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Identity on Tap: Other-directedness in Female Bar and Pub Employees

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ABSTRACT

Gender norms and stereotypes that influence the behaviors and reinforce other-directed behaviors among female bar and pub staff are deeply embedded in social and individual consciousness and, as a result, are resistant to change. David Riesman's (1950) social theory of other-directed personalities proposes that individuals conform to societal norms because they have been sensitized by other people. Riesman's theory proposes the idea that individuals will take on a personality that they believe other people expect of them. This study looks deeper into the ways in which customers influence the behaviors of female bar and pub staff members as well as how female bar and pub staff members alter their personalities to either accommodate or resist the influence of the customers. This study finds that females working in bars and pubs do adjust their personality, actions, and/or behaviors in order to suit the interests of their customers.

For over a century, bars and pubs serving beer and other alcohol have been a major success in American culture. The employment of females as bar and pub staff has been a reoccurring theme in the United States for many years. Traditional beliefs and ideas regarding a female's role in society as well as gender stereotypes have served to reinforce and strengthen current businesses, such as bars and pubs, which are economically driven by long-standing and commonly accepted female stereotypes. Females working in bars and pubs have learned to modify their behavior, dress, and attitudes to maximize their earning potential and increase customer approval and acceptance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Construction and Role Stereotypes

Gender norms and social expectations of gender have become widely accepted in the United States (Suk 2010). Social definitions can affect adults and children's socialization by causing internalization of expected behaviors and traits (Seguino 2007). Bruder, Lenton, and Sedikides (2009) determined that gender stereotypes are particularly strong among human beings because they are among the first stereotypes that develop. Gender has become a powerful influence over many people's behaviors, attitudes, and lifestyles. The perception of and traits associated with being male or female can impact the level of performance in a work environment and, ultimately, effect a person's identity formation (Eagly and Karau 2002).

Psychologists have studied gender and the internalized pressure for gender conformity among children and adolescents (Tobin, Menon, Menon, Spatta, Hodges, and Perry, 2010). Seguino (2007) conducted a study on global trends in gender norms and stereotypes and determined possible causes, effects, and solutions to inequitable gender norms and stereotypes. Seguino's research suggests that norms and stereotypes are shifting in a gender-equitable direction. Her evidence also suggests that increasing women's access to income is likely to yield more immediate results in improving women's economic empowerment, which would hasten the alteration of power dynamics within the household that shape children's perceptions on gender. Seguino further argues that part of the problem of the perpetual gender stereotyping phenomenon in the U.S. is deeply embedded within the structure of the workforce and economy. Eagly and Steffen (1984) found that social structure, specifically the frequency of observing women in low levels of status and authority as well as the decreased likelihood of observing a male homemaker, accounts for the content of stereotypes. Their research provided supporting evidence to the idea that beliefs about women resemble those about homemakers and that beliefs about men resemble those about employed persons.

Female Stereotypes and the Workplace

Wade and Brewer (2006) found that many people have an awareness of stereotypes that surround female subgroups. They determined that women evaluated businesswomen more positively and men evaluated homemakers more positively. Their results showed that even though there were no differences between male and female

participants' awareness of female subgroup stereotypes, participants still associated certain stereotypes to be more positive than other stereotypes. Wade and Brewer (2006) associated these findings with ambivalent sexism, and inferred that women were more likely to positively evaluate unconventional female stereotypes. In contrast to this finding, Eagly and Karau's (2002) research on women and leadership roles leads them to argue that prejudice towards females in leadership positions stems from traditional views that women are less able to lead than men and that women enacting leadership duties violates the female gender role. Their study found that men often showed a stronger prejudice when they associated a woman with an untraditional gender characteristic, such as leadership.

In today's rapidly evolving culture, appointments of women to leadership positions in a typically male-dominated industry signals an organization's departure from past practices and help it to capture the symbols of innovation and progressive change (Carli and Eagly 2003). However, when a female finds herself in an industry that primarily supports the interest of males, such as sports bars, identity formation and gender stereotypes may be compromised.

