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Co-creating the Service Encounter: The Relational Dynamics of the Hair Salon

HARNESS, OONAGH,MCKENZIE

Co-creating the Service Encounter: The Relational Dynamics of the Hair Salon

By Oonagh M. Harness

Durham University Business School

Department of Management and Marketing

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Supervised by:

Professor Nick Ellis

Professor Mark Learmonth

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Abstract

The PhD thesis is empirically focused within the context of hairdressing, a highly affective, emotionally charged form of service work. Conceptually, the thesis seeks to unpack the service encounter by considering how the worker's embodied and interpersonal skills coalesce with the material landscape to create a service experience that effectively engages the customer. To further illustrate the customer's role, the notion of 'co-creation' is drawn upon. This marks a departure from a sociological depiction of the customer as either shrouded in mystery, entirely passive and/or disruptive. In exploring the relational skills required to engage customers, this thesis provides a far-reaching, trans-temporal narrative that illustrates how 'soft skills' flourish. I employ a qualitative methodology comprised of ethnographic observations and various types of interviews to obtain data that offers a rich and vivid insight into service work. I show how relational and embodied capacities flourish to allow a well-honed, fluid performance adapted to the nuances of each interaction. The thesis is also corporeally focused, as the nature of the work performed becomes inscribed upon the customer's body. I therefore examine the body of the worker as part of the broader 'servicescape' that foregrounds both interaction and bodywork.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank several people who made the completion of this thesis possible.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Nick Ellis and Professor Mark Learmonth who were always on hand to listen to me talk away about the intricacies of life at hair and beauty salons. At each supervisory meeting I felt that my ideas and findings were always met with intrigue and suggestions about what these meant and possible ways of interpretation. The feminised domain of hairdressing may have not been an overly familiar empirical field for my supervisors, yet their enthusiasm reaffirmed the importance of my research as a commercial setting that the vast majority of people will sporadically visit throughout their lifetime.

I am also incredibly grateful to each and every one of the participants. Having spent many an hour in a hair salon, I am familiar with how hectic things can be for stylists as they balance catching up with clients with cutting, drying and styling their hair. Appointments often extend past their allocated time and stylists frequently find themselves playing catch up. It is testament to how much stylists enjoy their work the fact that they set aside additional time to talk with me about it. I am also grateful to the clients, who accepted my presence in a place that holds great significance for them. Finally, I am appreciative of the training providers at various further education colleges, who spoke to me about the challenges of teaching the next generation of hairdressers.

I would also like to thank my parents. They have been incredibly supportive throughout my entire academic journey and always been on hand to alleviate anxieties induced by the ever-looming sense of imposter syndrome. My mum radiates positivity and encouragement, she is the embodiment of my own personal cheerleader. She is also an

avid user of 'emojis' that never fail to perk me up after a long day at my desk. My dad has been mystifying me with verbose, jargonistic language since I was young and although I don't yet possess his expansive vocabulary, I do know what the word 'anadiplosis' means. They are wonderfully supportive in their own unique ways and when it comes to my studies, are an unapparelled force of optimism and reassurance.

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Outlining the roots of this thesis

The Hairdresser is...

> *It is my considered opinion that the hairdresser is the most influential person in any*
>
> *community. When the public goes to a hairdresser, something happens to them. They*
>
> *feel safe, they relax. The hairdresser knows what their skin is like under the makeup;*
>
> *they know their age; they don't have to keep up any kind of pretence. People will tell a*
>
> *hairdresser things they wouldn't dare confess to a priest and they are open about*
>
> *matter they try to conceal from a doctor. When people place their secret lives in the*
>
> *hairdresser's hands, the hairdresser gain authority few other people attain. I have*
>
> *heard hairdressers quoted with complete conviction on art, literature, politics,*
>
> *economics, childcare and morals. I tell you that a clever, thoughtful, ambitious*
>
> *hairdresser wields a power beyond the comprehension of most people.*
>
> - John Steinbeck

The quote above was brought to my attention by my hairdresser, who having worked

for some 30 plus years proudly echoed the sentiment that hairdressing is typified by a

complexity unimaginable to the layperson. Of course, highlighting the poetic veneration

of one's own occupation can be interpreted as somewhat self-serving. However,

Steinbeck romanticises the relational qualities of hairdressing illustrates the

significance of commercial relationships that have the potential to transcend superficial

terrain, instead taking the form of a quasi-friendship. The hairdressing and beauty

context in particular, allows for heightened emotional exchanges and a disclosing of

intimate personal detail unseen in other service contexts. Having attended the same

salon for two decades I had inadvertently and until now, unquestionably, developed a

loyalty largely unrelated to the quality of the actual haircut. Instead, my unwavering and

automatic return to the same salon was seemingly motivated by something else. Was it the assurance of a friendly greeting? Was it the comfortable navigation of the salon space? Was it the palpable warmth and informality cultivated by the salon's 'worn in' décor and relaxed ambiance? These were among the initial questions that gave rise to the thesis.

I am aware that for the vast majority of people going for a haircut represents an occurrence that is at the very least, sporadic. A trip to the hairdressers is simply part of an on-going routine signalling conformity to the Western norms that govern our appearance. The demand for hairdressers shows little sign of falling, as the number of hair and beauty establishments is continuing to grow each year with around 10,000 new establishments opening up in 2015-2016 alone (Statista, 2019). It is a somewhat unsurprising trend as for the majority of people the prospect of cutting their own hair is likely to invoke both confusion and anxiety. A trip to the hairdresser may not necessarily amount to excitement or joy; it may simply be regarded as a humdrum non-event underpinned by utilitarianism. It is, however, something that has become deeply and unquestionably integrated even as part of the minimalist of personal care regimes. Disparity may persist in the type of customer experience sought after during a trip to the salon, yet an on-going co-creational dynamic allows for an exchange that satisfies the customer's distinct relational desires.

Whether a trip to the salon is fleeting or prolonged, one-off or recurrent, mundane or significant, its distinct relational features qualify it as a rich site for empirical research. A client-stylist relationship may evolve into an intimate quasi-friendship or it may remain unassuming and superficial. As these relations develop, they do so in a

commercial setting, where the established roles of 'service worker' and 'customer', and economic asymmetries distinguish it from an authentic friendship. Where recurrent contact persists the relationships that we develop with particular service providers become a significant, albeit peripheral, fixture within our social network. I look to the salon as a buzzing social setting thriving with ever-evolving client-stylist relationships. Whether it is indeed, the stylist who has somehow been cutting your hair for several decades or the bar staff at your local pub who has your drink of choice poured as soon as you enter, these frequent meetings allow a sequential unfolding of a unique relationship bound by the norms of its commercial origin. During this thesis I seek to vividly illustrate how these relations emerge from an on-going co-creational dynamic. Through a rich empirical account that conveys both the experiences of the service worker *and* the customer, commercial relations emerge as neither arbitrary nor random but as continuously co-developed. By looking at the salon, I observe how customer and stylist co-navigate the increasingly unbounded reality of their 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: The 'performance' of service work

To obtain a rich and vivid account of the service encounter with its sprawling contours of social interaction, I look to the hair salon as an empirical site. In focusing upon the dynamics of the hair salon and the encounters that occur in it, I aim to explore how the necessary relational competencies are acquired and attuned to accommodate variable stylist-client relationships. The purpose of this thesis is therefore, in part to illustrate how development of a relational trajectory is steered and 'co-created' by both client and stylist. I explore these trajectories as distinct service-borne relationships that, like a palimpsest of sorts, bear the memories of past encounters that are impossible to efface. The enduring relational history comprised of each past exchange informs forthcoming interactions. Attesting to the corporeality of hairdressing, I also focus upon the lived experiences of those involved in a bodywork encounter. Reflecting a dynamic perspective, I explore both the role of the body being worked upon (the customer) and the one changing the body of another (the stylist).

I focus specifically on salons that are locally owned, with a small team of staff operating according to a flat internal hierarchy and colloquial ambiance that facilitates agency during encounters (Cohen, 2011). I look to the variety of stylist-customer relations that flourish and evolve, assuming a distinct trajectory steered by past encounters. Reflecting a dynamic focus, I also consider the skills required by stylists to manage the vast and diverse customer relations. In an attempt to broaden conceptual understandings of 'soft skills', I focus on how these skills are performed but also on how inexperienced actors prepare for entry onto the stage of service work. This reflects an

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analysis of the service performance that considers it an on-going, continuously refined accomplishment.

Attesting to the richness of the interaction, I use Goffman's (1959) theatrical analogy to conceptually unpack the service encounter. In creating a 'vivid mental image', the theatrical analogy illustrates the 'experiential and/or processual characteristics of many phenomena' (Grove et al, 1992: 93). To further understand the performative demands encountered by the service worker, I draw from sociological concepts, such as emotional and aesthetic labour. These concepts have centralised the experiences of the service worker, focusing closely on how they mobilize their embodied and emotional capacities during the performance. I, however, intend to conceptually integrate the customer, illustrating how the service worker's performance of emotional and aesthetic labour is dynamically steered by the customer's input. In vividly tracing the customer's role and experiences, I intend to offer an elevated depiction of the customer that analogises them not simply as a passive and observatory audience, but as an active co-creator of the performance. The aim of this thesis is therefore to show how service work is not one-sided but is in many contexts predicated upon an evolving worker-client dyad, which allows the service experience to be co-created rather than simply provided.

This dyadic focus marks a departure from much of the sociological service work literature, which endorses a passive depiction of the customer by centralising the experiences of the workers. The sense of theatre conferred by the dramaturgical approach does in a sense, acknowledge the potential for customer engagement as an audience that conform or disrupt a performance (Grove et al, 1992). However, I recognise a customer experience that is highly individualised, amounting to a

performance that is nuanced to reflect the development of client-stylist relations. These nuances manifest in the broader service setting or 'stage', which can be dynamically reconfigured by ever-evolving social relations. As service roles entail direct interaction with customers (Bélanger and Edwards, 2013; Deery and Nath, 2013; Ikeler, 2016), there is formidable scope for customers to engage, interject and participate in some manner. Drawing upon marketing literature regarding co-creation in the context of services to conceptualise customer engagement (Buonincontri et al, 2017; Prahaland and Ramaswamy, 2004), I seek to pave the way for a dynamic focus within sociological accounts of service work that jointly recognises the role and experiences of the customer. In furthering understanding of the customer's role, I also seek to advance conceptual readings of how service workers perform.

Tracing Goffman's (1959) analogy back to a context that precedes ritualised entry on the stage and the nuanced modes of adaption that ensue, I look to the practices and processes that prepare inexperienced actors. As a complimentary empirical focus, I explore hair and beauty colleges, where the hairdressers and beauticians of the future are schooled in the art of service work. Extant empirical research has previously illustrated the interpersonal qualities required, particularly by those working in highly affective contexts, to navigate the changeable terrain of each customer exchange (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007; Arnould and Price, 1993; Price et al, 1995). However, I address a lingering conceptual void within service-based research pertaining to how workers initially develop this interpersonal and embodied calibre. Guiding this thesis are three research questions (RQs) developed to reflect the main aims of the research:

1. *What skills are required to navigate high-contact, affective service encounters and how is their initial development conceptualised?*

2. *How do service encounters dynamically influence the surrounding 'servicescape'?*

3. *How do service worker and customer interact to produce a desired service outcome?*

In answering RQ 1, I intend to draw upon insights obtained in an educational setting. This broadens current understanding of service work by exploring how nascent workers are readied for the 'stage'. These insights matter because escalating customer expectations intensify the work of those in customer facing roles (Korczynski and Ott, 2004; Bolton, 2004), who must now 'showcase particular forms of embodied as well as affective skills' (Mears, 2014: 1331). Accompanying the rich narrative of salon life, I aim to provide a supplementary account that broadens the reach of Goffman's (1959) theatrical analogy by illustrating how actors are prepared for their 'role' on the demanding 'stage' of service work. Addressing RQs 2 and 3 necessitates a dynamic focus that considers both the experiences of customer and stylist. This contributes to existing research by allowing alternative reading of the 'audience' or customer, thereby redressing the disproportionate empirical focus upon the service worker. Rather than observing in a passive manner, the customer participates actively and is capable of changing, disrupting or derailing the 'performance'. In answering RQs 2 and 3, this includes dynamically co-construction of the surrounding space and negotiating the tactile process of bodily alteration that relies heavily upon a closely attuned reading of the customer.

Empirical focus and methodological approach:

The empirical focus of the research is based within the hair and beauty industry, a growing sector of aestheticizing bodywork that incurs moderate, semi-permanent changes to the body. Salons range substantially (Lindsay, 2004), from those that are luxurious and opulent (Bax, 2012; McDonald, 2016), to those that are locally owned and relatively informal (Furman, 1997; Gimlin, 1996) to those that operate as part of a multi-national franchise (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007). Salons may be perceived as functioning mainly to cut, style and beautify their customers, yet the accompanying phatic chatter builds rapport and configures the site as prime for the development of affective relations (Algharabali, 2014; Hanson, 2019; Toerien and Kitzinger 2007; Sharma and Black 2001).

Methodologically, the research employs ethnographic observation of various lengths at two sites; a locally owned salon and an academy offering hair and beauty training. This is accompanied by interviews, firstly those of an in-situ format conducted opportunistically in the salon with stylists and clients alike. More formal, semi-structured interviews were conducted with hairdressing and beauty training providers working at various colleges and academies located across the North East. The datasets are not intended for direct comparison, rather they illustrate the practices used to ready students for their impending performance as stylists and the development of necessary 'soft skills'. Moreover, the educational context offers a formalised pedagogical discourse stipulating what to say and how to act. This is then located within the reality of a working salon, where a more nuanced approach to service work that accounts for the development of customer relations and an ever-evolving service landscape is revealed.

The conceptual scope of the thesis

The thesis has a broad conceptual remit relating to issues that foreground the service encounter. The service context that I focus upon is distinct to that where interactions with customers are fleeting. Instead, I look to contexts where interactive conditions are prolonged and episodic, creating fertile ground for the development of affective relations. Similarly, circumstances that instigate intimate and sensitive conversation (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Cohen, 2011; Hanson, 2019) foster an emotive climate distinct from that of encounters that are fleeting, scripted and routinized (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005; Grove et al, 1992). The insights I pose are applicable to service contexts where heightened affectivity and situational proxemics gives rise to the development of 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999), 'place attachment' (Low and Altman, 1992; Debenedetti et al, 2013) and 'third places' (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982; Hickman, 2013; Fullager et al, 2019; Sandiford, 2019).

The insights I present are relevant to bodywork that is aestheticizing, which I identify as paid labour that alters the customer's body (Gimlin, 2007; Twigg et al, 2011; Kang, 2010). The constant desire to change one's body is reflected in an increase of UK consumer spending, which in the area of hair and personal grooming alone amounted to £8.6 billion in 2019 (Statista, 2020). The underlying service objective of bodily alteration necessitates a distinct interweaving of relational and technical skill (Wainwright et al, 2010; Algharabali, 2014; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a; Stefani and Horlacher, 2018). Touch for the purpose of aestheticiation has been conditioned as feminine, being regarded as deferential, servile and gentle (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018). Moreover, the navigation of potentially intimate and sensitive encounters is often essentialised as a natural feminine capability (Nixon, 2009). It is therefore unsurprising that certain types of bodywork, such as that which is aestheticizing and

caring, are dominated by female workers. Moreover, the salon exists as a uniquely feminised commercial space on account of 'a woman's supposed affinity for grooming, beauty and style' (Willet, 2000: 55). Though I recognise the significance of enduring gender dynamics within hairdressing and beauty, I do not focus specifically on gender identities and/or relations. Gender is not completely disregarded, rather it is considered as part of a broader set of relations that intersect to produce an embodied self (Skeggs, 2005; Lindsay, 2004).

The empirical reach of the thesis is not entirely applicable to every hair and beauty salon on account of the disparity that exists across the industry (Lindsay, 2004). The insights offered are however distinct to the conditions of the majority of salons in the UK, which are independently owned and feature a small workforce (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; National Hairdressers Federation, 2016). These salons are perceived as forming 'the mainstay of the industry' on account of their vast numbers (Willet, 2000: 67). Rather than being applicable to the minority of more opulent, chain or spa-like salons that seek to espouse a more polished image (Bax, 2012), the empirical reach of the thesis extends to salons and other service organisations where recurrent contact cultivates loyalty, informality and inclusivity (Furman, 1997; Gimlin 1996). It is also worth briefly touching upon the conceptual remit of the thesis. Though I assume a dynamic focus, it is not all encompassing. I am not seeking to provide an individualised account of either worker or customer that positions the two as detached. Instead, I coalesce experiential fragments to provide a broader relational account that documents how the service encounter transpires in an affective commercial context. As I look to the service environment or 'scape' more generally (Bitner, 1992), I illustrate how the stage

of a performance becomes dynamically embedded as part of an on-going process that reconstructs and reconditions it.

1.2: A dynamic analysis of the service encounter

In order to broaden current understandings of worker-customer relations in service work, I focus partly upon the early and tentative development of the 'soft skills' that allows workers to communicate, interact and converse with others through the mobilization of their interpersonal and embodied attributes (Orwig, 2020; Grugulis et al, 2004; Ikeler, 2016). Encapsulating 'many different social skills that are distinct from hard, technical skills', soft skills include 'attitudes and personal characteristics as well as teamwork, cooperation, empathy and listening' (Anthony and Garner, 2016: 361). Regardless of definitional particularities, soft skills are widely acknowledged as essential for any customer-facing role (Grugulis, 2007; Grugulis and Vincent, 2009). Service organisations desire those in possession of soft skills as they allow an emotionally charged relational performance in which employees position themselves as a 'friend' to the consumer (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Guerrier and Abid, 2003). This is highly pertinent in the context of hairdressing, where relational qualities are regarded as essential for the role (Gimlin, 1996; Holmes, 2010; Cohen, 2010). Moreover, the broader creation of an affective climate enacted and embodied by workers is crucial for enchanting customers and ensuring retention (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989; Bitner et al, 2000; Tumbat, 2011; Seymour and Sandiford, 2005; Korczynski, 2005).

In an age where customers are increasingly chasing a hedonic service experience that fulfils and 'enchants' them (Korczynski and Ott, 2004), there is a greater impetus to look to how the skills needed to cultivate such an emotionally engaging experience are

acquired. Emotions, therefore, feature heavily in sociological accounts of service work. Service workers mobilize their affective and emotive attributes to dynamically transform their own emotional display and that of others (Hochschild, 1983; McKenzie et al, 2019; Tombs and McCool-Kennedy, 2003). Emotions can be communicated through the most subtle and slight of dispositional changes, from a faltering smile to a heightened vocal inflection (Fineman, 2003; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). Service workers must remain hyper receptive and demonstrate sufficient emotional literacy by identifying changes that communicate a shift in emotions (Sheane, 2011). The non-homogenous reality of social interaction necessitates a highly nuanced exchange, where interpersonal attributes and emotive properties are adapted to suit situational idiosyncrasies (Tseëlon, 1992; Mann, 1997). On account of such exhaustive and changeable demands many argue that 'emotion workers have never before required such a high level of skill' (Bolton, 2004: 25).

The expression of emotion is not limited to the social interaction with each customer. Service workers more generally serve as humanized embodiments of an organisation and the type of service experience they offer (Grove et al, 1992). Through their affective, aesthetic and emotive attributes, I regard service workers as embodying the very relations they seek to foster with customers. By mobilizing their embodied properties, service workers entice and immerse customers in the service experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1991; Bookman, 2014; Warhurst et al, 2000). Extant research positions the affective, corporeal and social qualities necessary for customer facing roles as manifesting through long-term acculturation experienced as part of one's upbringing (Bourdieu, 1984; Wright, 2005: Williams and Connell, 2010; Warhurst, 2008). In looking to the development and performance of these attributes by stylists, I intend to

show how they constitute part of an incredibly nuanced display that is dynamically steered by the surrounding 'servicescape' (Bitner, 1992) and the on-going development of customer relations.

Developing a performance: the mobilization of habitus

In order to account for early stages of development, I take a step back from the moments of interaction that occur in the actual salon. Instead, I look to the training and practices that prepare nascent hair and beauty students for such encounters. In doing so, I build upon an enduring stream of research on service work, focusing upon how soft skills are acquired (Gatta et al, 2009; Gatta, 2011). To conceptually enhance understanding of the educational context, I will draw from Bourdieu's (1984) notion of habitus, and related concepts of cultural capital, field and bodily hexis. Bourdieu's work will be used to illustrate and critically interpret 'phenomena such as educational inequality, cultural reproduction, social positioning, mobility, class and distinction' (Murphy and Costa, 2015: 3). Embedded structural and social relations create a limited occupational landscape, as potent societal discourses pigeonhole individuals to reproduce immobile career options demarcated by class and gender (Bourdieu, 1986; Brockman, 2013; Colley et al, 2003; Lindsay, 2004). I look to how these embodied markers are moulded during the formative years of education and then reshaped through the lived experiences of salon life.

As a conceptual tool, habitus facilitates an understanding of how socio-structural relations manifest in the context of everyday micro-level interactions (Raey, 2004; Colley et al, 2003; Skeggs, 1997; 2005; Savage et al, 1992). This is especially pertinent in hairdressing, as pronounced essences designate it a feminised occupation for the

working class (Lindsay, 2004; Holmes, 2010). Class distinctions routinely emerge during interactions with customers, requiring discursive management to evade asymmetries (Gimlin, 1996). Through their embodied performance, stylists enact a socially conditioned occupational identity marked by gender and class (Ashcraft, 2013). Extant research implies that this performance will be modified to embody a more refined mode of deportment (Bourdieu, 1984). The educational context therefore illustrates moments of tension, as agentic subjects resist the embodied process of gentrification that seemingly parallels a transition into service work. However, in moving away from empirical research that posits a cultured and refined habitus as necessary for service work, I look to the evolving realities of a working salon where embodiment emerges as incredibly nuanced.

In looking to the salon, I employ the theatrical metaphor to interpret the 'performance' as it transpires upon its 'stage' (Goffman, 1959). This stage can be understood as the tangible setting of an organisation, as well as embodied and sensorial qualities that coalesce with materiality to influence how the space is experienced (Bitner, 1992; Hancock, 2013; Grove et al, 1992). I do, however, apply the term 'stage' with caution on account of the suggested fixity. Drawing from sociological research that regards space through a constructivist lens, I regard the salon space as being dynamically (re) configured and (re) shaped by its occupants (Lefebvre, 1991; Rosenbaum, 2006; Best and Hindmarsch, 2019). The social buzz that characterises many commercial spaces has the potential to shift normative demarcations that designate areas of the 'stage'. In breaching restrictive dichotomies that posit space as a 'fixed, stabilised structure' detached from any semblance of social, relational or temporal development, I interpret space as an ever-changing output of symbolic and social reconstruction.

Assuming a constructivist lens allows interpretation of the emotionality that commercial spaces can become imbued with on account of fledging and established social bonds. The perceptual affectivity of a commercial space is conceptualised through the notion of a 'third place' (Oldenburg; 1989; Jeffres et al, 2009; Hickman, 2013) and 'place attachment' (Low and Altman, 1992; Debendetti et al, 2013). The affective conditioning of a space through inclusive social relations not only influences the customer's experience (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003), but also allows for the meaningful appropriation of space, shifting the allocation of spatial control from managers, employers and 'set designers' (Bitner, 1992; Goffman, 1959) to customers. Customers are elevated from a depiction of passive spatial occupants and considered as capable of utilizing their economic and relational prerogative to (re) shape a space to realise their desired service experience (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012; Sandiford, 2019). In order to interpret the customer's role, I draw upon the marketing concept of co-creation. Co-creation provides a conceptual lens through which to read customer engagement and crucially acknowledges it as a necessary component of an effective service encounter.

Co-creating an embodied service output: the particularities of bodywork

The distinct arrangement of bodywork services complicates the fragile interactional terrain that both service worker and customer must negotiate to produce a satisfying service outcome. Bodywork that is 'aestheticizing' situates the consumer's body as a canvas upon which the skill and technique of the worker is inscribed as a bodily alteration (Wisely and Fine, 1997; Holton, 2019; Gimlin, 2007). The social premium of the body as an expression of identity (Giddens, 1991; Mears, 2014; Gimlin, 2000) and as

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in a constant process of 'becoming' (Shilling, 2012) intensifies the encounter. Stylists must interweave interpersonal and technical capabilities to elicit and interpret the customer's desire, and then enact these accordingly through a situated and tactile application of craft.

The aesthetic essence that underpins bodywork heightens scrutiny levelled toward worker's corporeality, through which they must embody their technical expertise and the organisation's brand (Cutcher and Atchel, 2017; Williams and Connel, 2010). I will therefore expose the complexities of situating a formalised discourse stipulating stringent aesthetic policies within a highly nuanced and interpretive reality where somatic pressures are conditioned by a social milieu that is tacit rather than prescribed. There are also added complexities relating the physical execution of a craft and engaging in the phatic chatter necessary for rapport building (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a; 2007b). I consider both as temporally bound accomplishments that are ongoing. The technical craft is acquired through repetition that rhythmically builds muscle memory (Ward et al, 2016; Holmes, 2014), while the accompanying process of weaving in phatic chatter is eased through the gradual development of a relational terrain, where encounters of the past guide forthcoming ones (Harness et al, 2020).

Outline of structure and concluding comments:

The contributions I offer span various interrelated areas broadly located within the empirical remit of interactive service work. I shall briefly touch upon each contribution in turn:

1. A contribution to research regarding the development of soft skills. Though the insights I present are not intended to make novel advances in the area of pedagogy, they partially address the lacuna regarding the education and training of soft skills (Gatta, 2011; Gatta et al, 2009; Solnet et al, 2016; Warhurst et al, 2000; Dawson et al, 2011; Chathoth et al, 2013).

2. I also contribute to research regarding the functioning of an affectively charged 'servicescape'. In doing so, I illustrate the role the physical space during service encounters. Space is considered through a dynamic lens that accounts for both the spatial practices of both customer and service provider. This signals a departure from a restrictive analysis that denies the customer an active, on-going role in spatial (re) configuration (Lugosi, 2009).

3. In terms of a conceptual contribution, I frame these insights through Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analogy and in doing so broaden its applicability. Firstly, I consider the preparatory practices and process undertaken to ready oneself for the stage. Comparatively, empirical analysis has focused largely upon the actual performance often disregarding the experiences that precede it. Yet, service workers or 'actors' do not simply enter the stage and seamlessly assume their role. I intend to show how the process of entering and performing on the stage for inexperienced actors is one fraught with tension, adaptation and acts of resistance. The analysis also suggests that applying a blanket label of 'audience' to all customers reproduces unhelpful notions of docility, sameness and passivity. Essentially, I devote more attention to the 'actor's' (the service worker) preparation for the stage and the role of the audience (the customer) is expanded to account for greater diversity, agency and activity.

4. Finally, I seek to contribute empirically by illustrating the complexities of bodywork and locating these within a societal discourse that increasingly positions the body as a site of on-going identity construction and expression (Giddens, 1991; Holton, 2019; Gimlin, 2010; Wisely and Fine, 1997). The burgeoning sub-sector of bodywork necessitates a distinct application of skill premised upon the seamless interweaving of embedded technical craft with fluid, phatic chatter that allows relational development (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018; Hanson, 2019; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a; 2007b).

Overall, I present an offering that is a rich and multi-faceted account of the service experience in an affective context. Contributions are provided in the related areas of inculcating the soft skills required for an emotive delivery of service, the processual development of resultant commercial relations and the collaborative negotiation of a satisfying service output.

In terms of how this thesis is structured, in chapter 2 I will outline relevant literature, beginning with a broad overview of service work. Throughout this chapter, I intend to tease out the distinctive features of a service encounter. Reviewing related empirical research will also elucidate the various voids that linger throughout sociological accounts of service work and the concepts that have been developed to understand it. In emphasising one of the central deficiencies of a disproportionate focus on the service worker, I will use co-creation to dynamically frame encounters in a way that acknowledges service worker and customer. In reallocating the focus to the service worker, I will then discuss the skills required to navigate the affective and complex terrain of encounters. In an effort to conceptually unpack these skills, during chapter 3 I

will explore emotional and aesthetic labour in order to illustrate the mounting demands encountered by workers and their role in cultivating organisational affect. Chapter 4 will serve as a conclusion to the reviewing of relevant literature. In this chapter I will contextualise bodywork as an emerging service sub-sector and outlining the particularities of it, before moving onto a detailed overview of hairdressing.

In chapter 5 I will move onto the methodology. This will include a discussion of the data collection process, detailing the chronology of collection and how issues encountered were negotiated and resolved. I will describe how the coding process and subsequent analysis led to the emergence of the themes that form the empirical chapters. In chapter 6-8, I present findings from my research. To account for the processual interpretation of the service encounter, the empirical data is thematised to cover the trans-temporal reality of the service encounter. In chapter 6 I therefore take a step back to the training, education and development that foreground a service encounter, considering the pedagogical origins of 'soft' skills. Chapter 7 looks to the realities of a working salon, oscillating between the stylist and the customer to vividly explore how a service encounter is 'co-created' and 'co-experienced'. This chapter extends the dynamic analysis to consider the co-construction of the salon as a symbolic space. In chapter 8, I expose the situational particularities of bodywork, elucidating the need for a tactile application of embodied and interpersonal skill. In chapter 9 I will coalesce the empirical insights presented, contextualise their relevance and outline broader contributions. Finally, in chapter 10 I will conclude this thesis by returning to the research questions, identifying poignant limitations and outline avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Co-creating a service experience

The relational conditions in hairdressing are in a way, both typical and atypical of service work. There are some features of hairdressing that render it indistinguishable from various other forms of service work. However, there are also particularities that demarcate it as a distinct occupation. To tease out both these similarities and differences, I will begin this chapter by providing a general overview of service work. I will then briefly discuss the skills required in a service context and how these have changed to include an enhanced emphasis upon emotion. Building upon the spontaneity ensued by emotion, I will touch upon organisational efforts to standardise service encounters. To reflect a dynamic account of service work, I will move onto discuss the experiences of the customer and their role during the encounter. In furthering understandings of how the customer becomes engaged in the service encounter, the chapter draws from co-creation. The focus is then shifted back to the service worker, as I conclude the chapter by considering the illusively defined, yet highly sought after 'soft skills' that are essential for service work.

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the findings of this thesis within the emergence of service work and its distinctive dynamics. In doing so, I set up subsequent chapters that discuss and evaluate the sociological theory and conceptual tools developed to capture the complex dynamics of service work. This chapter also establishes the dynamic customer-worker focus that I sustain throughout the thesis. I therefore consider the experiences of those employed in service work, touching upon the interpersonal acuity required to cope with the irreducible flux of worker-customer interaction. This is complimented by an acknowledgment of the customer's role in the service encounter. Here I utilise co-creational insights to set up the customer as an

active and agentic participant. Though this chapter may seem unrelated to the empirical focus of hairdressing, it initiates discussions regarding co-creation and sets the scene for further chapters to more vividly expose how the situational nuances in hairdressing require a refined performance from stylists and an appropriate form of client engagement.

2.1: The service industry: emergence and overview

Services have not always characterised our experience as customers. As a sector, the service industry underwent substantial growth in the wake of the formerly dominant manufacturing industry (Bell, 1976; Wharton, 2015; Ashforth et al, 2008; Belt et al, 2002; Grove et al, 1992). This growth was so exponential that around 70% of employment opportunities in OECD countries are now within service roles (Wharton, 2015). I focus specifically upon 'front line service work' (FLSW), where there is direct contact with customers (Bélanger and Edwards, 2013; Deery and Nath, 2013). In working upon and with people, service encounters entail 'complex interactions with experiential and emotional components' (Tumbat, 2011: 191). It is such interactional properties that demarcate FLSW as a fruitful site of academic interest (Bélanger and Edwards, 2013).

Jobs borne out of the service industry are often imbued with negative connotations of being 'deskilled, low quality service job' or 'McJobs' characterised by a flat career trajectory and low wages (Lindsay, 2005: 50; Ikeler, 2016; Hill and Bradley, 2010; Brockman, 2013; Baron et al, 2001). Despite the variable contours of social interaction being a distinguishing feature of service work, typical depictions reveal it to be highly 'scripted and routinized', reproducing the idea that it requires minimal skill (Holmes,

2014: 480). Successive empirical research has sought to dispel such pejorative labelling, illustrating how service work is 'demanding, boring, exhausting, tedious, arduous and stressful' (Bolton and Boyd, 2003: 304). In needing to satisfy the diverse needs of clients, service workers must mobilize emotive and affective attributes, often blurring the division between private and public displays of emotion (Ashforth et al, 2008; van de Berg and Arts, 2019: 301). Despite the intense interactional climate of service work, the necessary competencies and skills are often rendered invisible and unworthy of higher status or pay. Subsequently, empirical research has sought to expose the skills of service workers that often go unnoticed and ignored. In doing so, the complexity of contemporary service work is revealed, pointing toward a nuanced form of social intuition and intelligence (Lloyd and Payne, 2009).

Skills and the changing role of emotions in the workplace:

The service experience, and specifically the interaction between service worker and customer, serves as a crucial means of acquiring a competitive edge in an increasingly saturated market (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005: 2007; Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996). The lessening emphasis upon actual products necessitates tactile usage of the 'servicescape' especially where interpersonal contact is high (Bitner, 1992). Within the multi-layered assemblage of a servicescape, the workers represent 'the face and voice of the organization', tasked with 'embody[ing] and enact[ing] what the organization espouses' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 6). The demands imposed upon service workers are multifaceted, comprised of 'emotional, cognitive, technical and time management skills performed often at speed and at varying levels of complexity and autonomy' (Hampson and Junor, 2005: 176). A tactile interweaving of such skills is required as the contemporary service worker must be empathetic and deferential to the customer,

while maintaining control of the encounter (Korczysnki, 2005). This requires a well-developed emotional toolkit, as service workers must 'regularly change their own, their colleagues and, of course, their customer's emotions' (McKenzie et al, 2019: 675). The demands imposed upon service workers are intensifying, as customers harbour increasingly hedonic expectations (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005; Korczynski and Ott, 2004).

Whether seeking to invoke the onrush of joy, excitement or comfort, the need to alter the emotions of the customer and one's own display of emotions, requires 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983). The exact feeling created is contingent upon the occupational context, and can range among those working in retail (Pettinger, 2004; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Williams and Connell, 2010), to a call centre (Taylor and Bain, 1999; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002) and to nursing (Mann and Cowburn, 2005). Within a particular service context, no two encounters are the same, meaning that service workers are required to 'switch and swap faces', qualifying them as 'truly multi-skilled social actors' (Bolton, 2004: 24). This irreducibility is located as primarily challenging for the worker. However, in this thesis I assume a more dynamic analysis that accounts for how the customer experiences each interaction as a truly unique event. Reflecting the worker-centric approach of sociological accounts of service work, organisational efforts to routinize and structure service encounters by prescribing the worker's interaction have been discussed (Bailly and Léné, 2015; Leidner, 1993).

Standardizing and evaluating service encounters

Service encounters are characterised by an intangible element deriving from the ''people work' aspect of the job' (Korczynski, 2005). On this basis, routinizing the

service encounter is challenging given the consistent threat of being confronted with 'variable and unexpected [customer] demands' that may render attempts at standardisation useless (Bailly and Léné, 2015: 177). As service encounters become increasingly underpinned by a social, as well as economic order (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005), they pave the way for enhanced spontaneity (Leidner, 1993; Grove et al, 1992). During a service encounter 'customer actions, reactions and other characteristics can have a profound influence on the actions and mannerisms of front-line personnel' (Bettencourt and Guinner, 1996: 4). Despite the inferred potential of customers to enact change and steer the course of the encounter, there remains an empirical dearth regarding their experiences. As a 'fragile process' (Korczynski, 2003: 57), I intend to illustrate the social ordering of consumption in an affective context. The customer is therefore acknowledged as capable of participating and even misbehaving by defying prevailing norms and disrupting the encounter (Grove et al, 1992; Bolton and Houlihan, 2005).

Where service workers are concerned, organisations may seek to hire those able to control their emotions, supressing visceral forms of expression that threaten the quality of service. This ensures a more tightly structured exchange, where customer disputes are resolved quickly and efficiently (Bailly and Léné, 2015). Large organisations may implement this through formalised training that prescribes situational responses (Hochschild, 1983; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Korczynski, 2003; Seymour and Sandiford, 2005). Routinizing encounters in such a way is however, at odds with the contemporary emphasis upon experience. Employees must therefore wrestle with juxtaposing demands of providing a personalised, highly attentive experiential service (Korczynski and Ott, 2004; Korczynski, 2005), while encountering 'increased demands

with regard to quality, time limits, adaptability and resourcefulness' (Bailly and Léné, 2015: 186). Efforts to standardize encounters may further threaten the customer's experience, as demands for interaction with a service agent perceived as acting 'genuinely' intensify (Sandiford and Seymour, 2011; Seymour, 2000; Grove et al, 1992). As a key focus of the thesis, extant research regarding the organisational control of employees' emotions acknowledges that such control does not extend to the customer and their emotions. The customer therefore emerges as a disrupting, derailing and dismantling influence on an otherwise seamless service encounter. In the following section, I shall broaden the variable scope of involvement that customers may assume during an encounter.

The role of the customer in the service relationship:

From discussions of service work so far, I hope to have conveyed that at the heart of the service encounter is social interaction. Despite service work being premised upon 'direct contact with customers' (Bélanger and Edwards, 2013: 441), the customer is too often 'absent or sidelined' (Pettinger, 2005: 352). Empirical research has instead focused on exposing the contemporary struggles experienced by service workers as the imperatives of 'customer orientated bureaucracy' impose dichotomous objectives regarding customer experience and measures of efficiency (Korczynski, 2002; Korczynski and Ott, 2004). Where customers have been considered, they are subsumed as part of a triadic structure, being that the 'old dyad' [of] workers and managers locked in their long-standing feud' has been transformed into 'a ménage à trois', seemingly elevating the role of the consumer from passive to active (Leidner, 1993; Deery and Nath, 2013). Yet this triad posits customer involvement and engagement as peripheral compared to that of the service worker. Moreover, acknowledgment of the customer's

role tends to be a disparaging depiction of 'sovereign consumer, co-producer, emotional vampire, aggressor, management accomplice and governed object' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005: 685). The kindest of these labels 'co-producer' arguably hints toward a more active and involved customer, yet calls persist to attribute greater agency and importance to the customer, who represents 'an embodied subject' steering 'social action in ways that harness the emotional, corporeal, cognitive and discursive' (Pettinger, 2011: 226).

Reflecting the dynamic focus of this thesis, some extant research has perceived the customer's presence as 'the most important unique aspect' (Korczynski, 2002: 2) and revealed 'the impact an audience may have on a service performance' (Grove et al, 1992: 101). The elevation of the customer as an active participant in the encounter has perpetuated the co-creational view of service as 'a process that is created and maintained by both the customer and service provider' (Tumbat, 2011: 188). The extent of customer involvement is dependent upon the nature of the service encounter (Grove et al, 1992; Gutek, 1995; Broderick, 1998). Echoing the dramaturgical analogy, the distinct contextual backdrop of each encounter imposes 'performance expectations on each of the participants' (Tumbat, 2011: 197, Goffman, 1959). The norms that govern customer conduct are, however, less prescriptive than those stipulating the performance of the service worker (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989; Mann, 1997; Biddle, 1986). The additional agency enjoyed by customers may pave the way for the development of affective relations or commercial friendships (Price and Arnould, 1995). Alternatively, customers may exert power (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005), act aggressively (Korczynski and Evans, 2013; Payne, 2006), or disrupt the encounter by rejecting opportunities to engage (Greer, 2014; Heidenreich et al, 2015). By maintaining a

dynamic focus upon both customer and service worker, I hope to resolve the blind spot within sociological service research by illustrating customer agency and reflecting their voice as part of a dynamic customer-worker relational analysis. I look to hairdressing as an apt empirical setting where opportunities for customers to engage are plentiful.

Giving the customer a voice in the service dyad:

This section has outlined the distinct features of service work, which have in turn necessitated the conception of theories from a range of disciplines. The focus of this thesis largely concerns sociological research, where the empirical focus has been situated disproportionately upon the workers who wrestle with intense emotional and interpersonal demands. The customer is relatively absent, positioned implicitly as furthering the stresses experienced by the service worker through their unwavering interactional demands. At best, the customers are represented as a relatively passive audience, as part of a theatrical analogy commonly applied to social interaction (Goffman, 1959; Grove et al, 1992; Baron et al, 2001). In assembling a 'material stage for production' in the form of organisational space (Bolton, 2004: 25), the potency of the theatrical metaphor in the context of service encounters becomes clear (Baron et al, 2001). To accommodate the changeable identity of the audience and situational particularities, the service worker or actor 'changes or manages his emotions to make them appropriate' (Mann, 1997: 7). Alongside a complimentary effort to construct an appropriate stage or 'servicescape', organisations recognise and manage 'the 'dramatic' aspects of service marketing' (Grove et al, 1992: 93).

Sociologists and marketing scholars are both intent upon extrapolating the 'intangible interpersonal feature of the service delivery process [which] may be the strongest

indicator to the client of overall service quality' (Broderick, 1998: 355). In accommodating a more equipollent depiction, marketing research increasingly presents the consumer as an active participant capable of exerting influence as part of service co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Payne et al, 2009; Grönroos, 2011). The customer's role is elevated from merely an arbiter of quality or an enchanted service recipient to an organisational member and even quasi-employee (Tumbat, 2011; Pettinger, 2011). Progressive accounts within sociological research that accord the customer with greater agency have largely done so in a regressive manner that generalises customers as either passive or exacerbating the stress of the encounter (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005). Judging the quality of service may represent a prerogative for many customers, however homogenising customers as active, albeit overly cynical and evaluative, neglects the interactive emotionality that transpires in certain service contexts (Tumbat, 2011). I therefore offer a more balanced understanding of the customer's role as an active, co-creator of a service experience in an affective context. Building upon the notion of customer as co-creator, in the following section I shall discuss relevant research in the field of marketing.

2.2: Co-creating a service encounter

Having previously highlighted the questionable representation of the customer in sociological literature on service work, the following section will draw from research on co-creation to illustrate the potential for customer participation and engagement. Serving as an important 'touch point' or 'contacts' (Payne et al, 2008), the service encounter gives rise to a 'set of activities which describe how the customer and/or the provider act (together to produce a service with both material and immaterial results)' (Fliess et al, 2014: 439). This process is often referred to as 'co-creation', a concept that

regards the customer as 'an active agent' (Prebensen and Xie, 2017: 168). It is a multifaceted process, consisting of co-production, engagement and personalisation, all of which require some form of customer involvement (Prebensen and Xie, 2017). Personalisation in particular, is credited among various disciplines as paramount for acquiring contemporary organisational success (Shaw et al, 2011; Korczynski and Ott, 2004). Moreover, co-creation is a continuous process, being that it is the means and the end rather than simply an output of service or product offering (Ramaswamy, 2009). Co-creation therefore persists throughout the entirety of a service, beginning from the moment a client enters a salon until the point when that client departs with newly coiffured hair.

The conceptual significance of co-creation for this thesis resides in its emphasis on collaboration being that it requires 'at least two resource-integrating actors who are engaged in specific forms of mutually beneficial value creation for them' (Buonincontri et al, 2017: 264). This elevates the consumer's role to one that is active and capable of steering an encounter in order to produce value (Cossío-Silva et al, 2016). Departing from the one-dimensional focus endorsed by sociological research, co-creation posits that it is not entirely down to the service provider to direct the encounter. It is this collaborative emphasis that I draw from in order to broaden sociological understandings of service work and reflect the customer's voice. In order to avoid submerging the experiences of the two parties together as an unintended by-product of a co-creational focus, the following sections isolate the expectations and experiences of the service employee and customer, as they each navigate the dynamic process of co-creation.

A dynamic input from worker and customer:

Expanding upon the extant empirical research that illustrates the exhaustive and demanding reality of service work for employees, co-creation allows a nuanced interpretation that considers the collaborative effort of workers. An important distinction that alters the role of employee concerns whether the service offers the exchange of physical goods or is centred upon the provision of an intangible service (Grönroos, 2000). Where services centre upon the provision of an intangible experience via human interaction, the service provider comes to embody the service itself and is central to ensuring customer satisfaction (Lovelock et al, 2007; Friedmann et al, 2018). Service employees are therefore expected to engage with customers on a relational level, influencing their emotional disposition with the intent of enhancing client satisfaction (Friedmann et al, 2018). The latter has been the focus of much sociological research that has exposed the deleterious impact and arduous labour involved in mobilizing emotional attributes to positively influence those of customers.

Personalising a service is also deemed crucial for co-creation and more generally, for customer satisfaction. Employees are increasingly required to provide a service that is seemingly tailored to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of each client. However, doing so requires that organisations create opportunities for customers to involve themselves to whatever extent they perceive necessary (Harkison, 2018). The service provider may therefore be tasked with directly providing the customer with clear means through which they can actively co-create the encounter to suit their needs (Payne et al, 2009). This may be as direct as attempting to 'engage the customer in an interactive process of value creation' (Chathoth et al, 2013: 17). In hairdressing, this may be as simple as asking the customer what they want them to do to their hair. From there, both the

experience and outcome of the service can be co-constructed by means of a 'purposeful dialogue' (Buonincontri et al, 2017: 265). Needless to say, the response offered by the consumer assumes an idiosyncratic form characterised by potential spontaneity. The following section will explore such responses in further detail.

Despite a sparse and peripheral representation in sociological research, within the conceptual framework of co-creation the participation of consumers is now regarded as something of a necessity (Fliess et al, 2014). Consumer contribution maximises the potential value acquired from a service (Grove et al, 1992; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Harkison, 2018). In constructing the service through the integration of various resources at their disposal, the customer's capacity to influence the course of the encounter and its outcome is substantial (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Grove et al, 1992: 101). Customer participation assumes multiple forms, transpiring through the provision of information, presence/attendance and co-creation of service (Claycombe et al, 2001). More generally, consumer contribution may occur through a physical, mental and/or emotional means, reinforcing the multi-dimensionality of the consumer's role (Fliess et al, 2014). In recognising the importance of effectively engaging consumers, Ramaswamy (2009: 14) asserted that it is no longer a case of 'build it and they will come' but rather 'build it with them and they are already a here', a notion that captures the organisational necessity of facilitating co-creation.

As an extension of Goffman's (1967) ideas regarding social exchanges, role theory speaks to the importance of customer contribution in the context of service co-creation. Illustrating the interdependency of particular roles, role theory is premised upon typical behavioural pattern of individuals based upon various forms of identification

(Goffman, 1967; Biddle, 1986; Moeller et al, 2013). A role therefore represents the 'total of cultural patterns associated with a particular status' (Linton, 1945: 77) such as that of the customer. The role of a customer imposes certain social norms and expectations upon the individual, whose adherence is essential to avoid being viewed as a non-conformist (Biddle, 1986). Within sociological research, the customer role is either unacknowledged or posed as non-conformist on account of misbehaviour and hostility (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005; Harris and Reynolds, 2003). A co-creational analysis does however, broaden the role of the customer beyond the restrictive dichotomy of conformity or resistance. Attesting to the potential variation among customers, there is a distinction between 'customer-in-role and extra-role behaviour', the 'in-role' practices being those necessary for the service, such as 'providing a description of needs [and] paying for the service' (Bove et al, 2009: 698). 'Extra-role behaviours' by contrast, serve to positively impact the service for all involved and can include 'gestures of appreciation to the service worker in the form of thank-you notes or gifts [and] positive word of mouth' (Bove et al, 2009: 698). Throughout this thesis, I consider both 'in-role' and 'extra-role' elements of customer contribution as highly significant in steering the encounter and informing the development of relations.

