

Case Study: Surveillance in Disney World

The general concept of disciplinary power that Foucault defined can be found in many specific instances, such as the prison, the school and the army. Shearing & Stenning (1996) have suggested that Disney World, too, involves such techniques of surveillance. Corporate control here can be found embedded in the very social relations it aims to govern, and power is exercised through the design of the environment and the bodily practices of the staff. For example, when visitors arrive at Disney World, they are reminded to lock their car and remember its location, before being shepherded onto a train which takes them to the next place to see. Throughout the park there are physical barriers that limit the directions and distance in which people can move, and apparently ornamental features like fountain and flower gardens also function to direct visitors towards or away from locations. Some of these structures of control only become visible when they are challenged: Shearing reports that when his daughter developed a blister on her heel and decided to walk barefooted, a security guard approached them and threatened to escort them out of Disney World. Typically, however, visitors would willingly comply with the orders they were given, and saw them as evidence of concern rather than coercion. Shearing & Stenning suggest that this form of discipline relies on instrumental rather than moral control or individualized 'soul-training', and so it is quite different from the power exercised through carceral punishment.

Source: Shearing, C.D. & Stenning, P.C. (1996) "From the Panopticon to Disney World: the Development of Discipline" – Chapter 37 in Muncie, J., McLaughlin, E. & Langan, M. (eds). *Criminological Perspectives: A Reader* Sage, London

Questions:

1. Which features of 'disciplinary power' can you identify from this account?
2. What do you notice about the way individual bodies are used as a site of power?
3. How do you think Disney World would be managed if it were (a) a feminized organization or (b) a virtual organization?
4. How might the staff at Disney World have been trained to perform 'emotion work' through Human Resource Management?
5. This account is based upon the authors' personal experiences of Disney World and recalled from memory. How valid and reliable would you say such a method is?