When a person's self-esteem is threatened, they often become sad or depressed, or they may engage in active attempts to minimize the damage to their identities (Golledge, Manzi, Regalia, Scabini, and Vignoles, 2006). Golledge and colleagues (2006) examined the influence of multiple motives on identity construction and found that the more participants rated an element of identity as providing feelings of self-esteem, the more

they considered it as central to their self-definitions, the more they felt happy about it, and the more they reported emphasizing it in their everyday actions. According to Gardiner and Tiggermann's (1999) study on gender differences in leadership style found that stress and mental health may be attributed to both gender and the gender ratios of industries. The persistence and tolerance of gender stereotypes can be attributed to the pressures and stresses females feel to perform their duties as well as others feel a man would. Thus, women's overall self-esteem and actions and behaviors are affected by factors incorporated in their work environment.

Gendered Personalities in the Workplace

The past couple of decades have seen women increasingly obtain employment in full-time, year round occupations (Howe 1990). Howe studied trends regarding employment rates of males and females and found that a variety of pressures effect changes in male and female employment status, and determined that changes in employment status cannot be definitively narrowed down to one specific factor. Gardiner and Tiggermann (1999) conducted a study to test gender differences in leadership style, job stress and mental health, and found that women reported feeling more pressure from their jobs than men. Their findings suggested that there are three consequences for women employed in stereotypically male-dominated industries which are liable to increase their stress: increased visibility, exaggeration of differences and stereotyping. For example, when a female is employed at a sports bar, she is highly visible. She may be positioned behind the counter facing the bar and its patrons. Stereotyping may also occur

in the sports bar and restaurant setting. Gardiner and Tiggermann (1999) also found that women often feel more pressure than men while performing leadership roles in male-dominated industries. However, their research concluded that the pattern of findings for job stress seems to indicate that although women in male-dominated industries experience pressure from the organization and from being highly visible and gender isolated, it is the actual pressure caused from the perception of being actively discriminated against that leads them to report higher job stress than women who do not work in male-dominated industries.

Other research shows that although women have gained increased access to supervisory and middle management positions, they remain quite rare as elite leaders and top executives (Eagly and Karau 2002). Many of the difficulties and challenges that women face arise from the clash of the traditional female role with today's more tolerant and progressive beliefs (Eagly and Karau 2002). Many organizations and central policies concerning gender sensitive issues, such as maternity and sick leave, have been modified to decrease the gender stereotypes placed on women in the workplace (Suk 2010). In the United States, the law makes it problematic for employers to treat women differently based on the belief that women tend to have family responsibilities that could conflict with their ability to meet the demands of the workplace (Suk 2010). However, this type of belief is precisely the type of generalization that constitutes a gender stereotype. Women's ability to adopt and continue to adopt characteristics associated with leadership ability, which have traditionally been based on traits associated with males, could increase women's opportunities to assume leadership roles. In turn, women's self-esteem

could increase, allowing for healthy maturation and formation of their identities. If presented with increased opportunities for leadership roles and responsibilities, other-directedness among females working in bars and pubs could be positively affected.

THEORY

Bars and pubs have become signature establishments in the United States. Female employees are closely associated with sports bars and restaurants and their gender identity may be influenced by their employment in these establishments. Many social theorists have developed ideas and beliefs concerning why groups of people act and behave in certain ways and in certain locations. Social theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Dorothy Smith (1974), and David Riesman (1950) all provide insight into the dynamics of gender and how females construct their social and gender roles. Using the social theories developed by these social scientists can potentially shed light on issues surrounding female employees and how they construct their identities while working in male-themed environments. Despite modern changes to gender stereotypes and gender construction, this paper will argue that David Riesman's theory of the other-directed self is still applicable to females currently working in male-themed eating establishments.

Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) social theory on females entitled, "Woman as Other," can be used to further understand whether or not traditional gender stereotypes apply to females working in bar and pub environments. De Beauvoir focuses her feminist theory on the issue of unity among women. When a particular group of people is

oppressed, de Beauvoir argues it is normal that they would band together and fight for equality and justice. Some, including Simone de Beauvoir (1949), argues that women are one special group in society that has not completely managed to unite themselves. De Beauvoir explains, “Women lack concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own...they live dispersed among the males” (1949, p.347). She believes women have found it hard to unite because they have nothing solid from which to unite themselves around. Without a group voice and the inability to unite, women will find it hard to unite for the interest and equality of the group as a whole.