Particular service contexts warrant a higher degree of customer input (Grove et al, 1992), however facilitating the conditions allowing such participation is challenging. Initiating co-creation with clients is often deemed essential for acquiring a competitive advantage as it has been shown to enhance aspects of a customer's loyalty and serves as a potential advertisement to other potential customers (Cossío-Silva et al, 2016; Shugla et al, 2018). Arguably, an effective means of ensuring customers engage in a co-creational capacity is the cultivation of an 'experiential service environment' geared

toward facilitating their input and engagement (Prahaland and Ramaswamy, 2004). Situating customers at the heart of the encounter, a priority concerned engaging 'in a dialogue with and learning from the customers' (Chathoth et al, 2013: 12). The centralising of customers occurs in a literal sense in hairdressing, where customers are relationally and physically located as the focal point of the encounter. The interaction that ensues represents a specific means through which consumers can participate, acknowledged as the 'basis for co-creation […] at the crux of our emerging reality (Prahaland and Ramaswamy, 2004: 15).

Interaction is perhaps the most obvious way that value is realised during a service encounter. Initial evaluations of an immediate service context are linked to one's prior service experiences, as well as micro-contextual detail capable of influencing one's judgment (Helkkula et al, 2012). Put simply, the creation of value is not random or arbitrary, but contextually located within an individual's distinct experiential narrative of service consumption. The emphasis on value as a phenomenological and deeply subjective construct has fuelled growing interest in the experiential offering of co-creation. Service organisations increasingly acknowledge that their 'future survival and growth depend upon creating and offering a unique and memorable positive experience for their customer' (Chathoth et al, 2013: 11). In emphasising the intense emotionality of consumption, the 'experience economy' was conceived of, highlighting affective reality of contemporary service offerings (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Helkkula et al, 2012).

The consumption of experiences constitutes the fastest growing sector in the global economy (Oh et al, 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Solnet et al, 2016). Experiential co-

creation is defined as 'the process through which customers and organisations collaborate in order to create experiences' (Buonincontri et al, 2017: 264). Prior to its conception, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982: 132) made the pertinent observation of 'consumption experience as a phenomenon directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings and fun'. Organisations therefore strive to offer a 'memorable consumption experience' as opposed to a service centred solely upon the delivery of goods (Oh et al, 2007: 119). For organisations seeking to engage and excite customers, the creation of a recognisable brand co-ordinated effectively across various establishments assists in the creation of a highly experiential servicescape (Pine and Gilmore, 1991; Bookman, 2014).

In realising the importance of engaging their customers in a co-creational process, customers are considered 'feelers' and 'doers', who consume for the emotive onrush and euphoria evoked (Payne et al, 2009: Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). In seeking to 'gain more power and control of their experience' (Solnet et al, 2016: 218), a highly individualised service is created with the potential to transpire upon 'an emotional, physical, intellectual or spiritual level' (Buonincontri et al, 2017: 265). Understanding these experiences is therefore more challenging, as they are deeply personal and subjective (Buonincontri et al, 2017: 265). The experience economy attests to the significance of emotion, feeling and experience that are central to the thesis. In line with the dynamic focus I seek to uphold throughout this thesis, I extend the status of 'feelers' and 'doers' (Payne et al, 2009) to service workers who also harbour feelings and emotions toward the service experience. In considering the vastness of experiences enjoyed and/or endured during the service encounter by worker and customer, the following section further discussion regarding the effects of co-creation.

The effects of co-creation and when it fails:

I draw from co-creation not only to redresses the balance by considering the dynamic experiences of both client and worker, but also to acknowledge how each party is affected by the outcome of the service (Chathoth et al, 2013; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Prior to the encounter it is reasonable to assume that both parties will harbour expectations regarding how co-creating value will benefit them. The benefits and value expected from a service may hinder or enhance their eventual level of satisfaction (Prebensen and Xie, 2017). Needless to say, satisfaction is a simplistic means of encapsulating the plethora of outcomes ensued by co-creation, which can include hedonic, cognitive, social, personal, pragmatic and economic (Verleye, 2015). Each customer participates and engages in a nuanced way that reflects their preferences. However, organisations must create opportunities for participation and allow them necessary resources to do so (Buonincontri et al, 2017; Harkison, 2018; Chathoth et al, 2013). As organisations are economically motivated to initiate co-creation, additional customer-employee points of contact may be weaved in throughout the service experience. This can be as straightforward as regularly checking in with customers and clarifying that they are content.

During the subsequent moments of worker-employee interaction, co-creation speaks to the importance of reciprocity and mutuality. Put simply, a co-creational analysis holds that 'firms and customers play balanced and interdependent roles' (Chathoth et al, 2013: 11; Vargo et al, 2008). Any misalignment between expectations, interests and/or utilization of resources creates the possibility of defective co-creation (Chathoth et al, 2013). Particular service contexts are more vulnerable to such instances, including those that require a high level of customer participation (Greer, 2014). Relying upon a

certain level of consumer input renders an encounter especially fragile and incites a

lingering risk of failure (Heidenreich et al, 2015; Greer, 2014; Grove et al, 1992). As

customers are individuals with their own unique set of preferences and styles of

interaction, encounters are immensely variable. The salon in this sense is a fairly typical

service context given its heterogeneous clientele. This speaks to the fragility of co-

creation, which is intensified by an incessant variety of customers, each entering into an

encounter with a distinct and individualised set of expectations.

Customer behaviour that is unforeseen and atypical potentially distresses the service

provider, threatening the quality of the overall experience (Im and Qu, 2017). The

employee's attempts to co-create may be hindered should the customer behave in a

dysfunctional manner, defined as being 'any consumer behaviour that obstructs the

service provider from creating value' (Greer, 2014: 241). Dysfunctional behaviour can

include 'actions by customers who intentionally or unintentionally, overtly or covertly

act in a manner that in some way, disrupts otherwise functional service encounters'

(Harris and Reynolds, 2003: 145). This definition is indicative of the vast and diverse

forms that customer dysfunction can assume, broadening that inferred by extant

sociological research that largely depicts 'dysfunctional' customers as intentionally

abusive and irate. Instead, co-creation illustrates a more subtle, seemingly innocuous

type of customer dysfunction that occurs through disengagement.

Co-creation in the salon: interaction, skills and 'third places'

The purpose of this section has been to illustrate the conceptual purchase of using co-

creation to provide a more dynamic account of the service encounter. In departing from

the worker-centric view of sociological research, co-creation acknowledges that 'both

the customer and the service provider are in some capacity part of a value-creating process' (Grönroos, 2011: 280). This is not to say that assuming a co-creational lens is an entirely faultless way of conceptually reading the service encounter. A significant proportion of co-creation literature and the accompanying language used to frame the service encounter remains informed by goods-dominant logic that locates encounters within product-centric contexts such as manufacturing and technology (Shaw et al, 2011). I therefore draw from co-creational research that places 'services instead of products at the centre of the economic exchange' (Buonincontri et al, 2017: 265; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This stream of research focuses on the relational and interactive conditions engendered by employee-customer co-presence that are a central interest to this thesis.

In offering a balanced account that considers the role of the customer, co-creation does not lose sight of the service worker. Rather, those at the frontline of customer contact are regarded as being tasked with effectively initiating and navigating co-creation throughout the encounter (Dawson et al, 2011). Responding to the variable contours of social interaction, service workers must ensure that customers mobilize the resources and environment to co-construct a satisfying experience (Chathoth et al, 2013). Reflecting an emphasis on the experiential component of a service, I discuss how emergent social relations that evolve through co-creation are managed. In looking to the salon as a site thriving with such relations, I regard these as becoming increasingly intimate and over time emerging as an entirely distinct type of 'friendship' as illustrated in the below quote:

'Beauty-shop friendships, then, may be seen as neither better nor worse than other friendships. They are different from other friendships, perhaps, because they are limited to a particular space and time, but the significance of such relationships is not thereby diminished rather it is particularized' (Furman, 1997: 27).

Furman (1997) speaks to the significance of the social relations that emerge among stylists and clients and does not attempt to detach them from the bounded reality of their commercial setting. The 'commercial friendships' that develop are unlike typical friendships as there is a pecuniary impetus for their development, on account of enhanced customer satisfaction and retention (Price and Arnould, 1999; Lin and Hsieh, 2011). This kind of relational development in a service context does not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, commercial friendships depend upon the dynamic mobilization of employee's affective attributes and a responsive customer. Particular service contexts are especially prime for the development of commercial friendships and emotive bonds harboured by clients toward the space and its inhabitants (Rosenbaum, 2008: Debenedetti et al, 2013). The empirical focus of the thesis is one such context where structural conditions of the encounter allow for a deeper level of relational intimacy (Garzaniti et al, 2011). Organisations, such as hair and beauty salons, increasingly seek to cultivate an accompanying 'communal atmosphere' that encourages lingering and attachment (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012: 131) in light of the 'financial benefits from harbouring customer networks' (Rosenbaum, 2008: 181). Forging such affective relations is contingent upon service workers mobilizing their emotive and relational capacities to provide 'exceptional customer service' (Dawson et al, 2011: 290).

Service workers therefore play a central role in allowing customers to appropriately shape and 'co-create' the service, causing a sense of attachment to the organisation to flourish. By 'indulging in a dialogue with customers rather than just listening to them' (Chathoth et al, 2013: 13), service workers initiate an 'interested conversation designed to foster feelings of belonging and invoke a "sense of community"' (Bookman, 2014: 91). Conditioning the organisational space as affective and immersive gives rise to the formation of a 'third place', typified by the flourishing of social relations at a site distinct from one's home and work (Oldenburg, 1989; Sandiford, 2019). Third places are instrumental in assuaging feelings of loneliness and isolation (Bookman, 2014; Fullager et al, 2019; Debendetti et al, 2013; Rosenbaum, 2008). Hair salons are among typical examples of third places commonly cited in empirical research (Jeffres et al, 2009). Third places are of continual significance due to the increasingly fragile social relations symptomatic of postmodern society (Sandiford, 2019; Rosenbaum et al, 2007). The social voids created by an increasingly disjoined society where relations are fractured and self-serving forms of behaviour escalate, are partially filled by third places (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982; Hickman, 2013; Fullager et al, 2019; Sandiford, 2019).

Speaking to their emotionality, third places nourish 'the kinds of fleeting relationships and diversity of human interaction' (Rosenbaum, 2008: 180), giving way to interactions that mirror those between friends as opposed to being bound by commerciality and economic asymmetry (Price and Arnould, 1999). 'Longer duration and closer spatial proximity' are cited as intensifying the likelihood of a quasi-friendship between service worker and client (Tumbat, 2011: 191). Certain situational features facilitate a 'salient connection [...] through an accumulation of personal experiences and domesticized exchanges' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 904). The latter type of encounter tends to become

a 'boundary open transaction' whereby the employee assumes a participant like role, engaging as a friend as opposed to a service provider (Mars and Nicod, 1984; Price et al, 1995; O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006). Such affective conditions may give rise to a sense of 'place attachment' that 'emerges from experiences of familiarity, authenticity and security' provided by an organisational space (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 905).

Place attachment can be conceptually located within a 'third place' discourse being that it acknowledges the social functioning and emotionality of a domain (Oldenburg; 1989; Rosenbaum, 2006; 2008). From a service marketing perspective, the sociality of a space is crucial as an inclusive climate can 'act to facilitate or hinder the customer's enjoyment of their service experience' (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003: 449). Organisations such as hair salons where structural conditions allow customers to linger and reattend, may therefore strive to (re) condition a space into a 'third place' by mobilizing the embodied attributes of staff to invoke warming expressions of hospitality, comfort and familiarity (Bookman, 2014: Lugosi, 2009). The subsequent feelings of loyalty and belonging are an important prerequisite for close relations, as a single communicative exchange is typically insufficient to develop a relation beyond situational, commercial confines (Price and Arnould, 1999; O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006).

Where structural conditions allow for lengthier and recurrent interactions, there is a heightened demand for adequate social attributes that cultivate relational intimacy; the latter often conceptualised as 'soft' skills (Grugulis, 2007: Grugulis and Vincent, 2009; Orwig, 2020). In contrast to the formerly privileged objectivity sought after by organisations, employees are now encouraged to minimize relational distance from clients and convey a genuine interest in their client's lives (Ashforth et al, 2008;

Bookman, 2014). Appearing interested in a client's personal life facilitates the intimate disclosure of personal information, an identified component of service marketing (Shulga et al, 2018). This information is elicited by the employees positioning of themselves as a 'friend' to their customers through a relational performance, enabled through the mobilization of soft skills (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Guerrier and Abid, 2003).

This final section has if nothing else, illustrated that the demand for 'soft' or relational skills shows no signs of waning. On the contrary as services become increasingly collaborative and customers chase a sense of relational fulfilment, services workers must 'possess social and emotional intelligence' (Solnet et al, 2016: 218). Service workers must demonstrate a nuanced capacity for emotional recognition, allowing them to detect slight dispositional changes in their customer (Sheane, 2011). Moreover, to initiate and develop the 'commercial friendships' that many customers desire, service workers require 'attractiveness, social skills, responsiveness and similarity' (Price and Arnould, 1999: 40). In an organisational sense, the embodied flexing of one's soft skills is not just about oozing charisma and charm to embellish a service. The 'attitudes and behaviours during the service encounter' are in fact, essential for the longevity of an organisation, as they encourage customer engagement and loyalty. As I focus upon conceptually unpacking the service encounter through a dynamic worker-customer account of experience, I look now to the skills required by workers who must mobilize their interpersonal and embodied attributes to engage customers accordingly.

2.3: Skills required for interactive service work

The previous section discussed co-creation as a way of cementing the dynamic focus that I intend to uphold throughout this thesis. Although I have previously discussed the dearth of sociological research that acknowledges the experiences of the customer; this does not mean that I wish to assume a disproportionally customer-centric approach. Service workers interact with an immense variety of customers and cultivate a range of different relations, each following an entirely unique trajectory. As these 'commercial friendships' become more visible throughout the service context (Price and Arnould, 1999), it is crucial not to lose sight of the skills performed by workers that allow these relations to flourish. As discussed in the previous section, even where co-creation endorses a more balanced and dynamic approach, there remains an awareness of how the relational and affective qualities of workers create a fertile terrain for co-creation (Buonincontri et al, 2017; Solnet et al, 2016). In order to provide some important definitional clarity around these somewhat illusively defined, albeit essential skills, the following section shall discuss 'soft' skills.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the advent and expansion of the service industry. It is this remarkable economic restructuring that has engendered demand for 'soft' skills, those being an alternative skillset premised upon proficient social capabilities (Bolton, 2004; Lloyd and Payne, 2009; Solnet et al, 2016). They are essential in the delivery of contemporary services, which are 'bundled up with the feelings and personality of the worker selling the product' (Bailly and Léné, 2015: 184). As the hair salon is one service context that allows the development of commercial friendships, stylists are required to mobilize social attributes to pave the way for an affective relational trajectory to be further steered by the customer's input (Price and Arnould, 1995; Garzanitti et al, 2011). Despite the importance of such social competencies the vast discourse

surrounding skills often subsumes them with other such skills of 'hard and soft skills, basic skills, key skills, transferable skills or poor skills' (Westwood, 2004: 38). This contributes to a lack of definitional clarity that risks the layperson maintaining an over-simplified perception of soft skills.

Relational qualities and social attributes are generally considered as being among the primary components of soft skills, those being 'the interpersonal attributes that characterise a person's relationships with others' (Robles, 2012: 457). There is, however, an increasing tendency to regard such traits as 'personal characteristics, attitudes, character traits or predispositions as skills' (Grugulis et al, 2004: 6; Ikeler, 2016). Organisations affirm this by attributing greater emphasis to personal competencies, which among other things include the ability to 'communicate and interact with customers' (Bailly and Léné, 2015: 184). Locating soft skills within one's personality fuels arguments pertaining to the existence of an increasingly deskilled workforce (Strangleman and Warren, 2008; Lindsay, 2005; Ikeler, 2016). Moreover, subsuming skills as personal attributes implies an essentialist quality that locates them as either dichotomously present or absent. In dismantling the essentialisation of soft skills, I look to how these skills can be acquired through training and learning.

Acquiring soft skills: education, training and learning

Having discussed what constitutes soft skills and how in demand they are, a sensible question concerns how exactly does one acquire these sought-after capabilities? Mounting topical justification supports this intrigue given that there is an acknowledged shortage of soft skills identified among the current workforce (Bolton, 2004; Schulz, 2008; Robles, 2012; Anthony and Garner, 2016). Generally, it is agreed that 'the skills

that matter to employers in interactive services tend to relate to the person' (Warhurst, 2008: 78). Learning therefore extends beyond the technical skills and attributes, as there is an additional need to learn 'specific norms, behaviours and worldviews that conform to the requirements of the relevant field' (Juul and Bysknov, 2019: 2). This tacit form of understanding is thought to better equip individuals with the 'ready-for-work' skills that qualify them as 'employment ready' (Succi and Canovi, 2019: 4). As it is a highly nuanced and experiential process of learning, teaching soft skills to service workers of the future represents a 'daunting task' (Orwig, 2020).

Empirical research from various disciplines including organisational behaviour, human resource management and marketing, continues to highlight a lacuna regarding the training and education required to support the development of relational and social attributes (Gatta, 2011; Solnet et al, 2016; Warhurst et al, 2000; Dawson et al, 2011; Chathoth et al, 2013). In observing this lacuna, Gatta et al (2009: 984) noted that 'training and education are critical for individual's ability to compete in service occupations yet discussions of training and education for workers in these jobs is often ignored'. Throughout this thesis I therefore aim to broaden empirical insight by looking into the practices and processes used to inculcate soft skills among the next generation of service workers. I do not however, profess a novel contribution in the form of revised pedagogical theory. Rather, I intend to contribute to sociological understanding of service work by looking to the training context for insights regarding the tentative development of the relational and embodied attributes mobilized during the service encounter. These insights are then situated in the reality of working salon, where the more formalised discourse of a training context is tacitly moulded to reflect the particularities of a service context and the encounters that transpire.

Conclusion:

Throughout this chapter I have outlined the distinctive features of service work. In doing so, I hoped to illustrate the lingering absence of the customer from empirical research, so as to set up the contribution of this thesis. In an effort to cement the dynamic approach I assume throughout this thesis; co-creation was drawn upon. Co-creation also speaks to the need for relational skills that enable the service worker to initiate affective, social trajectories to be steered by customers in a direction that best suits them. Establishing such a trajectory is, however, dependent upon the mobilization of affective competencies often referred to as 'soft skills' (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Guerrier and Abid, 2003). In alluding to an additional aim of the thesis, this chapter also attests to the importance of soft skills in service work and notably, the dearth in empirical research that explores the early stages of their development. To further justify and locate the purpose of the thesis, the following chapter shall discuss the leading conceptual frameworks within sociological accounts of service work. In discussing what these concepts have previously revealed about service work, I will tease out the salient voids that this thesis seeks to fill.

Chapter 3: Conceptual analysis of service work

In the previous chapter I outlined the definitive characteristics of service work and drew from co-creation to tease out a pronounced void within sociological research regarding the role of the customer. Co-creation broadens the scope of customer involvement beyond that depicted in sociological research, where customers are often peripheral to the encounter, either being passive or disruptive. This speaks to one of the main aims of the thesis; to allow for a more balanced focus through a sociological analysis of service work. The intent is not to compensate for the prolonged omission of the customer through a disproportionally customer-centric focus. Rather, I intend to contribute by offering a dynamic account that conceptually broadens the customer's role *and* provides insights regarding how service workers develop the necessary 'soft' skills.

The experiences of workers have formed the basis of much empirical sociological research, amounting to concepts developed to understand their work. These concepts illustrated the hidden but exhaustive reality of interacting with customers and strengthened the enduring analogising of service work to a performance (Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983). However, these concepts are not without lingering voids that fall short of capturing the nuances of customer-worker relations as they evolve. Through a dynamic analysis of the service encounter, I seek to expand understandings of service workers by stepping back from the immediacy of the encounter and the moment of interaction. In doing so, I look to the training context to explore the initial practices and processes that tentatively allow one's interactional skillset to flourish.

To elucidate the importance of this contribution, in the following chapter I will focus on the experiences of the service worker. To conceptually unpack these experiences, I will firstly discuss emotional labour and its empirical development. I will then discuss aesthetic labour as a conceptual expansion of emotional labour that illustrates the significance of the service worker's appearance and embodied attributes. Embedded throughout these discussions is an acknowledgment of how these concepts manifest in the specific service context of the hair salon. The purpose of this chapter is to show how although these concepts serve as key analytical tools to understand the service encounter, as alluded to in chapter 2, their reach largely excludes the customer. Moreover, there is little mention of the precursory practices and processes that precede the moments of interaction where emotional and aesthetic labour are performed. These moments can create tension, alienation and/or fulfilment. As I will illustrate throughout this chapter, preparing for and experiencing interactions that can be both fractious and harmonious requires an emotional acuity that continuously adapts to the fluctuating contours of an encounter.

3.1: Emotional labour

At one point, emotions in the workplace seemed something of a disjuncture. Although the visceral expression of emotion remains taboo in most public domains, the advent of interactive service work propelled emotions to being a necessity in the delivery of service (Hochschild, 1983; Blyton and Jenkins, 2007). A hallmark of service encounters therefore became 'feeling management', informed by 'the requirements of capitalist accumulation' (Taylor and Tyler, 2000: 77; McKenzie et al, 2018). Hochschild's (1983: 7) empirical study of flight attendants highlighted the labour intensity of service work, where effort was expended 'not in the physical or the purely intellectual but in the

interpersonal dynamic between worker and recipient'. Emotional externalities including smiles, posture and body language were harnessed for organisational benefit and regulated through the dissemination of prescriptive codes governing their employee's emotional display (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007; Ashforth and Tomuik, 2000). Accordingly, several of the flight attendants Hochschild (1983: 8) interviewed as part of her study spoke of 'their smiles as being on them, but not of them'. In situating emotions upon the academic stage, empirical research exposed the rapidly increasingly exchange value of emotions (McKenzie et al, 2018), inciting an 'economy of feelings' (Vincent, 2011; 1369).

What makes emotional labour such a central conceptual tool of the thesis are the insights it teases out in relation to interaction during a service encounter. For those researching emotional labour, interaction of any kind whether that be 'face-to-face or voice-to-voice' (Edgell, 2012: 243) creates opportunity to mould the emotions of others (Tumbat, 2011). Importantly, an encounter with an employee provides organisations with the opportunity to cement a positive reputation (Bitner et al, 2000) and secure consumer loyalty, as 'service with a smile will […] make them keep coming back' (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989: 31). For certain organisations inciting such loyalty may be especially important, as is the case for many independently owned hair salons that operate in the absence of a leading national brand name. In such contexts, there is a pronounced economic incentive underpinning any efforts to regulate emotional displays (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005; Korczynski, 2005; Blyton and Jenkins, 2007).

Embodying a friendly persona contributes to a 'positive affective climate' that envelopes customers and infects them with 'positive emotions' (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy,

2003: 461). As discussed in chapter 2, the service encounter is a crucial moment where customer perceptions are forged and evaluations of the service are made (Bettencourt and Guinner, 1996: 3). Organisations increasingly embed the emotions of workers as part of the service experience as customers increasingly yearn for an emotionally fulfilling encounter that 'enchants' them (Korczynski and Ott, 2004). Services that offer emotional engagement and successfully engender euphoria tend to increase satisfaction and retention (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). An enchanting service is premised upon the mobilization of affective attributes such as 'the ever-present smile, the cheery voice [and] the politeness when under pressure' (Fineman, 2003: 35). Service workers therefore expend substantial emotional effort during an encounter as they fluidly adapt their own emotions while dynamically responding to the emotions of others, and crucially, attempt to mould their customer's emotions (McKenzie et al, 2018). The changeable of façade of emotions locates conceptual interpretations within a performative metaphor.

Understanding the performance of emotion:

Theoretically, emotional labour has long been framed through Goffman's (1959; 1969) dramaturgical model, as employees represent actors delivering a performance intended to satisfy the 'audience' or customers (Mann, 1997; Goretski and Messer, 2019; Mars and Nicod, 1984). Encounters therefore constitute a 'symbolic performance' (Grandey et al, 2002), judged according to the perceived quality of the actor's front stage 'performance' (Grove et al, 1992; 1998). In an effort to enhance the quality of their performance, actors may 'accentuate[s] certain matters and conceal[s] others (Goffman, 1959a; 67). Contradictory pressures demand employees not only perform 'their job correctly but must do so in a manner that will convince the customer they are actually

enjoying their job' (Hill and Bradley, 2010: 42). Employees are therefore required to dynamically wrestle with rudimentary occupational requirements pertaining to efficiency and procedure, and organisational schemas that prescribe emotional conduct.

The codes and norms that govern emotional conduct are not homogenous. Rather, they are contextually rooted and demand nuanced adaption to accommodate a new audience (Goffman, 1959; Mann, 1997). In other words, the norms that govern a particular salon may differ to another and the needs of an individual customer will vary from one to the other. The service worker must, therefore, don the appropriate 'face' selected from their 'repertoire of faces' (Tseëlon, 1992: 116). Identifying the particularities and distinct requirements of an audience is dependent upon the refined development of a situational definition (Goffman, 1955). The latter is established partially through appropriate identification of 'transaction defining cues', whereby 'attributes of the target person [...] educate the role occupant about which emotions should be expressed' (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989: 16). Performances are therefore governed by both overarching organisational and role-specific norms (Ashforth et al, 2008; Ashforth and Tomuik, 2000; Mann, 1997) and situational discrepancies that demand a refined emotionality contingent upon audience particularity.

In pushing the analytical guidance of the theatrical framework further, the performance of emotional labour can be distinguished depending upon whether it transpires on the front stage, in the presence of the audience (the customer), or back stage either in the solace of isolation or in the presence of fellow actors (colleagues). The latter enables the service worker to temporality 'step out of character' (Goffman, 1959: 112) and acts in symbiosis with the front stage by providing necessary respite from performative

pressures. A hair salon may, for example, boast a pristine and immaculately presented 'front stage' that poses a stark contrast to the less polished 'backstage' where tools and equipment are haphazardly stored and staff can relax (Bax, 2012). Often these unassuming and underwhelming backstage areas are demarcated by an organisation's layout (Wilson, 2013; Bitner, 1992). For example, something as innocuous as a closed door restricts access and visibility, upholding an important veil of privacy (Richards, 2010; Ashforth et al, 2008). The backstage may be temporally (re) affirmed through allocated 'break' times or be spatially marked among domains sealed off by established connotations of privacy such as 'back offices, lunchrooms [and] restrooms' (Ashforth et al, 2008).

The purpose of the backstage is multifaceted. Poignantly, it allows actors to momentarily evade the confines of their mask, discard their props and express any suppressed feelings that amounted during their performance (Goffman, 1959). This seemingly allows for 'an authentic, sincere and/or believable performance' (Grove et al, 1992: 94). The backstage facilitates a different performance typified by lapsed norms and behavioural regulations, allowing a more relaxed persona that deviates from restrictive display rules (Lewis, 2005; Wilson, 2013; Korczynski, 2003). The backstage may also allow the formation of communities that provide collective relief to those coping with the intense demands of the front stage, particularly in jobs regarded as emotionally taxing (Korczynski, 2003; Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Sutton, 1991; Meyerson, 1990; O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Brockmann, 2013). Moreover, those with plentiful front stage experience may share their experiential knowledge with nascent performers to better equip and prepare them.

Goffman's (1959a) theatre analogy speaks to the inevitable variation that transpires, reflecting the fact that the audience are not necessarily passive observers as the term suggests. Audiences are instead capable of harmoniously supporting a performance or derailing it completely (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989; O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006). Of course, that is an exaggerated depiction of a typical audience, however it is crucial for performers to remain attuned to the needs and desires of their audience, tailoring their performance accordingly as these needs evolve (Mars and Nicod, 1984). As mentioned in the previous chapter, intuiting the emotional needs of each client represents a challenging endeavour for employees. Close attention must be paid to the signs and signals given off by their client (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006). This involves observing 'the body and face of the client for signs of approval, satisfaction, trust and excitement', the correct interpretation of which is crucial for providing a continuously satisfying customer experience (Sheane, 2011: 155). It is upon this basis that Bolton (2004; 2005) lauded service workers as 'multi-skilled emotion workers', on account of the complex situational and interpersonal dynamic, which demands a performance that is both introspective and alert to the subtlest manifestations of customer discomfort.

Service workers wrestle with spontaneous, unforeseen interactive conditions, while attempting to 'regulate emotional display to meet organisationally based expectations specific to their roles' (Brotheridge and Lee, 2008: 365). These 'expectations' assume the form of display rules that stipulate what emotions should be portrayed (Mann and Cowburn, 2005; Mann, 1997). Objectively, the task of managing emotions appears straightforward, occurring through cognitive effort to display the required emotion and supress what is authentically felt (Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). Employees are motivated to conform through the possibility of a promotion or financial

reward (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). Additionally, emotion management serves to protect the customer's feelings, ensuring that they are presented with a sufficiently supportive and empathetic façade (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006). This is especially relevant in certain service contexts, such as the hair salon, where interactions can involve the client disclosing of intimate and personal detail (Furman, 1997; Frost et al, 2000).

Coping mechanisms: Surface acting and collective action

Extant empirical research has illustrated the arduous and exhaustive reality of emotionally taxing service work. Managing the 'physical and emotional displays' of oneself and others necessitates the refined application of 'emotional abilities' (Vincent, 2011: 1370-1371). Certain situations, such as severe incidences of customer misbehaviour, may exacerbate this by requiring workers to supress a visceral response in favour of a jovial exterior able to placate volatility (Bolton, 2004; 2005). Coping mechanisms are not exclusively warranted in situations of social extremity. They may be required simply to cope with the tiring reality of plastering on a smile for the entire duration of the working day. Therefore, the emotionally demanding conditions created in affective service contexts such as hairdressing may warrant prolonged surface acting.

Where interaction is performed through surface acting, accusations of inauthenticity often follow on account of the 'wooden' smile that workers use to mask their true feelings (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005). Surface acting therefore bears strong conceptual roots within Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical concept of impression management (Seymour, 2000). The performance of a pleasant emotional façade does not however, guarantee a satisfying customer experience (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1988). Increasingly Western customers demand an authentically delivered service (Seymour,

2000; Sandiford and Seymour, 2011), as it is no longer 'adequate that an employee

merely configures his or her face into a smile for the benefit of the customer' (McKenzie

et al, 2019: 674). Certain consumer cultures may tolerate surface acting, as apparent in

the Japanese concept of 'hone versus tatemae' that allows for the socially required 'face'

over that which is genuine (Seymour, 2000). By contrast, this thesis focuses upon those

service contexts where more intimate and well-developed customer relations may

intensify desires for authentic social interaction. In this regard, surface acting

represents an important conceptual tool in unpacking the interactions that transpire in

the salon.

Deep acting on the other hand, entails internal moulding of one's emotional state to

accommodate the organisationally stipulated emotions (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993;

Soni, 2017). Premised upon adaption, deep acting involves stirring up a 'feeling we wish

we had, and at other times we try to block or weaken a feeling we wish we did not have'

(Hochschild, 1983: 43). The type of acting required is dependent upon the job as for

certain roles the 'smile has to appear genuine', rendering surface acting insufficient

(McKenzie et al, 2019: 674). The authentic performance demanded across an

increasingly number of roles instead requires deep acting (Liedner, 1993). It is,

however, difficult to ascertain what constitutes deep acting. In the salon for example,

the evolution of close customer relations may amount to a performance that cannot be

analytically distinguished from being authentic and/or an instance of deep acting.

Alternative modes of coping centred upon community have also been identified

(Korczysnki, 2003). This kind of collectivism has appeared in salons, where an inclusive

lexicon that reinforces a sense of shared identity allowed stylists to 'handle the daily

stresses and strains in a manner that did not jeopardise their profit-making potential'
(Willet, 2000: 72). These communities have also been identified within nursing (Bolton,
2005), debt collecting (Sutton, 1991) and medical social work (Meyerson, 1990). Among
these emotionally taxing occupations, employees may collectively access a 'back stage
area' where suppressed emotions of anger and frustration can be expressed among a
receptive and sympathetic audience (Fineman and Sturdy, 2001; Lewis, 2005;
Korczynski, 2003; Meyerson, 1989). Whether serving as a cathartic release to
oppressive display rules (Lewis, 2005) or as an emblematic counterculture collectively
resisting organisational norms (Taylor and Bain, 2003), the back-stage's functionality is
symbiotic for the overall performance (Goffman, 1959).

For employees who feel they lack agency within their emotion management, they may
revert to acts of defiance and resistance in order to reassert their emotional
independence (Payne, 2006). Emotional expression may assume an 'auto-pilot' form
characterised by reduced enthusiasm (Payne, 2006), alternatively consumer acts of
irritation may be redressed through subtle acts of sabotage (Van Maanen and Kunda,
1989). These efforts share the same objective; to offset feelings of alienation from one's
'true self' (Hochschild, 1983). The risk of alienation is intensified in contexts such as
hairdressing, where the lengthy and potentially intimate interactions require additional
emotional stamina to consistently maintain an agreeable façade (Rafaeli and Sutton,
1989; Sutton, 1991; Bolton, 2005). This is not to say that all stylists suffer detrimental
effects of alienation brought on by the emotionally exhaustive conditions of their work.
Throughout the thesis I do not wish to reduce emotional labour to an entirely
disparaging experience that distresses and exhausts workers. Rather, I intend to reflect

the rich experiences of emotional labour by both service worker and customer and therefore regard it as something that is highly subjective and changeable.

Experiencing emotional labour: individual agency and motivation

Extant empirical research on emotional labour has instigated debates pertaining to the wellbeing of employees. While emotional labour can indeed be exhausting, alienating and distressing, it is crucial to avoid a homogenised interpretation of the workforce. This risks a limited analysis of employee experience and disregards the variability of service roles, which produce a highly individualised subjectivity that differs according to occupational context (Seymour, 2000). Autonomy, for example, varies substantially among jobs and higher levels may facilitate an emotional performance that incites the 'greatest pleasure and meaning' (Korczynski, 2002: 146). Hairdressing is one such context where internal organisational hierarchies tend to be quite flat, allowing stylists greater agency in navigating their interactions with clients (Cohen, 2010). The enduring variation in the experiences of service workers has fuelled efforts to expand emotional labour and broaden its conceptual scope.

Successive empirical research has offered a more balanced account of emotional labour as something that can be experienced as both enjoyable and taxing (Williams, 2003). The negative aspects of service work could be rationalised by considering the positive experience of interacting with 'fun-loving, good time people' (Guerrier and Abid, 2003: 1415). Moreover, a four-point typology developed by Bolton and Boyd (2003) illustrated the multitude of potential motivations that shift and intersect to influence an employee's emotions (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). Experiences of emotional labour are therefore so changeable that service workers are not necessarily bound indefinitely

within an 'iron cage' of emotional manipulation (Hochschild, 1983). The motivations that steer emotion management may initially concern pecuniary interests; alternatively, prevailing social norms may dictate an appropriate presentational form (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). Adherence to organisational norms may occur in a prescriptive manner or assume a philanthropic form where emotional 'gifts' are agentically awarded to customers (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). The latter type of philanthropy has been identified as transpiring in 'work behaviours that offer rapport, supportiveness, congeniality, nurturance and empathy' (Lewis, 2005: 568). An affective service context such as hairdressing benefits from an expanded analysis, as prolonged relations with certain customers may incite a range of different motivations that intersect throughout the interaction.

A broader typology of emotion management also speaks to the variable purpose of emotional labour, which may at times shift beyond creating the 'proper state of mind in others' (Hochschild, 1983). The work of Wouters (1989), Bolton (2005) and Ashforth et al (2008) indicates the potential for authenticity among service workers, where smiles may be displayed out of choice rather than in accommodation with organisational feeling rules. Depending upon the individual and their occupational context, workers may 'resist, enjoy and cope differently with emotional labour demands' (Mears, 2014: 1333). Emotional labour may therefore be experienced on a broad spectrum, ranging from inciting feelings of exhaustion to exuberance (Tolich, 1993; Hancock, 2013). Such 'pleasurable emotional labour' may even be regarded as 'one of the most significant and satisfying aspects' of the job (Korczynski, 2003: 57). The motivation to cultivate customer loyalty and satisfaction through the provision of a personalised service may therefore derive from a philanthropic source as opposed to being managerially imposed

(Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Tolich, 1993). Put simply, 'many agents derive considerable satisfaction from interacting with clients and fulfilling their needs' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 9). Moreover, the particularities of certain service contexts may incite forms of emotional expression that are rawer and more intimate. The hair salon, for example, has long been regarded as a commercial space where discussions of grief, sadness or loss may transpire (Furman, 1997; Frost et al, 2000), potentially instigating a more authentically compassionate response.

Certain service contexts allow lesser scope for agency within micro-level interactions, greatly influencing the way emotional labour is experienced and performed. Where service encounters are highly routinized and governed by temporal constraints that render them fleeting, agency is often reduced. The scripting of encounters in such contexts is common, allowing organisations to ensure optimum efficiency and a uniform quality of service (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Seymour and Sandiford, 2005). Measures such as scripting are, however, suitable only to contexts where fleeting and monotonous encounters enable the premediated coordination of 'plans and procedures' (Grove et al, 1992: 108). This is not to say that scripts bear no place in the hair salon where prolonged and potentially intimate encounters seemingly make scripting unfeasible. By contrast, certain hair salons may attempt to script encounters to a degree (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007), though their actual implantation by stylists may be dependent upon the interactional context and their own experience.

The purpose of this section has been to reflect upon the conceptual reach of emotional labour. The concept was paramount in instigating debates surrounding the commodification of emotions in service work. However, as I have discussed, it endorsed

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a conceptual lens that was hyper critical and hindered discussions around agency and authenticity among service workers. As extant research has illustrated, this restricts analysis of various service contexts, where there is in fact scope to feel, to express and to embrace an authentic emotional façade (Wouters, 1989; Bolton, 2005). Despite emotional labour being so other-orientated, as its purpose is to produce a positive emotional state among customers (Hochschild, 1983; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007), it generally excludes the customer and denies them any influence in steering the emotional display of service workers. Through a dynamic analysis, I intend to illustrate how emotional labour is no longer an organisationally prescribed phenomenon. Instead, by obtaining a rich account of how client-stylist relational trajectories evolve, I hope to reveal emotional labour as an on-going performative accomplishment that is nuanced according to the distinct contours of each interaction.

This section has also illustrated the significance of emotions in the service context. As mentioned in chapter 2, customers increasingly desire services that incite an onrush of emotional fulfilment. This raises questions regarding the longevity of standardised service encounters. These may become tolerated in specific service contexts (Bettencourt and Guinner, 1996), as heightening expectation demands a service tailored to appease the idiosyncratic and relational desires of each customer (Seymour, 2000; Mars and Nicod, 1984). Wrestling with the juxtaposition of efficiency versus enchantment therefore becomes a daily strife for many service workers (Korcysnski and Ott, 2004). The emphasis upon services that enchant and delight customers through affectively charged encounters is particularly relevant in the context of the salon. I intend to build upon this by expanding the scope of emotional labour through a rich analysis of service work characterised by mutable relational trajectories. As the focus of

the research extends to embodied and corporeal attributes, acknowledging them as key features in the service experience, the following section will discuss aesthetic labour and how its insights relate to the thesis.

3.2: Aesthetic labour

Having discussed the worth and role of emotional attributes during the service experience, in this section I discuss the role of embodied capacities which are typically 'geared to producing a 'style' of service' (Warhurst et al, 2000: 4). Aesthetics are significant not only in the sense of localised service encounters and the cultivation of brands (Pettinger, 2004; Mears, 2014) but in 'our everyday economic activities and cultural encounters' (Chugh and Hancock, 2009: 465). In conceiving of customer demand, Böhme (2003) acknowledged an insatiable desire to be drawn in through far-reaching, universalised material processes. In illustrating this, aesthetic labour functions to imbue 'things and people, cities and landscapes […] with an aura, to lend them an atmosphere, or to generate an atmosphere in ensembles' (Böhme, 2003: 72). Consequently, 'new modes of workplace embodiment' (Witz et al, 2003) envelope service workers, reducing them to 'the status of an objectified- if albeit aesthetically skilled-fabrication' (Chugh and Hancock, 2009: 465).

Aesthetic labour manifests most apparently at 'the level of physical appearance' (Warhurst et al, 2000: 7), but also extends to an individual's whole demeanour. As part of this, service workers are often required to speak in the 'organizational "tone of voice"' (Hancock and Tyler, 2000: 117). This reflects the sensorial 'affect' of aesthetic labour, emanating from a combination of 'sight, sound, touch, taste and smell' (Warhurst et al, 2000: 7). In seeking to hire those who 'look like they belong',

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organisations co-ordinate a brand image through the embodied dispositions of their staff (Mears, 2014: 1334). The type of imagery or brand that is cultivated depends the type of service offered and their target clientele (Juul and Byskov, 2019; Pettinger, 2004). Disparity may persist among organisations offering the same services, as they seek to embody a different image. Among hair salons for example, there are those that strive to espouse a spa-like imagery of tranquillity and calm (McDonald, 2016). Alternatively, some salons focus on positioning themselves at the forefront of contemporary trends through a stylised brand while others endorse an informal, less polished persona.

In considering how the aesthetic competencies of stylists contribute to the overall experience of the service encounter, it is important to acknowledge how these attributes may be moulded and shaped to suit the organisational landscape. This can be especially pronounced at the level of aesthetic dispositions, as organisations often laud embodied competencies that are indicative of a cultured upbringing (Bourdieu, 1984; Wright, 2005: Williams and Connell, 2010; Mears, 2014). Amongst other things, this includes the ability to communicate confidently about meaningful topics and the demonstration of value through a 'bodily hexis' comprised of a well-regarded accent and the ability to conduct oneself appropriately (Crossley, 2005). Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus was innovative in demonstrating how particular dispositions and mannerisms demarcate class status, having been cumulatively acquired through one's upbringing. The cultural dispositions acquired through childhood engenders an organisational preference for those who 'already possess the required soft skills necessary for efficacious customer interaction' (Warhurst, 2008: 79). The aesthetic

attributes sought after by most organisations therefore advantage those in possession of adequate 'cultural capital'.

For service workers, their employability may indeed be contingent upon 'their style, demeanour, manner of speech and emotional management' (Boyle and Keere, 2019: 708). Empirical research has suggested that the ability to embody an all-round 'presentable' image equates with an improved suitability for placement in the service sector. Those who fail to possess the aforementioned 'assets' are likely to struggle; as such traits cannot be taught on the basis that they are 'manifest deeply in embodied dispositions' (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009: 10). Cultural capital fuels discriminatory hiring practices being that its acquisition is rooted in early childhood exposure to pursuits and practices considered middle class (Wright, 2005). Some training may occur in order to 'mould people into the desired personas' (Warhurst et al, 2000: 12). However, embodying the appropriate aesthetic attributes represents also concerns something of a tacitly learnt process premised upon experience.

Overall, the literature speaks to a pronounced organisational leaning toward attributes that embody the celebrated status of middle class. Attempts may be made to instil the importance of appearing presentable, however embodied markers of class cannot simply be moulded into innate, valorised attributes of masculinity, middle-classness and whiteness. Research therefore contests that the organisational lauding of middle classness excludes those who embody the antithesis of working-class culture from employment opportunities (Pettinger, 2004; Gatta, 2011; Boyle and Keere, 2019). I do not deny that a deeply embedded preference for workers able to espouse middle classness persists, manifesting through exclusionary hiring practices. However, I intend

to reveal the possibility for a more nuanced form of embodiment that is intertwined with the affective conditioning of a commercial space and the subsequent relations that develop. This amounts to an aesthetic that extant empirical accounts may conceive of as 'faulty' (Lawler, 2005: 437), yet it is attuned to the particularities of the service context and the nuances of each encounter. The following section will illustrate why a more refined understanding of the various elements that coalesce during a service experience, including the embodied and emotional, is essential.

3.3: Conclusion: coalescing sociological and marketing insights

This section has illustrated the complexity of contemporary service work by discussing the conceptual tools developed to unpack its experiential, emotive and relational properties. Though concepts such as emotional and aesthetic labour are fundamental for understanding the subjective experiences of the employee, they pose a unidimensional account of the service experience that excludes the customer. The substantive void of the 'mystery customer' (Korczynski, 2009) is acknowledged as hindering empirical accounts of service research (Pettinger, 2011). As discussed in chapter 2, a co-creational lens offers a balanced acknowledgment of the customer and worker as equal participants (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Moeller et al, 2013). This research seeks to evade the passive depictions endorsed by sociological research, instead positioning customers as active participants able to shape their service experiences accordingly (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Best and Hindmarsh, 2019; Griffiths and Gilly, 2012).

Where sociological research deduces the failure of a service to customers that are irate and disruptive, I draw from co-creational literature to offer a more balanced account of

how customer engagement may hinder a service. Above all, the customer is acknowledged throughout the research as capable of spontaneous action, whether that be in the form of deviating from their prescribed role (Biddle, 1986; Moeller et al, 2013; Im and Qu, 2017; Greer, 2014) or harbouring especially grand expectations regarding the service experience (Korczynski and Ott, 2004; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Oh et al, 2007; Payne et al, 2008). Consequently, no script or training programme can fully prepare service workers for 'the unpredictability and variability of the interaction order' (Bolton, 2004: 27). Despite the lingering potential for spontaneity, understanding how to co-create an experience may be furthered by considering how the necessary interpersonal skills are embodied, performed and learned. The latter represents a concern that is especially neglected in current discussion of skill. Therefore, to broaden understanding of such 'soft' skills, I take a step back from the service encounter to look at how relational and embodied competencies flourish from a nascent stage to that of refined and embodied application. In order to draw out the contextual particularities of hairdressing to a greater extent, I shall the begin the following section with an overview of bodywork, an emerging sub-sector of service work. This will assist in elucidating the conceptual voids that persist in a context of affective service work that the thesis seeks to fill.

Chapter 4: Hairdressing and beauty as distinct service contexts

In the previous chapters, I illustrated the voids that linger within sociological accounts of service work. Chapter 3 focused closely on the conceptual reach and limitations of emotional and aesthetic labour, both of which have informed empirical research interpreting the affective and embodied attributes of the service encounter. To more vividly tease out the issues regarding customer engagement and the development of soft skills that I intend to explore, in this chapter I will now locate relevant literature within the empirical context of the hair salon. In doing so, I build upon previous chapters by illustrating how the distinct contextual attributes of hairdressing warrant a conceptual reassessment that better captures the richness of client-stylist interaction. This is not to suggest that the conceptual apparatuses discussed in chapters 2 and 3 are entirely insufficient. Rather, as a highly affective and experiential service context that facilitates more expansive relational trajectories, I intend to demonstrate the worth in intertwining various conceptual insights to ascertain a more in depth understanding of the service encounter.

