?) *People collect postcards, pins, patches, mugs, etc.*

    3) Tell me about your shopping and dining while on vacation? *Is eating and shopping a major component in your travels to Disney?*

H) Photos—For this section, would you please pull out your smart phone or whatever device you used to take photos with

    1) Tell me about your photo-taking habits during this trip? *What do you take pictures of? When do you find yourself reaching for your camera?*

        i) What device did you use to take photos with? *smart phone, actual camera, etc.*

        ii) What did you mostly take pictures of? *Were you drawn to taking pictures of anything in particular?*

    2) If you did not take photos during this trip, why not?

3) Tell me about your favorite photo... *Look through your device and when you find a photo that makes you smile, describe the photo and what was happening during it*

    i) What feelings do you have when looking at these photos?

I) Social Media and Smart Phones

1) Tell me about your cell phone use while inside the parks? *How did you use your phones when in the parks?*

2) What impacts did your cell phone have on your trip? *How do you think the smartphone influenced your vacation?*

J) Evaluation

1) How well do you think you did Disney? *What would you do the same and what would you do differently if you were to go back?*

    i) When your friends and family asked you about your vacation, what did you say?

    ii) What impact did this trip have on you? *What lasting impressions stuck with you after travel?*

    iii) What did you learn? *Did you learn about anything about yourself? About ways to do Disney/things that you want to do for future trips?*

2) What do you think people normally do well/poorly when they go to Disney?

3) Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your vacation?

APPENDIX B-Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in "Performances in Theme Parks"

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to investigate the performances (or lack thereof) of guests to theme park. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project
This thesis project is a requirement for me to obtain my UiT graduate degree in Tourism. The thesis is focused around the question of the performances during a theme park experience.

Who is responsible for the research project?
UiT is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?
You have been asked to participate in this research based on the criteria that you have been to a Disney theme park in the last two years.

What does participation involve for you?
If you choose to be involved in this project, the interviewee will conduct an interview on a video calling service. It will make between 30-60 minutes. The interview will include questions regarding your latest trip to a Disney theme park, including the pre-arrival, and return from the trip. All answers will be recorded electronically. The interviewer may scribble down additional notes during the interview.

To prepare for your interview, please reflect on your memories of your latest trip to a Disney theme park. Please bring a few souvenirs and photos of your latest trip.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw. If you feel uncomfortable with the questions asked during the

interview, you may choose not to answer a particular question or withdraw from the interview.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). Only myself and my supervisor will have access to any information provided.

- Masters Candidate: Mary McCormick (mmc009@uit.no).
- Supervisor: Associate Professor Trine Kvidal-Røvik (trine.kvidal@uit.no).
- Each participant will be given a pseudonym to mask their identity. If you provide other information that might identify you (city of origin, job, age, name, ethnicity, etc.) I will redact that information. All recordings and personal information will be stored on my personal laptop which requires a password within five minutes without use. Data will be backed up on a password protected external hard drive, which will be kept in a locked building. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the interviews.
- Since all interviews will be held online, personal data will be transmitted online. Depending on preference, this will be on Skype for Business or a password protected zoom call.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end May 15, 2021. Over the course of my project, I will be reviewing, organising, transcribing, then analysing the recordings. Following the completion of this project, all personal data and interviews will be erased.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and

- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with UiT, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Masters Candidate: Mary McCormick (mmc009@uit.no).
- Supervisor: Associate Professor Trine Kvidal-Røvik (trine.kvidal@uit.no).
- Our Data Protection Officer: Erik Axel Vollan (erik.vollan@uit.no).
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader   Student
(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

_____

(Signed by participant, date)

APPENDIX C-Verbal disclaimer

As a reminder, I am doing this project focusing on performance theory at Disney theme parks. The idea behind performance theory is that people act different ways based on different settings and contexts. Kind of like how you may act differently when you are out at a bar with your friends and when you're at work, versus when you're home alone. The questions I will be asking you are going to be related to your last Disney trip, and may touch on any previous Disney vacations if those exist.

Before we get started, I wanted to get your verbal consent to my recording this interview. Participation in this interview is voluntary. During any time of this recording, you are able to withdraw your consent, as well as withdraw your consent any time afterwards. These interviews will be kept on a password-protected, encrypted hard drive, as well as an encrypted server in Norway until May 15th, 2021. For your privacy, I ask that you do not provide any information that is considered personal identifiable information such as race, sexual orientation, health information, ethnicity, age, etc. If a combination of information is given that could identify you, I will be redacting it from the recording to ensure your privacy. I will be collecting your age range, gender, and country you're residing in as a way to give a general overview of who I am interviewing. Do you agree to all of this?

Do you have any questions about your rights before we get started?

APPENDIX D-Registering with Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata and data protection

Registering with Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata (NSD) proved challenging due to my particular situation. I moved back to the United States during the pandemic. This turned into a potential challenge in completing my research. In the application there is a line that reads: "Will the collected personal data be transferred/made available to a third country or international organisation outside of the EU/EEA?" This stumped the faculty at UiT and myself. Since I was living outside of the EU/EEA, it seemed that I would automatically have to transfer data into the United States. This challenge held up my research for months; I sent my first message to the data controller at the end of September, and did not get any sort of conclusion until mid-December. After many lengthy discussions made by faculty, it was concluded that as long as the data was collected and stored in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) area, and the informants knew that all their information was going to be stored in Norway, it should be fine to go. I was finally able to submit my project to NSD on December 15th. It was approved on January 21st.

I used UiT's recommendation of a password-protected Zoom to have secured video conferences. On top of this, I connected to UiT's VPN to ensure even more privacy. Once recordings were complete, I moved the file onto a password-protected encrypted external hard drive that was recommended by UiT's data officer. I immediately deleted the original from my laptop. I stored transcripts and drafts of this thesis on my personal laptop, which was password protected, and kept inside a locked house, and on Sharepoint. Letters of Consent were stored on Sharepoint and backed up on the password-protected encrypted external hard drive. When transcribing interviews, I used a participant code instead of names and redacted any information that could identify a participant. I created a scramble key which was handwritten in a notebook that was kept inside my house. Following the collection of data, there was limited transferring of data. This was kept strictly between myself and faculty advisor via Sharepoint. Data was kept until the thesis was handed in on May 15, 2021.