Simone de Beauvoir’s feminist theory applies to the topic of females working in bars and pubs. If females are not united, it is difficult for them to be treated as equals in the larger society let alone in an establishment specifically suited to male interests. Males are the dominant group in most societies. The cultural norm of male superiority has affected the ability of females to unite and gain power as a societal group. They are seen as “others” when compared to males. This label or classification of females as “other” may be one reason for the persistence of traditional gender stereotypes regarding females.

Another theory that provides insight into the dynamics of other-directedness in female bar and pub employees is Dorothy Smith’s (1974) feminist theory. Smith’s 1974 work, “Knowing a Society from Within: A Female Standpoint,” highlights the idea that much of the current knowledge and information is derived from a male point-of-view. Smith (1974) specifically focuses on how the male perspective has shaped the field of

sociology. She argued that most of the academic work in her time was from the male point-of-view. Smith argued that the standpoint from which any work is done in must be acknowledged. She was fighting for female equality and argued perspective was an important factor into the framework of current knowledge and information.

Dorothy Smith's feminist theory can be applied to other-directedness in female bar and pub employees. If the female viewpoint is dismissed or vacant in the academic world and the female perspective is ignored, all of the existing knowledge is based on a biased standpoint; one that only regards the male point-of-view. Many women working in male-themed eating establishments may feel that their viewpoint or perspective is ignored in favor of the male perspective. This could be detrimental to the ways in which our societies are structured. For females working in bars and pubs, the female perspective is very much lacking.

The subject of other-directedness in female bar and pub staff can be connected and more closely associated with David Riesman's (1950) social theory and work entitled, "Character and Society: The Other Directed Personality." In his work, Riesman (1950) is trying to understand the relationship between an individual's social character and a given society. The main idea of his theory is that people will acquire a particular personality that is for the good of society. Riesman believes there are three ways in which people are directed, or influenced by others. The first way a person is directed is by tradition. Tradition-directed people consist of those individuals who conform to societal norms because of traditional ideals and values. The second types are those

referred to as inner-directed people. This type of person conforms because of an internalization of personal goals. The third type of person is what Riesman (1950) calls other-directed. This type of person conforms to societal norms because they have been sensitized by other people (1950, p.333). These people learn to act in ways they know others will approve of. Other-directed people act and behave according to how they feel others expect them to act and behave.

For females working in bars and/or pubs, other-directed conformity is based on what men desire from them in that environment. Because bars and pubs are geared for a male audience, the environment fosters male beliefs and ideas. For a female working in this type of environment, it may serve to influence her actions, behaviors, and overall sense of self while working a shift. Riesman's theory that many people in modern societies behave according to how they feel others want them to act can possibly shed light on the actions and behaviors of females who work in bars and pubs.

Some may critique Riesman's (1950) theory because he is speaking from a modernist's perspective, and some theorists believe his theory is outdated in the present day post-modern society. However, it seems that Riesman's (1950) theory still very much pervades many societies today. When a female is working in an environment themed for a male or with a mostly male crowd, it seems natural that they would mold their behaviors around what they believe their male audience would approve of most. Because many females working in bars and pubs are working for tips, women often seek affirmation from male customers.

Riesman's (1950) theory of the other-directed personality offers a framework for understanding why females continue to work in, and tolerate, bar and pub environments. The relationship between money and sexuality continues to drive and direct the market today. Individuals are constantly trying to act or behave in ways they know will be approved of and accepted by peers and people who can affect the amount of money they make. The actions and behaviors of females currently working in bars and pubs could allow for further analysis into other-directedness among women in bar and pub environments.

METHODOLOGY

Field interviews were selected as the primary data collection method because of their in-depth and descriptive nature (Neuman, 2007). Field interviews were selected for this study because it allows participants the chance to express themselves in the forms in which they normally speak, think and organize reality, whereas conducting the interviews at the participant's homes may have been problematic if the participant were to be preoccupied or experience a lack of privacy (Neuman 2007). Interviews provided this study with insight and better understanding into other-directedness among female bar and pub staff by maintaining focus on participants' perspectives and experiences while situated in those environments. Interviews of female bar and pub staff provided detailed encounters and interactions with managerial staff and customers of the eating establishments that highlighted experiences of relaxation and enjoyment as well as unease and tension. The qualitative method, interview process, and observational research were utilized for this study because they allowed more knowledge to be gained

about the informant and setting (Neuman, 2007). Face-to-face interviews added a personal nature to the process and supplied an alternate channel or medium for expression of ideas. Interviews provided an outlet for the participants to share their insights about work related experiences without feeling pressure.