In setting up the scene of the empirical context of the salon, I will begin with an overview of bodywork as an emerging sub-sector of service work. This allows for a broader contextual discussion of how and why the consumer's body has come to be a canvas upon which the service outcome is inscribed. This will then be followed by a detailed discussion of hairdressing, including the composition of the industry, the cultural importance of hair, the salon as a commercial space and the interaction between client and stylist. The various conceptual insights discussed in previous chapters will be situated within this specific context. Crucially, in this chapter I seek to

make it clear why hairdressing was selected as the empirical setting in which to explore the co-creation of the service encounter by identifying its distinctive qualities.

4.1: Bodywork as an emerging service sub-sector

In chapter 2 I provided an overview into the service sector, including the qualities that make it a distinct form of work. The conceptual reach and shortcomings of co-creation, emotional labour and aesthetic labour were then discussed. The takeaway was that the insights provided by the latter concepts serve only a partial analytical purpose in particular service contexts. One such context where conceptual gaps linger is the emerging service subsector of bodywork. Bodywork refers to work performed directly upon the body (Gimlin, 2007; Twigg et al, 2011; Kang, 2010). This instigates significant changes that alter the encounter from the 'traditional' service contexts discussed in chapter 2 and 3. Notably, the involvement of the customer's body necessitates a conceptual reassessment of how customer engagement is interpreted and understood. Efforts to represent customer involvement, from the notional service triad consisting of managers, customers and workers (Leidner, 1993; 1999) to the more explicit concept of co-creation, offer a limited reach when this involvement becomes bodily.

Bodies are widely regarded as characterised by a changeable materiality, as they 'are rarely fixed and are subject to negotiation, contestation and reimagining' (Holton, 2019: 2). As an 'object and subject of signification', the body serves as a site upon which judgements are formed (Burkitt, 1999). Individuals therefore engage in 'reflexive bodily techniques', the nature of which becomes inscribed upon one's body (Crossley, 2005). Given that contemporary society endorses an intense level of corporeal scrutiny and policing (Featherstone, 2010), individuals face mounting pressure to invest necessary

resources to transform their bodies into a culturally acceptable state (Gimlin, 2000;

2007; Giddens, 1991). Our bodies therefore become an extension of our identity as a

consumer. They can be used to garner social acceptance, to cultivate prestige and/or

steer external perceptions in the same way as material possessions do. As we

endeavour to reshape and alter our bodies to better convey a desired sense of self,

assistance from 'specialists' may be purchased. A consumer-worker dyad is

subsequently instigated, and the concepts discussed in chapters 2 and 3 become

pertinent means of interpreting and unravelling the emergent dynamics of the

encounter.

Broadly speaking, the definition of bodywork involves 'care, adornment, pleasure,

discipline and cure', qualifying a variety of occupations as bodywork including nursing,

care work, beauty work, hairdressing and massage therapy (Wolkowitz, 2002: 497). On

account of the various forms bodywork can assume, it was estimated from 2011 UK

Census data that 11.5% of the working population occupy a role within the bodywork

industry (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2017). All forms of bodywork are unified by touch,

whether that be 'assessing, diagnosing, handling, treating, manipulating and monitoring

bodies' (Twigg et al, 2011: 171). There is disparity among different forms of bodywork,

nursing and care work for example, assist in the basic functioning of the human body.

However, in this thesis I focus upon bodywork that serves an aesthetic purpose. Defined

as 'aestheticizing body work', workers 'attempt to redress our physical character and

imperfections' (Wisely and Fine, 1997: 166). Given that the body represents a '(mostly)

renewable substance', opportunities to 'reshape and contour the body' are plentiful and

infinite on account of the body's mutable changeability (Holton, 2019: 6). Jobs that offer

assistance in such transformative processes include hairdressing (Gimlin, 1996; Cohen,

2010), beauty work (Sharma and Black, 2001; Toerein and Kitzinger, 2007), tattooing (Timming, 2015) and even cosmetic surgery (Gimlin, 2000). Regarded as 'impression-creating occupations' (Wisely and Fine, 1997: 182), those working in aestheticizing bodywork encounter the same challenges emanating from customer interaction as those in 'traditional' service roles while engaging in the tactile 'craft' of bodily alteration. Where chapter 2 and 3 touched upon the skills required to navigate service encounters in 'traditional' contexts, the following section details the skills needed to manage bodywork encounters and the added complexities that come with working upon a client's body.

Skills in bodywork: relational work and craftsmanship

In considering the skills required to perform 'traditional' service work, chapter 3 discussed the use of scripts in certain service contexts as an organisational measure to standardise interaction (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Seymour and Sandiford, 2005). Though not possible across all contexts (Grove et al, 1992), this suggests that particular service encounters follow a somewhat predictable pattern of interaction. Interaction in bodywork is, however, less reducible to such pre-determined patterns. In seeking to cast and uphold certain impressions (Wisely and Fine, 1997; Sheane, 2011), customers express different desires and preferences relating to the particularities of their body and how they wish to change it. This makes scripting and standardising bodywork encounters less feasible than in more typical service contexts such as retail or hospitality. As well as a service that is more nuanced and personalised, the physical intimacy of bodywork intensifies the interpersonal demands faced by workers (Gimlin, 2006). Building upon the discussion of emotional labour in chapter 3, extant empirical

research in bodywork contexts speaks to an interweaving of the 'body and emotions in the workplace' (Wainwright et al, 2010: 80).

Emotions in bodywork encounters are in a sense, inescapable. For one, the duration of encounters can be quite prolonged and far exceed the fleeting, transitory interactions typical in the retail and hospitality context. Where encounters are prolonged rather than fleeting, the interpersonal and embodied demands upon workers are intensified. Lengthier encounters require that workers are constantly attuned to the subtlest dispositional cues given off by their clients, adapting their performance accordingly (Eayrs, 1993, Yeadon Lee et al, 2011; Sharma and Black, 2001). Such an in-depth and intimate reading of customers was conceptualised by Sheane (2011) as 'emotional and aesthetic literacy'. Here, being literate encompasses both the performative capabilities cited as part of emotional and aesthetic labour as well as the relational intuition that allows a close reading of the client's needs as they evolve throughout an encounter.

Interactions in aestheticizing bodywork also have the potential to be episodic, as client and service provider may re-encounter one another. This recurrent contact facilitates the development of a long-term relationship that transcends the confines of an archetypal service encounter (Cohen, 2010; Price and Arnould, 1999). Recurrent contact also potentially renders opportunities for co-creation mutable, as they shift according to the development of each client-worker trajectory. Extant research exploring co-creation in the more experiential service contexts largely neglects what significance the development of a trajectory that spans backward and forward has upon the co-creation of the encounter. A well-developed and affective trajectory is, however, not an automatic by-product of recurrence. Much like the service contexts discussed in

chapter 3, those engaged in bodywork must mobilize their emotional attributes to appear 'friendly' and construct an affable persona (George, 2008; Harvey et al, 2017; Cohen et al, 2010). The latter is essential in the initiation and ongoing development of a relational trajectory. What complicates the dynamics of bodywork further and demarcates it from other service contexts is the sensorial element of human touch.

Consumers of bodywork arguably anticipate touch as a necessary part of the service. Quite simply, if a customer wants their body changed, the service worker is required to physically handle and examine the body, approaching it as a metaphorical canvas upon which they execute their craft. The experience of touch can be painful, pampering, comforting and/or therapeutic (Sharma and Black, 2001; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007). Touch can also exacerbate relational asymmetry between service provider and customer, inciting a threat to occupational status (Gimlin, 2007; Wainwright et al, 2010). The symbolism invoked by aesthetically tending to and adorning the body of another incites sovereign like imagery, relegating the worker to a position of subservience (Korczysnki, 2013). It is, however, possible to negate the potentially stigmatizing aspects of bodywork that threaten worker's sense of identity. For example, forging close relations with clients can minimize the perceived imbalance of status (Gimlin, 1996). Alternatively, occupational worth can be bolstered by broadening the reach of one's work as capable of restoring an individual's sense of self-worth and confidence (Sharma and Black, 2001; Ward et al, 2016, Cohen, 2020). Efforts to elevate occupational worth and redress the symbolic inequalities that can result from the performance of emotional labour are not unique to those in bodywork. However, individuals working in bodywork must dynamically navigate the tactile application of craft as they work upon their client's body and mobilize embodied capacities to appear

friendly throughout. Having outlined the challenges faced by those in bodywork and conceptually framed these using insights from chapter 2 and 3, the following section shall unpack the empirical context that is central to the thesis: the hair salon.

4.2: The particularities of hairdressing

> *'Then there is a fickle nature to the raw material itself. Human hair, like humans, is unpredictable' (Tarlo, 2016: 31)*

The above quote speaks to the distinct materiality of hair as an unruly and untameable entity. This is perhaps why regular practices of management and control have become so normalised as an essential part of most people's grooming routines. For some, this may consist of a bi-annual hair appointment or an infrequent trip booked when deemed necessary. However, for others the prospect of unruly hair and non-routine, sporadically booked appointments at the salon are somewhat unthinkable. In the US it is estimated that up to a third of women attend the hair salon on a weekly basis (Freedman, 1986). This reflects the enduring and potentially long-lasting relations within hairdressing where interactions are 'one-off but continuously on-going' (Cohen, 2010: 201). As mentioned previously in the thesis, it is such recurrent contact that demarcates hairdressing as a service context prime for the flourishing of 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999).

To accommodate such a widespread demand, as many as 12 new salons across the UK were reportedly opening every week during 2016 (Douglas, The Guardian, 2016). Hairdressing services are offered at a range of prices, with the majority operating at a

low-mid price point that is accessible to the majority of people (Hansen, 2019). Salons

are, therefore, not homogenous in their pricing nor in their stylization and branding,

which varies from 'funky city salons, suburban hairdressers and budget haircutters'

(Lindsay, 2004: 264). As a growing industry, the majority of salons are those that are

reasonably small, with around 93% of UK salons employing a maximum of 10

employees (National Hairdressers' Federation, 2016). Large, multinational hairdressing

chains referred to as 'polyopticons', comprise only a small minority of hairdressing

salons (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007: 15). Chain salons are noted as inhibiting efforts to forge

long-lasting relations with clients and establishing a sense of community, instead

focusing on 'rapid customer turnover and less conversation' (Willet, 2000: 174).

However, for certain customers getting their hair cut and styled in a particular way may

override relational desires to socialise. This reflects the deeply embedded socio-cultural

significance of hair.

The tangible materiality of hair

> *"Symbolic of life, hair bolts from our head[s]. Like the earth, it can be harvested, but*
> *it will rise again. We can change its color and texture when the mood strikes us, but*
> *in time it will return to its original form, just as Nature will in time turn our*
> *precisely laid-out cities into a weed-way."*
> *Diane Ackerman (1991).*

In one sense, hair can be regarded as merely a physiological by-product of human

evolution that exists at the peripheries of the body to provide essential warmth (Holton,

2019; Kwint, 1999). However, as the impassioned language in the above quote

illustrates, hair possess an enduring vivacity. Many individuals harness the

changeability of their hair, imbuing this process of change with symbolism associated to the reshaping of personal identity (Holton, 2019; Holmes, 2010). In mobilizing the socio-symbolic potential of hair, the practice of managing one's hair is deeply ingrained. Historical documentation shows that 'over the centuries, women's and men's hair has been arranged, styled, curled and coloured in every conceivable manner' (Lawson, 1999: 238). Although men are required to devote time and resources into the tidy upkeep of their hair, an intense societal scrutiny is felt by many women in relation to their appearance for which their hair is an important extension of (McFarquhar and Lowis, 2000; Hansen, 2019; Holmes, 2018; Holton, 2019).

The routinized maintenance speaks to its symbolic connotations of strength and sexuality (Rabinowitz, 1984). As a 'highly visible cultural and political signifier of difference' (Holton, 2019; 4), hair is both personal and public, serving as an important means of socio-cultural identification. Through a combination of agentic choice and genetic makeup, hair becomes something that 'we transform in order to express our participation in the present milieu' (Bax, 2012: 397; Synnott, 1988). The potential to communicate through one's hair is vast and ever changing, given that hair remains a malleable resource that stylists are routinely tasked with altering to their client's specifications (Gimlin, 1996; Hansen, 2019; Holmes, 2018; Sheane, 2011). The inevitable growth of hair demands a constant reassessment of oneself and remedial measures intended to preserve, adapt or alter resultant expressions of identity (Holton, 2019; Holmes, 2010). Hair is, therefore, deeply significant. It would, however, be an over-simplification to assume that attending your local salon is solely motivated by the obligation to control one's hair. This is because salons are distinct commercial spaces allowing scope for the development of quasi-social relations.

What is crucial in the cultivation of client relations is the dearth of oppressive

organisational tensions in the salon. These prescriptive measures often demand a

balancing of distant corporate rules and an undifferentiated consumer mass such as in

airline travel or large-scale hospitality organisations (Hochschild, 1989, Seymour and

Sandiford, 2005). The salons I focus upon in this thesis are however, largely

characterised by a relatively flat internal hierarchy that allows stylists greater agency in

navigating their encounters with clients (Cohen, 2010). Echoing the points made earlier

in the thesis, the nuanced management of irreducible encounters with a heterogenous

mass of clients reflects a tacitly learned skillset that interweaves relational and

embodied competencies with technical craft. On this basis, stylists can be regarded as

highly competent 'social actors' (Bolton, 2004) and quasi-artists (Holmes, 2010; Fine,

1996). As discussed in chapter 1, service work is however, saturated with disparaging

depictions that denounce workers as low skilled (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Holmes,

2014). Hairdressing is by no means exempt from this and its visibility within popular

culture heightens assumptions of triviality and superficiality (Lindsay, 2004). Such vivid

cultural imagery produces 'occupational essences' (Cohen, 2020; Fine, 1996) that

condition hairdressing in such a way that disregards the complexities associated with

interaction and craft.

As a service, hairdressing is often depicted as allowing for self-indulgence through

attentive pampering (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007; 2011; Algharabli, 2014). Much like the

service contexts discussed in chapter 1, hairdressing is therefore subject to mounting

expectation among customer who anticipate 'enchantment' as part of the service

(Korcysnki and Ott, 2004). This enchantment may comprise the sensorial element of

physical pampering that incites relaxation (Sharma and Black, 2001). It may also entail an attentive style of service that allows for unbounded interaction where the client can cathartically disclose intimate worries and concerns. Needless to say, not all encounters in the salon feature such free-flowing interaction. However, the distinct temporal and proximal organisation of a hairdressing appointment makes it difficult for a client to completely evade interaction, as the two parties remain intimately situated for a prolonged period (Algharabli, 2014). It is such physical and social centrality of the customer that cements the popular depiction of hairdressing as offering indulgence and escapism from the demanding realities that lurk beyond the salon (Holmes, 2018; Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007; Sharma and Black, 2001).

As discussed in the previous section, bodywork generally occurs in the absence of a script. Interactions within the salon are, therefore, largely spontaneous and unscripted. Of course, there may be some salons that attempt to standardize encounters to a degree to ensure uniformity and efficiency (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007). The nature of hairdressing does however, present unforeseen circumstances personal to each client, warranting an empathetic and emotionally attuned reception. Whether initiated through fairly superficial small talk or a more intimate form of questioning based upon an established relational history, the salon boasts an affective quality that can incite an onrush of emotional disclosure (Cohen, 2020; Gimlin, 1996). Moreover, as relations develop over time, each client-stylist trajectory is characterised by a distinct subjectivity based upon their previous discussions and experiences. The following section delves further into the role/s of the hairdresser. In considering how hairdressers come to assume alternative quasi-occupational roles over time, I reflect upon the embodied emotional

attributes necessary to cultivate amicable relations and initiate sustained customer involvement.

The multifaceted role of the hairdresser:

As 'quasi-artists' (Holmes, 2010), stylists actively create the 'face' that their client shows the world and therefore assist in the impression management process (Goffman, 1959; Sheane, 2011). The value attributed to one's physical appearance mean hairdressers 'play a central role in self-representation for most people' (Lindsay, 2004: 259). Moreover, they are capable of elevating their client's sense of self-esteem by supposedly making them more attractive (McFarquhar and Lowis, 2000; Cohen, 2020). A bolstered sense of confidence is externally affirmed by wider society, which imbues normative connotations of feminine beauty with desirable qualities such as enhanced 'morality, sociability, kindness' (Black and Sharma, 2001: 104). Engagement in feminine beauty practices are on-going, involving the 'crafting of the transient and unstable' as hair is susceptible to immediate change from departing the salon chair until returning at a later date (Holmes, 2014: 480). The actual doing of hair demands technical skills that are 'tacit and intangible', as the management of hair requires 'skill and knowledge, for example, to use a brush and hairdryer at the same time to create hair that is straight and smooth' (Hielscher, 2013: 259).

An added component of stylist's work concerns 'listening and placating clients' (Holmes, 2014: 485). Stylists therefore act as both 'supportive confident and image developer' (Hanson, 2019: 152), performing work that is 'technically complicated', involving the 'management of clientele both physically and psychologically' (Eayrs, 1993: 31). As previously mentioned, the onerous task of managing the physical entity of hair and

managing client's emotional needs (Cohen, 2020) is often downplayed through stereotypic depictions positioning hairdressing as a low skilled occupation that can be done by 'anyone' (Soulliere, 1997: 43; Lee et al, 2007; Yeadon Lee, 2012; Holmes, 2014; Hanson, 2019). The societal construction of hairdressing as requiring minimal skill imbues it with a stigmatizing essence that necessitates discursive strategies to preserve and reaffirm occupational identity (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner et al, 2006). In the last section, the strategies of forming close client relations (Gimlin, 1996) and emphasising the 'value of their work-product' (Cohen, 2020: 142) were cited as potentially offsetting feelings of inadequacy. An additional strategy includes emphasising the specialist 'subcultural knowledge' as tacitly acquired only by those within the occupation (Fine, 1996).

These discursive strategies are necessitated as the 'emotion work' required to manage the psychological and emotional needs of clients diminishes the status of hairdressers (Eayrs, 1993; Gimlin, 1996; Holmes, 2010). The 'self-sacrificing' emotional labour performed by stylists weakens any claims upon a professional status, as they remain bound within an enduring paradox that grapples between higher status craftsmanship and emotional subservience (Gimlin, 1996; Hansen, 2019). Despite prevailing assumptions positioning hairdressing as a low-skilled occupation (Eayrs, 1993; Yeadon Lee et al, 2007; Holmes, 2014), a great deal of varied emotion work is necessary to forge 'client trust through establishing a strong client/hairdresser bond, entertaining the client to pass the time, getting to know the client's character in order to help shape the hairstyle that suits her, [and] creating a friendly atmosphere in the salon' (Algharabli, 2014: 54). This speaks to the importance of establishing rapport as a means of ensuring customer engagement. Without sufficient engagement, deducing exactly what the

customer would like becomes more challenging. This illustrates how the significance of co-creation discussed previously in chapter 2 is especially pertinent in the empirical context of the salon.

The rapport cultivated between stylist and client allows for the co-creation of a more effective service experience. However, for certain clients, this rapport represents an important social relationship that has the potential to span across decades (Cohen, 2010; Willet, 2000). These well-developed relations qualify salons as 'a common part of social life' (Hill and Bradley, 2010: 44). For particular clients the empathetic and unwavering ear of stylists represents an important 'function of their work' (Hanson, 2019: 149). The customers' purchasing of the service therefore extends beyond the applied specialist craft of stylists. Instead, 'time is the commodity being bought in the salon' (Black, 2002: 5), this could be time to talk, time to listen, time to counsel or time to laugh. In serving as 'natural neighbours and informal caregivers', the extensive level of emotional support situates stylists as substantial players in the field of informal mental healthcare provision (Cowen et al, 1981: 386; Ward et al, 2016; 2017).

The emotional and proxemic intensity that characterises certain client-stylist relations has been judged as 'hard to match' (Willet, 2000: 54). This is not to deny the emotional hardship experienced by those working in the more traditional service contexts discussed in chapters 2 and 3. However, it is important to acknowledge the quasi-occupational roles often subsumed within that of hairdresser. Notably, this includes the role of 'non-binding counsellor' (Hason, 2019: 149-150) on account of the therapeutic advice provided (McFarquhar and Lowis, 2000). The disclosing of personal problems to a stylist may stem from the desire to communicate sensitive detail to someone where

there is a weaker, less established social bond (Hanson, 2019). Moreover, in purchasing the stylists' 'time' (Black, 2002), the customer is free to revel in the catharsis acquired by sharing personal details with a highly responsive audience. In providing an empathetic response that is continuous, stylists may experience the relational demands of particular client interactions as an 'onerous encumbrance' (Hanson, 2019: 152). In essence, the affable and warm front portrayed by stylists indulges clients' relational needs through a process of emotional pampering. Part of this indulgence may also include elevating their client's self-esteem by espousing self-confidence (Juul and Byskov, 2019). The desire to feel good about oneself is after all, among the various motivations for attending the salon (McFarquhar and Lowis, 2000; Hanson, 2019; Cohen, 2020. Projecting and inspiring confidence among clients is self and other orientated, as stylists were required to radiate an image of 'confidence, competence and personality' (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007: 6).

Embodying confidence also speaks to the importance of possessing sufficient technical expertise (Holmes, 2014, 2018; Hansen, 2019; Eayrs, 1993). This is relevant for initiating and subtly moulding customer engagement. Through a demonstrative showcase of technical proficiency and expertise, stylists are better positioned to elicit a customer's preferences. Moreover, embodying technical capabilities awards stylists greater legitimacy should they need to reshape and/or steer clients' preference to reflect a more suitable choice (Yeadon-Lee, 2011, 2012; Algharabli, 2014). Beyond the emotionally indulgent and elevating spiel used to bolster client's self-worth, there is some task-related dialogue spliced throughout the encounter to ensure that the client remains satisfied with their hair as it is clipped, dyed and changed (Hanson, 2019). Though it has been established that hairdressing can be experienced as a service that

relationally and symbolically centralises the customer, moments of tension and discord can occur when the preferences of a client defy the stylists' expertise.

This relates to insights discussed in chapter 2, where I spoke of how the persistent fragility of co-creation incites constant risk of strain and the derailing of service. These tensions are particularly virulent in hairdressing, as the ways in which one's hair can be changed is vast. Hair can be cut short, it can be trimmed, it can be dyed a multitude of colours and it can be straightened or curled. The customer, however, typically presents with a relatively clear idea of how exactly they want their hair to look. This incites a task-orientated dialogue that is highly purposeful in eliciting, identifying and then enacting client's desires. The consultation process that typically occurs pre-appointment serves as an important opportunity for stylists to evade forthcoming dispute and friction by obtaining a clear idea of a client's desires. Moreover, by mobilizing interpersonal capacities and establishing/furthering rapport with clients, stylists can acquire lifestyle information that allows a more effective deciphering of their suitability for a particular haircut and/or style (Yeadon-Lee, 2012; Bertoia, 1985). Even in the more regulated chain salons where there is less scope for agency and phatic, prosocial chatter, stylists are encouraged demonstrate their creative expertise during the consultation, using their discretionary judgment to provide alternative suggestions based on an individual assessment of the client (Yeadon Lee et al, 2007).

In affirming technical capability through the artistic reshaping of hair, stylists must also embody an ongoing image through their own hairstyle, clothes and makeup that demonstrates a creative flare and competency (Yeadon Lee et al, 2007; Juul and Bysknov, 2019). Reflecting the collective mobilization of aesthetic attributes discussed

in chapter 3, the appearance of a stylist can be used to 'brand' a salon. For example, imposing a smart, all-black dress code and prescribing moderate makeup can elevate a salon's corporate and professional imagery (Yeadon Lee et al, 2007; Wainwright et al, 2010). As hairdressing forms part of an industry centred upon appearance, stylists by association become 'style "experts" and their "look" is an important part of the presentation of the salon to client' (Lindsay, 2004: 268). This amounts to a multifaceted application of embodied and emotional skill that is further complicated by the realities of working upon and with bodies where close physical contact requires careful management.

The significance of touch: transforming the body and supporting the customer

As previously mentioned, touch is a necessary and unavoidable aspect of all forms of bodywork including hairdressing. Extant empirical research often regards the tactile craft of hairdressing as a 'highly embodied discipline' where stylists interact with the bodies of their clients as well as materials and tools around them (Öhman, 2018: 444). The wielding of tools incites an element of risk, as sharp scissors, hot tongs and razors are manoeuvred at close proximity to the client's face (Eayrs, 1993). Where others are permitted to poke and preen individuals with an array of tools, such as in medical and dental work, 'distancing techniques' including the wearing of gloves are common. These techniques negate the low status associated with touch (Twigg et al, 2011) and symbolically condition its meaning to that of correction and healing (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018). In contrast, the hairdresser will routinely use their bare hands to touch, comb through and smooth down their client's hair, only retreating to the use of gloves when applying chemicals. In this sense, touch in hairdressing work entails

'affective and sensuous qualities' as stylists engage in a 'tactile relationship' comprised of 'the touching, ruffling and running of fingers through hair' (Holton, 2019: 5).

Touch itself represents a complex phenomenon, serving as a means of primordial connection to others (Crossley, 2006). As an unavoidable and fundamental part of work, touch is infused with complications as an expressive, emotional act is transformed into a routine procedure. Moreover, as hairdressing is a highly feminised occupational context, the touch of a stylist becomes conditioned as servile, caring and gentle (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018). The aestheticizing context of hairdressing intensifies the relational inferiority ensued through touch by invoking sovereign imagery centred upon (Korczysnki, 2013). Touch can therefore exacerbate relational asymmetry between stylist and client; however, it can also deepen trust and intimacy (Eayrs, 1993; Yeadon Lee et al, 2007). Creating trust is important, in order to ensure clients are confident in the stylist's application of technique and their ability to retain personal detail (Cowen et al, 1981). The development of trust for the relational context of exchanging sensitive information affirms imagery that situates stylists as 'confidantes, friends and to some extent, even therapists' (Soulliere, 1997: 44). The seamless interweaving of relational and technical capabilities demands a proficient performance centred upon displaying 'simultaneous engagement in multiple activities' (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018: 224). This includes sustaining phatic chatter and small talk throughout, as such conversation is an essential 'non-obligatory' and 'rapport building' feature of service work (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018).

In building upon previous discussions of emotional labour in chapter 3, stylists' emotional labour extends throughout the entire encounter, emerging as 'a certain

outward expression through coordinating self and feeling' (Bax, 2012: 397). Stylists'

work is, therefore, deeply performative, as they are required to monitor their

expressions carefully (Sheane, 2011). They must appear as 'looking happy and listening

to client's problems' (Holmes, 2014: 485), a display that requires stylists to remain

consistently attuned to their clients. As mentioned earlier, this requires remaining

literate to the subtlest nuances given off by the customer, as these provide hint toward

their emotional needs as they evolve throughout the encounter (Sheane, 2011). Upon

identifying changes in the customer's demeanour, stylists are then required to adapt

accordingly (Mann, 1997; Tseëlon, 1992, Bettencourt and Guinner, 1996). Echoing the

dynamic focus of this thesis, the performance required by stylists varies depending

upon the client and the distinct relational trajectory they share (Price and Arnould,

1993; 1999). Performances are not only dependent upon the mobilization of emotional

competencies. They are also informed by the overarching stylisation of the salon space,

which informs the embodiment of stylists. The final section/s of this chapter will look to

the salon as a distinct commercial space that is aestheticized accordingly.

The salon: a social microcosm and site of aesthetic renovation

The salon is a distinct space, operating on the periphery of an occupational domain in

which individuals work and a social sphere conditioned by affective relations. As a

societal microcosm of sorts (Furman, 1997; Gimlin, 1996; Ward et al, 2016), the salon is

subject to a continuous process of (re) development, whereby the overarching

materiality influences and is (re) configured by the social encounters that it guides.

Subject to a spatial dynamism engendered by an interweaving dualism of materiality

and sociality, the salon conveys an eclectic and distinct affect that shall be further

discussed. Various empirical studies have explored the salon space, as the cognitive and

emotional responses it incites ensues a functionality comparable to that of a tangible product's 'packaging' (Bitner, 1992; Baron et al, 2003; Grove et al, 1998). As mentioned in the last section, the material landscape of the salon coalesces with the aesthetic attributes of its stylists to cement a particular 'brand' (Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Bax, 2012; McDonald, 2016; Juul and Byskov, 2019). As with many service contexts, there is a pecuniary worth in establishing a particular brand identity. For salons this brand may be synonymous with a relaxing atmosphere that invokes the senses (McDonald, 2016) or a community-based atmosphere where patrons can socially thrive (Furman, 1997; Gimlin, 1996; Ward et al, 2016). Salons therefore seek to utilize their material and socio-symbolic traits to create an appropriate identity.

Much like the service contexts touched upon in earlier chapters, different organisations within the same sector may stylize and brand themselves in distinct ways. The mobilization of aesthetic and material imagery may be intended to preserve and attract a particular clientele. A salon seeking to attract primarily male clients may therefore employ a moderate pricing structure and mobilize female stylist's sexuality, as well as offering tokenistic embellishments of 'snacks, beer, wine and "men's" magazines' (Barber, 2016). Materiality also has the potential to incite emotion as the 'design of everyday artefacts' cultivates an immersive 'aesthetic experience' that becomes deeply meaningful (Hancock and Tyler, 2008: 203). The potential of the salon is therefore vast, serving as 'anything from a 'totemic symbol-orientating employees toward a universal goal' to embodying 'the organization's history and prescribed values' (Chugh and Hancock, 2009: 464). Salons may strive for 'service excellence' by maintaining 'a high quality stylish aesthetic image, which suggested individualised and luxurious experience for clients' (Yeadon-Lee, 2012: 4; Yeadon-Lee, 2012). This speaks to a salon

'type' that aspires toward an especially visible brand identity. In this thesis however, I look to those salons that are characterised by independent ownership, a small workforce and a less orchestrated brand (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; National Hairdressers' Federation, 2016; Willet, 2000). These salons are regarded as operating 'at the intersection of several discourses around health, work, the body and gender' (Sharma and Black, 2002: 3).

The type of salons that I focus upon are characterised by a distinct relational climate. Of course, the manual work performed across all salons necessitates a co-presence that facilitates 'space for small talk' (Raevaara, 2011: 565). However, the affective symbolism of recurrent encounters between stylists and clients transcends interaction beyond the realm of superficial conversation. This allows 'alliances and affiliations to be fostered' that crucially 'mediate women's relationships with the wider world they inhabit' (Ward et al, 2016: 402), reflecting the configuration of the salon as a feminized domain. Extant ethnographic research has also commented upon the sense of community created and upheld in the salon (Furman, 1997; Gimlin, 1996). Reflecting the co-creational focus of the thesis, the community of the salon is regarded as 'co-constructed' through the reciprocal exchange of 'talk-stories, personal narratives, jokes, folklore and folktales' (Majors, 2001: 116). What emerges is a social milieu that is warm and welcoming where patrons are encouraged to relax and informally communicate with others (McFarquhar and Lowis, 2000; Griffiths and Gilly, 2012).

Earlier in the thesis toward the end of chapter 2, I discussed the conditioning of commercial spaces as 'third places'. Various empirical studies have listed the salon as a 'third place' (Oldenburg, 1989; Jeffres et al, 2009; Hickman, 2013; Sandiford, 2019),

being that it allows 'socialability, spontaneity, community building and emotional expression' (Nguyen et al, 2019). Third places such as the salon provide fertile ground for the formation of significant social ties that strengthen communal bonds and offset potential feelings of isolation (Bookman, 2014; Fullager et al, 2019; Debendetti et al, 2013). Sought after on account of 'their anonymity and neutrality', stylists are at the forefront of providing personalised support for clients intended to assuage loneliness and stress (Rosenbaum, 2008: 179). Compounded by a social climate of pervasive malaise and fractured social relations (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982; Oldenburg, 1989; Sandiford, 2019), the need for third places is especially pronounced among marginalised groups, such as elderly women. Third places can be utilised by such groups as a means of resisting societal exclusion by acquiring leverage to forge additional social relations (Fullager et al, 2019; Rosenbaum, 2008).

In assuaging symptoms of isolation, third places are noted for their home like properties whereby 'regular visitors find the atmosphere comfortable enough to "root" themselves there' (Nguyen et al, 2019: 218). Third places are therefore often typified by 'informality, neutrality and inclusiveness within convivial environments' (Sandiford, 2019: 1109). Though neutrality suggests a terrain free from pecuniary interests (Jeffres et al, 2009; Sandiford, 2019), third places may consist of commercial spaces that facilitate the formation of close social relationships (Rosenbaum et al, 2007; 2008). Attempts to align a commercial space as a highly affective 'third place' are common across a range of service contexts where employees are trained to embody 'friendliness (though small talk), hospitality (being inviting, welcoming) and recognition' (Bookman, 2014: 90). Therefore, while they are often somewhat ordinary and unassuming (Hickman, 2013; Debendetti et al, 2013), third places have the potential to provide

'experiences and relationships that are otherwise unavailable' (Oldenburg and Brisset, 1982: 270). Assessing the role of salons as third places ultimately speaks to the relational skills of stylists and the variable extent that customer engagement may assume.

In this section I have located the conceptual insights discussed in chapters 2 and 3 within the empirical context of hairdressing. As part of this, I have reflected upon the way stylists intertwine relational skills and embodied attributes with the technical performance of craft. Here emotional and aesthetic labour have some conceptual purchase in elucidating the complexities of a stylist's role. However, what remains neglected from sociological accounts of hairdressing, and service work more generally, is an analysis of the customer's role and a deeper insight into the development of a highly affective skillset. An enduring, ongoing relational trajectory can emerge, leading to a temporal narrative framing each encounter. In serving as a palimpsest of sorts, the materiality of hair becomes therefore inscribed with the changes made during past appointments, lingering on to inform future encounters (Holmes, 2014; 2018). The relational and corporeal entanglement between stylist and client discussed throughout this chapter is in part what qualifies the salon as a rich empirical field. In concluding the discussions initiated throughout this chapter and unifying them with the insights presented in chapters 2 and 3, in the following section I will finalise the research questions that steer the conceptual focus of the thesis.

4.3: Summation of literature and research questions:

Hair salons currently exist in surplus (Douglas, The Guardian, 2016), saturating the consumer with choice. Salons are therefore incentivised to provide an engaging and

emotionally fulfilling experience. Part of this entails efforts to foster long lasting client relations with the intent of ensuring repeat business (Arnould and Price, 1993; 1999; Yeadon Lee et al, 2007; Cohen, 2010; Willet, 2000). The attempts to create an affective relational climate can be conceptually read through concepts deriving from sociological and marketing research, each providing a nuanced understanding of service encounters informed by relevant topical specialisms. In coalescing the understandings provided by sociological literature, in this chapter I sought to create an informed and detailed projection of co-creation within an affective, high contact encounter that involves the customer's body.

The conceptual insights discussed in chapters 2 and 3 are unified by the impetus of securing advantage in a saturated market. Emotional labour for example, entails the prescriptive governance of worker's emotions with the intent of inciting a positive emotional state among the customer (Hochschild, 1983; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007). More recently, marketing scholars have cited effective co-creation as an important antecedent to customer satisfaction (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Engaging the customer, in actual practice, is by no means straightforward, as various social and structural conditions must coalesce to facilitate consumer involvement (Cossío- Silva et al, 2013). The purpose of this thesis is therefore, to provide a rich account of co-creation in the context of affective service work. In doing so, I draw from Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis to consider the following: how the skills that allow for a smooth performance are developed, how an appropriate 'servicescape' is co-constructed and how ever-evolving relational conditions facilitate co-production of an embodied service output.

I consider emotional labour to be a crucial conceptual starting point in how interpersonal and relational skills are understood, enacted and embodied. However, this understanding extends almost entirely to the service worker, disregarding the experiences of the customer. Yet, in positioning oneself as a 'friend' through emotional labour, a distinct co-creational exchange emerges that is tied to an individualised set of temporal and situational relations. Reflecting a dynamic focus, I regard this exchange as co-steered by service worker and customer. In seeking to elucidate the customer's participation, in this chapter I presented hairdressing as a suitable empirical site due to its affective conditioning as a buzzing socio-commercial microcosm (Ward et al, 2016; Majors, 2001; Hansen, 2019). As an active co-creator of value (Moeller et al, 2013; Fliess et al, 2014), the client is given ample opportunity throughout their appointment to co-create their experience through verbalised interaction and subtle dispositional changes.

Beyond the prolonged temporality that renders a client 'confined to the hairdresser's chair' (Algharabali, 2014: 54), I intend to closely explore the relational conditions that foster participatory behaviour and subsequently allow a deeply experiential co-creational exchange. Such experiential services are said to be displacing those with a material focus (Buonincontri et al, 2017; Prahalad, 2004). Empirical research exploring experiential co-creation has occurred primarily within tourism, a service context with pronounced intangible value (Prebensen and Xie, 2017). Hairdressing may share similarities to the tourism industry on account of its experiential properties. However, hairdressing offers customers an opportunity to customize their service as it becomes inscribed upon their bodies. It is on this basis that Vargo et al (2008: 149) identified barbering as a prime occupational context for the study of co-creation, as barbers

seamlessly apply 'skills and experience using scissors, shampoo and other resources to style a customer's hair'.

In order to provide an in-depth and detailed account of the situational conditions that facilitate co-creation, I will use qualitative methodology to capture the rich interaction and experiences of stylists and customers. I also consider encounters within the broader context of their relational history. This allows a more nuanced understanding of how a customer's role shifts and develops as relations progress. Reflecting the stylist-client dynamic, I look to how the stylists' relational skills evolve to accommodate the mutable particularities of each interaction. Such relationships with the potential to develop into 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999) are particularly pertinent in hairdressing, which 'throws two people together for a relatively lengthy period of time,' (Price and Arnold, 1999: 47).

The ongoing development of a relationship with clients is not entirely philanthropic (Bolton and Boyd, 2003). Rather, it serves a pecuniary purpose as they often correlate with enhanced levels of customer satisfaction (Price and Arnould, 1999; Price et al, 1995; Lin and Hsieh, 2011; Seger-Guttmann and Melder-Liraz, 2018), as well as improving 'customer's commitment, trust and loyalty to service providers' (Shugla et al, 2018: 201). The development of a commercial friendship is premised upon the reciprocal exchange of personal information, which gradually strengthens the relationship (Price and Arnould, 1999; Shugla et al, 2018). Emotional labour is crucial here, as it establishes a relational terrain that allows the client to comfortably divulge intimate details that intensify their ties to the salon. The subsequent flourishing of a relational trajectory is not entirely free-flowing and mutable, as there are temporal

restrictions that inhibit its development to some extent (Garzaniti et al, 2011).

Moreover, the underlying economic context of the hairdressing encounter restricts its

existence to that of a 'quasi' as opposed to an authentic friendship. However, the

episodic and recurrent contact typical in hairdressing furthers the evolution of a

relationship that changes with each meeting. Occasionally, the relational intimacy borne

out of these encounters' sprawls beyond the commercial context of the salon, blurring

the relational demarcation between stylist to client and friend to friend. Whether

relations become more akin to authentic friendships or remain situationally confined to

the salon, these emotionally charged interactions coalesce to condition the broader

social climate of the salon (Gimlin, 1996; Ward et al, 2016, Furman, 1997; McFarquhar

and Lowis, 2000).

Customers are central to the affective climate of the salon. As illustrated in chapter 2,

co-creation speaks to a more active and engaged customer. However, co-creational

research only implicitly hints toward the significance of interpersonal and 'soft'

attributes that cultivate an affective service experience (Grönroos, 2000; Garzaniti et al,

2001; Lovelock et al, 2007; Solnet et al, 2016). This reflects a broader lacuna relating to

the intimate relations that can flourish within certain commercial settings. Despite such

relations representing 'a fundamental and timeless part of human existence' (Kanov et

al, 2004: 809), there is little said about how workers develop the capacities to cultivate

relational intimacy among customers (Gatta et al, 2009; Gatta, 2011). Prior research

exploring the salon focused on it 'as an end point with a focus on clients', disregarding

its potential functioning as a site where stylists develop relational fluidity and attuned

social intuition (Wainwright et al, 2010: 82). In this thesis, I therefore intend to explore

how stylists come to acquire and develop the highly nuanced and complex relational skillset that allows them to navigate customer contact while executing their craft.

During chapters 2, 3 and 4 I have discussed the relevant literature through which I intend to conceptually frame the insights presented later in this thesis. Ultimately, the purpose of this thesis is to provide a rich, sociologically informed account of service work. This offers two main contributions, the first being a dynamic analysis that frames the encounters through co-creation. This allows for a more balanced representation of the service encounter that considers the contribution of both service worker and customer. Secondly, I seek to further understanding regarding the skills required to navigate close customer relations by 'stepping back' from the moments of interaction to the moments of practice, preparation and development. To guide and steer the thesis, the research questions that I listed earlier were developed:

1. *What skills are required to navigate high-contact, affective service encounters and how is their initial development conceptualised?*

2. *How do service encounters dynamically influence the surrounding 'servicescape'?*

3. *How do service worker and customer interact to produce a desired service outcome?*

The questions are intended to tease out insights relating to the previously discussed conceptual voids that persist in sociological accounts of service work. RQ 1 provides insights relating to the embodied and relational skills of service workers. Crucially, RQ 1 facilitates an empirical sidestep toward a training context in order to understand the practices and processes that foreground the assumption of a service role. RQs 2 and 3 are written in a way that reflects the dynamic focus assumed by this thesis. RQ 2 speaks

to a constructivist view of commercial space as something that is continuously (re) configured or 'co-created' through social relations. Finally, RQ 3 considers how the distinct context of bodywork alters the subjective experiences of service worker and customer as they dynamically negotiate an output that becomes somatically inscribed. Having outlined the research questions, in the following chapter I will discuss the methodology developed to address the questions and the process of data collection.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Throughout the previous chapters, I sought to establish the conceptual and empirical focus of the thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 outlined the conceptual apparatus used for analysis, while chapter 4 detailed and justified the empirical setting of the thesis. Crucially, these chapters have teased out the persistent voids that linger within extant sociological research pertaining to the customer's role and the development of the service worker's skillset. I therefore sought to obtain a rich empirical account that vividly reflected the customer's voice and provided insight into the processual development of the stylist. I will now discuss the methodology used to obtain such data, providing an accompanying rationale for my choices and a chronological outline of the data collection.

I shall begin by touching upon the epistemological positioning of this thesis, followed by an overview of the ethnographic approach that I assumed. I will then detail the various modes of data collection, including participant observation and in-situ interviews in a salon, and semi-structured interviews with FE training providers and observation at a single training academy. I will outline the chronology of the data collection, discuss my choice of research site/s and then detail the realities of collecting the data. I will also provide some reflective commentary of my role across the various research sites and discuss how I recorded the field notes. Toward the end of the chapter, I will discuss the process of coding and analysis, as well as identifying some limitations and ethical considerations of the research.

5.1: Epistemological positioning: a symbolic constructionist approach

In this this chapter I shall detail the methodology underpinning my research. As stated in the introduction and further illustrated by the research questions listed at the end of chapter 4, the aims of the thesis were to obtain a rich, in-depth account of the service encounter that reflected the dynamic involvement of both worker and customer. In capturing this client-worker dynamic, I also sought to resolve conceptual voids pertaining to the customer's role in co-creating the encounter and the preparations undertaken to enter the 'stage' of service work. I therefore assumed a methodological approach that would allow me to explore the service encounter 'from the interior' (Flick, 2009: 65). An 'immersive' style of ethnographic research was subsequently assumed, enabling insight into the 'action, process, perspective and knowledge' (Rothe, 2000:7) that were of required to address the aims of the thesis.

Conducting an ethnography

In order to acquire rich, descriptive data necessary to answer the research questions, I initially adopted an ethnographic approach to data collection. An ethnographic approach yields 'thick description', with much of the data consisting of descriptive information as well as important contextual detail (Hammersely, 1992; Grbich, 2012). Ethnography can be represented as a 'family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents, and richly writing up the encounter' (Willis and Trondman, 2000: 5). Put simply, ethnography typically seeks to 'describe a culture and its operation, rituals and belief systems' (Grbich, 2012: 41). Though this process produces copious description, ethnography is intended to penetrate superficial representation by offering a reconstruction of 'a given social world, in conceptually rich ways that uncover the orderliness of everyday life' (Atkinson, 2017: 13).

The aim of ethnography is 'to listen deeply to and/or to observe as closely as possible the beliefs, the value, the material conditions and the structural forces that underwire the socially patterned behaviours of all human beings and the meanings people attach to these conditions and forces' (Forsey, 2010: 567). As I discussed in previous chapters, the service encounter involves social interaction imbued with emotional and relational properties (Tumbat, 2011). I therefore regarded ethnography as a suitable approach in unravelling the subjective experiences of service worker and customer that are central to this thesis. Moreover, ethnography can illuminate the 'tacit skills, the decision rules, the complexities, the discretion and the control in jobs that have been labelled unskilled and deskilled, marginal and even trivial' (Smith, 2001: 221). Given that this thesis seeks to further insights relating to the relational skills of service workers, the rationale to assume an ethnographic approach was enhanced. Ultimately, I sought to capture the experiences of customers by using ethnographic methods not to 'intrude into consumer's lives but blend in and participate with them' (Fisher and Smith, 2011: 345).

5.2: Ethnographic modes of data collection: participant observation and interviews

Ethnography is by no means a simple, straightforward approach to data collection (Atkinson, 2017). It is a complex approach that as a term has Greek origins referring to the process of 'writing about people' specifically an 'ethnically, culturally or socially defined group' (Madden, 2017: 16). The methodological remit of ethnography is reasonably broad, as it includes 'participant observation plus any other appropriate methods' (Crang and Cook, 2007: 35). Among the additional suitable methods are 'interviews, focus groups, videos or photographic work, statistics, modelling, archive work and so on' (Forsey, 2010: 566). To conduct the research for this thesis, I opted to

use traditional qualitative methods of participant observation and interviews, both of which shall be discussed in detail.

I shall firstly discuss how the observations were conducted. Participant observation was conducted in a small, locally owned salon. At a later stage in the data collection process, I also conducted non-participant observations at a hair and beauty training academy. Although traditional anthropological accounts of ethnography conceive of observation as involving the researcher 'living with and living like those who are studied' (Van Maanen, 2011: 2; Grbich, 2012), an increasing number of contemporary ethnographic studies are now far shorter in length and necessitate a lesser degree of immersion (Madden, 2017). In reflecting upon the structuring of contemporary ethnographies, they are 'just as likely to be short-term and/or not co-resident, particularly as ethnographers engage in more multisided fieldwork, or engage subjects that are closer to their own natal society' (Madden, 2017: 78). As suggested, ethnographic approaches are used to study a broader range of cultures, ranging from a 'tribal group or a group of young people living by their wits on the street' (Grbich, 2012: 42). Depending upon the focus of the research, a 'step-in-step-out' out approach may be appropriate, wherein the researcher returns home after spending a period of time in the field (Madden, 2017). The latter points are both applicable to my own research, as following both observation within the salon and at the training academy, I continued to return home to write up notes after an observational session.