Participants

Ten female employees, ranging in age from 21 to 50, participated in this study. The average age of participants in this study was 31. All ten of the participants were white. 90% of participants were single and never married, separated, or divorced. 70% of participants had at least one child. 50% of the participants had completed some college courses, and 20% of the participants had received an undergraduate diploma. Of the remaining 30%, 20% had completed only some high school and 10% had received a high school diploma or GED. The participants were recruited to this study through a snowball effect. A gatekeeper, or insider to the community, was utilized for access to the communities of interest for this study. The initial access to the communities provided additional references who could be contacted for participation. Interviews were conducted at Between the Buns Sports Bar and Grill and The Pitt Stop Sports Bar and Grill, both located in Granger, Indiana. Seven (70.0%) current female employees from Between the Buns and three (30.0%) current female employees from The Pitt Stop were interviewed after introductions were made through the gatekeeper.

Procedure and Materials

Participants from both locations were asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately 10-30 minutes. Participants for this study included select employees contacted through the gatekeeper as well as additional references given by participants after they had been interviewed. Not all of the female employees working at each respective establishment were interviewed for this study. Participants from both locations were asked questions concerning length of employment at their place of work, status or position within the establishment, comfort and cohesion among co-workers and customers, earning potential, self-esteem, and leadership experiences. General demographics were noted as well as general questions relating to work and lifestyle. Other questions focused on interactions the participants experienced with other employees as well as customers. Participants were also asked to answer questions regarding the effect their physical appearance and the environment had on their attitudes and overall identity formation. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Nine of the participants were interviewed at their place of work; one participant was interviewed at their home. A copy of the interview questions and demographic form are attached in the appendix. In addition to interviews, participants were observed at work. Approximately ten hours were spent observing and noting the behaviors, interactions, and theme of both locations during participant's work shifts. Five hours of observational research were conducted at Between the Buns, and five hours were conducted at The Pitt Stop. All 10 hours of observation were conducted between the hours of 6:00pm and 1:00am. Direct quotes, body language, tone of voice, and other visual cues were observed

and noted. In order to maintain honest and authentic behaviors and interactions, customers were unaware of the presence of a researcher.

FINDINGS¹

Work Environment

Participants in this study worked, on average, between two and seven days a week, or 15-60 hours per week. 4 (40%) of participants were also working another job at the time of the study. Employment length for the participants at both locations ranged from about four months to eight years. The two bars used for this study were both decorated with sports posters and memorabilia. The first location used for this study had painted the walls navy blue and had hung sports apparel, posters, and autographed memorabilia, all relating to sports. The tables in the bar area were completely covered with baseball cards, sports articles, and pictures of athletes from the popular sports magazine, Sports Illustrated.

The second location used for this study also incorporated a sports theme. The focus of this establishment's theme was NASCAR racing. The floor was checkered with white and black squares, and the walls were plastered with racing posters and sports signs. Both sites provided customers with a variety of arcade-style games as well as large, flat-screen television sets hung throughout the bar broadcasting sporting events.

¹ Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Both locations were considered by the employees in this study to be suited more towards male interests. One participant, Gabriella, stated,

Guys not only come in here to drink, they come in here for female companionship. So it's real important that you make yourself right because what you do with yourself impacts all the other females and your staff.

Gabriella specifically reported using what she has learned from working in that environment to teach her three young sons how to treat other people, especially women she says. Gabriella pointed out that she must maintain a certain attitude and approach in order to be successful in her place of work. Many of the females who participated in this study reported similar feelings of personality and behavior alterations while in the work environment.

80% of participants in this study reported having a male supervisor or manager. Only two (20%) of the participants held a superior or managerial position at their place of work. When asked questions concerning gender equality at work, one of the only two participants that held a managerial position, Danielle, responded that her elevated status had an effect on how customers treated her as well as her feelings of equality while at work. The participant stated,

They, you know, they tease me and stuff, but they don't treat me like they treat the bartenders because they want to kiss up to the bartenders so they can get something out of it...But when I'm bartending, totally different story. They suck up to me more. They want my service. They want me then, there.