The combined use of rich observational data coupled with additional insights acquired through interviews is common within studies of interactive service work. Harvey et al (2017), for example used participant observation and semi-structured interviews to

firstly explore the effects of aesthetic labour on self-employed personal trainers, then later to examine how closely their employment conditions aligned with the medieval concept of neo-villainy. The extent of immersion can vary, Petersson McIntyre's (2014) research entailed participant observation in a retail setting for a two-week period. However, Barber's (2016) data was drawn from conducting 9 months of ethnographic observation at male hair salons, as well as a total of 52 interviews with staff and clients. Immersion may not entail direct interaction but occur instead through shadowing those being studied, as apparent in Holla's (2016) research regarding the aesthetic pressures facing fashion models. Similarly, Anker-Hansen et al (2018) conducted a study of home carers, whom for a period of 6 months were shadowed as they worked both from offices and went out to citizen's homes. Anker-Hansen et al (2018) identify their participatory role as being 'partly participating observer' (Fangen, 2010), as while they routinely interacted with carers and clients, the researcher was unable to engage directly in work activities.

Participant observation involves 'establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur within that setting' (Emerson et al, 2001: 352). In terms of the extent of immersion to establish such a place, the role of 'partly participating observer' (Fangen, 2010) was assumed. The extent of immersion during observations in both the salon and training academy was limited due to the absence of necessary technical skills. Moreover, designated opening hours necessitated the aforementioned 'step-in-step-out' style of ethnography wherein only 'portions of days were spent "in the field"' (Madden, 2017: 78). The extent of involvement may appear limited when likened to traditional anthropological ethnographic studies, however it

arguably suits the nature of the study and aligned suitably with Wolcott's (2001: 66)

definition of fieldwork as 'personal involvement to achieve some level of

understanding'.

Given I intended to capture the rich dialogue of a service encounter, all talk within the

salon was deemed significant. As the appointment itself represented a potentially

lengthy 'window of opportunity' to talk (Van De Mieroop, 2016: 2), conversation ranged

from innocuous small talk to the disclosure of highly sensitive detail (Majors, 2001;

Ward et al, 2016). The service encounter is increasingly regarded as involving

'extended, intimate and stressful interactions' with others (Tumbat, 2011: 199),

consequently heightening the sensitivity of information exchanged. Though it is

possible to co-create through non-verbal gestures, the communicative process quickly

emerged as a crucial means through which both parties drew value from the service

(Echeverri and Skålen, 2011; Tumbat, 2011; Bolton and Houlihan, 2005; Grönoos, 2011;

Prahaland and Ramaswamy, 2004). As interaction occurs instantaneously, it was crucial

to acquire an 'understanding of the phenomena as it occurs in situ' (Belk et al, 1989: 3).

Such consistent and routine observation gradually facilitates the identification of

'patterns that structure the interaction' (Tumbat, 2011: 193).

As ethnography is 'a technique based upon direct observation' (Gobo and Marciniak,

2016: 104), participant observation has long comprised a substantial part of the

fieldwork and is intended to make visible events as they unfold naturally (Hammersley,

2013). What constitutes participant observation can vary, though in the context of the

salon and training academy, it included a combination of 'sharing and learning their

everyday practices' and 'engaging in verbal exchanges' (Goodall, 2000: 84). Beyond

simply allowing visibility, participant observation involves assuming a role intended to give 'the fieldworker access to the fluidity of other's lives and enhance his (sic) sensitivity to interaction and process' (Emerson et al, 1995:3). Participation also potentially makes accessible areas that through observation alone would remain inaccessible (Matthews and Ross, 2010). For example, conducting observation in the salon could have been done from the sofa in the customer waiting area, however by assuming a participatory role I was able to access the 'backstage' staff area.

Despite being a somewhat essential component of ethnography, observation can instigate cultural tensions through its potential obtrusion and invasiveness (Madden, 2017). As observing is an important means through which an ethnographer learns about the field and collects data, an 'ethnographer's gaze' has been developed, which in part seeks to accommodate Western social norms by avoiding uninterrupted staring for prolonged periods of time, an act typically considered rude (Madden, 2017). An ethnographer's gaze is often infiltrated by tacit socio-cultural rules acquired through one's upbringing; it is a product of conditioning that influence how one observes, as well as what they see (Madden, 2017). I therefore endeavoured to remain attuned to my own ethnographic perception, hence when reviewing the chronological development of fieldnotes, I identified a gradual interpretative shift. Initially characterised by a broad and plentiful description of salon life, its occupants and other notable qualities, my field notes became more succinct and concentrated as I became more familiar with aspects of the field.

In total, I conducted around 100 hours of observation in the salon, where I simply sat in the waiting area, watching the social reality of the salon unfold. I attended the salon

during the quieter weekday afternoons and the busier Saturdays. Moreover, I also accommodated seasonal peaks in attendance by starting my fieldwork in the salon from September 2018 through to Christmas of the same year, the latter of which being the busiest period of the year for hairdressers. As I was using my mobile phone to record brief notes so as to avoid disrupting the social flow of the salon, observations lasted about 2-4 hours per session, in order to ensure detail was retained. Among other empirical studies conducted in the workplace, the duration of the participant observation period varied significantly. Certain studies have featured relatively length spells of participant observation such as Gimlin's (1996) study of a small salon that involved 200 hours of fieldwork and Ward et al's (2016) study of hair salons as a form of care for dementia patients, which consisted of an ethnographic study conducted over 28 months featuring 300 hours of participant observation. On the other hand, there are empirical studies featuring a lesser amount of participant observation, Soulliere's (1997) study for example, entailed an observation period of three weeks in which 6 observational sessions lasting between 45-90 minutes were conducted. Similarly, Yeadon-Lee (2012) conducted 45 hours of informal observations.

After early analysis of field notes recorded in the salon, questions emerged regarding the learning those 'soft' skills and embodied attributes necessary for co-creation. I sought to explore how such skills are developed prior to assuming a service role by 'stepping back' to pedagogical contexts where the next generation of service workers are trained. A training academy specialising in hair and beauty was subsequently selected as an additional site of observation. I visited the academy twice a week and students were observed for the duration of their working day, which lasted from roughly 9:30am until 3:30pm. Contact was first established with the academy through

email, then over the telephone where an initial meeting was arranged. During said meeting, I explained the research and training providers confirmed that they were happy for me to attend the academy for a brief period of time primarily to observe lessons. I also expressed a desire to speak more generally with training providers about the nature of their work, which again, training providers consented to. The academy provided a multitude of interesting opportunities in which useful insights pertaining to the gradual acquisition of communicative attributes were acquired. As learners of variable ages and experience attended the academy, I observed a trajectory of skill (both technical and interactional) flourish from a nascent state to that of enhanced competency and confidence, particularly at the interactional level. The adult learners (older with pre-existing qualifications) were permitted to practice upon 'real' clients, who were offered their treatments at a reduced cost.

The observations at the training academy succeeded those conducted in the salon, hence the cessation of these observations marked the end of data collection. The amount of time I spent in the field was determined by how long it took to reach a point of theoretical saturation, defined as 'the point at which no new insights are obtained, no new themes are identified, no issues arise regarding a category of data' (Bowen, 2008: 140). Other definitions of data saturation emphasise replication and repetition, a suitable time to depart the field was therefore identified as increasing uniformity within the data (Morse et al, 2002). Leaving the field is essentially, a judgment call I made based upon whether the data collected is imply reaffirming that already acquired (Fetterman, 2010). Prior to officially exiting the field, I conducted interviews of various formats at both sites (salon and training academy) to clarify emergent queries from the field notes.

Conducting interviews:

In order to acquire 'sufficient conceptual depth, repetition and variation in both perspective in action and perspectives of action', field notes were accompanied by insights elicited through interviews (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994: 494). Interviewing is a pervasive and widely used method of data collection, occurring in an array of contexts such as the highly publicised media interview as well as a more personal, one on one interview (Madden, 2017; Forsey, 2010). Interviews consist of 'direct communication between two people' and allow the 'interviewer to elicit information, feelings and opinions' (Matthews and Ross, 2010: 219). When used in a research context, 'interviews offer flexibility and are used to understand and make sense of another person's perspective, with the over-arching goal to tap into his or her rich, varied and multi-layered life experience (Manning and Kunkel, 2014: 50).

Interviews have long been viewed as a suitable accompaniment to observational data, as the purpose of the interview is 'to access the perspective of the person being interviewed to find out from them things that we cannot directly observe' (Patton, 1990: 278). It is relatively common for qualitative empirical studies to employ both participant observation and interviewing as their primary methods of data collection (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). Interviews serve as a further, more direct means of enquiring about how participants experience their social worlds (Manning and Kunkel, 2014). Initially, I conducted interviews in a way that allowed for some flexibility in order to capture additional depth and detail. At the salon where the observations were conducted, all interviews assumed a relatively informal, ethnographic style. Data was collected via spontaneous and opportunistic questioning of stylists and clients about

relevant topics. This reflects the methodological approach assumed by Tumbat (2011), who as part of an ethnographic project exploring the co-creation of service experiences interviewed both the service providers and the clients.

Following an informal conversation with the salon's apprentice, she described how working in the salon had drastically enhanced her confidence, emphasising that while she used to dread talking to unfamiliar faces, she now thrives upon it. Based upon this exchange, questions resulted pertaining to how the hairdressers of the future are prepared for the buzzing, all-encompassing social milieu found in most salons. I therefore opted to make contact with colleges and academies to see if I could arrange interviews with those teaching the next generation of hair and beauty workers. These series of interviews assumed a semi-structured format, where I was able to clarify meaning by asking additional questions relating to emergent themes (Arksey and Knight, 1999). I endeavoured to remain adaptable and responsive to the emergence of unanticipated issues, though the pre-arranged, recorded interviews conducted with FE tutors were informed by a prompt. I did not intend to adhere rigidly to the prompt, but rather to use it as a reminder of the topics that I wished to discuss as informed by the literature.

Unlike the salon where the observations took place, there were no pre-existing links or connections with colleges/training institutions offering courses in hairdressing. Contact was established either through an introductory email or telephone call, in which the nature of the research was briefly outlined, and the information of the curriculum manager was sought. Given that hairdressing is taught within the same department as beauty, it was decided that beauty training providers would be interviewed alongside

those based in hairdressing. This was due partly to the fact that several of the training providers taught across both courses, often specialising in a more advanced level teaching of one of the two. Moreover, much of the literature foregrounding the contextual description and justification of hairdressing derived from studies based within beauty salons (Sharma and Black, 2001; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007; Kang, 2010).

Whether orientated toward providing hair and/or beauty treatments, the salon constitutes a space where 'the body is moulded and worked on in order to achieve a look' (Black, 2004: 11). Running parallel to the tangible offering of aesthetic alteration was an accompanying attempt to emotionally elevate the client through the construction of a personally attentive and enriching relationship (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007; Gimlin, 1996; Cohen, 2020). In attending to client's individual needs and circumstances (Sharma and Black, 2001: 919), beauticians encounter comparable demands pertaining to emotional and aesthetic labour. Though the application of technical skills may differ, the provision of customer service and creation of an interactional climate is sufficiently comparable to that in hairdressing.

The interviews with hair and beauty training providers were envisaged as providing an insight into the development of skills required to co-create effectively in the hairdressing context. As training providers endeavoured to adequately prepare students for the realities of working in a hair and/or beauty salon, skills were implicitly depicted as attributes that through specialised teaching and situated experience, could be tacitly learned (Strangleman and Warren, 2008; Öhman, 2018; Fuller and Unwin, 2004; Wainwright et al, 2010). It was hoped that unpacking the pedagogy of relational

attributes allows for a greater understanding of how to cultivate the affective conditions necessary for effective co-creation. I conducted the interviews in various sized groups, ranging from one-on-one to a larger group composed of eight individuals. The latter dynamic was by no means preferable, but time restrictions required that I interview several training providers at once prior to them commencing a staff meeting. All interviews lasted between 30 minutes to one hour and were recorded, then transcribed. I informed training providers at the beginning of the interview that the focus of the research was upon communication and customer service skills, though they were encouraged to draw broadly from their experiences of teaching. Some questions related to the general teaching of hairdressing/beauty ('what is the most challenging skill to teach?'), others were focused more specifically upon extrapolating the attributes necessary for a relational climate prime for co-creation ('how are students taught to elicit necessary detail from clients?). Several questions sought to uncover the integration of customer service within teaching, ('are students aware of what customer service refers to?' 'Is customer service explicitly acknowledged as part of your curriculum?' 'What constitutes good customer service?'). The latter questions were pedagogically orientated; asking specifically how training providers instilled upon students both the importance of and the confidence to, communicate with their clients.

5.3: Methods used: The chronology of data collection, reflections and analysis

Timeline of data collection:

The timeline of the data collection spans across one year, as indicated in the table below. Initially, the data collection was intended to transpire solely within the context of the salon, amounting to a single site ethnographic study. However, as the fieldwork in the salon progressed, questions emerged relating to the origins of the interactional and

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communicative skills that stylists relied so heavily upon to cultivate conditions prime

for co-creation. Notably, through informal questioning of the salon's youngest staff

member/apprentice, the role of education, training and occupational experience

emerged as significant in equipping those entering the industry with sufficient

interpersonal abilities. This emergent area of interest was then furthered by relevant

sociological and marketing literature, which through various concepts indicated a for a

well-honed relational skillset among service workers.

Table 1: Timeline of data collection:

September 2018-December 2018	Participant observation in hair salon	100 hours of field notes recorded plus ethnographic interviews with stylists and clients
January 2019-May 2019	Semi-structured interviews with FE training providers	A total of 20 higher education training providers were interviewed
September 2019-October 2019	Observation at a training academy	50 hours of observational field notes recorded plus ethnographic interviews with training providers.

The table above documents the chronology of the data collection, which began with

salon-based participant observation totalling 100 hours, plus in-situ interviews with

both stylists and clients. Following this, I made the decision to also pursue pedagogically

rooted questions that had arisen within the salon and contact was made with various

higher education institutions and academics located across the North East. Finally, for a

period of 5 weeks I conducted non-participant observations at a relatively small

training academy as well as several in-situ interviews with training providers and

students. In keeping with the chronology of the data collection, the observations that I conducted in the salon shall be discussed first.

Selecting the research sites:

Selecting the research site/s is an important preparatory step in any ethnographic project. In this case, the initial research setting was a fairly straightforward choice being that the salon is the main site in which interactions between stylist and clients transpire on a daily basis. A single salon was selected to facilitate the collection of detailed and focused insights (Murchison, 2010). One salon was deemed sufficient being that sample selection was neither driven by 'generalizability' or 'representativeness' (Bowen, 2008: 140). Rather, an empirical field rich in detail and adequate conceptual scope was sought. The practical considerations of accessibility also meant that one particular salon emerged as a prime site for research, due to it being located 10-15 minutes away and easily reachable via public transport. The salon was typical of UK salons, being that it was independently owned and comprised of fewer than 5 members of staff (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; National Hairdressers' Federation, 2016; Willet, 2000).

I also chose to base the ethnography in this particular salon as its localised history, reputation and flat internal hierarchy permitted scope to develop client relations. This demarcated the salon from those larger, chain salons with renowned branded imagery attracting a steady stream of new and returning clients. Following a conversation with a stylist who had formerly worked at a chain salon in the city centre, I was reassured in my decision to pursue empirical research in the context of a small, locally owned establishment. This stylist explained to me that her experience of client interaction in a chain salon had been fleeting, hasty and segmented according to the specialist skill of

each stylist. She described a "conveyer-belt" like system of service, where the application of technical skill supersedes the relational nurturing of affection connections with clients. This is of course, not to homogenise all chain salons as impersonal in their approach to client interaction. I recognise that each chain salon cultivates a distinct climate that is nuanced to its location, stylists and client base. However, for the purpose of this research I wanted to look at a space where stylist-client relations unfold organically in a non-prescribed format.

My decision was also informed by the fact that, having been open for 60 years, the salons' client base consisted primarily of regular as opposed to walk in clients, many of whom harboured nostalgic fondness toward the salon. Some of the salons elderly clients reported to me that they had attended the salon since its early days of opening. The salon typically accommodated 3-4 clients at a time, with a spacious waiting area and adjoining 'beauty' room, allowing for concealed appointments. I obtained access to the salon on the basis of being a customer for several years. Having known me for a long time, the salon owner legitimated my presence, introducing me to others and serving as a 'fairy god mother' by assisting in the navigation of unfamiliar terrain (Fetterman, 2010). Colloquially, the owner frequently referred to me as being 'in with the management' having attended the hair salon for two decades. Although gaining access via verbal confirmation from the salon owner was relatively straightforward, an enduring need to constantly re-establish access persisted. Put simply, 'getting in' through the simple acquirement of physical access is comparably simpler than the process of 'getting on' in which one must achieve social acceptability (Cassell, 1988: 93-95). Becoming socially accepted proved challenging due partly to my lack of technical

qualifications preventing me from cutting hair and engaging in specific hair related conversations.

Entering and being in the field:

Entering the field proved overwhelming for several reasons, namely the need to quickly adapt to situational norms of the field and forge amicable relationships with participants. In both observational sites (the salon and training academy), my presence raised intrigue from staff-students and customers. Attempts to explain the purpose of my research were occasionally met with additional questioning, acceptance or further suspicion. This was particularly virulent in the salon, where there was an impetus to establish a rapport with staff and clients, as enhanced social integration in the field could minimize the disruption caused by my presence. The reality of social immersion was challenging; hence perseverance was crucial in overcoming the emotional hurdles that resulted from the initial isolation experienced during ethnographic research (Wolcott, 2001).

Given that the salon operated as a place of work and a social domain, two groups (stylists and customers) regarded the salon in a territorial way, leading them to look upon my presence with hostility. Exemplifying this was one of the more senior stylists, who seemed initially confused and sceptical about by my presence. Time however, emerged as a partial resolve to this as after several weeks she seemed more accustomed to me being there and even greeting me with enthusiasm and telling me about her clients. Similar curiosity was also exhibited among the regular customers attending the salon on a weekly basis. These clients demonstrated an enhanced level of comfort in the salon, as illustrated by them regularly entering the staff room area to smoke prior to

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their appointment and placing their personal belongings throughout the salon. Being such an established presence in the salon, these clients often enquired about who I was and what I was doing there. Though there was some initial confusion, after several weeks regular clients also grew used to me, often asking how my research was going. Occasionally during moments of shared laughter and frivolity, clients would insist I make note of these moments being that they were "what the salon was all about" (anonymised client).

Within the salon, my participation remained especially limited, as the absence of necessary qualifications meant I was unable to cut hair. As one of the junior stylists was often tasked with the more basic menial tasks of tidying, greeting customer and making tea/coffees; my help was often not required. My role therefore consisted more so of shadowing the stylists, observing them as they interacted with customers and one another. Regardless of the extent of immersion, whether minimal or deep, group membership can never replicate that of 'natural' members (Emerson et al, 1995). Efforts were however made to develop a rapport, nonetheless. Building a rapport was easier with the younger stylist in the salon and the students in the academy, who shared many age-based interests. After a short while, conversation with the aforementioned groups seemed to flow more organically, ranging from superficial topics centred on popular culture to more substantive issues around skills, work and customer interaction.

The openness and flexibility associated with ethnography does not equate with a lesser degree of rigour, rather one can enter the field with an open, but not an empty mind (Fetterman, 2010). Subsequently, observation was initially informed by vague,

unconsolidated ideas, directed largely by prior reading (Atkinson, 2017). Although I

made a conscious effort to neutralise preconceptions accrued from years spent

attending the salon as a client, my perception of the salon's social milieu was

undoubtedly tinted by this. However, relevant literature had pre-emptively focused my

attention toward all forms of stylist-client interaction, something that as a customer I

had paid little attention to. As the primary means of co-creation (Echeverri and Skålen,

2011) and a definitive constituent of salon life (Furman, 1997; Ward et al, 2016; Gimlin,

1996), all forms of interaction were now of interest.

Reflecting on my role:

I intended to remain reflexive throughout observational period, being aware not only of

what I was observing but why I was observing it (Wolcott, 2001). This required

constant consideration of my role as both a researcher and as a longstanding customer

of the salon. Early field notes therefore consist largely of descriptive entries detailing

general aspects of salon life and the delivery of education in the training academy.

Initially, I endeavoured to ask simple questions in order to gain an initial idea of the

overall ethnographic field (Fetterman, 2010). This included questions relating to the

routine of a typical day in the salon/training academy, as well as its spatial organisation.

Personal reflections about adjusting to the role became lesser as the study progressed

and immersion with particular individuals became more established. Field notes

consisted partly of events deemed particularly notable from the researcher perspective,

but also those of a more repetitive and seemingly monotonous nature that were

recorded to facilitate the emergence of interactional and spatial patterns (Fetterman,

2010, Wolcott, 2001). A conscious effort was made to avoid misrepresenting an atypical

occurrence as normative and to remain 'attuned to the nonobvious' (Murchison, 2010: 26).

Relationally, my perception of events did not occur in the same 'real life' manner as authentic group members. Instead, observations were interpreted through the potentially restrictive prism of researcher, meaning that events were inevitably perceived from academic stance (Emerson et al, 1995). My participation could in a sense be deemed 'neither as committed nor as constrained as the native's' (Karp and Kendall, 1982: 257), as although the salon was interpreted as an empirical field it was detached from existence as a place of work/learning/commercial activity. My initial disconnect from the site was especially pronounced through early sensory interpretations. That is, the salon was rife with the potent scents produced by dyes, sprays and other noxious formulas. Gradually, these scents that had been initially so pungent became indistinguishable as more time was spent in the field. There were of course, aspects of salon life that inevitably went unacknowledged in favour of issues that were potentially, over-emphasised and analysed for their significance. My own socio-cultural predispositions perhaps disproportionately drew my attention to behaviours such as communal smoking and swearing that while significant through my gaze, were experienced as fairly innocuous, mundane occurrences by those in the salon.

Recording data: field notes

When considering field notes, it is important to acknowledge the potentially broad remits of what constitutes the 'field' (Atkinson, 1992). The 'boundaries of the field are not 'given', rather they are the outcome of what the ethnographer may encompass is his or her gaze' (Atkinson, 1992: 9). I considered the 'field' as being the physical site/s of

the salon and training academy, including its occupants and objects as part of its overall constitution. Field notes therefore consisted of data amassed within the aforementioned premises, comprised of descriptive information featuring 'rich, specific detail' (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011: 158). First impressions were of particular importance; so comprehensive notes were recorded detailing the sensory experience of initial entry into the research field (Emerson et al, 1995). In aligning with the content of notes recorded by Tumbat (2011: 193), recorded data included 'details about the place, people, scenes and the interactions observed and participated in'.

I recorded the data chronologically to allow reflection upon the unfolding narrative role and relational development (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011). Maintaining a sense of chronology is particularly important, as the field is an organisational space, structured largely upon a temporal basis (Atkinson, 2017). The carefully structured routine of a workplace is conceptualised through Goffman's (1983) notion of 'the daily round', which traces 'the sequential and rhythmic organisation of mundane tasks, encounters and movements' (Atkinson, 2017: 155). The temporal organisation of one's working day also serves to establish a sense of individual and collective identity. Efforts were made to accurately represent the temporal delegation of tasks, including the average duration of time spent conversing with a client and the supposed 'down time' set aside for stylist to consume their lunch.

In determining how best to record and store data, I sought a way that was relatively unobtrusive. I therefore considered several instruments when deciding how best to record field notes, including 'notepads, digital voice recorders, computers, PDAs, cameras [and] camcorders' (Fetterman, 2010: 69). In the salon, no recording device or

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notepad was used to record data, as visible items would potentially disrupt the natural flow of interaction. Instead, brief notes were recorded using a smartphone device, small enough to avoid attracting attention from staff and customers. Notes were then recorded in full in written form, using pen and paper, the most commonly used tool among ethnographers due partly to the freedom and ease at which one can write down their notes and experiences (Fetterman, 2010). By contrast, within the training academy, I recorded my notes using a notebook, as use of a smartphone felt inappropriate on account of the 'no-phones' policy imposed among students. The notes detailed the general workings of the academy, including the distinct learning processes among those at differing levels of experience and education.

The notebooks containing my field notes therefore came to 'hold initial impression, detailed conversations and preliminary analysis' (Fetterman, 2010: 69). These notes were of crucial importance as they are the initial tangible output of an ethnographic project, in which there is much intangible interaction and thoughts (Fetterman, 2010). The following day, I typed up notes and stored them on a computer. The writing up of notes occurred immediately after returning from the salon, so as to ensure notes were recorded verbatim where possible and that sufficient detail from the day was maintained. Recording quotes verbatim enhances the credibility of ethnography and can demonstrate to readers the degree of immersion exercised by an ethnographer (Fetterman, 2010). In order to avoid misrepresentation, quotes that were unusual were not used in order to maintain a concise image of participants (Fetterman, 2010).

The process of recording field notes was highly subjective, consisting of 'jotting down notes […] where possible', 'returning to our offices/homes/rented rooms to write out

our representation of field notes' and 'engaging in armchair, after-the-fact self-reflection, analysis and editing of the field notes into a narrative (Goodall, 2000: 84-85). Although it was deemed a less disruptive method, recording notes in full using only brief drafts from the field did prove challenging particularly as I attempted to recall minutiae detail of each interaction. Gradually it became easier to effectively interpret abridged notes, as the interactional order of encounters become more familiar to me. Certain participants represented frequently throughout became increasingly predictable in terms of their behavioural and spatial practices. This reflects the cumulative nature of field notes, which build up over a period of time meaning 'descriptions of the "same event", let alone the same kind of event, will differ, depending upon the choices, positioning, personal sensitivities and interactional concerns of the observers' (Emerson et al, 1995: 9).

In the context of the hair salon for example, the same client-stylist type encounter was observed multiple times a day over several months. Occasionally, I observed interactions between the same client and stylist pairing, yet the progression of research influences the perception, interpretation and recording of the interactional dynamics of each encounter. Arguably, 'field notes can and should be a faithful representation of real events' (Madden, 2017: 117). Field notes are however; a selective mode of representation on account of the judgment involved in determining what data is recorded (Emerson et al, 1995). As information and detail was initially overwhelming, I made decisions regarding what data is useful and should be recorded and what can be disregarded. Moments that are important for participants may unknowingly go unrecorded by the researcher, who instead views the action as insignificant. Recording field notes therefore requires awareness of the internal filter that persists and

selectively qualifies certain data as noteworthy and other data as unimportant. Consequently, the field notes produced were vast in nature, encompassing a range of properties from objective description to detailed personal reflections regarding my experiences in the field.

Coding, analysis and emergent themes:

Prior to beginning the coding process, I re-read field notes in their entirety in order to gain a comprehensive overview of the field (Emerson et al, 1995). The actual coding process involves 'grouping together themes and categories that you have accumulated in the field' (Madison, 2012: 43), thereby resulting in the creation of 'code clumps' (Glesne, 1999: 135). Codes were then subject to a process of thematic analysis, allowing for 'data reduction' as 'one of the major data analytic options in qualitative research' (Grbich, 2012: 61). Hence, 'line-by-line categorization of specific notes' was conducted, with the intent of revealing emergent ideas and themes (Emerson et al, 1995: 172). Grouping the data can be done in various ways, for example, data can be grouped according to abstract themes and topics (high-level coding), although it can also be grouped according to concrete factual representation (low-level coding) (Madison, 2012). The high- and low-level coding speaks to the potential tension between the idea that field notes represent factual, objective data, or those from which emergent meaning can be drawn (Madden, 2012). As pointed out previously, field notes are not to be perceived as 'raw' data, as their recording is derived from the ethnographer's individual outlook (Madden, 2012).

The process of analysis was consistent throughout the period of data collection, thereby reflecting the iterative reality of qualitative research, where each stage of research is

interlinked. To accommodate the non-linear collection of data, I used constant

comparison where 'newly gathered data are continually compared with previously

collected data and their coding' (Bowen, 2008: 139). As the analysis was dynamic, the

raw data was frequently referred back to in order to clarify meaning and interpretation

(Matthews and Ross, 2010). A myriad of themes emerged through coding, serving as an

initial basis for analysis. I had initially began coding using the software NVivo, however

while it assisted in elucidating some of the salient themes in the interviews, I found it

was less helpful for the field notes and failed to capture the richness of detail as well as

the personal reflections spliced in throughout. Theme identification therefore occurred

primarily using Microsoft word, where a table was created, and the content of a data

excerpt was summarised with an accompanying explanation:

Table 2: Early thematic analysis of salon observations

Code Name	*Description*	*Examples*
Use of the salon back room (main code)	The back room in the salon is out of sight from customers, featuring a toilet, sink and kettle	"I notice a small back garden area used by staff. Out there are cups of tea and cigarettes." "While appointments are carried on in the salon, menial tasks such as laundry, cleaning and washing up are confined to the back room"
	The back room is used to prepare coffees and teas for clients.	"After setting her client under the dryer, Ruby exclaims "right you have fun and I'll get your coffee'. Ellie comes over and asks: 'are you having a coffee?' to which Steph replies 'course she is, it's

		the only reason she comes in here!' As Steph is preparing the dryer, she asks the client 'would you like a tea or a coffee?', the client replies 'I normally have a tea', the client then specifies how she likes her tea and Ellie goes to prepare it.
	The back room is used by stylists to ready themselves for their next appointment	"When Ryan emerges from the back he appears very lively, telling his client that he's just had his caffeine fix." "Ruby then heads to the back to finally make herself a coffee and have a cigarette." "Ruby frequently returns to check up on her client, but also utilises the time to have some coffee, a snack and a tab out the back." Steph is therefore in the back having a cigarette and a cup of coffee, telling me how stressed she is waiting for Ellie to show up.
	The back room is used by certain clients who are especially well-known to stylists	"Mrs McVey then comes in early for her appointment and immediately puts on her own gown and heads straight into the back to smoke." "Mrs McVey then proceeds to smoke her cigarette out the back room and chats to me while Ellie busies herself

		sorting out salon laundry."

The above illustrates the initial approach toward a thematic analysis. The initial coding process gave rise to the collection of additional data, both until 'a redundancy of information' resulted (Bowen, 2008: 140) and related lines of inquiry were sufficiently explored. To clarify, thematic analysis and coding are not used interchangeably; rather the coding process occurred consistently throughout the data collection while the thematic analysis was reserved until all the data was amassed (Grbich, 2012). In keeping with the dynamic and flexible approach to analysis, the various data sets were analysed separately in the chronological order of their collection. Interview transcripts from further education training providers based at colleges and training academies were subject to the same form of thematic analysis, as were field notes recorded during observations at a single training academy. The identification of themes transpired firstly at a semantic level, as themes were borne out of a surface level interpretation of events. This was followed by an attempt to push the analysis further, considering the context and symbolism behind 'repeated words or phrases, individuals, cases or narratives' (Grbich, 2012: 61). The language used, discursive practices employed, and symbolic implications of certain behaviours were closely considered. Given that much of the text consisted, these were subject to a process of microanalysis, considered as part of a broader observational trajectory.

Table 3: Coded analysis of field notes

Code	*Example*	*Analysis*
Use of the salon back room	"A young client asks where Ruby where the	Familiarity with the salon and stylists

	'doll's head' is, and she goes in exploration of it, venturing into the back room."	Ease of navigating the salon Transgressing a normative occupational boundary
	"When Ryan emerges from the back he appears very lively, telling his client that he's just had his caffeine fix."	Back room allows performers to re-energise Props used to support and sustain the on-going front-stage performance
	"Mrs B then comes in early for her appointment. She immediately puts on her own gown, and heads straight into the back to smoke."	Breaching service norms regulating timekeeping Automatically donning the clothes symbolic of client status Participates in practices typically preserved for stylists only

Importantly, the themes that structure the empirical chapters were neither arbitrary, nor did they passively 'emerge'. Inevitably, codes emanated partially from previously read literature, amounting to a potentially researcher-centric data analysis (Fine, 2002). It is however an idealistic thought to avoid the imposition of 'researcher designed labels' and allow the 'data to speak for itself' (Grbich, 2012: 62). Rather, codes were dynamically guided and informed by prior reading of the literature, amounting to themes related to the experience of service work including the performance of 'soft' skills, experience of the organisational space and bodywork. Within these broad themes, unanticipated codes that emerged from salon interviews that included the socio-spatial significance of client movement and the role of the 'back-stage'. Below is an exemplar table documenting the subsequent development of the central thematic category labelled 'socio-economic background of students', which emerged from analysing interviews with FE training providers:

Table 4: Development of central thematic category

Socio-economic background of students (thematic category)
Economic factors (sub-theme)   • "They're [students] out trying to find food, you know at the end of the day, their parents could be locked up and they go out and pinch, they pinch to survive."   • "Alongside the deprivation, we've got third generation unemployed"   • "We sometimes have kids who are at college because if they weren't at college and didn't have a job then they wouldn't have any benefits and their family would struggle financially"   • "(Students) are here because they have to be here for their parent's benefit   • "There's an opportunity to get a little Saturday job or something and they'll say I can't cause it'll affect the benefit money"   • "You've got students not really interested in doing it, they might be here because their mam needs to keep their money going"
Lack of familial support (sub-theme)   • "The last three years we've had students from disjointed families, from drug families, we've had a suicide, it's just trying to get them onto a normal way of thinking,"   • "It's their home life as well isn't it, the type of home life, if they've had the push to study and progress in education"   • "Parent engagement is really important. If your parents not bothered, why would the students be bothered?"   • "Some kids aren't encouraged to come to college by their parents, their parents will ring up and say they're not coming in and they'll tell lies for them"   • "I always say they need some TLC and they do, some of them have been abused and come from horrible backgrounds"
Social network (sub-theme)   • "Backgrounds, what they do on a night-time, friendship groups, what they do at home, drugs alcohol.   • "You're trying to undo, those intrinsic skills that you're getting from your family, your parents and your role models aren't you, so you're undoing stuff"

Ethical considerations and methodological limitations

My research generally sought to satisfy the six key principles identified by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The first principle relates to the integrity and quality of the research while the second entails informing participants about the purpose of the research and any potential risks it poses to them (Jones et al, 2012). Participants involved are also to be granted anonymity and must not be coerced in any way (Jones et al, 2012). To satisfy the former principle, participants were all given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Finally, efforts must be taken to avoid causing harm to participants and any potential conflicts of interest must be declared (Jones, et al 2012). All the aforementioned ethical principles promote openness and full disclosure among participants (Madison, 2012), thereby speaking to the general requirement for research to be conducted overtly.

Ethics and its associated considerations in the specific context of ethnography is not a one-off process. Much like the continuous nature of ethnographic study, consent is 'not simply resolved through the formal signing of a consent document as the start of research' (ESRC, 2005: 24). The following steps were therefore taken in order to ensure on-going adherence to the previously mentioned ethical codes. First and foremost, staff, clients and students at the hair salon and training academy were all made aware of my role as a researcher and subsequent intent to collect data. In line with the American Anthropological Association's (AAA) briefing paper regarding informed consent, I endeavoured to create an open dialogue with participants, reminding them of my intent to gather data and the eventual usage of said data (Madison, 2012). This was easier in the context of the salon, where the participatory style of observation created a continuous and organic dialogue between staff, clients and myself in which the topic of my research was frequently discussed.

Ethical considerations were slightly more complex in the context of the training

academy, where students at the training academy varied in age. The 'higher-level'

learners were aged anywhere between 20-50 years old and often comfortably spoke to

me about their reasons for pursuing a career in hair/beauty, their favourite aspects of

the learning experience and their previous jobs. However, as several of the level 1

students were under 18, I decided not to individually represent students in

observations or record any interactions with them. Instead, only training providers

were represented in field notes and where possible, conversations with them were

recorded verbatim.

An additional difficulty concerned obtaining consent among customers. Customers

attended the salon or academy (where a salon operated offering discounted services) as

infrequently as every few months, or as regularly as once a week. Indeed, The Social

Research Association (SRA) assert that 'there can be no reasonable guarantee of privacy

in "public" settings since anyone from journalists to ordinary members of the public

may constitute "observers" of such human behaviour' (2003: 33). I therefore remained

open with all clients and disclosed my status as a researcher to any clients who asked

why I was there. Generally, it was the regular clients who enquired about my presence,

presumably because their frequent attendance made them more observant to changes

within the salon, such as the absence or presence of staff.

There were undoubtedly temporal constraints that potentially reduce the ethnography

to that simply of a study with applied ethnographic techniques (Fetterman, 2010). In

the specific context of this research, my opportunities to observe were restricted to just

four days per week as per the site's opening hours. Opportunities to record data rich in sufficient detail were limited due a desire not to disrupt the organic social flow. I therefore had to return home after observing for a 5-hour period in order to write up notes and ensure that adequate detail was maintained. Similar issues persisted in the training academy, where observations were restricted to teaching hours of 9am to 3pm. Occasionally, opportunistic questioning with training providers would occur after 3pm when students had left the academy. These conversations were however not recorded, as they occurred in-situ and followed on from a day of lessons meaning student performance was often discussed.

A drawback concerned the unavoidable 'reactive effects' of my presence, which potentially altered and influenced the participant's behaviour (Emerson et al, 1995: 4). As discussed previously in this chapter, efforts to resolve this issue consisted of developing sufficient rapport with participants that, in the context of the observations, enabled at least partial immersion into the social milieu. Moreover, I endeavoured to position myself carefully in both sites so as to avoid being perceived as an imposition. In the salon I therefore sat mostly in the waiting area, which was also occupied by other clients. This allowed me to observe the interactions in the salon without creating further disruption. Similarly, in the training academy as most of the observation was of lessons, I opted to sit amongst students near the back of the classroom or salon area. Though everyone present was aware of my researcher status, my proxemics within the space and to participants went some way to minimizing feelings of discomfort and unease.

In light of the aforementioned efforts to avoid disrupting participants' behaviour, the data gathered was not regarded as 'contaminated', but rather was considered as reflecting a reality inevitably altered by researcher presence (Emerson et al, 1995: 4). The data was however, bound by particularities that potentially limited the applicability of the insights produced. As discussed in chapter 4, hairdressing is a distinct occupation with the salon operating as a unique commercial space. Consequently, some of the insights teased out of the data are tied to the specific contextual feature of the salon. I would, however, argue that the data has produced more general conceptual insights with a more expansive reach. These insights pertain to the role of the customer and the tentative development of relational skills. The emergent findings to be discussed in the following three empirical chapters have purchase across a range of alternative service contexts, particularly those where there is recurrent contact and/or an affective social climate.

To conclude, this chapter has provided a detailed overview of the research methodology. Amongst other things, this has included a description of the data collection methods used. I therefore discussed the process of conducting the interviews and observations, outlining the chronology of the data collection, issues that emerged when in the field and how the data was recorded and stored. Ultimately, the purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate how the data that informs this thesis was gathered through an in-depth qualitative approach intended to capture the richness of social interaction. In justifying the use of two datasets from an educational and a service context, the insights provide a trans-temporal account of service work. By stepping back from the performative moments of interaction in the actual salon, I explore the everyday practice of actors as they prepare for forthcoming encounters. The following

chapters follow this trajectory by piecing together insights from the 'pre-service'

context of training and development, to the lived reality of service work.

Chapter 6: Becoming a stylist: developing the skills to relate, co-create and craft

> *"I found it quite hard when I first started cause obviously I knew like none of the clients here and some clients like if you don't really know them, you don't really know how to take like their conversations or anything, so I found it like a little bit forced with some of them but now I've got to know them. You've got to settle into a new place and get used to everybody here" (Anna, junior stylist)*

The above quote was obtained during ethnographic research in the salon and along with similar in-situ conversations, it is what inspired additional research into the training of stylists. In tracing the processual development of student, to trainee, to junior stylist, to 'actual' stylist, the following chapter will present insights gathered within the pedagogical context of training academies and FE colleges. Chapter 6 marks the first of three empirical chapters that discuss findings from the research. This chapter is followed by a return to the salon context, where the insights relating to training and development are then empirically located in an affective service context with recurrent customer relations. Chapter 7 also refocuses upon the customer and considers their role within the encounter and the space more generally. Finally, chapter 8 coalesces various insights from the data to tease out the nuances of co-creating a service outcome that is inscribed upon the customer's body.

Chronologically the findings discussed in chapter 6, those being from the collection of data in the colleges and training academies, succeeded those obtained in the salon. It was from early analysis of field notes collected in the salon that questions emerged pertaining to the relational skills required by hairdressers. These are the skills needed

to manage intense, episodic customer contact and the affective bonds that may form. Extant empirical research has conceptualised such relations as 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999), which incite feelings of 'place attachment' toward the commercial space (Rosenbaum et al, 2007). Chapter 2 detailed the benefits of fostering long-lasting service relationships on account of the loyalty they inspire among customers (Rosenbaum et al, 2007; Hickman, 2013; Jeffres et al, 2009). These types of customer-work relations are not automatic or instant. They may be more likely in particular service contexts, such as those with an affective social climate that envelopes customers and/or facilitates recurrent contact. However, as alluded to in prior discussions of relevant literature, the relational 'soft' skills of workers are crucial for the initiation and ongoing development of close customer relations. Extant sociological research provided some conceptual insight into these skills through emotional labour. However, this chapter steps back from the service encounter where such skills are enacted as part of a situated performance.

Drawing from interviews with FE training providers and observations conducted at a training academy, the tacit and embodied processes of learning how to interact, communicate and intuitively relate to customers are discussed. In acknowledging the service worker as an established social role, this chapter looks to how inexperienced 'actors' are readied to embody the particular front [that] has already been established for it' (Goffman, 1959: 37). These insights are conceptually framed through Goffman's (1959) theatrical analogy, an established metaphor that is widely applied to service encounters. In this chapter I consider how students learn the tactile handling and appropriate mobilization of available props. Situating these as part of an everyday practice, I look at how relational and embodied attributes are interwoven to resemble

the fluid and adept performance of experienced stylists. Notions of embodiment are unpacked using Bourdieu's concept habitus and related empirical studies, allowing for an analysis sensitive to somatic inscriptions that give rise to a performance marked by class and gender.

The chapter is structured as follows: firstly, the constituents that comprise a positive customer experience will be discussed, including the judgement of appropriate conversation topics, maintaining customer centrality and learning the 'full combination' of skills. Following this, I will outline the main challenges of teaching hairdressing, as identified by training providers. Focusing largely upon the lingering manifestation of habitus, I will then identify the remedial solutions presented by training providers. These solutions include experiential learning opportunities and the evaluation of student-salon fit. This data contributes to sociological research on service work by reflecting the everyday embodied practice of learning how to perform. These insights also tentatively speak to how interpersonal abilities are adapted to cope with customer relations that are diverse and constantly evolving.

6.1: An 'enchanting' service experience

In chapters 2 and 3 I drew from relevant literature to illustrate the burgeoning premium of services that offer an 'experience'. The impetus for organisations to provide a service that experientially engages and indulges customers was clear; it assists in retaining customers and ensuring regular income (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2011). The sociological research cited in chapter 3 elucidates the escalating demands of the customer who increasingly seeks 'enchantment' (Korczynski and Ott, 2004). The importance of providing this kind of 'enchanting' service was embedded throughout

training providers' talk and their teaching. Many drew from their own subjective

thought to vividly convey what good quality service looks like:

> *"For me if I've been in different salons and I've got a bad vibe straight away, they*
> *haven't been very friendly, I always try and teach them to communicate properly*
> *with clients, be very friendly, smile, positive attitude, if you don't look like you want*
> *to be there they're not going to want to be there." (Phoebe, training provider)*

The notional "bad vibe" experienced by Phoebe reflects a highly individual, subjective

assessment of service. In a more objective sense, a "bad vibe" is inferred as resulting in

the absence of appearing "very friendly" and displaying a "smile [and] positive attitude",

which go some way at creating warmth and affect. Mobilizing interpersonal

competencies in a highly affective and endearing manner creates the 'alluring emotional

climate' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005; 694) that previous chapters cited as being

essential. Teaching students to "communicate properly" is conceptually entangled with

emotional labour due to the emphasis upon an unfaltering smile and the risk of

transferring negative emotion to the customer (Hochschild, 1983; Tumbat, 2011).

Extant research may regard 'friendliness and courteousness' as merely a conditional

'role-appropriate' feature, however Phoebe speaks to a functionality that qualifies such

traits as a 'role-necessity' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 23). The inability or unwillingness to

display a friendly persona risks creating the antithesis of a cold and unwelcoming social

climate where palpable feelings of negativity engulf the customer in a contagion like

manner, discouraging them from returning (Hochschild, 1983; Tombs and McColl-

Kennedy, 2003). In further unpacking the notion of communicating 'properly', a

perceptual binary is hinted toward where there exists a proper and improper way of conversing with clients. In the following section I shall discuss this further, considering how the norms that dictate what constitutes 'appropriate' conversation reflect a distinct amalgamation of the situational, relational and organisational.

Appropriate topics of conversation

In chapter 3, I discussed emotional labour as allowing the emotions of others to be transferred, moulded and (re) shaped (Hochschild, 1983; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Tumbat, 2011). In an effort to ensure that the emotions of clients were positively moulded during interactions, many organisations imposed prescriptive codes governing the conduct of customer facing staff (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007; Ashforth and Tomuik, 2000). Reflecting the centrality of talk in the salon space, training providers sought to ensure that the positive and enveloping climate of the salon was not offset by the discussion of inappropriate topics. These topics emerged as those with the potential to distress, offend or upset customers. Here instructions were explicit with minimal scope for interpretation as students were told: "don't talk about sex, don't talk about religion, don't talk about politics, keep off those main three subjects." (Tony).

Such divisive topics can inspire strong opinions with the potential to disrupt the harmonious ambiance of the salon: "We've got to be careful, politics, religion and things like that in salons because you could offend salons and they might have completely different views so, communication is a really big one" (Rosie). An additional threat to the service experience entailed students disclosing overly personal anecdotes, hampering the creation of a professional image:

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"We do get some almighty clangers dropped in the first few weeks believe me,
really inappropriate conversations, telling the clients where they've been with their
boyfriend, loads of things." (Charlie, training provider)

Charlie speaks to the issue of students revealing too much personal information, a common problem discussed among training providers: "they'll [students] be talking about last Saturday night, saying, "urgh I'm hanging today because I was out last night" (Tony). As personal and organisational roles bleed into one another, students struggled to grasp and identify "that line of being professional and friendship" (Lucy). Moreover, training providers reasoned that the relational intimacy facilitated by the proximal and temporal conditions of an appointment problematised notions of a personal/professional dichotomy. A careful balance was therefore required in order to build "a rapport with someone without crossing too many boundaries" (Rachel). In ensuring that "almighty clangers" referred to by Charlie were avoided, some training providers opted to impose prescriptive rules restricting the scope of the conversation exclusively to areas deemed suitable:

"My students are taught to talk about the hair, the service and that's it, the odd
time if they're asked if they've been on holiday or something like that but then I'll
say get it right back to the service again" (Molly, training provider)

In seeking to curtail the mention of overly personal detail with no relevance to the service, Molly imposed highly prescriptive conversational restrictions. Limiting the scope of conversation to that of 'the hair, the service and that's it', distinguishes the exchange from the normative social encounters that students are presumably

accustomed to. Students were also vehemently reprehended for swearing: "we get some students in that say the F word constantly and we have to actually train them into understanding that it's not how we speak" (Sally). Sally firstly illustrates how ingrained the persistent usage of swear words is, as 'training' students to avoid them is suggestive of a prolonged effort. Moreover, the inferred delineation between "how we speak" and how 'they' (students) speak reflects the potentially antagonistic traits that require redressing as part of an embodied transition into a service role. This process emerged as time-dependent: "it just takes them two years to get used to communicating, firstly to each other, then to staff then to clients" (Rose). In adjusting to the situational norms of the salon as an organisational sphere, "almighty clangers" were acknowledged as symptomatic of such adjustment hence why they occurred primarily within the initial weeks of term. Time and experience reduced the propensity toward swearing and over-sharing, as inappropriate conversations were redirected and tentative social boundaries with clients were established:

> *"They'll [students] go over that line and the bad language might slip or the tone of voice, or someone's got their leg in the wrong place and they'll move their leg that kind of thing, so knowing that professional boundary and knowing what to tell them and what not to tell them, some young ones find that difficult cause they'll talk [...] I think we do find that line, that professional boundary is quite hard, but once they get used to it and they know our standards and what's expected it isn't so bad." (Lucy, training provider)*

Lucy speaks to the need for a refined and conscientious form of interaction. Here swear words do not simply "slip" out nor does inflection become too colloquial or

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impassioned. Moreover, proximal contact with the client is sensitively negotiated and clients are not forcefully repositioned without warning. Identifying the somewhat ambiguous "professional boundary" seemingly eases as time passes, allowing for familiarity with overarching situational norms and the distinct relational terrain fostered with each individual client:

> *"The more and more you get that client coming, that client gets comfortable with you and you let them get comfortable with you first, so you get to know their clients and their boundaries and limits." (Phoebe, training provider)*

Phoebe speaks to the gradual easing of trepidation resulting from the ongoing development of a client-stylist relational trajectory. This trajectory assists in student's comprehension of the 'boundaries' to abide by, as the distinct preferences and personality of a client become understood. Crucially, the boundaries that training providers speak of are fluid, as each interaction incurs subtle changes to the broader relational landscape that characterises each client-stylist relationship. Therefore, prescriptive codes that govern interaction may assist in initially avoiding offence, yet they are largely unsustainable. Intuiting appropriate interaction instead emerges as a relationally bound, dynamic judgement resulting from a constant (re)-evaluation of "what to tell them and what not to tell them". The emphasis attributed to the judgement of suitable interaction speaks to a broader endeavour to ensure the customer remains at the centre of each encounter.

Customer centrality

The importance of ensuring that the service experience remained customer-centric seems somewhat obvious. The frequently used term 'customer service' connotes an indisputably customer-orientated delivery of service. The research discussed previously in the thesis broadened notions of centrality to encompass relational elevation and indulgence (Korczynski, 2003; Korczynski and Ott, 2004). However, the buzzing social setting of the salon posed a lingering threat the customer's position as the interactional focal point of the encounter, as training providers discussed how students were easily enticed into peripheral chatter that detracted from the customer's experience:

> *"We do push them to get the best we possibly can, it's about respecting your client and making that client feel like they're the most important person. You know quite often I'll look up and this one's doing someone's hair but then having a conversation with someone else over there so it's getting them to focus on that client for the whole time while that client is there, that's what they're paying you for". (Charlie, training provider).*

Efforts to make the 'client feel like they're the most important person' reflect the contemporary effort to enhance customer experience through relational elevation, in other words, the longstanding capitalist imperative of ensuring 'the customer is king' (Korczynski and Ott, 2004: 583). Echoing the economic asymmetry that underpins an exchange, the unwavering attention of the stylist constitutes part of what the customer is paying for:

"Everything involves the client, that would be a salon policy. In conversations you converse with the client, if someone joins in that's fine but we don't want the conversations to be excluding the clients." (Rosie, training provider)

The importance of customer centrality was discursively cemented through designation of it being "salon policy". In seeking to ensure that "everything involves the client", training providers warned of students being easily enveloped by peripheral chatter that inadvertently excludes the customer. This chatter may stray into terrain that is entirely unrelated to the customer and/or subjects them to topics perceived as inappropriate and/or distasteful. Students were not homogenous in how they communicated with clients. Some were easily drawn into conversation with others at the detriment of customer focus, while others remained relatively withdrawn from all forms of interaction. This was most apparent during observations conducted at the training academy among year one learners:

> *'Despite students working upon other classmates who are known and familiar to them, conversation is extremely minimal. Any discussion related to hair occurred only at the start of the encounter during the completion of the consultation sheet, though such discussion was then ceased upon starting the actual appointment. There are no attempts to engage on a personal level, rather students simply work on the hair, creating a silence that seems incongruent to the archetypal salon environment.'*

The above field note from the training academy speaks to the almost oppressive silence sustained among lower-level learners posed a stark contrast to the more experienced,

higher level adult learners, whose conversations seamlessly interwove task-orientated talk with that of a personal nature:

> *'Observing the adult learners and higher-level learners reemphasises the pertinent absence of communication between the lower level learners. By contrast, the adult learners engage and communicate with their clients in a seemingly confident and capable manner. The remit of their conversation appears unrestricted as students indicate a willingness to adapt to the client's topical directives. For one client, this concerns the highly sensitive discussion of her parent's recent death and the consequential mental health problems she now faces, topics to which the stylist offers both engagement and empathy. However, in demonstrating the broad scope of conversational areas pursued by adult learners, conversations were also composed of task-orientated talk pertaining to the client's hair. This often entailed the adult learner's clarifying the requests made by the client and ensuring the client remains content with the overall progression of the service.'*

The above field note further demonstrates the interactional progression apparent among those with greater training experience. Such experience seemingly equips adult learners with confidence and an attuned level of emotional literacy that facilitates the appropriate interpretation of clients' emotional needs (Sheane, 2011). The adult learners therefore cultivated a conversational climate where they were highly responsive but allowed clients to preferentially steer conversation. The deeply ingrained nature of these social attributes renders them challenging to identify, yet their absence had the potential to seriously diminish the quality of a service encounter. For example, eye contact is a key form of non-verbal communication (Bonaccio et al,

2016) and was cited by several training providers as highly important: "it's a lot of eye to eye contact, active listening, asking appropriate questions [...] face to face and have good eye contact, and ask them questions about certain things, getting that visual contact" (Rachel). A smooth interactional encounter was seemingly dependent upon an accompanying visual reception. Alternative non-verbal gestures and nuances that symbolically communicated 'sociability, friendliness, and confidence' (Bonaccio et al, 2016: 1056), were observed as invoking discomfort among students:

> *"How I greeted you just now, with a handshake, they just wouldn't, they're like eurghhh, whereas for me that was the norm when I was learning, you had to greet with a handshake, you had to greet with 'hi, my name's Lucy and I'm going to be doing your treatment today.' They stand at the door saying 'I can't go out there, what was her name again?' even though it's someone they know [family and friends are often invited to the college as clients] they'll say 'eeee it's just embarrassing' but they've got to get used to it" (Lucy, training provider)*

Introductory formalities and basic social etiquette were judged by Lucy as invoking visceral distain among students. Training providers were unanimous in citing students' embarrassment as encumbering their efforts to interact. Rather than appearing as a barrier to 'actions, activities considered problematic or unwanted' (Heath, 1988: 137), embarrassment resulted instead from fears concerning the pressures to assume the role of a stylist, a key component of which concerns the confident staging of interaction. Though interaction is an important part of the service necessitating both confidence and a refined situational understanding, in the following section I will unpack the dynamic interweaving of variable skills enacted over the course of an encounter.

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6.2: Teaching students the 'full combination' of skill

Echoing the theatrical analogy discussed previously, the service experience is increasingly likened to a performance (Goffman, 1959; Grove et al, 1992; Baron et al, 2001). In an effort to familiarise students with the various attributes that coalesce during their 'performance', training providers developed exercises and materials intended to demonstrate what constitutes a 'good' service experience. Rosie, for example spoke of having her students engage in role play, mirroring a salon experience from 'heaven' and one from 'hell':

> *"One of the good things we do in our departments, I get them to do a salon from heaven and a salon from hell, so a salon where it's a really good experience and one where it's a really bad experience so you're maybe approaching reception and the receptionist won't give eye contact, they talk to each other, they ignore you [in the heaven salon] the stylists are friendly, they don't speak slang, and they're not swearing, they're attentive, they're keeping eye contact, they make the clients feel comfortable, they're checking whether the clients want a magazine or a coffee."*
> *(Rosie, training provider)*

Employing the antonyms of heaven and hell illustrates the extreme disparity of service that can transpire. The implicit suggestion of dichotomised behaviour speaks to the alignment of embodied practices to deliver a positive service experience. The identified constituents of being friendly, avoiding the use of slang and swear words, and ensuring client comfort appear fairly standard when contextualised within normative codes of

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social conduct. The interpersonal mastery represented a single component of skill required by stylists, who must also possess the necessary technical aptitude:

> *"People skills, dealing with the public, teaching them how to deal with people and talk to people is a huge one, but that just gets them over the first hurdle, I think the skill and creativity comes with that but that is the first hurdle that they really have to deal with, it's a mixture of everything, you've got to have the full combination of it all really." (Tony, training provider)*

Here mastering the rudimentary components of interaction is considered "the first hurdle", paving the way for a more complex application of varied skills. Demonstrating the "full combination" that Tony refers to could be interpreted as 'a myriad of considerations such as competence, courtesy, knowledge, reliability and communicative ability' (Grove et al, 1992: 100). These must be seamlessly interwoven allowing for the fluid application of technical competency, interaction and intuition (Yeadon Lee et al, 2007; Soulliere, 1997; Algharabali, 2014). In an effort to help students assess the interweaving of interpersonal competencies and application of craft, Tony had them reflectively evaluate visual representations of their work:

> *"Sometimes as well we tend to make them photograph before and afters. Sometimes people have drastic changes so we'll get the photos out and ask "well how did you get there?", "how did you know they wanted that hairstyle, how did you get that impression?". Because obviously we don't just look at that we look at body language as well, we teach them to look at the client's body language as well. If you got a nervous kind of client, so kind of working with body language, you*

know it's about personal space so looking at their body language is another way of

reading and communicating so teaching them to deal with that." (Tony, training

provider)

Having students reflectively narrate how they reached the final outcome brought to

light the subtle dispositional changes in the client's demeanour and how these are an

important insight into their current feeling (Sheane, 2011; Wisely and Fine, 1997).

Students therefore become alert to the intentional and subconscious signs and

expressions 'given off' by clients, interpreting subtle changes in their body language as

"another way of reading and communicating". Shifting nuances in expression, mood

and/or comportment identified through a close and attuned reading of the client have

the potential to convey feelings toward the service, suggesting anything from minor

dissatisfaction to strong discomfort (Goffman, 1959; Smith, 2006; Clarke, 2014). As

discussed in earlier chapters, reading the client for changes that convey discomfort or

dissatisfaction represents an on-going accomplishment. This reflects the 'other'-

orientated reality of performing emotional labour. As well as managing the emotion of

others, emotional labour is also self-orientated as it requires a fixed display that reflects

organisational norms. In balancing the demands of emotional labour that are

simultaneously 'self and other' orientated, students then struggled with the application

of technical craft. Alluding to an interplay of technical, social and emotional mastery

that is embedded and seamless, the students were observed as unable to adapt to the

simultaneous application of multiple skill:

"They clam up, they clam right up with the client and I think it's more to do with

the concentration, they're concentrating so much on what they're doing, they can't

multitask and interact too because you know they're so focused on the haircut.

They're being so precise, they might be taking a section and they can't talk while

they're actually doing that until it starts to become second nature to them which is

understandable, but they can't do both" (Allie, training provider).

Rather than performing in accordance with situational fluidity engendered by chatter, students tended to "clam up", inciting a performative stiffness that reduced their focus to a single element of service. The intense technical pressures of cutting hair subsequently hindered student's social engagement, resulting in an uncomfortable silence. The main resolve for this was the assurance that these technical skills would gradually "become second nature", enabling students to divert their focus across technical and social locations. The habitual acquisition of technical skills through repetition and experience was necessary due to the inherent spontaneity of social exchanges and customer demands. The difficulty of coping with the irreducibility of both craft and interaction was echoed by Amy, a trainee stylist working in the salon where ethnographic observations took place: "when you're trying to do like two things at once it is like quite hard and sometimes you've got to like force it but now it's like just normal, like family and friends". Despite being more experienced than students in the college, Amy vividly recalled the difficulties of fluidly splicing technique and talk.

Amy speaks to the inability of those with little experience to adapt fluidly to the evolving contours of social interaction. Amy does however, echo Allie's point but in relation to interaction. Where the repeated application of technique amounts to well-honed motor skills, the experience of customer interaction gradually creates a sense of familiarity akin to that amongst "family and friends". Therefore, 'a formal and

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standardised set of skills' may be sufficient to navigate encounter in the formative stages of development, however the research speaks to the unwavering fluidity of service encounters, which demands services be 'delivered in a highly individualised and client-based way' (Wainwright et al, 2010: 84; Korczynski and Ott, 2004):

> *"So you've got to teach them that everybody's different, not everybody's the same, not everybody's like them, everybody wants something different, in hairdressing it's all about individuality, not everyone's the same." (Phoebe, training provider)*

Phoebe emphasises the importance of acknowledging clients as a diverse group, assuming an approach that is "all about individuality". Accounting for distinct relational qualities, service encounters are increasingly regarded as a 'social act and a human relationship' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005: 686). Consequently, an inescapable expectation pertains to the onslaught of social conversation, as opposed to that which is task orientated. Sustaining the organic flow of a social encounter requires 'active listening' identified by several training providers as highly important. Listening intently can provide insight into the customer's personal front, conveyed through the nuances of 'tone, intonation, inflections and expressions' (Clarke, 2014: 264). Lucy also sought to emphasise the importance of responding to presentational cues:

> *"Yeah listening as well, taking cues from the client's body language, the way the client's reacting, so taking cues from client's verbal and non-verbal sort of indicators that can make you go they're not too keen on this, you can tell whether they are or not then you can adapt things from there." (Lucy, training provider)*

The type of listening described by Lucy refers to that which extends beyond merely receiving the words spoken by another. Students must also listen to what is not said and be receptive to subtle changes in one's disposition and expression. Body language represents a presentational sign to be coalesced with other (non-visual) fragments, in order to effectively anticipate the customer's expectations based upon a holistic assessment of their personal front (Goffman, 1959; Clarke, 2014). Accurately identifying, interpreting and responding to the customer's 'sign vehicles' (Goffman, 1959) as well as the more situationally bound 'signs given and given off' (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006) allows stylists to potentially deliver a service closely attuned to the client and therefore evaluated as highly satisfactory. Inculcating students to the nuances of client body language, the rhythmic application of technical craft and the display of an affective personal front was however, encumbered by various issues that the following section will discuss in greater detail.

6.3: Challenges of teaching hairdressing

The previous sections of this chapter have teased out some of the main challenges of teaching the relational skills required by stylists. An analysis of the language used by training providers in their "training" speaks to an ongoing process of embodied enculturation. The following section therefore locates the challenges discussed by training providers within a broader framework of class. Extant empirical research discussed in chapter 3 exposed the organisational lauding of middle-class dispositions among customer facing workers (Gatta, 2011; Boyle and Keere, 2019). The way training providers frame their role and work is therefore read as transforming the ingrained attributes and dispositions of students that serve as markers of class status (Savage et al, 1992). The imperative to nurture such dispositions is perhaps intensified on account

of hair and beauty being constructed as a low status occupation reserved for working class females (Fine, 1996; Lindsay, 2004). The following section will elucidate why such disparaging occupational imagery incites challenges for training providers.

The influence of habitus and student demographic

As previously illustrated, challenges relating to the teaching of interpersonal skills both at a basic and more advanced, intuitive level, were rife. In expanding upon these difficulties, training providers collectively referred to the socio-economic background of most students. In descending from relatively deprived areas, training providers asserted that hair and beauty was an option pursued not out of interest or passion, but as an instrumental means of sustaining state welfare:

> *"I think we live in East Browning here where the college is, it's an area of multiple deprivation so you tend to find that before you even start to teach, there's a lot of obstacles in the way anyway because alongside the deprivation, we've got third generation unemployed. We've got some parents where I'll say to the students there's an opportunity to get a little Saturday job or something and they'll say I can't cause it'll affect the benefit money. Maybe so there are a lot of issues around that, some of the students have to get their young siblings to school because their parents don't. There's a lot of issues, probably more in our type of course because the entry requirements are a lot lower, so we can attract a lot because it's open to a lot of people, so some people aren't necessarily wanting to be hairdressers but it's the only course they can get on to and they need to stay in education until they're 18 so we can attract that type of student [...] if we don't have the parents on board then it's really difficult. It's just the fact that the students have to sign for the*

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parents and the family to get their benefits, they need to be in education until they're 18. It's maybe something that needs to be looked at, where if the government looked at that and said more about attendance." (Rosie, training provider)

Multiple training providers at colleges located across the North East reflected upon student's motivations for pursuing the course, citing the need to maintain income from benefits as a potential reason. Obtaining child benefit currently requires that the child be registered on approved education and/or training course. An economic incentive persisted in contexts where household income is dependent upon the receipt of child benefit. Hairdressing and beauty courses were subsequently regarded by training providers as opportunistic and instrumental ways of maintaining benefits. Familial support seemingly existed at the initial level of course registration but did not extend further into the embodied developmental process. The dearth of familial support exacerbated the transition into stylist, as some parents opposed students assuming part time work at local salons on the basis that additional income would reduce benefits. The institutionalised positioning of hair and beauty as a 'back up' option was further substantiated by an enduring stigma positioning hair and beauty as simplistic and easy (Sharma and Black, 2001; Soulliere, 1997: 43; Eayrs, 1993; Lee et al, 2007; Yeadon Lee, 2012):

"I think there is a stigma attached to hair and beauty that it's an easy course and they don't have to know much to qualify, but in fact it's actually quite science based. You know like, you need to know mathematical equations to mix up colour, ratios, angles, measurements, things like that" (Hannah, training provider).

In an attempt to negate the degrading connotations induced by the lingering stigma, Hannah cited the necessary application of mathematical skills. The importance of technical knowledge was also emphasised through the organisation of classrooms. During observations at the training academy, it was noted that large words forming a lexicon pertaining to the scientific knowledge of hair and beauty were plastered all over the walls. Terminology like 'anagen', 'cortex', 'keratin' and 'effleurage' symbolically bolster training providers' efforts to inculcate students' understanding of the importance of gaining adequate scientific knowledge. Training providers also identified schools as culpable in discursively steering particular students toward hairdressing and/or beauty, as those pre-selected on the basis of their limited capital were 'further sifted and acculturated' (Colley et al, 2003: 477). Schools particularly encouraged hair and beauty as an option for students with fewer academic credentials:

> *"(Students) they haven't done well academically, and they've been told go to hairdressing, you know you've failed GCSEs, get yourself into hairdressing".*
> *(Charlie, training provider)*

> *"Schools think oh well put them into hair and beauty and I think actually, we've had students come to us and we've thought why? Why would anybody put this person in hair and beauty?" (Katherine, training provider)*

There was a palpable sense of frustration as training providers identified the widely held perception of hair and beauty as an option for those with limited career potential. Training providers bemoaned this institutionalised pigeon-holing practice, asserting

that the automatic sifting of students with minimal alternatives into hair and beauty, represented a degrading misallocation:

> *"The hardest part of teaching for me is working with those students who don't really have an interest or are here because they have to be here for their parent's benefit but they don't really want to be hairdressers, or they haven't done well academically and they've been told go to hairdressing, you know you've failed GCSEs, get yourself into hairdressing. But when those students turn around, they are the most rewarding ones, but it's really difficult getting those students on board." (Tony, training provider)*

Although Tony emphasises the fulfilment acquired by engaging such students, this remains positioned as a challenging process. Displacing student's occupational interest in a hairdressing career was a concern with maintaining household benefits. In seeking to enculturate students toward the necessary 'vocational habitus', students required a combination of 'social and family backgrounds, individual preferences and life experience', allowing for the reorientation to make them 'right for the job' (Colley et al, 2003: 488). In drawing from an established societal discourse premised upon moralising through elitist judgement, training providers pieced undesirable fragments typical of a cohort that were inescapably class-based. Familial dysfunction, poverty and undesirable behaviour were registered as working class attributes through their identification as undesirable traits, plagued by longstanding semantic connotations that privileges a middle-class lexicon (Skeggs, 2005):

"The last three years we've had students from disjointed families, from drug families, we've had a suicide, it's just trying to get them onto a normal way of thinking, as in a transition from the school or behaviour unit that they've been in. It takes a good year just to get them on the straight and narrow so there's lots of different strands of students you know. One thing doesn't fit all because we've had some really difficult times with the low-level learners. It's a postcode areas where they live, [...] you're coming into a vocational setting where you're preparing to go into employment and you just can't speak to people like that so, or pinch, again it depends the background, the postcode area [...]". (Lauren, training provider)

In emphasising the importance of adapting student's perception to that deemed 'normal', students are positioned as requiring a transformation that lessens the inscribed and embodied realities of their experience in behavioural units, suicide and poverty. Behaviours suggested as manifesting from the latter, such as swearing and stealing, are identified not only as incongruent to the role of service worker, but also on a broader moral scale of a life perceived as being "on the straight and narrow". In aligning an impoverished and disordered background with the production of social and aesthetic deficiencies, training providers reaffirmed 'consensus and authorisation for middle-class standards, maintaining the symbolic order' (Skeggs, 2005: 970). Despite the dynamic reconfiguration of class identities, the sustained superiority wielded by the middle classes occurs at the relational expense of the working class, whose existence becomes perpetually typified by 'otherness' (Lawler, 2005).

By disseminating the dominant middle-class discourse training providers discursively emerged as arbiters of service standards, reproducing norms stipulating 'how one

should properly feel, look and act' (Colley et al, 2003: 488). In seeking to mould students in preparation for the conditions of a service context, training providers needed to erase and redirect deeply embedded and inscribed attributes continuously (re) produced through student's wider socio-cultural network:

> *"it's a lot harder to teach that, you're trying to undo, those intrinsic skills that you're getting from your family, your parents and your role models aren't you, so you're undoing stuff rather than just starting blank and moving forward." (Rosie, training provider)*

Training providers collectively identified the process of teaching students the necessary components of customer service and interaction as complicated by their socio-economic backgrounds. Teaching centred not so much upon enhancing or amplifying existing embodied and communicative practices. Rather, ingrained dispositions, or "intrinsic skills that you're getting from your family" require "undoing". Such attributes emanate through one's upbringing (Bourdieu, 1984; Williams, 1995) and persist as deeply inscribed traits that encumber the process of "starting blank and moving forward". Correcting and reshaping dispositions informed by habitus is challenging, though it is not impossible as there 'are no explicit rules or principles that dictate behaviour' (Raey, 2004: 433). Training providers therefore avoided the use of deterministic language that positioned habitus as an inescapable, lingering output of past socialisation (Bourdieu, 1991; Swartz, 2002; Colley et al, 2003). Perceiving habitus as a continuum rather than a static fixture (Bourdieu, 1991, Raey, 2004), training and education can mould the past-present orientated habitus of students by equipping them with a 'vocational habitus' (Colley et al, 2003) comprised of necessary 'perceptions, expectation and practices' for

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the workplace (Swartz, 2002: 635; Witz et al, 2003). In combating the automatic reproduction of habitus through inaction (Skeggs, 2004), training providers spoke of facilitating a broader transformative process beyond merely the acquisition of a technical skillset:

> *"I enjoy that side of the job because you can make a massive difference with someone who has you know maybe come from a disadvantaged background, I think understanding where they're coming from and being able to understand their needs a bit better. You can really turn their life around and help them with their social skills, help them to communicate that little bit better, point them in the right direction for a job, give them a skill for life, it rehabilitates them, I think beauty and hairdressing does a lot more for students than people think it does. It gives them so much more. When I was at college I was painfully shy and wouldn't speak to anyone and then I did my beauty course and it brings you out of your shell a bit more, it wasn't just about doing nails for me and I think I bring that into my teaching as well. I think you turn them into little ladies"* *(Laura, training provider)*

Laura implies the tuition of hairdressing and beauty consists of more than simply providing students with a specialist technical skillset. Rather, students are offered direction that allows them to "turn their life around", a life that would otherwise remain chaotic and tumultuous. Positioning students as requiring 'rehabilitation' suggests a quality of life hampered by disorder, deprivation and immorality. Posing stark contrast, students go on to emerge from the transformative teaching provided by training providers as "little ladies". "Ladies" not only connotes an elite status, but also speaks to a feminine identity that is inextricably class based. This contrasts with the demonizing

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discourse of 'the feminized underclass', which intensely scrutinizes the corporeality of young working-class females (Lawler, 2005). The gentrifying transition from girl to lady seemingly offers vindication by signalling an embodied shift toward a refined bodily hexis that is comprised of celebrated cultural nuances of 'speaking with a 'posh' accent and conducting oneself in a 'proper' fashion' (Crossley, 2005: 30). The deterministic narrative that accompanies discussion of class reproduction and habitus is partially evaded, as is 'the essentialist idea that certain people are inherently suitable for certain jobs' (Colley et al, 2003: 475). Instead, the transmission of skills is framed through an occupational ideology where a student's career options and quality of life, are drastically enhanced. In giving "them [students] so much more", Laura and other training providers broadened the impact of their work, seemingly allowing students access to an idealised landscape of expansive choice.

Analogised as a form of 'rehabilitation' and 'redirection', training providers were central in initiating a transformation that gave students more options. Becky for example asserted that: "once they get over that, they move forward with it even if then they don't pursue the pathway of hair and beauty, we've equipped them with so many transferable skills it allows them to make side steps and albeit that might be into McDonalds or into Tesco" (Becky). Similarly, Katherine explained that the transferability of skills learnt allows students to pursue "health and social care or onto caring jobs, nursing, retail or other hospitality, customer facing jobs". Nearly all training providers spoke of their students experiencing improved access to alternative career paths, allowing escape from a trajectory of poverty, deprivation and unemployment.

Opportunity for inter-class mobility does, however, remain limited within the field of the salon, or any comparable service context. Such fields have a minimised sphere of influence and the individuals occupying them are likely to possess limited cultural resources (Crossley, 2005). In contrast to the manual labour jobs formerly occupied by working class males that bolstered self-worth, the service and domestic roles available to working class females offer a lesser semblance of social worth (Lawler, 2005; Savage et al, 2001). The inferred suggestion by training providers could, therefore, be interpreted as postulating an oversimplified depiction of social mobility that negates the fatalistic reality of cyclical socio-economic inequality. Rather than facilitating social mobility through conditions of egalitarianism and meritocracy, education instead acts 'to institute or realise various becomings that are immanent, socially inscribed - in a sense, "waiting to happen"' (Colley et al, 2003: 478).

In seeking to prevent the pre-determined outcomes that exist latently, efforts were also made to instil the tactful suppression of visceral emotion, reflecting the fact that only 'a limited range of emotional expression tends to be socially acceptable in the workplace' (Mann, 1997: 5). This echoes earlier discussions of emotional labour and the notional rules it inspires regarding suppression and control. Where positive emotions are prescribed, expressive behaviours indicative of 'negative emotion such as fear, anxiety and anger, aggression' (Mann, 1997: 5) that may have been conditionally tolerated in formative schooling were designated as requiring immediate suppression:

> *"Some of them might be a bit huffy and slam things and you have to say 'you can't do that, you're not in school now you're in the real world, you can't do that in front of clients, you can't say that'" (Phoebe, training provider)*

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Phoebe illustrates the propensity toward misbehaviours that are widely recognised as incongruent to organisational display norms. The labelling of non-rational, raw forms of emotional expression as inappropriate in "the real world" suggests a performative reality premised upon the tactful suppression of extreme emotion (Mann, 1997; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). Whether it is 'outbursts of laughter [or] anger', exaggerated and demonstrative mannerisms are ruled as hampering one's performative capacity (Goffman, 1959: 60). In speaking to a grander transition from school to "the real world", part of which entails entry into an occupational sphere, there is a concurrent displacement of audience from peers and teachers to colleagues and customers. The change in audience and setting warrants a distinct set of prescribed display rules that function according to 'societal norms, occupational norms and organisational norms (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993: 8). In assisting students as they adjust and accommodate to unfamiliar norms and expectations, the background of students informed how training providers judged, perceived and guided their transition:

> *"They're challenging students cause they've all had different backgrounds and a lot of them come with different baggage especially some of the level 1 students, so it's overcoming those barriers." (Rose, training provider)*

There was an inferred notion that metaphorical "baggage" incurs issues and generates substantive "barriers" that require redressing. This speaks to the enduring influence of habitus, which lingers on as an embodied manifestation of a background typified by economic and cultural deprivation (Bourdieu, 1984; Skeggs, 2005; Savage et al, 1992).

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In order to sufficiently reshape habitus to reflect the performative demands of service work, training providers assembled a holistic overview of a student's background. Laura therefore spoke of knowing "backgrounds, what they do on a night-time, friendship groups, what they do at home, drugs, alcohol. It's part of your job really", identifying such detail as an occupational necessity of sorts. For training providers, many relished in the emotionality they extended to students as they assumed parental type roles presumably on account of perceived deficiency in students' domestic lives:

> *"I always say they need some TLC and they do, some of them have been abused and come from horrible backgrounds [...] I put a lot of humour into it, it's getting them to bond with you [...] I'll say "I'm your mam while you're here" and Becky does the same, they know they can come to us at any time throughout that year" (Sally, training provider)*

Sally speaks to the pastoral positioning of training providers, who assume a locus parentis role and extend emotional guidance to students in light of potentially unsupportive or neglectful backgrounds. Similarly, Becky discursively emphasised the pastoral positioning of training providers, asserting that: "without us doing our motherly thing here at college in level 1 and 2 those kids might actually stay NEAT (not in education, apprenticeship or training) and never do anything with their lives." Referring to students as "kids" connotes a youth and subsequently, vulnerability, imploring a need for adult direction and support. Moreover, by performing a "motherly thing", training providers seemingly provide an emotionally infused teaching experience where the pronounced emphasis upon pastoral care distinguishes them from 'traditional' teachers. The embedded concern for student's emotional welfare and

knowledge of familial instability led training providers to appropriate the identity of "social workers" reasoning that "we tend to get a bit more personal with them [students]" (Ashley). The extent of personal involvement was conveyed by training providers, several of whom recalled instances of absorbing concerns typically the preserve of parents:

> *"I got a phone once from someone's mam, saying can you come and get him out of bed, I can't because he's addicted to online gaming. All sorts. I mean is that not the parent's responsibility to get them out of bed?" (Laura, training provider)*

Similar anecdotes revealed training providers taking taxis to collect students and bring them into college, retrieving students who frequently leave the premises and convincing them to return, and regularly looking into the welfare of students beyond the situational realms of the classroom. In connoting altruism and compassion, training providers explained that fostering more affective student relations exacerbated their existing pastoral duties: "they tell us lots, sometimes stuff we don't want to know, more than just their training provider, we want to know what's *really* going on with them more than a normal teacher would." (Ashley). In emphasising how the virtuous obligations of their role relationally distinguish them from "a normal teacher", training providers spoke of occupational duties beyond the tuition of hair and beauty. Discursively, training providers emerged as arbiters of interpersonal competencies and comportment that crucially enables students a redeeming personal narrative allowing partial escape from an otherwise immobile social positioning.

6.4: Overcoming and (re) orientating habitus through experiential learning

The findings presented so far relate to research regarding aesthetic labour discussed in chapter 3. Particularly, training providers speak to the significance of embodied attributes in the context of service work. Though these skills have emerged so far as embedded dispositional inscriptions, training providers' talk indicated some transformative potential. In positioning themselves as capable of enriching students' skillsets, the situational rooting and tacit reality of obtaining these skills became increasingly pronounced through an emphasis on experiential learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Brockmann, 2013). Becoming a stylist demands nuanced mobilization of emotional, material and social skills, the situated understanding of which transpires through 'the lived experience of leaping into the activity' (Segal, 2017: 474). Further education contexts therefore attempted to cultivate 'socially situated activities of participation' (Ohman, 2018: 427), consisting of artificial environments constructed to replicate a salon space:

> *"At beauty, we do a unit, client care and communication, that is about different types of communication, verbal, non-verbal and then obviously personal space, presentation and the importance of communication. They have to go on reception, on our RWE which is our real working environment, they have to be on reception twice there as well as the theory that comes with that so answering the phone, texting, social media all of that. And then we also do 205 which is promote and sell, well for instance they'll go out into the town and they'll have to approach one of the cosmetic counters and find out about the skincare or whatever." (Lucy, training provider)*

The emphasis upon learning through experience reflects the fact that becoming a hairdresser, much like the process of assuming other roles, represents a situationally learned accomplishment (Colley et al, 2003; Sheane, 2011; Goffman, 1959; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Experiential learning environments familiarise students with prevailing organisational norms and codes that condition the salon as a working space. Routinized observation and gradual participation served as a rich learning opportunity as students: "develop that customer service skill by watching hairdressers every day, they pick it up and mimic but college trained hairdressers struggle more with that" (Katherine). Poignantly, Katherine speaks of a distinction in the application of skill among students who acquire rich experience in the industry and those whose learning is confined solely within the college environment.

Colleges did attempt to replicate a working salon, where students could apply the technical skills they had learnt in the classroom and begin the process of acquiring the more 'tacit' social and technical knowledge 'borne out of situated, embodied practice' (Ward et al, 2016: 1288-89). It was emphasised that although being constructed for educational purposes, the space operated as a fully functioning salon allowing 'legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice' (Colley et al, 2003: 474). Immersion in quasi-work environments with established communities of practices allowed the intuitive application of embodied skills and the acquisition of tacit understanding through participation (Ohman, 2018; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley et al, 2003; Brockmann, 2013).

> *"It's not just about keeping them to work historically in hairdressing on mock heads, you know so it's exploring working on clients because we can tell them all of*

that information and test them on it but the proof is in the pudding when they're

actually in the salon working on a client, and you see them working independently

and making those choices." (Terry, training provider)

Terry dispels any preconceived notion about student's learning being confined to an

inactive and unresponsive mock head. The educational restrictions of the situated

classroom learning was echoed by Hannah: "Even just greeting the client, taking their

coat off things like that, softer skills that when you're in classroom, you don't get the

opportunity to teach". Experiential learning therefore allowed students to apply the

specialist skills acquired through formalised tuition with the tacitly acquired nuances of

customer contact and the lived experience of salon life. The latter allows the navigation

of the encounter through enhanced intuitive capability and independence.

Underpinning training providers' rationale was the notion that students needed to

adapt to the variable and unpredictable conditions that characterise the service

encounter. These conditions require an adaptive response to the unfamiliar sense of

'otherness' and irreducibility that looms with each individual client (Lim, 2007). In

seeking to normalise the interactional heterogeneity engendered by the diverse

clientele, students were instructed to work upon asylum seekers:

"Yeah I mean one of the things we do in level 2 is take them to a local church and

do free haircuts for asylum seekers [...] we take them out of here into a church it

takes them right out of their comfort zone and it can be really good for them"

(Tony, training provider)

By removing students from their "comfort zone" they were denied the opportunity to stagnate within their developmental trajectory. Instead, diverse interactive realities of linguistic barriers and cultural discrepancies demanded adaptive responses premised upon distinct situational conditions. Any reliance upon a preconceived conversational script was negated, on account of a diverse clientele and micro-variations at the interactional level. Fluidly interacting with a heterogenous cohort of clients was however, conceived of as a higher-level capability unlikely to flourish until the latter stages of training, being that it was reserved for those in "level 2".

By contrast, the formative stages of learning were characterised by a metaphorical and figurative reliance upon scripts. The early stages of learning therefore involved the dissemination of a script-type document intended to provide stock commentary:

> *"I sometimes give them a script, because when you get that student who's really quiet and got no, well they've got personality but it's really quiet, I give them a script to work off, so that with this question then you know it's the standard question of have you had any holidays recently? It's the standard spiel but use that script, use those standard questions then when you let the client talk and you get more comfortable, you can start bringing in your own questions" (Tony, training provider).*

> *"We do consultation when they have the form and they do rely on that consultation sheet quite a lot when they first start but as they progress further I try and get them to do a consultation without the sheet, you can see the difference there, they'll ask more questions when they don't have the form to fill out cause it's just ticking*

boxes whereas when you take that form away, they will start then interacting with

their client and asking". (Hannah, training provider)

Scripts served an important purpose in easing the more socially withdrawn students into phatic dialogue premised upon inoffensive "standard spiel". These "standard questions" were crucial in tentatively establishing a relational terrain to be developed further and built upon. Both Tony and Hannah framed scripts temporally, with their initial usage being intended to gently foster confidence and allow the flourishing of a client-stylist dyad. Any reliance upon scripts would gradually fade, as students built upon the "standard spiel" by intuitively asking additional questions and progressing the exchange further. It is therefore suggested that students proficiently adapt to the spontaneous nuances of client interaction in a manner beyond the simplified automated response of "just ticking boxes".

Where scripted materials were used at later stages of training, their content changed to reflect an advanced level of interpersonal and technical skill. Additional questions pertaining to the client's history, both in terms of their hair, lifestyle and overall appearance (including face shape) were included. Specifically, advanced consultation sheets instructed students to extend the longevity of their client's treatment through the provision of highly efficacious aftercare advice. The field note below conveys a a struggle regarding the necessary application of technical knowledge and elicitation of detail regarding the client's background:

'In discussing consultation procedures, Allie (a training provider) explains the

importance of eliciting detail about the client's job role and lifestyle so as to

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determine their suitability for a particular style. To exemplify this, Allie states that

a client who works in a labour-intensive job and constantly has their hair tied up

may be deterred from a lengthier hair style or extensions.'

Within the scripted scope of an encounter there is an embedded emphasis upon personalisation. Students may be instructed to prescriptively elicit contextual detail from the client, yet this needs to be followed by individualised advise informed by the client's response. Even with the use of scripts, the progression of an encounter is not guaranteed. Individuals are not passive entities and may modify their metaphorical script in the face of customer dispute (Taylor and Bain, 2003) or reject any semblance of script entirely (Taylor and Tyler, 2000). Scripts therefore assisted in the navigation of archetypal client encounters, which for the most part remain 'governed by a high degree of strongly formalised routine behaviour, or interaction ritual' (Brockmann, 2013: 369). However, designating scripts as temporal resources allowed for the gradual flourishing of conversational adaptability and the spontaneous embracing of necessary emotion work (Brockmann, 2013; Ohman, 2018). In echoing the impossibility of an entirely scripted reality, Allie stressed that completing the predetermined consultation sheet required live and embodied engagement with the client:

> *'Allie emphasises the importance of ensuring that the consultation sheet is*
>
> *completed using visual and physical engagement with the client. The visual side,*
>
> *she explains, entails important eye contact with them while the physical side*
>
> *involves handling and touching their hair so as to ensure that the consultation*
>
> *sheet is completed as accurately as possible.'*

The above field note speaks to the multi-dimensionality of interaction, which beyond being susceptible to regulation at the verbal level, occurs also via body language. The latter comprises of eye contact and touch, primordial modes of interaction that necessitate on-going engagement. Students are therefore prevented from maintaining an entirely detached persona through the unaltered regurgitation of a script. Instead, they must visually engage with the client and remain attuned to minutia interactional conditions that inform appropriate physical contact.

Analysis of both interview and observational data suggested that while scripts served an initial purpose, their usage was cautioned in order to ensure student's interactional skills flourished organically. During observations, it was for example, apparent that scripts were not used by higher level students with more experience. These individuals seemingly did not require the conversational governance provided by a tangible script. Rather, they knew what questions to ask and importantly, how to organically weave these into a more fluid and social form of interaction. Hence while all social interactions bear a structure of sorts that may allow some scripting (Goffman, 1959), the variable identity of the audience/customer creates conditions of alterity that render interaction prone to difference, otherness and spontaneity (Lim, 2007; Bertoia, 1985; Leidner, 1993). Though the unavoidable fluidity of interaction makes attempts to premeditate conversation largely infeasible, effectively identifying 'student-salon' fit eased student's transition into a workplace reflective of their embodied selves.

Selecting an appropriate salon

As discussed previously in this thesis, there is significant variation among salons (Lindsay, 2004). Furman's (1997) study, for example, was based in a relatively small,

independently owned salon frequented primarily by a regular group of elderly clients, while Bax (2012) studied a salon espousing opulence and luxury through an incredibly polished and well-presented interior. These differences contribute to the overall 'branding' of a salon by creating a distinct 'servicescape' that appeals to certain customers (Bitner, 1992). The disparity among salons was well-acknowledged by training providers:

> *"It's just that different level, you can go from the ground level where it's not particularly clean where their hair skills aren't particularly brilliant, there's a salon in the area where they might have their dogs in, might be eating its dinner off the floor while you're having your highlights done. And then you've got your higher end, your Tong and Guy, your Saks, whatever. Where it's still very professional, almost cool persona, where people can feel uncomfortable walking in." (Charlie, training provider)*

Charlie presents a hyperbolic juxtaposition of two contrasting salon types though a range of salons exist within this dualism. Rather than conceiving of just the disparities that persist among salons, Charlie speaks to a hierarchal ranking. At the bottom or "ground level" of this hierarchy are salons characterised by lapsed hygiene standards and a less refined technique. These salons also confer a sense of comfort and familiarity that the salons toward the top of the hierarchy lack. By contrast, higher end salons cultivate a "cool persona" that is palpable to the point of being off-putting for particular clients. The typifying features that distinguish and order salons pertain to aesthetics, style of service and organisational structure, which coalesce to cement a brand image. Training providers therefore emphasised that choosing which salons to send students

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to for work experience was not random, but rather a judgment made according to knowledge of particular salons and their 'brand' coupled with student specific detail pertaining to their interpersonal attributes:

> *"We know salons, we'll say they're better going to that one, they might say "oh I'm going there", and we'll say no, you won't last half an hour, you're better going there. It's the same type of thing though with us, if we know we've got students who are a bit more nervous or don't want to come out of their shell, sending them into a salon where it is very structured, rigid and professional, it would frighten them and that would be bad for their experience, but we're sending them to a little shop on the corner where everyone is everyone's sister and best friend and in each other's pockets." (Tony, training provider).*

Training providers demonstrate a proficient insight into salons in the surrounding area. Here Tony speaks to a clear distinction between salons characterised by rigidity and professionalism that would potentially "frighten" more reticent students, and those analogised as "a little shop on the corner" where client-stylist relations are informal and relational asymmetries are less pronounced. These judgments were made on the basis of how well student's aesthetic and interpersonal qualities matched with those of a salon. Training providers did, however, acknowledge the potential for such qualities to be moulded and shaped by the norms of a particular salon.

Phoebe for example, explained that where salons aimed to cultivate opulent and luxurious imagery, prescriptive rules governing appearance were typically more rigorously enforced, meaning students "have to go in wearing certain makeup, they

have to wear their hair a certain way, they have to wear eyelashes". The malleability of student's embodied capital was therefore subject to 'aestheticization' by a salon, as student's dispositions are subtly orientated to reflect the particularities of an organisation (Juul and Byskov, 2019). In speaking to the aesthetic rigidity prescribed among high-end salons, Phoebe suggests that a mid-price salon, where staff do not encounter 'the picky rules and restrictions associated with the fancier shops' (Willet, 2000: 67) was preferable for certain students.

Incongruence between a student and salon is not solely the result of an aesthetic mismatch; rather interactional alignment is another constituent of a harmonious occupational fit. Salient discrepancies persist among salons where "everyone is everyone's sister and best friend and in each other's pockets" (Tony) and those were a contrasting degree of professional detachment from clients is endorsed. The former is suggestive of the close personal relations and 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999) that have the potential to form in salons that house 'third place' characteristics (Oldenburg, 1989; Jeffres et al, 2009 and Hickman, 2013). Subsequently, there is a stark difference between the relational skills required in large chain salons where communication is likely to be instrumental and surpassed by the highly prioritized technical attributes. Small, locally operated salons, on the other hand, potentially place greater emphasis upon the relational attributes that further the salons' social functioning as a site of emotional catharsis and fulfilment (Ward et al, 2016; Cowen et al, 1981).

Extant research has illustrated how the brand identity and climate of a salon is often geared toward a particular clientele. For salons that seek to attract a more middle-class

clientele (Gimlin, 1996; Lindsay, 2004), the embodied attributes of stylists may be mobilized as a means of excluding clientele who do not fit within the intended demographic:

> *"Some salons, the high up salons, can be quite, how do you put this not stuck up but sometimes you'll go in and you'll feel like they're looking down on you so I feel like that's quite a negative vibe and people pick up on that" (Phoebe, training provider)*

Despite high-end salons charging higher prices and offering more technically complex services, Phoebe illustrates how a palpable "negative vibe" results from their refined organisational landscape. This reflects earlier discussions regarding how certain organisations require the suppression of embodied attributes that are incongruent to the imagery they seek to project. The particularities of a salon may therefore demand that inscribed attributes that serve as potent markers of class, distinction and taste are masked. However, Phoebe speaks to the immense variation that persists among salons, which operate according to distinct codes manifesting as a tacitly embodied performance. Crucially, this performance is depicted as inextricably tied to the customer's perspective. Here customers are acknowledged as responsive to the aestheticized staging of a salon and relationally embedded as part of a salon's affective climate.

6.5: Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have presented insights related to the pedagogical rooting of relational and embodied skills necessary for co-creation in the salon. Chapters 2 and 3 drew from sociological and marketing research to illustrate the important role that the

service worker plays in enhancing the perceived value of the overall experience (Price and Arnold, 1999; Seger-Guttmann and Melder-Liraz, 2018). Within sociological accounts of service work, the embodied capacities of workers functioned to positively shape their customers' emotions. Marketing research on the other hand, espouses the importance of service workers facilitating opportunities for customers to 'co-create' the service to suit their preferences (Greer, 2015; Heidenreich et al, 2015). Both these objectives are unified by the need for workers that are relationally competent and able to adapt to the idiosyncrasies of social interaction. Yet, much of the empirical research discussed in chapter 3 explores service work as it is performed. There is little attention paid to the moments that precede the service performance.

This chapter therefore provides an empirical insight into the processes and practices used to inspire the tentative development of relational and embodied skills among the next generation of service workers. The insights discussed during this chapter speak to an emotional display that although explicitly prescribed, is also nuanced to suit each customer. Adaption to such nuances emerged as challenging; hence early stages of development were often marked by sameness and uniformity. As illustrated by the quote from a trainee stylist presented at the beginning of this chapter, customer relations were inescapably temporal. Students could not elicit and respond to the particularities of a client as infrequent and/or one-off contact encumbered the development of any sort of relational trajectory. This speaks to emotional labour as both a customer-orientated and temporally rooted accomplishment.

This chapter also illustrated the significance of embodied attributes often conceptualised in sociological literature as aesthetic labour (Wright, 2005; Boyle and

Keere, 2019). Extant empirical research concerning aesthetic labour has revealed the sought-after dispositions among service workers are those suggestive of a cultured upbringing (Bourdieu, 1984; Wright, 2005: Williams and Connell, 2010; Mears, 2014). Where this links to the data in this chapter is in the class-based conditioning of students, who are acculturated toward the embodied norms of professionalism and 'middle classness'. This process was represented as something of a feat by training providers, being that disparaging connotations of hair and beauty lead to the institutionalised sifting of predominantly working-class females into training (Lindsay, 2004). In seeking to instil 'the norms of a particular role' (Colley et 2003: 474), training providers sought to rid students of embodied markers and bodily inscriptions suggestive of deprivation, familial discord and poor education. This chapter therefore illustrates how the refined modes of embodiment desired across the service industry are embedded as part of a service-orientated pedagogical discourse. There were, however, hints toward a more adaptive form of embodiment that is informed by the nuances of a salon's aesthetics and affective climate.