Danielle explained many instances when she felt she had to change or alter her personality in order to be more successful at her job. When asked about disagreements at

work, she explained, “Sometimes it’s hard for them to take direction from a girl, I guess, when they’re a boy.” The other participant with a managerial position at her place of work, Gabriella, also reported experiencing times while at work when she felt customers expected her to act or behave in a certain way. Gabriella reported,

I think that vulgarness is just something you have to get used to, you know? For the most part, I’ve been here long enough that everybody who comes here knows that they really can’t get away with too much with me.

Eight (80%) of the participants in this study reported having had to take on more of a leadership role in order to maintain power in certain situations. Many of the participants reported altering their behaviors while at work in order to maintain power in certain situations. Many of the situations described by participants involved having to handle rowdy behavior from customers and, occasionally, resulting bar fights. Gabriella explains, “Sometimes you have to put them straight because they look at you as a female so you’re here to serve them more than just beer.” Gabriella explained that it was a part of her job to dissolve issues and resist influences from customers when she knew she had to control the situation as a person in charge. Another participant, Emma, stated, “The most I get into it with customers is cutting them off. And then, it’s really not up for debate. It’s not up for an argument. This is what it is. You’re done.” Participants frequently reported altering their personalities during times of disagreement with customers. Gabriella further explained, “I have to put myself in danger to make sure that everybody else is ok.”

Gender in the Workplace

Nine out of ten (90%) of respondents reported that physical appearance was a factor in the amount of money they make. The only respondent that felt her physical appearance was not a factor in the amount of money made preferred to work on the family side of the restaurant as opposed to the bar side and was the oldest participant in this study. One participant, Carmen, explained, “If I were to not wear a low cut shirt, a male customer would probably say something to me, and I’d have to deal with that.” Another participant, Danielle, describes how her appearance affects her while at work. She says,

I’ll come in here, you know, and be like ‘ugh’ I don’t feel like doing anything with myself. Sweats and a t-shirt...they’ll make remarks, you know, ‘why you dressin’ in that big ole t-shirt? What are you trying to hide? Are you pregnant?’ I come in here in my shorty-shorts and a tank top, my tips almost double.

Five (50%) of the participants in this study reported specifically wearing tight-fitting or revealing clothing or reported feeling discomfort at some point with something they were asked to wear at work. All five (50%) of the participants who reported specifically wearing tight-fitting or revealing clothing or reported feeling discomfort at some point with something they were asked to wear at work also reported men as generally tipping better than women. Additionally, seven (70%) of all participants reported men as being better tippers than women. Danielle laughingly responded, “Women don’t tip as well as men do. Well, for me at least because I’m a female. And, like I said, it also depends on what I’m wearing that day.” Carmen simply put it, “Yes...Men tip better.”

When asked about the attire enforced at their place of work, eight (80%) of the participants reported feeling comfortable in the attire they are required to wear. Typical attire for participants working in both establishments included jeans, t-shirts, jerseys, and shirts bearing the establishment's logo. Although the majority of respondents reported feeling comfortable in the clothing they wear to work, three (30%) participants reported feeling discomfort at one point or another with something they were asked to do on the job. Of that 30%, 20% declined to perform the task. Many participants reported that they wear tighter fitting shirts and tank tops at work than they would wear outside of work. When asked about typical work attire, Carmen laughingly stated, "Uh, generally it's tighter than what I would normally wear on the outside...And I wear jeans that I wore in high school so my jeans are tighter." Similarly to Carmen, another participant, Shar, also reported altering her attire at work to increase the amount of tips she makes. Shar stated,

I have a long-sleeved, tight-fitting v-neck which would obviously show some cleavage as well as just a normal tank top. Both of which, I would say, reveal enough skin that people like it and, yes, it's definitely a contributing factor in your tip.

Many of the participants in this study were well aware that the way in which they present themselves at work will directly affect the amount of money they make as well as have an effect on customers' approval of their performance in that specific role.