The overall purpose of this chapter has been to conceptually step back from the empirical context of the actual service encounter, where the majority of prior research is focused. Instead, this chapter draws from a pedagogical context that orientates and nurtures the next generation of service workers. As discussed in chapter 4, hairdressing is a distinctive service context where encounters can be lengthy and demand a complex interweaving of technical and relational skills. This chapter reveals that these abilities are not automatic, but form part of a situationally learnt accomplishment that is very much ongoing. What this suggests is that the affective climate that many service organisations seek to cultivate constitutes a 'mastered performance' (Hurrell et al, 2013:

162). As indicated throughout this chapter, delivering such a performance requires stylists to dynamically mobilize relational, embodied and technical attributes while closely reading the distinct needs of their audience. In the following chapter I will continue along the processual narrative of the service encounter by locating the pedagogical insights of relational and embodied development in the context of a working salon.

Chapter 7: The salon space - a site of co-creation and commercial friendships

In the previous chapter, I presented data gathered in the pedagogical context of colleges and training academies. The insights revealed salient issues including the lingering stigma surrounding hair and beauty as a career choice and the efforts of training providers to reshape student's habitus to more closely embody modes of middle-class deportment. These processes precede entry onto the stage of service work, where a nuanced performance is required. The purpose of this chapter is therefore, to situate pedagogical insights relating to the development of relational and embodied skills within the context of a working salon. The developmental trajectory of the service worker is extended to richly account for the lived experiences of managing diverse and intimate customer relations. In presenting ethnographic data comprised of observational field notes and in-situ interviews, this chapter also discusses the experiences of the customer as part of a dyadic analysis that was absent from the previous chapter.

The salon received a diverse range of clients, each with distinct physiological and emotional needs (Ward et al, 2016; Hanson, 2019; Cohen, 2011). Chapter 6 showed that despite such varied client needs, the fledging use of scripts among novices to aid customer interaction was common. Within the actual salon, a somewhat ritualized interaction order was observed among certain 'types' of clients (Algharabali, 2014). Generic greetings of exuberance were offered to all, then a handshake was commonly offered to men while the more affectionate alternative of a high five/kiss on the cheek is given to children and female clients respectively. Regardless of how seemingly routinized exchanges were, both stylist and client appeared to draw additional meaning from the interaction, which was experienced as a 'real social exchange' (Leidner, 1993:

230), as opposed to solely being an economic transaction (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005). Much like an authentic social exchange, some spontaneity was inevitable, as clients would frequently present with additional requests beyond those specified pre-appointment, arrive late and occasionally wish to converse with their stylists beyond their allocated time slot.

Throughout the observational period, clients grew increasingly recognisable as they attended multiple times, such episodic attendance and consequential familiarity problematizes Pettinger's (2011: 224) judgment of the customer as a 'demanding, paying stranger'. By contrast, particular clients were highly familiar being that they attended as regularly as once a week. For others, attendance was more sporadic, occurring every 4-6 weeks. The formerly mentioned clients attending on a weekly basis tended to be elderly, hence they were retired with no work commitments, and were female. From in-situ interviews conducted with stylists, occasionally walk-in clients would enter or call up the salon seeking an immediate appointment, although stylists expressed the difficulty of fitting in such clients over their 'regulars'. Demarcating clients according to their level of attendance is a common practice among salons (Gimlin, 1996; Eayrs, 1993; Bertoia, 1985), as is the subsequent variation of service afforded to different clients (Soulliere, 1997). In-situ interviews also revealed that regular clients were the recipients of an especially personalised service characterised by additional offerings (fitting in an appointment during a busy period, offering assistance in personal matters and the stocking of particular 'treats' favoured by the client).

The data below is derived from field notes collected over several weeks spent at a salon, in which the experience of all client 'types' was documented. Needless to say, those clients attributed the coveted salon status of 'regular' due to their frequent attendance feature prominently and are therefore named throughout the notes so as to provide a clear chronological narrative of their various appointments. The themes developed from the field notes are, where appropriate, accompanied by relevant interview data intended to compliment or challenge the observed reality of a working salon. Moreover, the insights from chapter 6 are occasionally drawn upon to illustrate the juxtaposition between service-based pedagogy and the lived realities of managing customer contact.

In returning to the customer experience, the data is organised firstly around the client's use of the salon space. The fluidity and ease, or stiffness and discord of a clients' movement in and around the salon is considered as emerging from a dynamic process of stylist-client co-creation. This broadens the conceptual reach of co-creation beyond the outcome of a service, but to the way the spatial properties of the service are embedded as part of experience. Related to this is the salon's co-conditioning of the salon as a social community. In locating this as a collaborative process of ongoing (re)conditioning, several sub themes are discussed including 'talk-for-work', 'the use of humour', 'longitudinal client relations' and finally, 'the discussion of taboo topics'. All themes are interwoven by a socio-spatial emphasis intended to explore how occupants collectively navigating the territory utilize the material and symbolic properties of an organisational space. In a sense, the structure of the chapter suggests a disproportionate emphasis on the customer. However, the customer experience is considered throughout as a mutable experience that dynamically shifts according to the stylist's input and the broader service landscape.

7.1: The role of the salon in the customer experience: reshaping, reclaiming and reconfiguration of a commercial space

During the observational period, the movement of particular clients around the salon appeared notable. Certain clients navigated the salon in a manner suggestive of a confidence, ease and familiarity untypical within a commercial as opposed to personal-private domain. Clients of course, were not homogenous in their movements and without imposing generalisations, those who fluidly moved with the greatest ease tended to be older women. While most public domains are organised according to patriarchal relations, the hair salon is distinct in supporting the movement of its primarily female patrons, symbolically reaffirming the space as a largely feminized zone (Black, 2004; Ward et al, 2016). Juxtaposing the spatial liberties experienced by female clients, the movement of their male counterparts was for the most part, marked by greater caution.

Generally male clients were observed as bound to the salon chair upon which they sat for the duration of their appointment. Certain female clients on the other hand, moved freely around the salon with ease, regularly interrupting their appointment to do so. The differences in spatial practices exhibited by clients were marked not only by gender. They were marked also by the strength of relational ties to the salon and its staff. Moreover, the spatial practices of regular clients often had the potential to incur subtle changes that reconfigured the salon space. This included the routine transgression of normative occupational boundaries, namely those designating the 'front stage' domains occupied by clients and 'backstage' area, supposedly characterised by privacy:

'After a short time in the salon the functioning of the out of site back room area became apparent. Here stylists hastily smoke and drink coffee, before then gargling mouthwash and spritzing themselves with perfume and deodorant. Dirty mugs are often piled up by the sink, multiple lighters litter the countertop and laundry from the salon is strewn all over the place. It is for the most part, a customer-free domain. Exceptionally, a client called Mrs B is observed entering this area in an automatic manner suggesting such entry is almost ritualised. Much of the time when she is in the back, Mrs B is fully gowned and has rollers set in her hair, suggesting that she is in the middle of her appointment. Despite occupying an area of the salon that I had perceived as 'staff only', her presence does not shock staff in any apparent way. Mrs B also smokes comfortably in the presence of stylists who even offer her usage of the salon's various lighters, and whilst this surprises me somewhat, Ruby and Ellie are undeterred and keep chatting casually. Collectively Mrs B and the other stylists tend to linger by the door at the back of the staffroom. This leads to a small garden area and occasionally gatherings spill out onto it.'

The above field note conveys a typical event in which a regular client of the salon initiates a ritualised sequence of behaviours that at first, appeared atypical in a commercial space. I was, in a sense, shocked to see a customer so frequently and unquestionably defy normative demarcation of symbolic space by entering into a 'staff only' are. Yet, the confidence and assertion that Mrs B displayed when doing so was mirrored by an equally assured performance whilst on the salon's 'front stage':

'Mrs B arrives early for her appointment, however without reservation she heads straight into the salon and over to the cloakroom area where customer's coat is hung up and gowns are stored. She hangs up her own coat and puts on her own gown. She then heads further into the salon into the backroom area to smoke. Initially, as Ruby and Ellie are both busy, she doesn't say much, just simply smokes in the back of the salon. Ruby does however, soon pop in and asks, "right Mrs are you ready for your perm?", Mrs B responds by stumping out her cigarette and following Ruby over to the salon chair'.

Mrs B movement around salon space prompted an observation that potentially would have gone unnoticed: that normally stylists take the lead in initiating the course of interaction and subtly guide their customer's movement around the salon. However, as apparent from the extract above and other comparable field notes, Mrs B's interaction with the space often occurred in the physical absence of stylist involvement. This reflects a tenacity and elevated sense of comfort typical within third places, where certain customers 'adapt it (the space) to accommodate activities that were never intended by the owner' (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012: 140). There is, however, some semblance of collaboration, as stylists cultivated the conditions allowing Mrs B to navigate the salon in a way that disregarded normative boundaries. The affirmative interaction offered by stylists in relation to clients' more decisive spatial behaviour contrasts with typical expectations attached to the roles of service worker and client, where prescribed symbolic boundaries are cemented through the organisation of space (Ashforth et al, 2008).

Another notable symbolic transgression of normative boundaries presented itself when Mrs B arrived early for her appointment during the designated lunch hour despite having called up to clarify her scheduled appointment just an hour prior:

> *'Ellie and I are eating lunch in the back of the salon. Generally, no client bookings are taken between 1-2pm so as to allow staff a full hour to have lunch. At around 1:10, Mrs Bickering calls up to clarify the time of her appointment, which Ellie informs her is at 2pm. After getting off the phone, Ellie reveals that Mrs Bickering's attendance today is unusual, as she is normally in on a Thursday at 1pm with Ruby who works through her lunch hour, yet today she is due in with Mark at the later time of 2pm. At about 1:45, still during the supposed lunch hour, Mrs Bickering arrives, reasoning that her early arrival is due to her overestimating how long it would take to stop for petrol beforehand. Ellie appears welcoming as always, and further justifies her early arrival, stating "you normally like to have a fag beforehand anyway". True to Ellie's assumption, Mrs B heads out to the back of the salon, reaching into her bag and pulling out a packet of cigarettes on the way. As she is initially unable to locate her lighter, Ellie offers her use of the lighter used by the salon staff. While she smokes, Ellie gets on with 'behind the scenes' salon tasks such as washing all of the hair towels.'*

The above field note shows Mrs B offering some justification as to why she arrived early, however she did not appear overly embarrassed at her premature arrival despite there being no other clients present and staff members either eating their lunches or cleaning up. This kind of atmosphere would be typically perceived as detrimental to the customer experience. As discussed previously in this thesis, there are many salons that

construct a front stage intended to emulate opulence and perfection that pose stark contrast to the chaos and discord that lurks backstage (Bax, 2012). Although this salon by no means embodies sheer indulgence and luxury, it does boast a front stage that is at the very least, comfortable, tidy and spacious. This contrasts with a small and cramped backstage that is littered with stylists' personal belongings. Moreover, the backstage is characterised by a sense of urgency and disorganisation, as stylists hastily down coffees and put out cigarettes ahead of their next appointment. Yet, Mrs B consistently opted to spend the duration of her appointment, when not in the salon chair, loitering in the back amongst the chaos.

In a sense, this suggests blurring by Mrs B, who economically is designated a client, but symbolically and relationally emerges almost as a quasi-staff member. Such an elevated level of comfort and confidence reflects the salon's conditioning as an affectively charged third place, where particular clients 'not only feel at home [...], but also make themselves at home' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 909). Mrs B's early arrival also speaks to the perceived accessibility of the salon, where 'people can come during any time of the day' (Nguyen et al, 2019: 228) despite service exchanges normatively being governed by a clear start and cessation. The client's domesticized perception of the space is what facilitates the fluidity of her movement, including unassisted navigation as well as the divisive placement of personal belongings.

What demarcated the client's movement as noteworthy is the longstanding literature discussed in previously in this thesis that regards the backstage in organisational setting as synonymous with privacy. Backstage areas have been conditioned as domains 'away from the customer's gaze [...] where service providers can reflect, be emotional

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and get ready for their performances' (Tumbat, 2011: 189). The spatial component of the theatrical analogy is then complimented by a conceptual distinction between the public/private role (Goffman, 1959). The corrections made by training providers in chapter 6 in relation to students' conduct *on* the salon floor (instructing students to avoid swearing, prohibiting the use of mobiles) tentatively nurture the separation of behaviours that are part of a public performance and those that comprise a private reality. These insights however suggest that in the lived experience of service work, a more nuanced interpretation of the theatrical analogy is warranted. Notably, this relates to the alternative conditioning of the backstage area as accessible to certain clients on account of a well-developed relational trajectory. Overall, the spatial fluidity demonstrated by particular clients poses stark contrast to imagery that depicts clients as 'confined to the hairdresser's chair' (Algharabali, 2014: 54). Instead, these insights physically and symbolically release clients from a static depiction that reinforces notions of passivity and inactivity. In seeking to move past a limited depiction of customers, this research vividly illustrates the potential for fluid and unbounded movement through rich vignettes of a regular client.

Being part of an ongoing dynamic between behaviour and materiality, the customer's experience within the salon speaks to the malleability of the space. The material properties and artefacts allowed for constant 're-staging' to suit client demands (Ward et al, 2016). This 're-staging' was nearly always collaborative, where stylists would encourage clients to shift furniture and litter the space with their personal belongings. Locating spatial (re) construction within a symbolic and relational process of individualised sensemaking illustrates the importance of analysing commercial spaces as inherently fluid. Moreover, any 'unmanaged space' (Bolton and Boyd, 2003: 303) can

therefore be qualified through social interaction as a 'gathering point', allowing

catharsis through a lesser prescribed performance (Brockman, 2013: 369).

It is through interpreting the socio-symbolic practices of stylists that the transgressive

behaviours of particular clients can be better understood as emanating from a well-

developed co-creational trajectory. The physical and social construction of a space

represents a dynamic process as 'the on-going process of interaction' manipulates the

material landscape and vice versa. Acquiring the symbolic power to incur spatial

changes occurred through subtle conversational leveraging in which clients

renegotiated their position in the salon. Prior interactions communicated significant

spatial privileges to certain clients, who were supported as they reconditioned the

commercial space to suit their desired service experience. The customer's usage of the

salon space was co-created not only through the verbal articulation of tolerance, but

also through behavioural practices suggestive of lapsed social boundaries.

The salon owner, for example, was routinely observed grooming his facial hair using

salon tools in the presence of the client; an act of personal grooming which typically

would be performed in a private domain. This poses a sharp contrast to the

observations in the training academy, where students were reprimanded for using the

mirrors in the salon to reapply their makeup or restyle their hair. Similarly, in the

training academy smoking in view of clients or on the premises was vehemently

prohibited. On several occasions, there was pronounced tension as training providers

deduced which students had smoked during their break on account of the lingering,

noxious scent. However, as illustrated by the field notes presented in this chapter,

enjoying a cigarette in the company of stylists was for certain clients, a ritualised part of

the service. On the observed occasions there was no affirmative dialogue sought by either parties, rather there was an unspoken and symbolic acceptance that this was simply "Mrs B's pre appointment fag" (Ellie). The symbolism behind smoking in a commercial space speaks to an informal and colloquial atmosphere. This atmosphere is (re) conditioned through stylist-client interaction, whose affective relations redefine normative organisational boundaries.

In a sense, this conceptual blurring between private and public behaviours served an inclusionary purpose by drawing the client into 'backstage activities that are typically only reserved for staff' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 909). Extant research has illustrated how the often-unassuming pockets of an organisational space that facilitate privacy from the prying eyes and ears of clients allow the sharing of personal detail (Shortt, 2012). Entry of a client into these hallways, staffrooms, side streets potentially derails the exchange of intimate personal chatter amongst staff. However, the data revealed an ongoing process of making 'private' behaviours visible and 'backstage' spaces accessible to particular clients, emerging from an enduring relational trajectory. The mutable conditioning of the salon and its various areas reflects its broader designation as a hospitable commercial space, where for the most part, clients are encouraged to linger. Reflecting the agency of customers, some were observed relishing in this, opting to remain seated after their appointment and enjoy an additional cup of coffee. It was as though certain clients needed to be prised away from the salon by the arrival of a taxi or family member to collect them, illustrating the sense of attachment toward the space. This contrasts with the training context, where there was a lesser emphasis upon such a refined level of relational adaptation.

Where students in their formative years of learning were initially taught to regard all customers as members of an undifferentiated audience and even defer to scripted interaction, stylists breached the homogenous audience implied by the theatrical analogy to nurture the development of affective client relations that supported a more nuanced performance. The lived experience of salon life fosters relations that are complex and distinct, as opposed to being generic and undeveloped. Certain clients become an increasingly formidable and distinct presence as their attendance mounts and symbolic ties to the salon intensify. An important contextual consideration when examining the re/definitional co-creation of the salon space is the reduced mobility of the client, who as an elderly lady was routinely offered physical assistance when moving around the salon. While Ward et al (2016) interpreted the provision of such physical assistance as a form of 'bodily collaboration' that served to temporally minimize the client's inescapable physiological restrictions, the data presented implied significance in relation to the re/definition of the salon space. The freedom awarded to clients to redefine the salon space counters the restricted and exclusionary access that elderly clients in particular experience as part of their lived reality, wherein both physiological ailments and discriminatory instances of ageism hinder their navigation of public space. However, the freedom to move around the salon was not solely the preserve of elderly regulars with limited mobility:

> *'This afternoon, Ruby has appointments with a mother and her young daughter. After her appointment has finished and the mother is due to have hers, the daughter appears bored, so asks Ruby if she can play with 'the head'. Ruby confirms that she can and without further instruction, the daughter goes into the back room by sink area, bringing out a large mannequin head. She sits with it in the empty*

salon chair next to her mother and asks Ruby whether she can have a brush, Ruby

responds "Tell you what, go into my bag and use the one that I've got in there for

her", as the girl wonders off right into the back room where myself and staff

members stow personal belongings, Ruby shows no concern and jokingly says to the

mother "I hope she keeps off my secret biscuit stash!"'.

The above field note illustrates entry into the back room as more purposive, being that it was solely to retrieve a specific item. In contrast, the occupation of the back area for Mrs B appeared less fleeting, hence suggesting a deep-rooted emotional claim sustained through the practice of 'selective exclusion' (Lugosi, 2009). In maintaining the symbolic inclusion for Mrs B, other clients were consequently denied possession of the 'gift' of spatial privileges (Debenedetti et al, 2013), as it was common for the door to be closed while Mrs B occupied the back room. As easily as expressions of territory marked 'spaces to indicate boundaries', they were also mobilized to 'defend these spaces against intruders' (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012: 132). Through the exclusion of those deemed 'intruders', Mrs B enjoyed a veil of privacy from the public visibility of the front stage where 'excluded' clients must wait. However, not all clients sought to affirm their entry in the backstage area as acceptable, in fact for the majority of clients who attended the salon on a semi-regular basis (every 4-8 weeks), normative spatial definitions prevailed:

'A male client comes in and I notice Ryan quickly retreats into the back-room area

stating he needs to fill up a spray bottle with some fresh hot water. Having been in

the salon for a while, I notice that Ryan spends several minutes occupying the back-

room area (arguably longer than needed to refill a spray bottle). Upon then

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entering the back room area myself, I notice Ryan hastily smoking a cigarette and quickly sipping a coffee, in an effort to mask these activities, he gurgles some mouthwash and sprays himself with deodorant before finally, filling up his spray bottle with water and re-entering the front stage with boundless enthusiasm.'

The above field note reflects a more traditional use of the backstage domain as an area that actors use to evade the pressures of the front stage and to prepare effectively for their next performance (Goffman, 1959). The privacy desired by Ryan in this instant was evident through his closing of the door leading into the back room, a symbolic demarcation of the area as inaccessible to clients (Bitner, 1992). Moreover, the affirmation of the back room as a private zone was reinforced not just spatially but also temporally. In a similar manner to teacher's utilization of break times (Ashforth et al, 2008), stylists opportunistically seized the variable time that presented in between client's appointments to momentarily evade the front stage pressure.

The effort to conceal backstage practices in the presence of certain clientele contrasts with the ease with which such practices are performed in front of more regular clientele. This reflects the device referred to as 'audience segregation', where 'those before whom one plays one of his parts won't be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting' (Goffman, 1959: 57). This speaks to a nuanced performance that is refined through the tacit process of developing client relations. This again illustrates the potential shortcomings of learning within the pedagogical context, where much of the teaching endorsed a conceptual dualism between a private and public performance. However, through the lived experience of a working salon certain clients gradually emerged as 'ratified participants', who are 'entitled and expected to be

part of the communicative event' (Majors, 2003: 299). The result was a performance less constrained by normative display rules and reduced effort to manage impressions. For clients who represent the antithesis of 'ratified participants', the 'private realities' of impression management are fully engaged with so as to perfect the façade presented through one's public appearance (Tseëlon, 1992). Indeed, the private 'backstage' practices of having a coffee and smoking are partially intended to raise a stylist's energy levels, reinvigorating them ready for the front stage. In exiting the backstage, the stylist's invigorated and energetic persona was palpable:

> *'Ryan emerges from the back, ready to tend to his client awaiting him in the salon chair. He greets her enthusiastically and she comments on his elevated energy levels, which he attributes to his 'all important caffeine fix'. The client describes a coffee flavoured protein shake she's recently been enjoying, though Ryan responds, 'sounds good but a bit too healthy for me, unfortunately the only coffee shake I enjoy is a Marlboro coffee frappe!'*

The time spent in the backstage area, prepping and preening for the next performance would occasionally cut into the client's allotted appointment, hence posing a risk to the smooth functioning of the service. Despite a sense of urgency and haste, stylists also appeared exuberant and enthusiastic. This seemingly offset any irritation caused by the delays that were incurred as stylists lingered in the backstage too long.

How the salon space is used and defined is crucial in creating a positive service experience. The optimal space for each client does, however, differ according to their distinct service preferences and relational history with the organisation. Each

encounter provided an opportunity for spatial reshaping and/or reaffirming through innovative practices or ritualistic behaviours. Where normative demarcations of a commercial domain were defied, such transgressive behaviour occurred with the support of stylists, who as 'set designers' (Goffman, 1959) possess the symbolic authority to direct and assist in client's spatial navigation. Space is therefore subject to an ongoing process of reconstruction through 'socio-spatial' practices that emanate from embedded client-stylist relational trajectories. In further examining the significance of social relations in the context of a commercial setting, the following section will focus upon the salon's broader configuration as a social community.

7.2: Creation of a social community

Interaction functions not only to strengthen ties at the micro level of the individual customer and their stylist, but also to enhance the salon's existence as a community. The interaction facilitated through the co-presence and closeness of stylist and clients alike inspires the development of commercial friendships by offering through the provision of meaningful support (Rosenbaum, 2009). Although the occupation of a particular space may initially result from 'consumption needs', where affective relations develop 'companionship [and] social support are also provided' (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012: 133). The relations borne out of salon interaction therefore operate within a blurred definition of being economic or social, as 'no distinct border can be discerned between them' (Seger-Guttmann and Melder-Liraz, 2018: 102). Economically, stylists may emphasise the salon's relational and affective properties in order to encourage customers to linger. This prolonged dwelling establishes 'fertile ground for territorial behaviours' (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012: 131). Expressions of territory and ownership are suggestive of 'customers who see the space as theirs and result in place attachment'

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(Griffiths and Gilly, 2012: 132). Subsequent feelings of warmth, belonging and attachment that emanate from perceived affiliation to a communal space are economically significant in cementing loyalty and retaining regular income (Rosenbaum, 2008; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Bauman, 2001).

For particular groups who encounter marginalisation and societal discrimination, the inclusivity provided by the salon's functioning as a community proves especially important (Rosenbaum, 2008). Majors ((2001: 290) for example, demonstrated the importance of hair salons specifically catering for African American women, which served as 'culturally shared and situated sites of labour- isolable, clearly defined parts of a community that produce goods or serves in demand. The salon therefore represents an occupational site where social ties are forged (Ward et al, 2016, Furman, 1997; McFarquhar and Lowis, 2000) and a sense of identity is conferred. Embedding oneself in the immediate social locality of a site remedies impending feelings of societal isolation and marginalisation. It is through experiencing the social 'warmth' of the salon's community and constructing close relationships that certain customers judge their experience as positive (Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007; Rosenbaum, 2008). Though there may be an obvious pecuniary motivation for organisations to envelope their clients within an affective social microcosm, clients are not passively subsumed by emotionally charged interaction. Rather, clients must opt in by indulging and supporting the development of affective bonds as part of an ongoing relational dynamic.

By indicating a willingness and desire to construct close relations with their stylists, the desire to become immersed within the affective sociability of the salon is subject to personal preference (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003). The voluntary disclosure of

personal information was regarded as suggestive of an inclination to embed oneself in the salon's emotive climate and establish close relations (Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996). The sharing of biographical detail is also crucial for the construction of a culture, being that it serves as a basis upon which future conversations are initiated (Fine, 1979). The personal detail shared was characterised by a continuum, ranging from phatic small talk that was largely impersonal to highly sensitive topics such as family illnesses, the latter of which are often shared for the purpose of acquiring cathartic relief of sorts (Ward et al, 2016; Furman, 1997). The first opportunity for clients to disclose personal information transpired at the outset of appointment:

> *'When Florence sits down for her appointment and Steph asks her how she's doing, Florence wastes no time disclosing recent issues. Hence, she replies to Steph's question with a rather downbeat 'alright', before then going on to discuss her husband's ailing health as well as his current residency in a care home facility. Florence complains that the staff at the care home "ask too many questions about his food and his tablets, and of course he then rejects them all the time because he's not in full mental capacity, so what can you do?' Steph nods a long presumably to show her sympathy, Florence continues 'you know you put your life in their hands don't you'.*

In reflecting the economic exchange underlying the encounter, Steph automatically awards Florence the power to direct the trajectory of their interaction by asking her how she is, a question offering a multitude of interactional pathways. As with other types of social ceremonies, interaction bears a clear structure in terms of its initiation, conduction and cessation (Goffman, 1983), all of which differ according to the identity

of the interactant (Bertoia, 1985). Through communication there is the potential to elevate 'the interaction from a more formal business realm to a more personal, familiar one' (Bettencourt and Guinner, 1996: 11). The transition into a more personal form of interaction is dependent upon the customer, who through their response symbolically consents to the ongoing recreation and affirmation of social ties. The client's decision to share details pertaining not only to her husband's deteriorating health but also his treatment in a care home speak to the highly affective context of the hair salon, which subsequently creates fertile ground for the development of boundary open relationships (Price et al, 1995; O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006).

The purpose of sharing such information is questionable, being that Steph is unable to offer any feasible solution to Florence's concerns. The sharing is perhaps motivated by a desire for personal catharsis and the extension of symbolic support, offered in the form of an empathetic and receptive façade. For particular clients, the disclosure of personal information appeared so ingrained as part of the service experience that it transpired without any verbal invitation:

> 'Without warning or initiation from stylists, Florence then raises a less jovial topic
> of conversation relating to an upcoming solicitor's appointment she has, detailing
> the intended division of her assets: 'I've already said, we'll split everything four
> ways, three for each of the kids then the rest split between the grandkids, now
> they're talking about keeping everything on hold for 7 years, well I might not even
> still be around in 7 years!'. Florence continues to complain about the admin tasks
> associated with her appointment, from which I gather that he husband is in poor
> health: "I'll have to learn it all when he goes, I've said I'm just going to sell the

second house because it's just too much to stay on top off', Ruby and Ellie respond

sympathetically to Florence with affirmative and agreeable utterances. Florence is

clearly comfortable discussing the difficulties she faces coping with the reality of

her husband's ailing health, often seeking to refocus the conversation upon such

matters. For example, when the conversation turns to be the less emotive issue of

heating and electricity prices, Florence mentions 'Last Summer you know when we

had all the hot weather, well he had to have a thick blanket on and pyjamas, he

looked red hot but he always complained about being too cold', Florence's

comment notably lowers the mood of the conversation and I wonder whether Ruby

and Ellie are simply conditioned to being emotionally receptive to her rather

maudlin experiential commentary.'

As Florence disclosed concerns relating to her husband's ill health and the challenges

she encountered living by on her own, the salon emerged as 'a safe and quasi-private

setting where [she] could share [her] concerns' (Ward et al, 2016: 402). Notably, this

information is unrelated to the cutting/styling of the Florence' hair, which is often

thought of as the primary objective of the service. The sharing of sensitive detail instead

serves an important social function especially sought after by elderly clients, whose

opportunities for interaction may be restricted (Hickman, 2013; Jeffres et al, 2009). This

social functioning is, however, not the sole preserve of the elderly, as clients of various

ages were observed sharing sensitive personal detail, and presumably experiencing a

subsequent feeling of catharsis:

'Whilst cutting the hair of a seemingly familiar client, Ruby chats about various

topics and asks about the wellbeing of the client's teenage daughter. In a more

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muted tone, the client reveals that the daughter is going out very much at the moment. The mother and Ruby chat about various topics, at one point she mentions her other daughter whom she comments isn't going out much at the moment. The client then dishearteningly reveals that the daughter was mugged recently, a detail that visibly shocks and saddens Ruby, whom deduces that it must have been the same incident she recently heard reported via the local news. The mother goes into further detail about what happened, stating that the assailant stole her daughters' phone, an act that both she and Ruby cite as pointless given the ability to lock smartphones and prevent further usage. As the mother digresses further, I notice that myself and others in the salon including clients and stylists appear to be listening intently. The mother explains that while the daughter has been assisting police, providing a detailed description of the offender, he has not yet been caught and they have been informed of the difficulty in locating him unless he reoffends. Both Ruby and the other stylist Ryan, whom has ceased frantically running about the salon as he often does, emphasise their shock and concern for the daughter, whom they both know from her prior visits accompanying her mother to the salon.'

The above field note reflects the disclosure of personal and sensitive information, which at times appeared emotionally challenging to reveal. Though this created a sombre tone, stylists seemingly defaulted to a quasi-therapeutic role (Gimlin, 1996; Furman, 1997; Soulliere, 1997; Cowen et al, 1981; Lee et al, 2007; Hanson, 2019). Responding appropriately to client's signals of distress, upset and emotional turmoil emerged as a tacitly learned accomplishment. Attesting to this, in the training academy there was very little observed to suggest that students were taught how to appear empathetic to clients. Students were of course, taught to appear friendly. However, the ability to

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receive and respond to clients as they divulged the melancholic realities of life went unmentioned and was tacitly learned. This is illustrated in the data presented in chapter 6, where an adult learner at a higher level of training explained that she thrived at clients sharing sensitive detail with her. In a sense, this speaks to an elevated sense of self-worth that can be accessed by effectively positioning oneself as a quasi-therapist.

Empathy not only emerged through micro-level interactions, but also at the broader level of the salon's social climate. There were moments during data collection when the portrayal of empathy was observed as assuming a collective form that powerfully altered the salon's social flow. This further demarcated the salon as a site primed for receiving and responding to revelations that can be highly sensitive. The power of emotions to envelope and unite individuals was evident when a client revealed distressing news about her daughter causing the whole salon to momentarily pause; surrounding clients ceased talking and background noise was muted as other stylists discarded their tools to congregate around the client. Though the emotions were not directly reproduced in a contagion like manner (Hill and Bradley, 2010), there was a degree of collective appropriation that placed salon occupants at the heart of any emotional episode experienced in the salon. Further cementing the emotional ties forged within the salon was the reciprocal exchange of personal detail as illustrated by the below field note:

> *'Ruby then tells all the clients about her mother's recent illness, "it was quite scary really cause she really wasn't herself, it was like she had Alzheimer's or something cause she really wasn't making any sense, but that's probably the sepsis she had". Presumably acknowledging Ruby's somewhat diminished demeanour invoked by*

her mother's recent health scare, the client then says "well keep your fingers

crossed for me", Ruby asks "oh are you going for your scan on Wednesday?", the

client confirms that she is and Ruby responds 'aye you'll be alright you're a tough

cookie you are!', the client responds "yeah I am!".'

Rather than the disclosure of personal detail being one-sided, the above field note

shows how stylists countered the anecdotal intimacies revealed by clients with their

own emotionally charged tales. Both the stylist and client appeared to offer an

empathetic reception for one another, a response that appeared somewhat genuine

given that 'individuals in a group are continuously influencing the emotions and

affective states of others' (Hill and Bradley, 2010: 56). The reciprocity of emotion was

bound within the contextual history of a stylist-client relationship. Compassion,

therefore, is not an essentialist trait, either being extended to a client or entirely absent.

The empathy extended to a client is, in fact dynamic, borne out of an ongoing relational

trajectory (Kanov et al, 2004). For example, when the client attended the salon shortly

after the death of her husband, Ruby shared this news with other clients, possibly in an

attempt to 'bind others into a community of lament, those bonded together quietly but

painfully as "knowers" of a tragedy' (Furman, 1997: 32):

'On her way out, Mrs B says: "see you next week Ruby, same time?", Ruby confirms

this. After she has left the salon, I hear Ruby say to her current client in a rather

hushed tone: "her husband died last week, she's been expecting it for some time".

The client responds sympathetically, and having met Mrs B on several occasions,

often hearing about her husband's declining health, I too find myself feeling deeply

sorry for her.'

The field note above shows the uniting of those present in the salon through a shared status as 'knowers' (Furman, 1997: 32). Those present were experientially drawn into a community centred upon the expression of collective sympathy; which for the stylists manifested as additional efforts to ensure the client's visit was comfortable. Along with divorce and separation, death is regarded as robbing an individual of an important source of emotional support and potentially their primary companion. In the client's appointment following on from her husband's death, stylists encouraged her to remain in the salon for as long as she pleases following the cessation of the actual appointment. The catharsis acquired from assembled companionship is commonly regarded as indispensable for those experiencing emotional isolation, especially when such isolation is compounded by a traumatic ordeal such as the death of a loved one (Weiss, 1973; Rosenbaum et al, 2007).

Empathy and sympathy were not the only emotions displayed by stylists, as while clients share difficult, personal details, they also shared positive, joyful experiences, which were received most commonly by communal celebration throughout the salon:

> *'After asking what the client would like done to her hair, Ryan is quick to initiate a more social topic of conversation, asking how the client has been lately. She responds positively, detailing several enjoyable family events: attending a wedding at a nice hotel, a relative getting accepted into the marine and her granddaughter passing her driving test. Ryan responds to each event in a positive, congratulatory manner.'*

As suggested by the above field note, stylists conveyed a situationally appropriate response as clients shared their emotional highs and lows. There was a sense in which the interest expressed by stylists in clients' lives constituted a philanthropic 'gift' that enhanced the quality of the overall service (Bolton, 2005). The display of such an attuned emotional facade is regarded as crucial in retaining clients due to the enduring link between the sense of companionship offered by employees and 'positive customer responses, including satisfaction and loyalty' (Rosenbaum, 2009: 58). On account of the high contact nature of hairdressing, relational warmth and fondness may extend beyond the stylist to include other salon occupants. This incites 'communal relationships' where 'people feel responsible for the other person's welfare' (Bove et al, 2009: 701). These affective and reciprocated bonds instigate the creation of a supportive community and speak to the broader socio-cultural functioning of the salon (Majors, 2001; Fine, 1979). Talk in the salon was however, interpreted as more than merely an instrumental way of upholding a sense of social community. In the following section of this chapter, I look to the further functionalities of talk and begin by detailing the enormity of talk often regarded as 'small'.

7.3: 'Talk for work" - the significance of small talk

A notable distinction emerged among the type of talk stylist and client engaged in; that which is related to the primary service objective of cutting and styling hair and that which is not (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a, 2007b; Stefani and Horlacher, 2018). Although talk that is unrelated to hair entails discussion of sensitive topics, it can also consist of peripheral conversation that frames the encounter through 'greeting, chatting, closing conversations and so on' (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018: 241). Typically perceived as 'small talk', superficial and frivolous topics such as 'family events, comical

stories, holidays and the weather' are discussed (McCarthy, 2000: 95-96). Small talk

emerged as crucial in the training context discussed in chapter 6. Here the scripts

distributed among students to assist them in their interactions featured the kind of

innocuous, inoffensive pleasantries typical of small talk. The pedagogical emphasis upon

small talk attests to such 'mundane talk' being essential for service (Stefani and

Horlacher, 2018: 223). The nature of the conversation blurs the previously

dichotomised notions of 'talk *at* work' and 'talk *as* work' (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a;

2007b). In seeking to conceptually disentangle these notions, the data presented speaks

to a type of 'talk *for* work'. Here conversation is regarded as necessary not only for the

immediacy of service but as a means of ensuring continual client retention:

> *'Steph's first client of the afternoon arrives and upon conversing for merely a*
>
> *couple of minutes, it transpires that this is a "pre-holiday appointment", to which*
>
> *Steph queries various details including when the client is due to leave and where*
>
> *she is going. The client reveals she leaves tomorrow, stating that prior to doing so*
>
> *she has a few last-minute errands to run. The two then discuss travelling, with a*
>
> *specific focus upon acquiring the necessary visa requirements to enter and exit a*
>
> *country safely, with Steph joking: "some countries will charge you 10 to get it then*
>
> *20 to get back out!". Conversation occasionally turns to the client's hair, which*
>
> *Steph is in the process of highlighting, the client reveals her intentions to go lighter,*
>
> *leading Steph to detail the technical process of how she could best acquire her*
>
> *desired colour. Steph insists that following her prescribed steps will yield "a better*
>
> *result with an overall lightness". The client then asks Steph about her holiday plans,*
>
> *for which Steph describes in detail. Conversation then turns to family, as Steph*
>
> *reveals that her sister is currently visiting from Corfu, prompting Steph to disclose*

the details of her family dynamics and the regularity with which she sees them. The two then reciprocally discuss the challenges associated with arranging family gatherings due to everyone's busy schedules. As Steph finishes putting the highlights in her hair, she asks whether the client would like a tea/coffee and if she would like some magazines to read. Upon returning sometime later (following the dye having been on the client's hair for some time), Steph enquires about how the client would like their hair cutting, in line with the specifications provided by the client, the two agree upon giving the hair a "little tidy up".'

The conversational topics discussed in the above field note were fairly typical of stylist-client encounters in the salon, often featuring several of the topics that McCarthy (2000) identified as constituting 'small talk'. Such conversational interludes are not deeply sensitive or personal, rather they are commonly perceived as superficial and irrelevant, existing purely to frame the necessary co-creational dialogue relating to the client's hair. Initial interpretation may even judge such conversation as simply the 'chatter and banter' that transpires within a third place as part of the non-discursive symbolic communication (Klapp, 1969: 273). However, interaction that may appear superficial and marginal actually plays a pivotal role in crafting the overall customer experience. The trivialities and pleasantries of small talk operate as 'a socially relevant undertaking' by cementing the salon's affective climate (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018: 241). Moreover, rational objectives motivate engagement in seemingly peripheral small talk, which rather than operating solely as a verbal filler, also serves the instrumental purpose of (re) securing cliental.

The idea that 'relational skills' are necessary for a career in hairdressing and that small talk represents a key fixture of the salon experience is by no means original (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018: 242; Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a; 2007b; Hanson, 2019). However, as mundane talk may be necessitated in order to maximise client retention, these interpersonal capacities become monetised as stylists are required to 'talk *for* work'. The exchange of trivial talk relating to frivolous topics of conversation crucially paves the way for future interactions, by allowing both stylist and client to subconsciously learn about one another in a manner that can be cumulatively built upon over the course of several encounters. The pecuniary and rapport-building purpose of small talk was perhaps most apparent during the rare occasions where there was a notable dearth in client attendance. As an observer, stylists appeared unsure of what to do, both physically in the absence of any 'bodies to work upon' but more so in the wake of clients to interact with, hence time became 'baggy' as the social milieu of the salon came to a temporary holt (Cohen, 2011: 197).

The use of humour

While hairdressing results in a tangible outcome (the client's hair) that can be evaluated to some extent, there is also value to be acquired through the provision of an emotionally engaging experience. Previously in this thesis, I touched upon the proliferation of the 'experience economy', which accounts for customers chasing an emotionally uplifting and elevating sense of fulfilment. This builds upon research concerned with consumption as a 'pursuit of fantasies, feelings and fun' (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982: 132). Stylists therefore endeavoured to construct a 'fun' atmosphere for clients notably through a 'charismatic presence' (Korkman, 2015: 205). For example, stylists greeted clients exuberantly, often personalising greetings with colloquial

nicknames. Humour was a device intuitively used by stylists to comically frame a range of topics, including those of a more serious nature such as the physiological experience of aging. Given the elderly status of several of the salon's major patrons, the physical deterioration induced by old age constituted their reality, yet many relished in discursively positioning their experiences through a humorous veil.

Attesting to the dynamic focus of this thesis, customers do not passively consume the humorous performances of stylists. Customers are instead drawn into this process, wherein they collectively relish and contribute to an affable climate. The humorous exchanges in the salon were suggested of an ease and comfort between stylist and client, as their dialogue became increasingly littered with colloquial slang and sarcastic commentary:

> *'Ruby begins putting dye onto the client's hair, to which the client comments "I hope this won't make my hair blue?', rather than offering instant reassurance that the outcome of the dye will not be blue, Ruby sarcastically questions 'oh did you not want blue hair? (before the client has adequate time to offer a response of sorts, Ruby reassures her otherwise) I'm joking man! I wouldn't do that to you!". The client laughs and responds "Good, I'm not an old lady, I don't want a blue rinse just yet!". Shortly after, another humorous exchange transpires as the client, reflecting upon the foils covering the majority of her scalp, observes "I look like a turkey with all these on!", Ruby jokingly remarks "Yep, you're all ready to go into the oven now!".'*

The exchange above is illustrative of the humorous dialogue between clients and stylists. One interpretation of Ruby's sarcastic response to the client is the potential invoking of anxiety at the prospect of the client's hair being turned blue. However, the tone and flippancy of Ruby's humour is well-received by the client, whose convivial response prolongs the joke. Stylists and clients also humorously conversed about their respective family members:

'The topic of Christmas comes up as Ruby reveals she's already started shopping for it, much to the shock of her client, though she justifies this early preparation on the basis that she has "too many kids". Ryan overhears this and jokes that she has 4 kids to buy for (in reality, Ruby has 3 children hence Ryan's comical inference that he is the fourth child), he jokes that although the "fourth child is the most demanding, he's also her favourite". Both Ruby's client and Ryan's client laugh along at the duo's humorous exchange. As Ruby previously found out her client is going on holiday soon, she jokes 'oh can I come on that holiday with you please? I've had enough of all my children and enough of my husband, they're all too annoying!', the client reasons "Oh Pol you don't mean that do you?", to which Ruby responds "oh I 100% do!", a response that makes them both laugh.'

Humorous exchanges involving the turbulence of family life, as illustrated above, were common in the salon. This particular dialogue frames the typical frustrations emanating from family life through a humorous guise. Subsequently, the harsh language of finding her family "too annoying" and having had "enough" of them is contextually located within an amicable exchange that semantically alters interpretation. As well as

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occurring directly between stylist and client, humour was also observed as a common feature of group conversations:

> 'Mrs M is then taken over to the salon chair where Steph asks her how she's doing. She replies simply "alright", to which Ryan interjects, seemingly attempting to life the mood: "well hopefully the sight of my face cheers you up and puts a spring in your step", Mrs M laughs and Steph jokes: "the site makes me feel a bit sick to be honest!". Steph also asks Mrs M if she's been to church this morning, and she confirms she has, to which Steph replies: "I love going to church but I haven't been there in ages". Mrs M describes church as her "little ritual" but follows up that she likes coming to the salon after to get a nice coffee. Steph says, "well I hope they don't start giving you coffee there or you might be wanting to start getting your hair cut there".'

The above field note reflects a collective sense of joviality in the salon, as the client relaxes with a coffee as part of her usual 'routine'. The targeted commentary toward the client's routinized behaviour and preferences speaks to a distinct type of service reflective of the client's preferences and experience in the salon. The small but significant rituals that become cemented through familiarity and regular attendance become a source of humour. The humour that transpires through established relational trajectories may also occur between stylists. This was apparent when salon owner Ryan comfortably interjected with a light-hearted quip to which Steph responds with a blunter response. Though the nature of Steph's response could be deemed in other occupational contexts as both undermining and potentially offensive, the relaxed and informal atmosphere of the salon is reaffirmed as both Ryan and the client laugh at

Steph's comment, interpreting it as nothing more than a playful response. Humour was also created through stylist's self-depreciating or semi-embarrassing admissions, which were willingly disclosed seemingly for the purpose of eliciting laughter from the client:

> *'Ruby complains to Mrs H about being too warm, Mrs H responds, "why don't you take you take your top off?" Ruby replies "I would do but I'm bare underneath, and you know I wouldn't want to excite everyone, I've got a lovely map of stretch marks all over my stomach" Mrs H agrees "oh yeah I remember all that with mine", Ruby comments "kids aye, they ruin your body then they take all your money!".'*

In the above field note Ruby makes jokes based on her physical appearance. This includes exposing her lack of commitment to the basic feminine beauty practice of hair removal, an admission that poses contrast to her being employed in an industry premised upon aesthetic habits and enhancements. Moreover, such self-depreciating humour is evident also in the latter extract, where Ruby jokes about her appearance after having children, a typically sensitive topic that she comfortably shared with a female client. These instances of self-depreciating humour can be interpreted as 'collective efforts of resistance', as the communal merriment offsets feelings of inadequacy engendered by unrealistic beauty standards (Furman, 2000). Humour was also invoked through interaction with the material landscape of the salon, including artefacts such as the radio:

> *'From my first few days in the salon, the social significance of the radio was apparent. It was constantly on, thereby serving as a permanent tool through which stylists could engender small talk, deep conversation and fun with their clients.*

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News reports and weather forecasts often fuelled small talk type discussions

between stylist and client, potentially paving the way for further conversation.

Moreover, occasionally lengthier reports detailing more serious issues would incite

subsequent debate between client and stylist in which variable opinions were

exchanged. Finally, the most prominent usage of the radio is to assist in the

creation of a fun and informal atmosphere in which clients feel comfortable

participating in. Hence, it was common for stylists to encourage their clients to play

along with the daily pop music quiz. On one occasion, Ryan excitedly encouraged

his client to play along, declaring "right Missy M, you're on my team, join in

whenever you know an answer!". Moreover, on several occasions I myself was

encouraged to participate and even experienced a sense of elation upon getting an

answer correct, an act that was always received by collective celebration by the

stylists.'

The field note above illustrates how the use of the salon radio is deeply significant in

creating the relaxed, informal setting that clients feel comfortable participating in. The

humour engendered by salon artefacts such as the radio and by other stylists cemented

clients' sense of belonging to the social milieu. Through the diffusion of 'informal

cultural products' such as 'jokes, slang or superstitions', clients were drawn into the

comical dialogue that operates as the preserve of those that are co-present in the salon

(Fine, 1979: 734). This does contrast somewhat with the insights presented in chapter

6. Rather than endorsing the use of humour in interactions, students were instructed to

suppress comical remarks as part of a clearly defined perceptual boundary that

distinguishes the client from a friend. The observed use of humour in the salon, is

therefore the likely by-product of client relations that are well-developed and an attuned ability to use humour appropriately.

The ongoing development of stylist-client relational trajectories:

As I have alluded to throughout this thesis, hairdressing was chosen as an empirical setting on account of the recurrent contact it allows between stylist and customer. In re-encountering one another at regular or more sporadic intervals, relations can evolve into 'commercial friendships' that look and feel very much like real friendships with the potential to span across decades (Price and Arnould, 1995; Cohen, 2010). The development of enduring relations was often signalled by a shift away from task-orientated talk focused on client's hair. The recurrent contact allowed stylists to grow highly familiar with the unique materiality and texture of each client's hair through ongoing tactile engagement. Regularly touching and handling of clients' hair seemingly embedded rhythmic modes of practice that were deeply ingrained. Stylists knew how the hair strands would lie following a cut, how they would take to a new set of highlights or how they would tightly curl following a fresh perm. More importantly, stylists had developed an insight into the clients' relationship to their hair. Time allowed stylists to learn how certain customers wanted their hair cut, the exact shade of brown they wanted it dyed or how close of a shave they desired. These slight preferences could not be learned instantly upon the first encounter but were cumulatively built up over several meetings as part of ongoing process of co-creating the client's ideal image.

Within the salon this meant that at times, very little conversation between stylist and client actually centred upon hair. This occurred in instances where there was a well-

developed relational trajectory between the client and stylist. The prior encounters that comprised this trajectory informed the stylist's course of action, leaving little need for hair-related dialogue in the present interaction. In its place was the reciprocal exchange of personal stories and anecdotes that cumulatively built up over the course of several interactions, qualifying the stylists as 'keeper of these stories' (Ward et al, 2016: 1294). The conversations that transpired appeared as akin to that between two friends due to the absence of any obvious signs suggestive to the underlying economic asymmetry of the exchange (Price and Arnould, 1999):

> *'Despite the fact that Steph doesn't normally do Mrs B's hair (Mrs B is usually in with Ruby, whom works on a different day to Steph), Steph enquires "you used to be a Wednesday client didn't you? And Susie did your hair?", a question indicating longitudinal, tacit knowledge pertaining to the client's attendance at the salon. Mrs B confesses she can't recall what day she used to attend the salon, but says she recalls Susie: "yes I remember her, she used to have a 7-year-old boy didn't she? Gosh he must be about 27 now!" Steph confirms this "yes he's certainly not far off that!".'*

> *'Upon sitting down for her appointment with Ruby, following her pre-appointment cigarette, Mrs B is quick to tell Ruby about her new kitchen plans, repeating much of the detail regarding different quotes that she had previously shared with me last week. Ruby responds in a manner that indicates prior knowledge about Mrs B's renovation plans and responds with a degree of interest when Mrs B reaches into her bag and pulls out what looks to be a torn catalogue page. It transpires that it is an image of the kitchen she is planning to get, and she shows it to Ruby, seemingly*

eager to get her opinion on it. Ruby comments that it's lovely, specifically noting

the extra storage space. At this point it seems apparent that Ruby is keen to tend to

another client, whom is ready and waiting in a salon chair. Mrs B however,

seemingly attempts to further their conversation, pulling out a photo album out of

her bag: "I've brought that scrapbook of photos I was telling you about, do you

want to see it now?" Rather awkwardly, Ruby politely declines, presumably on

account of her busy schedule, though she assures Mrs B that she'll see it later.'

The encounters conveyed in the above field notes speak to the lengthy relational

trajectories that persist in the salon. These were indicated by the degree of personal

tacit knowledge demonstrated by each party. Rather than having to develop an

appropriate interactional style based upon the process of trial and error (Bettencourt

and Guinner, 1996), the stylist had the luxury of a potentially far-reaching relational

trajectory from which they could draw experiential knowledge to inform the

interaction. By retaining the biographic and personal details of their clients, stylists

were able to re-embed themselves within the client's social landscape, demonstrating

their longstanding attachment and investment in the client's world (Ward et al, 2016).

This contrasts to the students discussed in chapter 6, who in the early days of

embarking upon their training did not have the luxury of referring back to prior client

encounters as a way of steering the forthcoming exchange. Where these interactions in

the salon were well-informed and part of an enduring sequence of exchanges with

familiar clients, interactions in the training context were underpinned by haphazard

guesswork as students worked upon clients who were essentially, complete strangers.

This speaks to the cumulative assemblage of personal detail, as 'topical development stretches over several turns of talk' (Stefani and Horlacher, 2019: 222). Each encounter provided ample opportunity to 'increase their acquaintance and eventually establish a long-term commercial friendship' (Seger-Guttmann and Melder-Liraz, 2018: 103). Both parties therefore became well versed in the client's preferred 'style' of service, whether that be an encounter interspersed with enthusiasm and exuberance or one that is more muted and calmer. The extracts above also reflect the social motivation for attending the salon that parallels the more objective reasoning of getting a haircut. The relational pull to the salon is especially strong where social relations are well-established over several years of attendance. The significance of these social ties was evident in the concern and inquisition that clients displayed in the event of a stylist's absence:

> *'While having her hair washed by Ellie, the salon's apprentice, Mrs M enquires about Ellie's absence the previous week. Ellie explains that her sister experienced a sudden illness and she subsequently needed to look after her sister's children for her. Similarly, while having her hair cut by Ryan, she then asks about the whereabouts of Ruby and of Steph. Ryan notes that Ruby is taking a days holiday and Steph only works certain days, reasoning that having worked for him for so long, she's free to choose what days to work.'*

Though the field note above illustrates the close relations established with the whole salon were apparent, for certain clients their sense of attachment was stronger toward particular stylists:

'Typically, Mrs B has her appointments with Ruby, however due to Ruby's absence, today she is in with Steph. Due to this irregularity, Mrs B checks with Ellie beforehand whether she has time for a cigarette, Ellie reassures her that she does. Mrs B asks where Ruby is, Ellie replies: 'well I think her parents are on holiday this week so she's got nobody to look after the little on, she's not in as normal next week either, I know she's coming in early on Thursday just to do Janet's colour, she asked us if I'd watch the little one for her while she does and I said aye course I will'. In a more hushed tone, Mrs B says "Just I don't really like her as much as Ruby [referring to Steph the other stylist]", Ellie responds empathically "Aye I know, she's only come in today to do Lauren's colour or she wouldn't be in at all, if you want Ruby to do your hair next week then book in for early Thursday and she'll squeeze you in". Overhearing Mrs B's preference for Ruby and slight dislike of Steph admittedly made me feel uncomfortable, however Ellie's response was, to my surprise, sympathetic with Mrs B as she resolved to ensure Mrs B's next appointment would be with Ruby.'

The field note shows how despite Mrs B expressing a rather obvious and somewhat unexplained dislike for a particular stylist and a preference for Ruby, Ellie registers this and even reassures Mrs B that her next appointment will be with Ruby. This speaks to the potential of seemingly superficial and innocuous 'talk-for-walk' amounting to formidable social ties toward particular individuals. The long-lasting relations that emerge have the potential to elevate a stylist-client relationship and lift it beyond the situated confines of the salon. Exemplifying this was Ruby, who revealed she now 'visits' an elderly client that previously attended the salon:

'It's more of a friend basis once you really get to know them. Like I have one lady I go and see her every week because she can't come in now. I've sort of adopted her, she's my grandma, you do get very attached to them.' (Ruby, stylist)

Ruby acknowledged that the trajectory of her relationship with particular clients had the potential to develop into a friendship. Traits deemed as indicative of an authentic friendship include 'reciprocal displays of affection, closeness, social support, mutual commitment and loyalty' (Seger-Guttmann and Melder-Liraz, 2018: 103). On account of such a well-developed relational narrative, Ruby revealed that she visits the client, due to her being unable to attend the salon. In further indicating the depth of the bond fostered with the client, Ruby draws upon a familial type lexicon, invoked through the use of 'adopted', 'attached' and the metaphorical casting of the client as her 'grandma'. The language used to conceptualise her relation to the client is suggestive of profound social ties, as is the act of 'visiting' the client beyond the salon, an activity characterised by less formalised and unclear pecuniary worth. The use of familial language to frame a client relationship encapsulates the 'blurring' emanating from prolonged episodic contact that gradually transforms the dyad from one composed of 'customer-service agent' to that of 'person-person' (Gutek, 1995; Ashforth et al, 2008; Seger-Guttmann and Melder-Liraz, 2018). In a sense, this reflect the personal/professional blurring experienced by students as discussed in chapter 6. Similar to Ruby framing her relationship with the client through language that connotes a family connection, students struggled to demarcate client interactions as wholly professional and avoid talk suggestive of a more personal relationship.

Whether it is emotive language denoting a familial connection among experienced stylists or colloquial slip ups by students, a more personal perception of the stylist-client relationship, implies relational equality. This disregards the commercial underpinning of the relationship, which exists as an economic exchange. Any friendship that develops harbours economic benefits for the service worker, as these types of relations are equated with enhanced satisfaction and client retention (Lin and Hsieh, 2011; Korkman, 2015; Seger-Gutterman and Melder-Liraz, 2018). The inescapably commercial origins of the relationship were apparent through tipping, an act which suggests satisfaction and reinforces the economic arrangement between the two parties:

> *'After eventually leaving the salon, Margaret comes back in, claiming to have forgotten to give Ruby something. At this point Ruby is in the back, presumably getting her bag together ready to leave, so Margaret discreetly gives Ellie two 50p pieces, saying "give the other one to Ruby will you?", Ellie confirms she will and says goodbye'.*

In the context of hairdressing, the economic significance of tipping in a manner such as Margaret, is relatively minimal and only slightly supplements a stylist's wage (Cohen, 2010). Tipping does, however, demonstrate satisfaction and a client's intent to return, thereby securing a regular source of revenue. Tipping is also highly selective, being that it was not offered to all staff members. As a customer driven, discretionary offering, tipping speaks to a relational and personal fondness toward a particular individual/s. Tips were therefore, always received gratefully by the stylists to which they were awarded. In subverting the 'tipping' relationship, stylists did occasionally act in ways

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that demonstrated a comparable sense of appreciation intended for a particular customer.

The extract below illustrates the treatment offered to Mrs D. As an elderly lady, Mrs D was routinely offered assistance in matters existing beyond the salon. This included Ryan offering to review her car's instruction manual to help resolve an issue she had been experiencing. What's more, Ryan was then willing to drive her car for her in order to navigate out of a tricky parking spot:

> '*Later, when she sits down with Ryan I overhear her repeating all her problems and complaints to him, beginning firstly with the issues relating to her car. In response, Ryan suggests she look at the cars instruction manual, though Mrs D quickly dismisses this suggestion on the basis that she is unable to understand the manual's contents. Ryan however, offers to have a look over it for her and even fetch it out her car, though she again declines, on the basis that she doesn't have the manual with her [...] Before leaving, Mrs D glances out the window, and another client inquires whether she requires her to move her car out of the way. However, Mrs D states, "no thanks, I'm just waiting for Ryan get me out". She then catches Ryan's attention and asks, "would you mind? [Whilst also waving her car keys at him]. Ryan does not seem surprised by her request and happily obliges, excusing himself with his current client to reverse Mrs D's car out of her space.'*

Although the requests revealed in the above field note are unrelated to matters concerning the client's hair, Ryan displayed no apparent surprise and willingly appeased the client's request to move her car. Such seemingly ritualised 'acts of

deference and demeanour' are reiterative of the fact that a client-stylist relational trajectory may be more typical of social rather than economic connection (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005: 697). Ryan's efforts to help the client could derive from feelings of genuine empathy. In a sense, authentic compassion seems to be the only explanation for acts that otherwise defy the objective stance privileged by management discourses that discourages catering to 'task-irrelevant' needs presented by clients (Ashforth et al, 2008). The pecuniary nature of Ryan and Mrs D's relationship was however, reinforced by the situational context of their socialisation. Ryan may have offered to drive her car to relieve Mrs D of a potential parking mishap; however, he did not then drive her all the way home. Moreover, while there was a willingness to resolve issues with Mrs D's car by reviewing the instruction manual, this assistance was bound within the salon and did not transpire beyond it. Essentially, there was nothing to suggest that these acts that conveyed fondness, likeability and friendship amounted to relations that extended further than the confines of the salon.

Where extant research has illustrated the potential for 'service relationships' or a 'commercial friendship' (Price and Arnould, 1999), relations borne out of the salon do not operate under the conditions of an authentic friendship. When perceptually dethatched from its affective context, a hair appointment persists 'under a commercial contract that reduces the interaction to the bare exchange of a fee for a service provided' (Korkman, 2015; 211). There is also the possibility that the perception of the relationship that the client harbours differs to that of the stylist, whose emotional engagement forms part of an offering provided to all clients as part of the service. Research has previously illustrated how the emotional and receptive fronts assumed by stylists comprise a commodified display intended to ensure client retention (Gimlin,

1996). Moreover, the research discussed in chapter 3 spoke of time being among the most important commodity purchased in the salon (Black, 2002; Hanson, 2019).

Where customers yearn for stylist's 'time' to gossip with them, to laugh with them or to confide in them, this is given as part of the service that the customer is purchasing. Occasionally, observations revealed the scarcity of time in the salon. Reflecting the fact that time is a finite commodity that stylists can only give so much of, a client brought in photo albums for the stylist to peruse threw. The stylist politely dismissed the opportunity to sit down with the client and look through these albums, instead moving onto her next awaiting customer. Essentially, where the conversation of an appointment may linger with a client right up until their next appointment, for the stylist it is fleeting and instantly forgettable as they move onto their next client. This is of course, a rather cynical and damming assessment of the stylist. A more forgiving interpretation suggests that stylists unintentionally forget certain details of their last encounter with a client, being that their day consists of an intense overload of client interactions that are irreducible yet similar.

Breaching normative display rules through the discussion of taboo topics:

So far, I have illustrated the social significance of seemingly innocuous small talk, which economically functions as a way of strengthening clients' relational ties to the salon and ensuring reattendance. As I previously discussed, the enduring relations that span decades creates room for talk that assists and elevates clients in various ways. The data presented already has shown how interaction in the salon defies normative organisational display rules that stipulate professionalism, emotional suppression and task-orientated talk. In furthering such defiance, I look now more uncomfortable

instances of talk. Here the inoffensive pleasantries of small talk were supplanted by divisive opinions relating to politics, religion and world affairs. This contrasts with typical depictions of how employees engage in emotional labour whereby there is conformation with normative display rules (Ashforth and Tomuik, 2000). Moreover, chapter 6 discussed how training providers vehemently prohibited the discussion of taboo topics that could disrupt, offend or upset the customer. However, as illustrated by the extract below, conversations veered into sensitive territory based on race, ethnicity and culture:

> *'The conversation then veers into a more controversial realm, beginning firstly with the topic of Turkish barbers. Mrs M comments upon the general proliferation of hairdressers on the high street, noting the specific increase in the presence of Turkish barbers, Ryan responds by stating that they embellish the service due to its hefty price tag for something that is essentially, "just a shave". Ryan then jokes about the tendency of Turkish barbers avoid paying their taxes: "conveniently they seem to forget how to speak English when the taxman comes knocking". The conversation then shifts to an arguably more controversial topic: the burka. Both Ryan and Mrs M concur that it is the extremist religious connotation that have stigmatised what was once a relatively unproblematic fashion garment. To further express the latter point, Ryan states that when his mother passed away, she left a whole draw of headscarves, several of which Ryan retained, joking that he keeps them in his glove box in case any female passengers wish to protect their hair when the car roof is put down.'*

Seemingly, the discussion of divisive topics in the above field, which includes gender/racial stereotypes, politics and religion, is discouraged in most service contexts (Sharma and Black, 2001; Hanson, 2019). However, the extract above conveys an interaction that is carefully nuanced to suit the particularities of a client. This speaks to the interactional and performative variation required by stylists, who must personalise every facet of their demeanour to suit each individual (Mann, 1997; Tseëlon, 1992) as 'each customer "style" implies a different employee "style"' (Bettencourt and Guinner, 1996: 4). Subsequently, there was no apparent shock or discomfort observed in the client's demeanour when the stylist disclosed his opinion on the legitimacy of Turkish barbers and the wearing of the burka. Rather, the client responded in an agreeable manner indicating an established relational trajectory that allows the stylist to broach taboo topics without fear of offense. It is worth noting that overhearing conversations of such a potentially taboo and offensive nature was not a regular occurrence in the salon. This is most likely due to normative occupational display rules which posit that negative statements premised upon subjective evaluation ought to be avoided. Most conversations centred upon non-offensive, generic topics such as weather or geography. Stylist's topics of conversation are therefore selective, the more controversial of which were reserved for a familiar recipient with whom there was a well-established relational trajectory.

A well-developed relational trajectory allowed stylists a greater degree of communicative leniency. Not only were they able to discuss more divisive topics that are usually prohibited in a service context, they are also able to express felt emotion without fear of offending the client. This contrasts with the insights discussed in chapter 6 where undeveloped client relations required the suppression of visceral emotion.

However, an established relational trajectory supported a more personal front, comprised of genuine emotion. Moreover, in the pursuit for an authentic customer experience, the expression of visceral emotion and the sharing of divisive opinions may intensify the relational pull to the salon as a site where 'real' relationships are formed (Debenedetti et al, 2013). Attesting to this, Bauman (2001) hinted at the forgiving and tolerant conversational terrain that comes with the existence of a community, where even quarrels are idealistically depicted as 'friendly quarrels' that pose no threat to the client's service experience.

An additional topic discussed was that of health, with a specific focus upon the realities of living with the declining health of an aging body. Old age is typically conditioned as an unwelcome stage of life on account of its association with 'bodily disease and decay, physical incompetence and bodily betrayal' (Howson, 2013: 191). For the elderly women who regularly patronized the salon aging represents a sensitive and potentially isolating process. Here older women are reduced to a paradoxical existence centred upon both invisibility but also hyper visibility, where their aged body is all that is seen by society (Furman, 2000). Despite societal norms qualifying ill health as a shameful, taboo topic, in the salon clients openly disclosed their physiological concerns and discussed their lived experiences in an aging body (Furman, 1997). Linguist Deborah Tannen (1990) identified the gendered tendency to discuss poor health as 'trouble/illness talk'; an intimate topic intended to create relationships with others through the revealing of such stigmatizing physical vulnerabilities. The sharing of illness related details appeared so ingrained for particular customers, that I found myself the unassuming recipient of it:

'Mrs B proceeds to discuss various personal topics with me. For example, as I ask how she is, simply in order to appear courteous, and rather than offering the vague, monosyllabic answer I had anticipated, she details the pain she is suffering in her legs which despite taking morphine for still bothers her: "really I take it, but I'm only good for about an hour and a half then the pain starts again".'

The above field note illustrates the willingness of particular clients to divulge and share intimate personal details in the situated context of the salon. This sharing was often reciprocated, as stylists responded to client's 'trouble/illness talk' (Tannen, 1990) by disclosing their own subjective experiences of deficient physiology. This 'reciprocal self-disclosure' represents 'an important factor in friendship formation' distinguishing it from an encounter with an acquaintance (Price and Arnould, 1999: 38):

'"It's this damn cold Mrs M, I thought I was over it but then I went and had a couple of pints and now I feel awful again, Ellie caught this cold you know and in two days she was over it, 4 weeks later and still nothing, I think they call that youth Mrs M, I swear when I turned 40 I aged about 7 years in one night", Mrs M laughs at this comment and recalls her own experiences aging: "well that was like me, you couldn't have caught me when I was walking", Ryan replies "Aye I remember you Mrs M, you were in your 70s and you used to walk all the way up here with all your shopping bags, I used to say why are you bothering? You've got a car!", Ryan shares this with Ellie, who expresses her surprise, Ryan then turns back to Mrs M and says "aye she was a real fit one". Ryan and Mrs D then discuss physical problems they've both been experiencing lately. Mrs D specifically talks again about the problems in her legs. Ryan offers a somewhat constructive suggestion based upon a recent

television show: "I don't know if you've been watching this programme on TV

recently, called something like Primary School for the Elderly, anyway some of the

older people on that could barely walk at first then since spending time with the

young kids they're up and about, it's that old saying, use it or you'll lose it!" Mrs D

replies "well yes, you know my mantra is always try and do a little walking", Ryan

responds: "yes make it part of your routine, put your warm shoes and socks on and

just go for walk around your garden, you know you're safe there if you need to sit

down suddenly or something, you can build yourself up though gradually and just

do a little more each time."'

The field note illustrates the stylist's willingness to impart advice that although personalised to the client, is entirely unrelated to their hair. Based upon personal knowledge about the client, including a brief understanding of their physiological health, Ryan offers advice intended to enhance the client's physical health. This advice is framed as deeply personal and delivered under the guise of genuine concern for the client's well-being. The advice is posed as being a safe and comfortable means of assuaging the client's ailments. The intimate discussion of physical ailments associated with aging reflects the co-conditioning of the salon and the relations within it as distinct from a typical commercial setting. These topics that would normally be prohibited, shunned or dismissed, were instead tolerated as part of an open and familiar dialogue that alleviated any awkwardness or discomfort that would normally ensue.

7.4: Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I sought to provide a rich representation of the customers' experience. Intending to fill the void that lingers within sociological research regarding

the customers' role during the encounter, this chapter elucidates the customer's ability to (re) shape surrounding materiality to better accommodate their desires (Gilly and Griffiths, 2012; Best and Hindmarsh, 2019). This is most vividly illustrated through vignettes that show customers movement around the salon to be unbounded and fluid. The way each client navigated the salon emerged as part of a co-creational dynamic that involved the stylist/s. Although customers exhibit spatial confidence, it is crucial to retain a dynamic analysis that acknowledges their movement as being 'processual in nature' emerging from the gradual development of a shared and constantly evolving service definition (Grove et al, 1992: 107). The customer's experience becomes relationally entwined with the stylist, instigating an enduring trajectory that spans back to prior encounters and is informed by those to come.

The insights presented also speak to the functioning of talk within the salon, which emerged as highly purposeful by symbolically creating fertile ground for the development of a broader community. Part of this derived from the inclusivity constructed through 'talking, confiding, joking and cooperating', all of which reaffirmed feelings of 'belonging and by inference, feelings of solidarity' (Hill and Bradley, 2010: 53). This builds upon the research into commercial friendships (Price and Arnould, 1999) and third places (Oldenburg, 1989; Jeffres et al, 2009) discussed previously in this thesis. These insights also speak to the relational abilities of stylists and how they function both at the micro-level of client interaction and the broader level of upholding an affective climate. Extant research on emotional labour discussed earlier in this thesis conceived of how the instrumental and prescribed performances among service workers function to mould the emotions of others. The data I presented here however, reflects efforts to construct an enveloping climate that allows for a more nuanced and

authentic emotional display. This amounts to an 'idioculture' that is distinct to the salon. This 'idioculture' is created through meaningful interaction that is underpinned by 'knowledge, beliefs and behaviours and customs' (Fine, 1979: 734) that are shared amongst those who occupy the space and have forged enduring relations to others. The outcome is talk that is highly situational, whether it be 'small' or taboo, it is contextually embedded within an ever-developing stylist-client trajectory.

In conceptually unpacking this 'idioculture', the following chapter will look further into the realities of working in a salon. A significant part of this concerns the stylists' work being inscribed upon the clients' bodies. In a sense, clients' bodies become canvases for stylists' interweaving of relational, technical and embodied attributes. Drawing upon the spatial practices and functionality of salon talk discussed in this chapter, the following chapter looks to the technical practice of doing hair to illustrate the added complexities that come with bodywork. Crucially, these insights are interpreted through a dynamic analysis that considers the customer's involvement in co-creating the service outcome, which becomes inscribed upon their body. Data from both the pedagogical context of training and the affective social climate of the salon will be drawn upon to locate the technical craft of bodywork within the broader experience of the service encounter.

Chapter 8: The dynamic shaping of embodiment and aesthetics

The following chapter delves furthers the insights provided by the data discussed in chapters 6 and 7. Drawing upon data obtained in both the salon and the training context, chapter 8 situates empirical insights in relation to the corporeal particularities of working upon customers' bodies. In following the processual trajectory of the service encounter, chapter 8 considers the aesthetic rooting of the encounter and conceptually unpacks the embodied, rhythmic craft of 'doing' hair. In line with the aim of the thesis, these insights are framed through the stylist-client relational dyad. Therefore, as well as analysing the everyday crafting practice of stylists, chapter 8 also considers the experiences of customers whose bodies temporarily become canvases that become inscribed with the encounter that ensues.

I regard the process of crafting client's hair as one that is co-created. As alluded to throughout chapters 2 and 3, co-creation requires the mobilization of emotional and affective capacities. I will therefore begin by discussing the significance of emotion, illustrating the importance of stylists' relational abilities in drawing out and eliciting sufficient customer input. I then touch upon the fragility of co-creation, showing how a lack of customer engagement requires careful management. Following this, I dynamically focus upon the experience of working upon a customer's body and being worked upon as a canvas of sorts. In attesting to the cultural importance of hair, I will then discuss how hair is vividly framed through a personifying lexicon. Such language implies that the management of hair is a skilled process, centred upon re-establishing control over a vivacious, ever-changing entity. Finally, I will look to the significance of organisational aesthetics. This will include a consideration of the material landscape of

the salon as well as the embodied attributes of stylists. Crucially, these are regarded as dynamically entwined with customers' perception and experiences.

8.1: An emotionally supportive environment to co-create

In the context of hair and beauty, the customer's modified appearance represents 'an endpoint of the [...] process' (Ward et al, 2016; 1288). However, there is much that happens prior to reaching this endpoint. The social premium attributed to hair and appearance warrants the creation of relational conditions that allow for the collaborative effort to 'make them [clients] appear socially virtuous' (Wisely and Fine, 1997: 182). In discussing how to create these conditions, Phoebe drew from her own experience to juxtapose salons that operate an attentive and engaging style of service that encourages co-creation to those that marginalise the customer's involvement.

> *"Can you imagine if you went into a salon and they just went 'come on then let's sit down', you just don't do that. I've been into a salon before and it was new, I hadn't been there before so I was quite nervous, I was a bit scared, I wanted a total change. So I walked in, they got us a coffee, it was a lovely coffee, nice cafeteria thing, had a biscuit, then he shook my hand and said 'hi I'm such and such, what can I do for you today? Wrote everything down, they asked **exactly** what I wanted doing'. So I thought was excellent customer service" (Phoebe, training provider)*

Phoebe suggests that upon entering an unfamiliar salon for the first time, customers are likely to do so with some degree of trepidation. This was echoed by stylist Anna: "especially like if they're new clients and you're friendly and that with them, its makes them feel a lot more at ease cause some people coming to the hairdressers for the first

time they hate it". These anxieties could be due to the impending allocation of trust upon an unknown individual tasked with altering their appearance, which as an extension of identity harbours a great deal of socio-cultural importance (Sheane, 2011; Bax, 2012; McFarquhar and Lowis, 2000; Eayrs, 1993). A way of minimizing client anxiety concerned eliciting and being highly receptive to the details offered by clients. Phoebe's emphasis upon a stylist asking "exactly" what she wanted and writing "everything down" in relation to her request illustrated the importance of a service premised upon collaboration and customer engagement. Probing further to clarify detail and recording answers also created a tangible record of the client's preferences, treatment history and hair condition. This acted as a referential anchor to direct and inform future encounters. Quashing client nerves therefore represented a temporal process, underpinned by the economic incentive to ensure they re-attend. Beyond the 'initial sizing up of the other person' that foregrounds all encounters (Wisely and Fine, 1997: 170), the first encounter initiates a potentially enduring, episodic trajectory of attendance. The direction and development of this trajectory is informed by the customer's input during the initial appointment. Consistently questioning and clarifying whether the client is satisfied was an embedded process, integrated as running consistently throughout the encounter:

> *"Yeah I think after you've done it, you're always asking them like if it was ok or if they like their hair because I know like every time I've shampooed I always asks like is it alright? Like you keep checking the temperature of the water and stuff and you do it with the hair dryers as well […] like just constantly making sure they're happy with how it's going" (Phoebe, training provider)*

Concurrent with the application of technical skills, Phoebe speaks to a need to remain engaged with the customer. Partly, this involved ensuring customer comfort, particularly in relation to the temperature of water and hair dryers. The customer's experience could be significantly hampered should they be surprised by an unpleasantly cold or scalding hot sensation. Any directive or prescriptive input from clients required careful interpretation and a considered response. For newer clients in particular, it was important to contextualise any conversational reticence against a backdrop of initial anxiety. Efforts to establish an open platform for dialogue pertaining to hair and other topics, were therefore multifaceted as apparent in the field note extract from the salon:

> 'Ruby is booked in with a young woman, who based upon the questions asked by Ruby, appears new to the salon. Ruby firstly asks what exactly she would like doing (while this question is not reserved solely for new clients, regular clients usually draw upon prior visits to illustrate their desired specifications which the stylist is usually well versed in). Hence, the client shows Ruby an image of her phone of what she would like her hair to look like, being unable to effectively articulate her preferences herself. Ruby responds positively to the image, and the client adds an additional detail: "I'm happy to go quite short with it, I've got a wedding next August so plenty of time for it to grow out a bit, and anyway, I wear my hair under a cap most of the time", Ruby laughs at the client's comment and asks how she normally parts her hair to which the client jokingly replies "under a cap!" Ruby laughs and asserts "well we'll just part it in the middle then". I notice that Ruby is cutting a substantial amount of hair off, however presumably this is due both to the image shown and the verbal confirmation provided by the client of her desire to go

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shorter. Throughout the appointment, Ruby asks a range of questions about the

client's personal life and their conversation focuses largely upon the client's job at a

dog shelter. At the end of her appointment, Ruby uses the mirror to show the client

the back of her head, allowing her to view her hair fully from the back. Ruby

clarifies if she's happy with it and the client confirms she is.'

In order to encourage client participation, stylists must create an interactional climate that welcomes their input (Payne et al, 2009), such as that created by Ruby in the above field note. Ruby's instant questioning of the client is, for example, suggestive of an attempt to engage the client and establish the 'purposeful dialogue' necessary for co-creation (Buonincontri et al, 2017: 265). This dialogue is 'purposeful' in that it is task-orientated with a focus upon co-producing a satisfactory tangible output (Hanson, 2019; Garzaniti et al, 2011). It also functions in a relational capacity by allowing the stylist to discursively position themselves as a 'friend' through the escalating disclosure of intimate detail (Gimlin, 1996; O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Guerrier and Abid, 2003). This reflects the notion of 'talk-for-work' discussed in chapter 7, where even the most superficial and inconsequential chatter nurtures the development of burgeoning relational ties. Overall, Ruby's questioning of the client, as well as Phoebe's judgment of her own experience as a client, both suggest an assumption of some level of client involvement. This depiction of the customer and the impetus of securing some form of involvement from them contrasts with extant research, where organisations accept the customer as a passive and/or inactive presence.

Hairdressing is of course, a distinct organisational context, where customer involvement is arguably of greater importance being that the embodied output of the

stylist's work manifests upon their body. During the encounter clients temporarily

relinquish aesthetic control; their input reduced to that of verbal direction. Put simply,

customers can not take the scissors from the stylist and begin cutting their own hair. By

entering the salon and sitting in the chair, the customer symbolically transfers control

of their appearance to another, who crafts a new 'face' using various tools. Data from

both the training context and the salon showed that discerning how exactly the

customer would like this new 'face' to look often occurred initially through the

consultation process that preceded the actual appointment:

> *"So if we're talking about consultation process, more important is finding out more*
>
> *about personal things, so listening to information that's quite personal, building a*
>
> *rapport with someone without crossing too many boundaries, so that would be*
>
> *through consultation and it would be doing a consultation one to one and finding*
>
> *out the very best ways of getting that information out of that person" (Colette,*
>
> *training provider).*

The purpose of the consultation is conceived of as twofold. Stylists' efforts dynamically

worked to elicit detail informing the forthcoming aesthetic change and to enable the

flourishing of a relationship through the tentative development of a rapport. More

specifically in the context of hairdressing the consultation necessitates 'diagnostic effort

to assess a client's hair type, colour, texture and chemical history' (Hanson, 2019: 150;

Eayrs, 1993). This technical detail is, however, insufficient, as there is a need to embed

such information within a client's personal backdrop in order to holistically determine

the feasibility and suitability of a client's desired hairstyle. Eliciting the necessary

technical and personal detail cannot be reduced to a homogenised performance. Rather,

it is a nuanced process in which subtle embodied cues accumulate, enabling stylists to find out "the very best ways of getting that information out of that person". The consultation process therefore emerged as an on-going interactional accomplishment consisting largely of constant questioning pertaining to a client's specifications:

> *"As soon as they come in you sit them down and have a look at their hair, ask them if they want a change, if they want the same as last time, how their hairs been, you ask loads of questions before you even start doing their hair so from the minute they come in you sit them down first without even putting their colour on and you consultate them, get them a coffee, make sure they're comfortable, some of them even interact with other clients in that salon so they'll start chatting. You consultate them beforehand about their hair, so like I would be gobsmacked if I went to a salon and they just started doing my hair without even asking what I wanted. If they just assumed I wanted the same as last time, you always ask, I mean if you wanted something different and your hairdresser just put the same colour on as last time, you'd be like 'well I wanted something different'. So you've always got to communicate with your client." (Phoebe, training provider)*

The depiction of the consultation as continuous is affirmed by supplementing of the noun 'consultation' for the verb 'consultate', suggesting the process represents an on-going endeavour. The consultation is therefore interwoven throughout the entire encounter. It also projects backward, seeking to establish a historical trajectory of previous appointments and treatments by piecing together a fragmentary narrative. Questions pertaining to the past such as, what they have had done before and whether they were happy with it, are crucial in informing the specifications of the forthcoming

appointment. It is not just the nature of any changes that require clarification and further questioning, even the act of simply performing the 'status quo', where the client is given the same cut and colour as before is judged as requiring, at the very least, confirmation from the customer. Conversation of this nature, relating to the technicalities and preferences of a customer's haircut arguably constitutes what Toerien and Kitzinger (2007: 164-169) identified as 'task-directed talk', that being 'talk performed in the service of the salon procedure'.

Questioning the client emerged as a learned accomplishment that was altered to suit each encounter. For new clients in particular, where there was no record (tangible or otherwise) to inform the encounter, stylists faced the challenging process of deciphering what the clients wants and what is feasible based on the client's hair composition and lifestyle. As this was often the case for students in the training context, whose technical and relational skills were both still in the early stages of development, training providers analogised the questioning process as a 'funnel technique'. Reflecting the upside-down triangular structure of a funnel, this method of questioning stipulated that students begin with broad, overarching questions before whittling it down to specific details:

> *"It's questioning techniques that we teach the students, almost like it's the funnel questioning technique isn't it? You're starting off with this great big wide, what can we do for you today? Then by the time you finish, you've come to a yes/no, this much off here, are you having a fringe? Down to the very essential." (Charlie, training provider)*

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Before obtaining the "very essential" detail, a much broader style of questioning served as a springboard to further information. The latter stages of a consultation crucially allowed clarification through straightforward 'yes/no' answers as well as the elimination of possible misinterpretations that could produce an output displeasing to the client. One training provider spoke of clarifying the meaning of an inch, a seemingly indisputable uniform system of measurement: "Even if you're talking about how much you want cutting off, what's your inch and what's my inch?" (Nicole). Here, Nicole speaks to the potential perceptual disparity between "your (the customers') inch" and "my (the stylists') inch" that requires clarification. A means of clarifying this level of detail was the use of expressive visual gestures. Rather than merely informing the client of their plan to trim two inches, students were instructed to use their fingertips to convey this length in order to reduce possible misinterpretation. Ensuring interpretive alignment between what the client wants and what the stylist is going to deliver also requires an 'insightful reading of the client's non-verbal communication, their body and body language' (Wainwright et al, 2010: 85). Consequently, a haircut dissatisfactory to the client was perceived as arising from a failure to establish mutual understanding regarding potentially ambiguous terms:

> *"You've still got to get that information out of the client because sometimes if something goes wrong with the client's hair, it's not necessarily a lack of skill but a lack of communication, you haven't quite fully understood what the person is saying to you, you haven't double checked, maybe use an image in something like that. You know if someone says, "I want my hair copper", right well what's your idea of copper and what's my idea of copper, sometimes you need to use visual aid, you need to get that information." (Rosie, training provider)*

Rosie hints to the potential scope of interpretation that can transpire even with the delivery of specific instruction. Much like the desired inch to be trimmed, the sought-after shade of copper may appear uncomplicated, however failing to clarify the exact richness and depth of colour gives way for interpretive misalignment. A requirement to any prescribed instruction therefore concerns an attempt to clarify meaning and decipher "what's your idea of copper and what's my idea of copper?". A commonly cited means of ensuring interpretive alignment concerned the use of visual aids. Images could be used in order to negate any confusion and ensure consensus regarding the intended service output. This presented as an observed reality in the actual salon, where newer clients, or those seeking a more substantial re-invention of their hair, routinely brought in photos to clarify their preferences.

When discussing how students navigate the consultation process, the emphasis was largely placed upon extracting the required information and ensuring their interpretations aligned. However, in the salon where stylists with decades of experience work, the consultation emerged as a delicate balance between negotiation and ensuring client satisfaction. Unlike in the training contexts where customers desires were generally appeased, experienced stylists in the salon utilised technical and experiential knowledge to redirect a client's request. This was observed as a gentle and inoffensive process, where stylists seemingly sought to leave the client's sense of relational superiority intact. The extract below illustrates the subtle means of shifting the client's demands into an option judged by the stylist as feasible and appropriate through the application of expertise and personal knowledge of the client:

'During an appointment with a client who appears reasonably well known to Steph, the client actively initiates conversation regarding her plans for her hair. The client articulates a desire to go lighter in shade, which Steph responds to by describing the necessary technical steps required to achieve the client's desired lighter share, insisting that she would get a better result following these steps. The client queries whether the darker colour of her roots will still be visible to which Steph honestly replies, "ever so slightly yes". In terms of the client's actual haircut, a description is provided by the client, and in line with these specifications, Steph defines what she intends to do as being a "tidy up", which the client confirms is suitable.'

The above field note illustrates the skill required to manage the encounter as a potential antecedent of minor conflict and tension. In seeking to engage in co-creation with the stylist, the client's contribution is partially rejected by the stylist on account of their specialist knowledge and experience (Algharabali, 2014; Yeadon Lee et al, 2007). Clients therefore assume a collaborative role in the service, where their demands are not unquestionably indulged. Stylists instead create a 'dialogue with customers rather than just listening to them', reflecting the necessary 'balanced and interdependent roles' assumed during the co-creation of an encounter (Chathoth et al, 2013: 11-13). In a sense this contrasts with sociological accounts of service work, which in positioning the customer as sovereign depict service workers as automatically indulging any demand espoused by the customer. In offering a more relationally balanced account, this research reveals the service encounter as a process of negotiation, dynamic input and eventual consensus. Regardless of how this consensus is reached, it is imperative for stylists to obtain affirmative responses from the client as a symbolic means of cementing the intended course of action. Tensions regarding the exact course of action

to take can arise prior to the actual appointment, as apparent through digital

communications between client and stylist:

> *'Steph is attempting to select a colour from a large catalogue composed of hair*
>
> *strands, each one a shade darker than the previous. Steph is focusing closely upon*
>
> *the samples of vibrantly dyed pink and purple hair, she explains that a client has*
>
> *requested that at her forthcoming appointment, she would like her hair dyed using*
>
> *the aforementioned shades. To illustrate clearly the specifications of her desired*
>
> *look, the client has sent Steph several images via a messaging app, each image*
>
> *showing a brightly dyed head of hair comprised of pink and purple tones. Steph*
>
> *subsequently spends a long time contemplating the exact colours to select, as they*
>
> *are to be ordered in from an external supplier especially for this client. She states*
>
> *that she has to be quite direct with this client, upon showing me the first image the*
>
> *client sent (showing the hair not only dyed but also styled in a rather elaborate half*
>
> *up, half down style), she replied stating that "you will never wear your hair like*
>
> *that", Steph explains to me that the client predominantly wears her hair up. She*
>
> *shows me successive images that the client sent, showing hair of a similar colour*
>
> *but in a style that is presumably, more akin to what the client usually wears'*

The field note detailed above revealed how even a disembodied service exchange

becomes fraught with complexities emanating from the stylist's attempt to manage and

alter the client's contribution. The insights afforded by experiential knowledge and

specialist training enabled the stylist to identify the client's initial request as

inappropriate. This judgement emanated not only from technical expertise but also

from knowledge of the client's personal style presumably obtained through prior

encounters. A combined application of technical and personal evaluation resulted in rejection of the client's initial request, leading to the exchange of successive images, presumably perceived as a more appropriate alternative. The above extract indicates that recurrent contact and exchange of personal information allows Steph to holistically evaluate the client's request on account of their hair composition, personal style and work life. Eliciting detail about a client's lifestyle appeared high on the teaching agenda at the training academy, where students were taught to assess the suitability of a treatment using a client's personal and occupational details. The application of discretionary judgment when working with clients also emerged as important, particularly during encounters where specifications were non-descript or vague. Anticipating the misuse of technical terminology was crucial in deciphering a client's request:

> *"With regard to communicating with clients during the consultation that is explicitly technique, it's drawing out what the client wants, because they quite often don't know what they want but they think they know what they want but use the wrong terminology a lot of the time, "oh I want a full head colour?" "so the whole head?" "no just the roots", well that's not the whole head is it, we have to teach the students that what the clients asks for, isn't always what they want because they're not using the same terminology as we use, so that is a technique in itself, using the consultation to get the information." (Charlie, training provider).*

Charlie draws a linguistic division between clients and stylists, suggesting that semantic misalignment may result on account of an occupational language barrier. Here the layperson client misunderstands what Fine (1996: 98) conceptualises as 'subcultural

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knowledge', which is the preserve of those with lived experience of the occupation. Students must utilize their technical mastery to assist the customer to ensure their desires are correctly interpreted in the absence of the correct occupational lexicon. This interpretive process entails maintaining an evaluative stance of the language used by customers to convey their demands. Concurrently, stylists must adopt a lexicon appropriate for the customer by avoiding verbose jargon and technical terminology that may confuse clients:

> *"Allie explains the need to be careful about the language used to elicit the necessary information from the client. That is, she explains how for the client, being questioned about their hair type and hair density may lead to confusion due to unfamiliar hairdressing jargon. Allie also explains that when asking the client about hair colour, students need to articulate through the use of shades despite the fact that within the industry, shades are translated and referred to numerically (e.g medium brown translates as shade 3)."*

The above field note from the training academy shows how students were encouraged to substitute technical terms such as density with more widely known words such as 'thickness', thereby assuming a layperson lexicon that semantically minimizes the risk of alienation and/or misinterpretation. Where client requests were typified by ambiguity, uncertainty or unwarranted dissatisfaction, stylists were required to assume a more directive and dictatorial role. Co-creational dialogue that becomes fraught with negotiation and debate is not limited to discussion pre-appointment, but can occur throughout the encounter:

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'Whilst cutting her client's hair, Ruby states that she won't take too much off the back, reasoning that this will achieve a tighter, presumably more desirable curl pattern. She soon shows the final length of the hair to the client using a handheld mirror, exclaiming "there you go my lovely!". She also gently pulls various strands of hair to better demonstrate the new hair length. The client wonders whether enough has been cut off, questioning "I can't really see where you've cut off", rather than display signs of defensiveness of irritation, Ruby simply points down to the floor, which is littered with "all the little curls" cut off the client, jokingly Ruby asks "you're not wanting them back are you?".'

The field note above was captures an interaction in the salon where in order to evince the output of her work and dispel the client's concerns, Ruby not only shows the client through the use of a handheld mirror but also physically unravels the client's hair in an effort to demonstrate the new length. However, the client's inability to identify how much her hair had been cut remained suggestive of mild dissatisfaction. Ruby seemingly regards such commentary as unsubstantiated and strategically renders the client's critical observation defunct by humorously referencing tangible evidence counteracting the claim; that being the client's hair clippings which littered the salon floor. Although Ruby succeeded in gently offsetting the client's input, it demonstrates the fragility of the exchange where interaction represents the sole avenue through which clients can co-create. The technical mastery associated with the skills of a hairstylist, denies customers the chance to physically assist in the production/direction of their service, rendering their contributory effort as exclusively communicative. Stylists must therefore embed 'intellectual and emotional labour' (Hampson and Junor, 2005: 177) to ensure clients

offer sufficient input and that this input is appropriately interpreted and negotiated throughout the encounter in light of developing technical application.

When 'co'-creation becomes 'solo'-creation: coping with defective forms of customer engagement

The process of agreeing upon a suitable plan for the client's hair constitutes a form of 'delivering' as 'interactants mutually agree on what procedures to involve in order to carry out a particular action' (Echeverri, and Skålén, 2011: 361). However, this co-creational process did not assume a generic pattern, rather the course of co-creational dialogue was determined by the input offered by the client, which occasionally was insufficient and minimal. Both observations and interview data suggested this to be of a relatively rare occurrence, though training providers stressed that in such an event the usage of open ended, as opposed to close-ended questions was crucial:

> Lucy: They've got to try and just get as much out of them as possible.
>
> Hannah: Yeah...
>
> (Both): Open ended questions.
>
> Lucy: So not your yes/no questions, a question that's got a really long answer, one that's going to get something back... I don't know
>
> Hannah: Do you wash your hair? So when you wash your hair what shampoo do you use? How frequently do you wash your hair? You can get lots of information from that.
>
> Lucy: Yeah, you will get the odd ones that don't but you've just got to keep going with that and try and get as much as they can. (Both training providers)

The instruction given by the training providers above suggests it is imperative to elicit as much hair related detail as possible from a reticent client. Although it was rare to witness clients completely withdrawing from interaction, an observed example of an especially reserved client showed the stylist gradually assuming control of the encounter, dictating its direction in place of the client's input:

'Ryan's client is a middle-aged male, who judging by his conversational input and demeanour is new to the salon. The client offers no specifications in relation to his hair, prompting Ryan to inquire whether a regular trim is required. Presumably such a suggestion is proffered on the basis of it being a relatively inoffensive option judged by Ryan as appropriate according to a brief assessment of the client's overall self-presentation. Ryan asks him a variety of questions relating to the nature of his work: "So where do you work then mate?", the client responds "At the university", (presumably based upon his athletic attire), Ryan questions "in coaching?", the client confirms this and specifies that he coaches fencing, to which Mark playfully replies "on guard, lunge, lunge!". Ryan then comments that he'd like to try fencing due to it being quite a fast-moving sport. The two the discuss sports further, with Mark generally leading the conversation, Ryan comments that all sports are good for building discipline. Ryan specifies that his favourite sport is rugby, stating that it's a good outlet for aggression but that it instils a sense of mutual respect, which Ryan cites as an important quality for young men to have. Generally, the conversation appears one-sided, with Ryan initiating the majority of it. Toward the end of the appointment, Ryan asks, "how's that sir? Tidy but not too short", the customer confirms it's fine and Ryan asks, in a more muted tone, "shall I

tidy up those eyebrows quickly?", to which the client gives an affirmative, albeit

nonverbal response.'