Results of this study indicated that females may experience affects to their self-esteem and feelings of overall wellbeing while working in bar and pub environments. Five (50%) of participants interviewed for this study reported that the theme of the establishment increased positive feelings of self-esteem and overall wellbeing. Of the

50% of respondents that reported the theme of the establishment as having a positive impact on their self-esteem and wellbeing, many participants included making new friends, receiving compliments, and gaining self confidence as factors in increased feelings of positive self-esteem. None of the participants reported the theme of the establishment as having a negative impact on their self-esteem or overall wellbeing.

The females that reported increases in self-esteem appeared to be somewhat defending the establishment and the sports/male theme. One participant, Pamela, reported the theme had no impact on her self-esteem because, from a very young age, she had been a “tomboy.” Another participant, Carmen, responded, “No. Well not in a bad way. I would say in a positive way.” Janice then explained that the establishment had made her more confident in herself because it had “forced” her to talk to many different people while at work. When asked how the theme of the establishment impacted participants’ self-esteem and overall wellbeing, respondents who answered positively seemed to be experiencing an epiphany of some kind. Many of them hesitated or began answering that the theme did not impact their self-esteem, then, however, they altered their response and reported increases in positive feelings of self-esteem. One respondent, Danielle, hesitated and then responded, “Yeah, I do. I wouldn’t say it’s a bad thing, I would say it’s a good thing...”

The findings in this study support the idea that females working in bars and pubs are influenced by gender role norms and customer expectations. Personalities, behaviors, and actions were altered for the primary purpose of earning increased amounts of money.

This study has found evidence that supports the idea that there is an other-directed quality to females working in bars and pubs. Female sexuality, in the form of revealing clothing, is used to gain approval and acceptance from customers who have a direct influence on the amount of money the participants make. The personalities of females working in bar and pub environments are partially directed by the expectations held by customers. However, in situations requiring leadership and power, females working in bars and pubs are likely to adjust their personalities, behaviors, and actions to resist the influences of customers. Obnoxious customers and bar fights are the select circumstances, found in this study, under which female bar and pub staff will not accommodate the needs and interests of customers and will maintain the personality directed by their selves.

DISCUSSION

The tendency for females to associate positive feelings of self-esteem and wellbeing with building friendships and meeting new people was a significant finding. This trend suggests that many of the females working in bar and pub environments experience increases in self-esteem when situated among other individuals closely related to the establishment at which they work.

One major trend in the data concerned the impact of the establishment's theme on participant's self-esteem and overall wellbeing. As stated, half of the participants felt the establishment's theme had a positive influence on their self-esteem and overall wellbeing. From the data, it appears that the impact of positive customer attention, customer satisfaction with the participants' responsibilities as well as acceptance and friendships

with customers and co-workers increased participants' feelings of positive self-esteem and wellbeing.

For females working in sports themed bars and eating establishments, physical appearance is very important. Commonly, the participants to this study reported altering their normal attire to increase their earning potential. Low-cut, tight shirts and tank tops along with tight-fitting jeans and skirts are normal clothing choices for a female working at the establishments used for this study. It appears that the influence of male interests and preferences impacts the amount of tip the females earn as well as choice they make concerning dress and appearance for work. Females in this study commonly reported experiencing negative customer remarks and criticism regarding their physical appearance including their hair, make-up, and overall dress, including shirt and pant choice. The impact of negative experiences with customers on females working in these establishments did not seem to override the participants' feelings of self-confidence and feelings of positive self-esteem.

The impact and influence of customer interests and expectations plays a significant role in the manner of dress and personality with which the participants utilize while at work. The average customer base and establishment theme appear to have influenced participants confidence in themselves and their abilities, leadership abilities, feelings of social acceptance, and a place to socialize on the clock as well as off. The establishment theme and general customer base also appear to have impacted participants' self-esteem and overall wellbeing in positive way.

The findings in this study support Riesman's theory of other-directed personalities. Females working in bars and pubs used for this study often altered their appearance, dress, and attitudes in order to maintain customer satisfaction and approval. Many of the females in this study described receiving negative comments when their appearance or personality was not what customers expected from them.

This study can be expanded to other work environments and the gender roles expected of employees. For a female working as a kindergarten teacher, the role she takes on at work would be very different from the ways in which she acts or behaves in her life outside of work. Participants in this study similarly felt the need to adjust their personalities, actions, and behaviors according to what the other people and customers expected of them.

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