The field note was collected in the salon and conveys a violation of the 'basic tenants of social exchange' on account of the customer's refusal to 'adequately engage with service providers' (Greer, 2014: 252). In deviating from the behaviours and norms exhibited by the majority, potential problems can arise as a result of such non-conformity (Biddle, 1986). The reluctance to socially engage may stem from the perceived intimacy and close proxemics of the encounter rendering it a stressful experience for the client, who consequently opts to withdraw from the emotional demands placed upon them (Tumbat, 2011). This withdrawal is reflective of the asymmetrical reality underpinning service encounters. The obligations applied to the customer pertaining to their emotional display may be dismissible, however the service worker is 'obliged not only to smile, but to try and work up some warmth behind it' (Hochschild, 1983: 19). Additional efforts to compensate for the client's disengagement involve the stylist assuming 'aspects of the consumer's role in the service delivery' (Greer, 2014: 253). Ryan therefore resorts to subverting the normative interaction order, posing a suggested style for the customer and allowing them to maintain their socially reticent stance by simply responding affirmatively.

In responding to perceived violations of a customer's role expectations, a common means of protecting one's sense of occupational self-worth is locating the client's behaviour in a situational context, emanating from a self-driven desire to disconnect from those present (Ashforth et al, 2008). There is potential linkage in the interactional fragility induced and the client's demographic, which is that of an older male.

Consequently, there may be a subconscious desire to disengage from the encounter in order to negate possible accusations of vanity and its feminized assumptions. The gendered propensity to appear disinterested in the process of having a haircut and to disconnect from the interaction accompanying it was acknowledged by Ryan:

> *"If you ask the right questions beforehand you can avoid a lot of regret afterward, but not everyone expresses themselves in the same way, so at the time people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say, however you can sometimes tell where the truth lies, a lot of chaps, they will pretend they don't really care "oh just cut it, I don't care", of course they do however it's not good for their masculinity to look too vain and too excited about their hair so chaps will pretend they don't care and the way of getting round that is saying look I know you don't care but I do so I'm more the faffy on, attention to detail, but in reality that's what they want."*
> *(Ryan, stylist)*

Here Ryan hinted toward the discomfort that male clients may experience when attending the salon, being that amongst other things, the salon represents a traditionally feminised space (Furman, 1997: Gimlin, 1996; Ward et al, 2016) where women 'gossip, build communities and shore up their appearances' (Barber, 2016: 624). Moreover, male customers generally spend far less time in the salon as their appointments entail the fleeting usage of shavers, scissors and/or clippers, thereby qualifying the salon as a less frequented, unfamiliar space (Ward et al, 2016). In touching upon the latter point of aesthetic modification, the salon is especially unconducive for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity given that its construction is premised upon the rejection of feminized beauty practices (Barber, 2016). However,

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through his identification of the 'faffy on, attention to detail', Ryan absorbs and projects his male client's supressed aesthetic concern and consequently leaves their masculine identity intact. Rather than perceiving his clients as entirely disinterested in their appearance, Ryan locates this disinterest within a heternormative cultural matrix that negatively judges men who exhibit an overzealous concern with feminized issues regarding physical appearance. Although there is a burgeoning socio-cultural climate normalising the appropriation of grooming practices among heterosexual men, other intersectional variants influence the ease at which aesthetic services are consumed.

Where attempts were made to initiate conversation, open-ended questioning was used. In accordance with the discretionary judgment to assist in the client's preservation of masculine identity, these questions related mainly to the client's personal life as opposed to his hair. Rather than over-quizzing the client, Ryan assumed an assertive role in navigating the direction of aesthetic change, even following up a question presumably intended for the client to answer, with a descriptive statement "it's tidy but not too short", thereby affirming the quality of his work. Where questions were posed, the client's engagement tended to assume the form of non-verbal, affirmative utterances. In place of verbal enthusiasm from the client, Ryan instead endeavours to extract sufficient audible detail regarding his intentions, through the straightforward verification of the client's satisfaction. In contrast to the clients discussed previously in this thesis, the client detailed above assumed a less participatory role, which was reflected in the stylist's observed disposition and style of interaction. There was a lesser degree of exuberance in his manner and the stylist's humour assumed a more muted, less personal tone. This speaks to the temporally rooted reality of co-creation, as it is bound within the relational trajectory shared with a client. The apparent lack of

familiarity between the two parties here renders the co-creation less 'co' and more 'solo' as efforts were largely initiated by the stylist.

In schooling students how to cope with a reticent client, training providers reasoned that some client's lack of input may be on account of them wishing to withdraw from any superficial and unnecessary chatter as an act of relaxation. Withdrawal from social interaction may represent a crucial component of the relaxing customer experience sought after. However, as evident in the extract above, attempts to get to know the clients are still necessary in the initial stages of the appointment:

> *"You listen to them, I teach them thing like the three question rule, you ask the three questions then if you get a one word answer they don't want to talk to you, leave them alone you know, because sometimes people want to come in and tell you their life story and sometimes people want to come in and just go ahhh (closes eyes and tilts head back) and not even look at you while they're having their hair done and it's teaching them to find out what it is that client wants from you" (Charlie, training provider).*

Ryan's early interaction with the client in the above extract very much aligned with Charlie's comments regarding the need to ask the client several general questions, the answers to which are used to intuit a client's preferred style of interaction. The underdeveloped, largely monosyllabic responses offered by the client, informed Ryan that the desired service experience consisted largely of silence and a less exuberant style of interaction. Even where clients desired silence, students were taught that some detail must still be extracted so as to ensure a satisfactory service output. Where non-

communicative clients were concerned, hairdressing training provider Allie prescriptively outlined scripted questions intended to draw out such detail:

> *'Allie, a training provider, encourages her students to probe into what the clients are wanting, she instructs them to ask 'what would like done?' then if the client isn't sure or doesn't offer a clear answer, the students are then instructed to ask 'well what do you not like about your hair at the moment?' (Allie explains this is a great way of eliciting detail from a less engaging client or one who simply is less sure about what they want). From here, students are instructed to deduce how best they can rectify or alter what the client has identified disliking about their hair, or alternatively if the client is still offering little input, to simply suggest a 'tidy up' and a particular style (e.g straight blow dry or curls).'*

The field note above was collected in the training academy and illustrates a reversal in the typical pattern of questioning. Here students are taught to elicit detail from reticent clients by instead asking them what they dislike about their hair, which may be easier to identify and articulate. A lack of customer input constitutes a transgression of the normative expectations surrounding customer conduct (Biddle, 1986; Linton, 1945). Consequently, students must learn to compensate, filling the interactional voids left by the customer with a decisive course of task-focused action. Although stylists assume greater creative control of the encounter, a course of action that is aesthetically neutral and inoffensive is advised; a "tidy up" being the prevailing option. Having focused mainly upon the blending of socially operative and task-focused talk, the following section will locate the functioning of talk within the broader application of technical skill.

8.2: Working upon a client's appearance:

Internalising craftsmanship and confidence

The fact that hairdressing constitutes a form of bodywork has significant ramifications upon the nature of the skills required by stylists. Allowing stylists to alter the 'face' shown to the world is highly significant, as appearance forms the basis for first impressions and broader identity-based judgements (Sheane, 2011; Goffman, 1959). Situated anxieties resulted among students, as aesthetic control was temporarily entrusted to them by clients despite remaining in the formative stages of learning the craft:

> *"I think as well with the difference within hairdressing and beauty from my experience, it's a big responsibility for a student to work with a client one on one and do their hair, and that there's so many things that can go wrong". (Allie, training provider)*

The assertion that "so many things can go wrong" speaks to the fragility of the appointment, where there is an incessant volatility pertaining to the blending of interaction and craft. The "big responsibility" of altering hair is especially challenging for students to negotiate, as their occupational and relational inexperience denies them opportunity to accumulate sufficient trust among clients to assuage pressure.

> *"You know and I think that fear factor that they are going to cut a fringe drastically too short or their colours going to go wrong, I think that fear factor and*

of course people can get very nasty if things go wrong" (Katherine, training provider)

Although hair bears a vivacious changeability that renders any alterations impermanent (Holmes, 2014; 2018; Holton, 2019; Hielscher, 2013), Katherine speaks to the visceral emotion incited by displeasing aesthetic mishaps. While hair will grow and gradually return to its former condition, clients must live through this transition, potentially inducing somatic anxieties and a sense of disidentification. Regardless of how fleeting this transitional stage is, unwanted aesthetic changes inflicted by another can incite a 'nasty' response toward the culpable party. As customers represent 'a key source of meaning and pleasure in service jobs' (Korczynski, 2003: 57), producing an output that is potentially both dissatisfying and semi-permanent incited a resultant 'fear factor' that plagued students as they learned to perform the craft.

From interviews and observations, it became clear that grasping the technique of seamlessly wielding, positioning and utilizing scissors represented a complex process. The role of props emblematic of hairdressing, including scissors, clippers and combs may seem trivial, yet Grove et al (1992: 112) regards them as 'symbolically creating the image of the service as well as instrumentally delivering it'. Moreover, as a form of manual labour and craft, cutting hair becomes 'embodied, involving the satisfaction and discomfort of using one's body' (Fine, 1996: 109). This discomfort was apparent upon watching learners cut hair for the first time, where a notable struggle ensued as students haphazardly attempted to manoeuvre their scissors. This was accompanied by students complaining about the uncomfortable and exhaustive reality of standing, moving and squatting for the duration of a client's appointment.

When compared to the arduous and disjoined movement of students, the fluid

manoeuvring of experienced stylists created a stark juxtaposition. Experience

seemingly allowed a confident wielding of tools that appeared ritualised and deeply

embedded, while the relative inexperience of students rendered their movements

disjointed and fragmentary. The training provider therefore encouraged students to

simply hold, position and move with scissors in hand, imitating the process of cutting

hair. This practice allowed students to grow familiar with the 'rhythm of practice'

(Holmes, 2014: 485) and develop an increasingly fluid performance emanating from the

'tens of thousands of hours' required for technical mastery (Sennett, 2008: 20). The

below field note obtained in the training academy described this process in detail:

> *'Prior to beginning the actual cutting of the hair, both students are encouraged to*
>
> *familiarise themselves with a pair of chosen cutting scissors, acting out the cutting*
>
> *hair motion without actually doing so. Allie then instructs them to embed a comb*
>
> *into this movement, demonstrating on the client's hair, the interweaved process of*
>
> *combing down then cutting with the scissors held in the same hand. Again, this is*
>
> *merely to familiarise students with the movement being that Allie instructs them*
>
> *not to actually cut any of the hair but instead monitors their co-ordination. She*
>
> *makes suggestions as to how the students can move with the comb and scissors in a*
>
> *more seamless manner, firstly suggesting that a tighter grasp on the comb allows*
>
> *for greater control over the hair.'*

The emphasis upon correctly grasping and wielding scissors reflects the ritualised

learning of craft in hairdressing, where the application of technical skills becomes

automatic following the 'rhythm and routine of repetition' (Ward et al, 2016: 1288). Reassurance was offered to students who commented that the training provider made cutting hair "look easy", as Allie attributed her 'smooth performance' to years of situated practice (Holmes, 2014: 485). The technical component of craft involved in hairdressing must be embedded with adequate interpersonal engagement with heterogeneous customers who may present as 'needy, likeable, demanding or not respecting' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 20). Given that clients value their body as an extension of their identity (Giddens, 1991), they displayed assertive responses during its renovation at the hands of another, responses that posed a threat to the fragile self-esteem of learner stylists:

> *"If we've got clients who are just not very nice as opposed to the other way then we just have to intervene, we always take the leading role within the debate or anything because that can be really off-putting for students, it can knock them right back. You know if they're getting challenged by the client, I mean we have had some clients where they knock the student's confidence because they're telling the students what they should be doing and you know "that's not, I don't like it like that, oh you need to do it like this", and then the student it does knock their confidence so we have had a couple of incidents where student have said "well I'm not doing her hair anymore because she's not very nice". But we've had to have a word with the clients, haven't we? And say it's a training environment." (Rose, training provider).*

Training providers expressed a need to protect and preserve the fledging confidence of students, which could be severely damaged upon criticism of their technical skill. Where

clients became overly critical, espousing harsh directives that undermined the technique of students, training providers interjected by reminding the client that in the training context, technical skills remained in the early stages of development. Rather than being the fault of the student for the misapplication of skill, training providers imply that it is the client who must amend their behaviour by allowing for leniencies and accommodating slight mishaps. Having touched upon the pronounced cultural symbolism of hair and overall appearance, the following section shall locate such meaning as symptomatic of androcentric conceptions of femininity.

The feminised bodywork experience:

Having alluded to the premium attributed to appearance, it is worth noting that women are often subject to disproportionate scrutiny and policing (Bartkey, 1982; Furman, 2000; Sheane, 2011), leading them to 'design their hair on a daily basis, investing work and time into creating their hairdos' (Hielscher, 2013: 259). Old age emerges as a particularly tricky stage for women to navigate (Furman, 1997; Ward et al, 2016), as society designates the aged female body 'unattractive and inadequate' (Furman, 2000: 16). Although the elderly female clients patronizing the salon are forcefully resigned to a life stage where their looks are no longer celebrated, the salon remains utilized 'as an important tool in the creation and maintenance of femininity' (Furman, 1997: 47). Stylists were therefore frequently observed lauding the appearance of their elderly patrons, possibly in an attempt to reaffirm their fading sense of feminine identity, allowing them to 'lay claim to more positive self-narratives and self-images' (Ward et al, 2016: 405).

'Ruby and Ellie are both commenting on the client's appearance, upon observation she appears to be dressed quite formally, although much of her attire is concealed by her salon gown. Yet, Ellie insists "I keep telling her she looks like the Queen today!", to which Ruby confirms "Yeah you really do, even smarter than the Queen!".'

The field note above from the salon illustrates how as an expression of warmth and kindness, compliments were offered to clients 'as part of the service provided' (Algharabali, 2014: 42). Despite the contextual sensitivities associated with old age and femininity, the elderly clients observed occupied the salon's 'front stage', those being areas in full visibility of all staff and other clients. Salons are however, reported as susceptible to promoting restrictive and exclusionary 'values pertaining to fashion' (Goffman, 1959: 240). These exclusionary values may intimidate those who perceive themselves as unable to embody the celebrated image of femininity (Lawson, 1999; Hielscher, 2013). This reflects insights discussed earlier in this thesis, where higher end salons are noted for embodying an aesthetic superiority that unnerves some clients. Though the salon that was the focus of this research is not classed as a high-end salon, it still offered some privacy for those uncomfortable with the gaze of the salon's 'front region'. Some elderly clients therefore opted to remain in the adjoining beauty room, the interior of which was shielded by a large door with frosted glass panels. In offering opportunity for 'greater social interaction', the salon also provides an optional veil of privacy that allows the 'customer to avoid other customers' (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003: 465).

Clients were never heard requesting entry into the private sphere of the beauty room. Their entry into appeared as though part of a premeditated agreement between client and stylist that their appointment was to occur away from the prying eyes of others. Many elderly clients by contrast assumed an assertive position on the front stage, moving comfortably throughout its landscape, often fully gowned with rollers in their hair. This imagery is reminiscent of the continued pursuit of femininity as a 'state to be constantly sought' through commitment to routinized aesthetic practices (Black and Sharma, 2001: 101; Sharma and Black, 2001). Despite playing a pivotal role in the (re) production of exclusionary beauty ideals, the salon itself enforces a lapsed aesthetic code that allows women the freedom to temporally embrace a more natural appearance. Women were free to patrol the salon while embodying a transitional aesthetic state as they had their hair cut, styled and coiffured in the comfort of a space that operated in the absence of heteronormative scrutiny and policing. As a specific component of appearance, the following section shall explore the semantic framing of hair through a lexicon emphasising its changeable and volatile nature.

'Taming the wildness': the personification of hair

The empirical research discussed throughout the thesis has illustrated how the interactional and affective climate of an encounter can influence the perceived quality of it (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012). Customer satisfaction is, however, also dependent also upon the tangible output of service; the client's modified hair and/or appearance. As well as being 'personable and able to interact', stylists must be technically competent and 'able to work with hair' (Holmes, 2014: 485). The socio-cultural importance of hair is reflected in the personified lexicon used by stylists and clients, positioning hair as a conscious entity that 'grows by itself' and a significant vehicle of feminine identity that

is 'part of our physical selves' (Levine, 1995: 88). The actual crafting of hair is imbued with temporality being that as hair 'grows, it splits, snaps, gets greasy, goes grey' (Holmes, 2014: 491). In discursively positioning hair as an ever-changing 'material thing', devoting resources of 'time, energy and money on taming, cutting, styling and removing' becomes justified as essential process (Holton, 2018: 2). The extract below represents a commonly observed incident in which a stylist spoke of a client's hair through personified language, imbuing it with human characteristics and consciousness:

> *'Ryan greets a customer waiting in a salon chair ready to have her hair cut, he instantly apologises about being unable to squeeze in the customer for an appointment last week when she had initially requested one: "it was hectic, we had Steph and Ruby off last week so it was just me and Ellie in all on our todd! I could only have spared 5 minutes top and I could never do your hair in just 5 minutes, as it's quite a job my darling and it'll fight back if we try to rush, it certainly wouldn't thank us!".'*

The field note from the salon reveals how Ryan personifies the client's hair, seemingly as a way of justifying why he was unable to offer her an earlier appointment. He asserts that the client's hair requires a relatively lengthy appointment otherwise it'll "fight back", suggesting that the client's hair will return to a more unruly, less desirable state. The use of impassioned adjectives, including untamed, long, rich and free flowing, to semantically convey the unruly reality of hair growth stems back to representation within Greek epics and other art forms (Levine, 1995). As with any entity presented as wild and untamed, the default response concerns the application of control. The tactful

application of control ensures conformity to prevailing norms, creating an 'acceptable state of hair' (Hielscher, 2013: 260). The suggestion that the client's hair wouldn't "thank" them implies that there is a proper way to assert this control in order to elicit metaphorical 'gratitude' from the client's hair. A similar incident is conveyed in the below field notes from the salon, where a young girl arrived for her appointment accompanied by her mother:

> *'After finishing cutting (presumably), the mother's hair, Ruby moves over to cut the daughter's hair, which due to its rather voluminous appearance has already been straightened by Ellie perhaps to make it more manageable. Despite being straightened, Ruby and the girl's mother comment upon the unruly nature of the daughter's hair. The mother comments "it's got a mind of its own your hair", in response Ruby puts her hands through the girl's hair and exclaims "I'm home" (presumably referring to the presence of frizz).'*

> *'On another occasion, the mother and daughter re-attend the salon. Again, when cutting and styling the daughter's hair there is talk of "taming the wildness". Afterwards when the mother gets her hair cut by Ruby, together they discuss her hair as though it is a conscious entity, as Ruby initially refers to the client's fringe as being "wild", while the client responds by bemoaning the fact that her hair will "never just lie flat".'*

The field notes above illustrate the semantic positioning of hair as wild, unruly and unable to be smoothed or flattened. This reflects an enduring depiction of hair as imbued with a 'tireless vivacity' (Holmes, 2019: 182) that 'requires the agency of

individuals to tame or control it' (Holton, 2019: 3). Stylists and clients therefore co-constructed the client's hair as being a living entity, imbued with autonomous traits. Subsequently, hair was rendered capable of changing and developing over time, as apparent in the below field note:

> *'Whilst cutting the hair of one of his regular clients, Ryan asks the client whether her hair has been "behaving itself", she confirms that it has, and refers to a previous appointment where her hair was supposedly in a less cooperative state, Ryan acknowledges this, asserting that "it just wasn't acting like your hair was it?".'*

The personifying language detailed in the field note above supports the co-construction of a broader, trans-temporal narrative chronicling the transitional state of the client's hair, which features materiality conveying 'layer upon layer of evidence of previous practices' (Holmes, 2018: 182; Holton, 2019). Hair therefore comes to embody a highly personalised narrative, comprised of past encounters and informing forthcoming exchanges. Crucially, this is a narrative dependent upon and directed by the input provided by each distinct client. Such a narrative is deeply enduring as the transitional materiality of hair necessitates routinized episodes of maintenance (Holmes, 2014; 2018; Holton, 2019), which episodically unite the stylist and client as they collectively manage this ever-changing entity.

8.3: The importance of aesthetics: corporeality, materiality and atmospherics

Throughout the thesis, I have discussed embodiment as an important component of the aesthetic labour that students come to learn, and experienced stylists continuously perform. As outlined earlier in chapter 3, aesthetic labour is as restricted as emotional

labour in that its conceptual scope does not sufficiently extend to the customer. By contrast, Bitner's (1992) notion of the 'servicescape' has inspired a host of empirical studies that explicitly consider the impact of the physical surrounding on both the customer and employee. In unpacking the salon's 'servicescape', its design, interior and organisation are regarded as functioning as an external packaging for the service offered (Bitner, 1992; Baron et al, 2001; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003; Grove et al, 1992). Returning to the focus of aesthetic labour, cultivating a particular 'servicescape' extends to the service worker's appearance and deportment. In the formative years of training, training providers emphasised the delicacy of students' positioning as they manoeuvred around the client. Such careful positioning reflects an elevated sense of technical confidence that intertwines with the surrounding environment through movement, navigation and the use of tools:

> *'Students are also schooled in the art of positioning, how they move around the client whilst doing their hair. One student who is cutting hair for the first time is frequently reminded not to 'squat' right down, as the training providers reasons that it is both unnecessary, bad presentation and will gradually become tiring. When the student opts to use the stool, the training provider instructs her not to, insisting that she doesn't need it and that she must learn to position herself correctly while stood up before becoming reliant on the stool.'*

The field note above collected from the training academy illustrates the importance of positioning for ensuring optimal quality of the haircut but also served as an embodiment of skill and confidence. This was particularly apparent during observations at the training academy where a stark difference was noted between the positioning of

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the year one learners and that of the more experienced adult learners. Through

expressive mannerisms and attributes, the inexperience of year one learners was

embodied. By contrast, the adult learners navigated the spatial terrain around their

client with fluidity and ease, cultivating a performance espousing competency and

experience. Along with comportment and posture, regulations pertaining to 'tidiness

and hygiene, makeup and grooming and clothing style' (Hall and Van de Broek, 2011:

92) were enforced:

> *"It's a very shallow industry, to the point of saying get out there and get some make*
>
> *up on whether you like it or not. Even if they don't wear makeup, you do when*
>
> *you're in here and that's for no other reason than you do look like a dead body*
>
> *under those lights in there." (Deb, training provider).*

Deb speaks to the performative duality of front/backstage stylization. Crucially, when

occupying the 'front region' (Goffman, 1959), students are expected to assume the role

of a stylist, embodying their specialist skill and knowledge through their appearance set

against the complimentary backdrop of the salon space (Cutcher and Atchel, 2017).

Make-up for example, emerges as essential being that a body without any is judged

defunct and rendered as a "dead body" by the salon's harsh lighting. A latent sense of

theatre is inferred here through reference to makeup and strong, unforgiving lighting

similar to that which illuminates a stage. However, the wearing of makeup coupled with

the appropriate styling of hair are preparatory practices to be performed prior to

entering the stage (Goffman, 1959). In this way the application of makeup may

constitute a habitual practice, 'experienced as fulfilling personal desires', yet it also

poses 'direct contribution to an individual's capacity to undertake paid service work'

(Hancock, 2013: 1006). For those deemed to wear insufficient or inappropriate makeup, the public/private dualism was reaffirmed through reference to the unspecified "they" whose appearance is unsuitable and the first person "you", targeted at a specific actor whom must don their stage makeup in anticipation of their performance. Though the wearing of makeup seemingly contributes to an assemblage of fakery and falsehood, it is merely an actor seeking to appease the assumed expectations harboured by the audience so as to produce a harmonious encounter (Tseëlon, 1992; Goffman, 1959). There was a careful balance among training providers' talk, which in one sense stipulated harsh and prescriptive codes relating to the embodiment of a more exaggerated form of femininity. However, this was displaced by a tolerance of an appearance that was at the very least, clean and presentable:

> *"Yeah we've got quite a strict dress code, I mean we used to say their hair had to be done and their makeup had to be done, we don't say that now but we do say their hair has to be clean and look healthy, tied back obviously if they're working on clients, we would prefer to them to wear makeup or have a good skin care regime, so that their skins good, you know to represent the area that they come from, so yeah and that's another way of communicating, if clients are coming in and their stylist's hair looks a mess and they've got the makeup on that they had the night before, it's not good, it's not a good reflection of any business but especially ours."* (Rosie, training provider).

Rosie's comments attribute importance to embodying an image of cleanliness and good health. A dishevelled and messy appearance on the other hand, risked creating negative first impressions that reflected poorly on the organisation. This echoes much of the

extant literature discussed in chapters 2 and 3, which identified the bodies if employees serving as 'walking billboards' for the organisation by demonstrating skill, competence and a professional attitude (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003: 318 quoted in Nickson and Warhurst, 2007: 155). Rosie also speaks to a theatrical analogy, where students are expected to prepare themselves for their forthcoming role as stylist by effectively segregating their audiences (Mann, 1997; Grove et al, 1992). Unruly hair and poorly applied makeup created an undesirable image regarded as inappropriate for the salon audience. Embodying the antithesis of a clean and presentable image with exaggerated feminine attributes such as the application of suitable make up constitutes part of the 'hairdresser type' (Juul and Byskov, 2019). The emphasis upon having hair that is 'clean and healthy' also avoids scathing moralising evaluations emanating from a broader socio-cultural matrix that polices appearance (Holmes, 2018; Holton, 2019).

Appearance was also crucial in the initial and continued creation of trust, an important service component in light of the symbolic weightiness of one's hair (Holmes, 2014; 2018; Cohen, 2020; Gimlin, 1996; Furman, 1997), a feature 'imbued with affect and emotion' (Holton, 2019: 5):

> *"It's critical, because they're coming make themselves better, so whether it's their hair or their skin, so somebody that's doing the treatment if they look rough, they're not promoting a very good sales point if they can't look after themselves." (Rose, training provider)*

Rose echoes the aesthetic motivations underpinning the pursuit of body work, as clients endeavour to "make themselves better". The creation of trust was essential in assuaging

anxieties that resulted from the transference of aesthetic control to another. An undesirable appearance among employees emerged as counterproductive and potentially disruptive to the continuation of service. Training providers semantically imbued an inappropriate and displeasing appearance with contagion type properties that induced fear among clients, who become prone to concerns that their own appearance may become 'infected' with similar undesirable aesthetic attributes. Student's bodies should therefore communicate 'a clear signal that his person cares about their appearance' (Juul and Byskov, 2019: 12). In an attempt to ensure professional imagery that assuages anxiety and reassures clients, regulations conveyed in data below relating to uniform were enforced to varying extents:

"They [student's] have a strict uniform code, which we enforce from their first induction, it's their appearance, their dress, you know they've all got to wear closed toed shoes, their hair up, erm no jewellery, things like that, we're very firm with it."
(Jane, training provider)

'Having noticed all students dressed in black, I ask Allie whether there is a uniform and she explains that they are instructed to wear only black items of clothing and smart black shoes (as opposed to open toed shoes/sandals or trainers). When I ask her why students are required to do so, Allie explains that it firstly accustoms them to following appearance based rules, helps them appear smarter and strengthens their aesthetic identification in the salon, where everyone else is in all black. Allie also explains to me that after attending the sessions for a fortnight, students are given a tabard to wear, symbolically completing their aesthetic transition into hairdressing students.'

The field note obtained in the training academy reflects the enforcement of uniform 'from the first induction'. There is then an element of training provider's pedagogical approach that is pre-emptive of their actual entry into the salon thereby utilizing uniform as a 'boundary marker' (Ashforth et al, 2008) that symbolically demarcates the service context and subsequent transformation into 'work-ready subject[s]' (van de Berg and Arts, 2019: 308). Uniform also has the potential to combat the inherent deprofessionalisation tied to bodily contact by symbolically distancing the stylist from their client (Twigg and Atkin, 2000; Wainwright et al, 2010). Naomi, who relatedly emphasised the importance of maintaining an acceptable level of hygiene, reinforced the relational proximity of a hairdresser/beautician's work:

> *"That's right, you wouldn't want to have your nails done by somebody with chipped nail polish and things like poor hygiene, obviously as a therapist and a hairdresser you know you're working in close proximity to your clients so personal hygiene is a huge thing. It's industry standard." (Naomi, training provider)*

The suggestion that a level of hygiene is elevated as 'industry standard' speaks to intimate proximal relations of bodywork. The reality of a working salon entails unavoidable close contact with clients and although one may try to maintain a professional standard of bodily comportment through careful positioning, it is unlikely for the client to sensorially disengage from the encounter. Where certain standards disseminated in the training context have in previous chapters appeared as more nuanced, standards of hygiene emerged as far less negotiable. As mentioned in chapter 7, stylists were frequently observed spritzing themselves with deodorant and gargling

mouthwash, therefore represents a habitual practice intended to temporarily nullify noxious aromas. Although chapter 7 details how certain customers became privy to such practices, their purpose appeared less about sustaining grand illusions or impressions but simply to avoiding the disruption of the customer's experience through the spread of noxious bodily aromas. Overall, the transitional process in which one superficially moulds into a stylist necessitates 'elaborate techniques of body work, discipline, care and repair' required to 'develop new bodily schemas of posture, movement and subjective state' (Witz et al, 2003: 40).

Despite appearance serving as a means to 'embody and enact what the organisation espouses' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 6), the observed reality at the salon conveyed a less formalised approach to aesthetics. There appeared to be no dress code, as stylists were observed dressed in fairly casual attire with no obvious coordination. When asked about the salon's aesthetic regulations, the salon owner Ryan responded:

> *"More than you'd imagine, when you look at me, not that much, I do insist on myself and the girls, you've got to be fresh and sort of professional yet casual looking, clothes wise, so theoretically although you wouldn't believe it, normally today we'd all be dressed in either white and black or green and black, at this point none of my staff are wearing green or black which makes me look like a liar, but I do insist that the girls are always, I don't say fully made up, but with make up on and sort of professional, at the end of the day you are in the beauty industry" (Ryan, stylist).*

In reflecting upon his own approach toward the aesthetic of his staff and the subsequent meaning they engender through their embodied corporeality, Ryan demonstrates the

malleability of contemporary aesthetics. Subject to re-negotiation, aesthetic regulations are not static and may be (re) shaped by management, workers and customers (Pettinger, 2004). The latter may subtlety govern and direct stylist's appearance through critical language and a scrutinising gaze, fuelling the disciplining of worker's bodies in a quasi-managerialist capacity (Mears, 2014; Pettinger, 2011).

Discrepancies between salons and their respective organisational cultures produced distinct requirements for students to subtly 'calibrate dress continuously for varying work contexts' (van de Berg and Arts, 2019: 309). Managerial discourse espoused by Ryan and the training providers may encourage a polished appearance among stylists, however distinctive socio-spatial conditions of each salon render formalised aesthetic codes meaningless. The stylist's appearance therefore embodies both the material landscape of the salon, with the two seemingly locked within a situational dynamic. In speaking to the variation of organisational spaces, 'the importance of the physical setting depends on the nature of the job and the nature of the consumption experience' (Bitner, 1992: 58). Field notes from the salon therefore illustrated how its distinct atmospheric conditions incited informal and welcoming climate rather than opulence and luxury:

> *'In attempting to view the salon landscape in a somewhat objective manner, its tangible and symbolic properties collectively cultivate an informal, relaxed atmosphere. As a space, the salon is littered with tangible artefacts that, whether intentional or not, align with the salon's offering of a casual and reasonably priced service. The old and worn black leather sofa, the equally inoffensive dark leather salon chairs. In countering the dark imagery of the leather seating options, the*

salon is encased by light walls and flooring. The occasional portrait of the nearby

historic city centre and handwritten thank you card are placed throughout, hence

the salon does not appear overly clinical and faceless but not cluttered.'

The descriptive extract above conveys the warm, well-loved albeit exhausted looking décor that through its haphazard arrangement contrasts with the more modern aesthetic arrangement perceived as cold and uninviting. The salon was therefore littered with adverts for services offered in the local area as well as décor based upon photographs or illustrations of the city's landmark and heritage. In contrast to national chains attempting to adapt sites to reflect their locality, the salon operated free from 'glocalised' objectives (Bookman, 2014). Moreover, the 'unpretentious style and frequently unkempt look' promoted interaction by nullifying socioeconomic markers, creating neutral terrain (Furman, 2000: 8; Oldenburg, 1989).

Whether it was a 'strategic combination' or something that evolved organically, the salon's spatial design, employee corporeality and interaction embodied 'the nature of a particular service' (Grove et al, 1992: 98). These atmospheric particularities of the salon emerged as a formidable pull to longstanding clients. Through various informal interactions with clients, the salon's warm and informal ambiance was collectively lauded. Any mention of the quality of the actual haircut was displaced in favour of the affective interaction, reflecting that 'the way a product is sold matters more than the product itself' (Bolton, 2004: 27). This was apparent through in-situ conversations with clients as detailed below:

'Whilst chatting informally with one of the clients, I reveal that I myself have been attending the salon for years, thus prompting the client to detail her fondness for the salon; 'I just love it here, it's so nice and friendly, you know some of those salons in town, they're a bit standoffish, you can come in here and have a laugh, you get your coffee and a nice magazine but you get a good laugh while you're here!'.

The above field note illustrates the importance of upholding a particular salon atmosphere, which extends beyond physical objects to include those who inhabit the space (Chugh and Hancock, 2009). A resultant 'interdependency between the human and the material' (Engeström and Blacker, 2005: 310) meant that the stylists were key in upholding the comedic atmosphere favoured by their clients, with the owner in particular making risqué jokes that were always received in good humour by those in the salon:

'While the client is having her hair cut, Ryan makes a slightly rude joke to which the whole salon laughs at. The client comments "eeeeeh some of the stuff he comes out with", to which Ellie responds "oh I know right, it doesn't matter if you're having a rubbish day when you come in here you're going to hear some funny stories", Ruby concurs "oh yeah some of the conversations we've had in here!", the client then turns toward me and says "I hope you don't write down all of the stuff that he comes out with!"'

The above field note illustrates the role of stylists and clients conditioning the salon as an inclusive, hospitable commercial space in a way that compliments its 'worn-in' aesthetic. Moreover, during informal conversations with stylists, they occasionally

reflected upon how the cultivated salon atmosphere distinct from that within larger salons:

> *Ruby: A lot of people say it's different here to where they've been like in a big town salon, I don't think they tend to have a close relationship with their clients.*
> *Ellie: They won't really have the time though will they, because we think we're busy but look at places like Toni and Guy.*
> *Ruby: Honestly, it's too quick, because I've worked in salons like that and it's too much.*

The in-situ interview above reveals an awareness among stylists regarding the agency enabled by a small-scale salon to evolve and nurture relational trajectories with client. In contrast, the time-pressured larger scale salons in which appointments operate in a more efficient manner are perceived as unable to 'gift' additional time with their stylist, whether that be to tend to a hair related matter or simply to converse about personal affairs.

8.4: Conclusion

This chapter has focused upon the lived realities and experiences of those that provide and receive services in the salon. As part of the distinct 'servicescape' (Bitner, 1992), the material environment of the salon coalesced with the embodied capacities of stylists to create a space that envelopes the customer in some manner. In nurturing the development of embodied attributes including 'dress, deportment and voice' (Hancock, 2013: 1006), training providers implemented a prescriptive aesthetic code centred upon professional imagery. However, as alluded to previously in chapter 3 of the thesis,

the type of 'brand' or imagery an organisation seeks to create is premised upon the type of service experience they seek to offer (Pettinger, 2004; Mears, 2014). Analysis of the salon data suggested that stylists sought to cultivate an affective climate, hence a more nuanced approach to aesthetics was assumed. This amounted to a more casual dress code that very much reflected the informal and somewhat imperfect décor within the salon.

An affective climate in the salon was necessary to give rise to co-creational dialogue (Solnet et al, 2016; Cossío- Silva et al, 2013; Payne et al, 2009). Where clients co-operated and provided sufficient detail this needed to be interpreted through a critical framework comprised of technical skill and biographic knowledge of the client (Hanson, 2019; Eayrs, 1993; Algharabli, 2014). This partly concerned clarifying a client's preferences so as to avoid misinterpretation. Of course, interpretation is just one aspect of the process, as stylists needed to execute the agreed upon course of action through an incredibly tactile and precise form of craft. The collective personifying lexicon used by stylist to frame hair emphasised its agentic ability 'do things' (Holton, 2019). This in turn demands 'strategies to deal with its constancy' (Holmes, 2014: 99), the learning of these strategies emerged through the experiential rhythm of everyday practice. The seamless yet meticulous wielding of scissors and other tools signified years of situated application amounting to a fluid performance of deeply ingrained physical labour.

The previous three chapters have presented the empirical data, structuring it to reflect the processual development of skills from formative years of training to the subjective experience of working in a salon. Chapter 6 illustrated the tentative nurturing of relational and embodied skills necessary for service work. Difficulties of this process

were interpreted through a class-based lens, where students' habitus was adapted to accommodate the demands of service work. In order to rebalance the empirical focus back onto the customer and situate the educational discourse regarding service work in actual practice, chapter 7 drew largely from field notes acquired in the salon. Chapter 7 instigated a conceptual departure from sociological research, which largely depicts the customer as passive, inactive and/or hostile. Through a series of rich vignettes, chapter 7 illustrated the agency of customers, who form an active half of a relational dyad with the potential to steer the service and (re) shape the environment. In unpacking the co-creational process further, the significance of various forms of talk found in the service context were discussed. Finally, chapter 8 delves into the realities of co-creating in a bodywork context by oscillating between data collected in the training academy and the salon. Throughout chapter 8 I sought to illustrate how the emotional and embodied attributes of stylists, and the subsequent relations they cultivate with customers, are accompanied by the tactile application of craft. The embodied performance of skill, whether that be technical or relational, is contextually bound by the relational trajectory shared with each client and coloured by the distinct particularities of the salon. The following chapter will explain these insights in further detail with stronger reference to the literature discussed previously in the thesis.

Chapter 9: Discussion

9.1: Introduction:

In this penultimate chapter I will discuss the data presented in the last 3 chapters. Here I intend to situate the findings in the context of the research questions outlined earlier in the thesis. The thesis has provided an overview of the service encounter, emphasising its emergence as a highly experiential 'dyadic interaction of frontline service employees (FSEs) and customers' (Yi et al, 2010: 87). In chapters 2 and 3 through an inter-disciplinary review of relevant literature I illustrated the social, spatial and embodied attributes that coalesce to create a positive service experience. Reviewing sociological research based within service work brought to light a poignant void pertaining to the experiences of the customer. Where embodied and affective attributes are mobilized to create the conditions that allow 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999) to flourish, sociological research infers that customers are either passively subsumed into this process or respond with hostility. Moreover, using Goffman's (1959) theatrical analogy to interpret the service encounter leads to an equally unhelpful representation of customers as a passive 'audience'.

In order to conceptually unpack the skills involved in the contemporary service encounter and give the customer a more pronounced empirical representation, hairdressing was selected as an appropriate occupational context. Initially data collection occurred in the salon, where customer-stylist interaction and the symbolic role of commercial space were the main focus. It was thought that data would vividly expose the encounter as a highly skilled performance that envelopes the customers as more than merely an observing audience. Early analysis of the data engendered further questions regarding the relational and embodied skills performed by service workers

that were of central interest to the thesis. Namely, my interest shifted to the pedagogical development of these skills. From observation of experienced stylists and in-situ questioning of the salon's junior apprentice, I wondered how the training that all stylists go through prepares them for interaction with clients. Echoing a latent sense of theatre, I wondered how 'actors' were prepared and readied for their impeding entrance onto the 'stage' of service work.

Extant empirical research has acknowledged the therapeutic role assumed by stylists, inciting occupational analogies likening them to counsellors, life coaches and/or care workers (Cowen et al, 1981; Soulliere, 1997). Yet, I wondered how actors prepare for such a performance where distinct social and commercial conditions require an embedding of relational, technical and embodied attributes that are situational and nuanced. Moreover, as suggested by the aforementioned occupational analogies, there is a need for displays of sensitivity, compassion and empathy in the handling of intimate, personal detail. I therefore wondered, how are stylists prepared both for the immediate contact of a single interaction and for the management of client relations that potentially span decades? In an effort to address these queries, I empirically 'stepped back' from the salon context to a pedagogical setting of FE colleges and training academies. Through observations and interviews, insights into the tentative nurturing of relational and embodied skills were provided. When aligned with data collected in the salon, a trans-temporal narrative resulted. This narrative vividly traced the highly skilled management and subjective experience of affective service encounters in a bodywork context.

The contribution I offer in this thesis is, therefore, broad. Part of this entails insights that elucidate the type of skills required by service workers to navigate customer interaction. In doing so, the thesis contributes to research exploring 'the experiences and meaning of emotional work', an important empirical endeavour given 'the increasing role of the service sector' (Brockmann, 2013: 374). To vividly reflect the potential emotionality of service encounters, the chosen empirical context features interactions that are often prolonged and episodic. This contrasts with much of the sociological research, which has focused on contexts where encounters are fleeting and transitory. Instead, this thesis captures the rich development of a service interaction that gradually unfolds into a relational trajectory. Empirical research has conceptualised such relations as 'commercial friendships' (Price and Arnould, 1999) and has exposed the commercial benefit of organisations fostering on-going customer relations. This thesis builds upon this by teasing out how the social skills required to cultivate such relations are tacitly learned and embodied as part of a situated performance that is ongoing.

By then looking at the enduring relational trajectories that result from the mobilization of one's social and embodied attributes, the thesis illustrates the dynamic relational and spatial changes that ensue. Crucially, these changes are regarded as emerging through a stylist-client dyad that is steered by both parties. Throughout this thesis I therefore provide a micro-level constructionist analysis of the co-creational process in service encounters. In drawing from marketing research regarding co-creation, I broaden the current sociological frameworks of analysis that have been used to interpret service work. This includes emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), aesthetic labour (Warhurst et al, 2000) and habitus (Bordieu, 1984), which provide conceptual readings of those skills

deployed by service workers. As previously stated, these concepts are however, inhibited by a lingering disregard of the customer. Conceptually, there is little insight provided in relation to customer experience, feelings and agency. I therefore sought to present a dynamic account into the sequential unfolding of the service exchange. In doing so, this thesis also broadens the conceptual research of the dramaturgical analysis. Despite regarding the 'performance' as dependent upon 'the audience's input as well as the actor's presentation' (Grove et al, 1992: 95), extant empirical research has disproportionately furthered conceptual understandings of the actor's performance. Throughout this chapter I unpack the staging of an encounter, considering the skills required to perform, satisfy and engage customers as part of an enveloping service experience contingent upon the contributory offering by the audience/customer.

9.2: Unpacking the 'full combination' of skill

In exploring the pedagogy of relational and embodied skills necessary for service work, extant sociological research focusing on emotional and aesthetic labour is built upon. By stepping back from the situated context of the service encounter, often analogised as a performance (Mann, 1997; Grove et al, 1992; 1998), we see how the social, embodied and technical competencies are tentatively developed among hair and beauty students. Acquiring the skills to engage and envelope the customer required insight adapted to suit the changing situation and developing relational landscape. This speaks to the importance of personalisation, whereby satisfying the 'often diverse and demanding needs of client' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 9) requires ongoing adaptation. For services premised upon personalisation, there is a greater impetus to engage the customer throughout and obtain detail that allows workers to adapt and tailor the service accordingly (Grove et al, 1992). Moreover, the distinct physical composition of hair

further inhibits the application of homogenous practice, as everyone's hair is different.

Each hair strand is a unique structure that can grow, snap and tangle in different ways.

This demands tactile and individualised management, elevating the manual labour

performed by stylists above monotonous forms of 'work that demands too little of the

brain' (Fine, 1996: 109).

Any semblance of change in the client's demeanour, from verbal articulation to slight

expressive nuances, is capable of conveying client's satisfaction and feelings toward the

service. Detecting and delivering the appropriate course of remedial action on the basis

of even the most elusive forms of expression demands a refined level of emotional

intelligence, literacy and tacit understanding (Sheane, 2011). As 'an accepted part of the

occupation', the emotional labour performed through interpersonal abilities 'is always

enacted in combination with other competencies' (Brockmann, 2013: 326). Put simply,

the 'the "soft" work of how clients are perceived and negotiated with' needed to be

enacted alongside 'the "hard" work of how production if managed to address the

demands and requirements of the client' (Wisely and Fine, 1997: 165).

**Learning to perform for the customer: interaction, embodiment and
personalisation**

Data gathered from semi-structured interviews with FE training providers and

observations at a training academy was interpreted through a dramaturgical analysis,

analogising the encounter as a performance (Goffman, 1959; 1961). Situational

conditions of distinct audience expectations partly determine the appropriate

performance required (Goffman, 1959; Tseëlon, 1992; Majors, 2003; Yi et al, 2010).

Customers were not presented as a homogenous mass, but rather as a diverse group. In

broadening the conceptual representation offered by Goffman (1959), customers are regarded as an audience capable of observing and judging, but also as able and willing to participate in a performance that is co-created. For the service worker who initially assumes the leading role, a static and unchanging performance emerged as inappropriate given the dynamic reality of interaction. Rosie's complaint illustrated this: "they've [students] just got one way of communicating and that's it, nothing else, how to react to different people and different situations." In preparing for each interaction, students were required to 'assume a different posture and tone of voice as soon as they face a customer' (Brockman, 2013: 369). Though the theatrical analogy suggests a degree of preparation prior to the impending performance, the inferred fluidity of each encounter renders complete premeditation as infeasible.

In serving as 'a temporal theatre', the salon 'provisionally transforms any who enter' (Hanson, 2019: 152), a metaphor that can be applied to stylists and clients alike as they assume their symbolic roles. Where the norms and traditions of a particular stage/role are unfamiliar, the question pertains as to how nascent and inexperienced actors are readied for their forthcoming performance. Available props and tools may ease the embodied transformation of students into the role of a stylist by assisting in the smooth functioning of a performance (Goffman, 1959, 1961; Hancock, 2013; Grove et al, 1992). Scripts were identified as a way smoothing the variable bumps ensued by the irreducibility of customer interaction. These scripts existed in the form of consultation sheets, composed of premeditated questions intended to elicit a rudimentary level of detail.

Within extant literature the perception of scripts varies, from an asset that enables an effective performance (Seymour, 2000) to a form of protection through a preserved sense of self (Goffman, 1961; Leidner, 1993; Seymour and Sandiford, 2005) to a precursor of alienation (Hochschild, 1983). Poignantly, scripts are lauded in assisting the more reticent employee navigate the potentially overwhelming terrain of customer contact (Seymour, 2000). Training providers therefore used them as a means of assuaging the anxieties that preceded client interaction. In remedying the timidity of students, scripts were framed as intended for exclusive use in the formative stages of learning. Extended use that breeds over-reliance was cautioned by training providers, who distributed scripts on the basis that their usage would wain as students' confidence flourished, allowing them to cope with the situational nuances of interaction:

> *"You take them from very sort of shy and quiet, but because we do have*
>
> *consultation sheets, they've got certain questions or certain tests they've got to do,*
>
> *that gives them a focus they don't actually have to think too much or get tongue*
>
> *tied, that can be a really good basis for them to move on." (Rosie, training provider)*

As Rosie illustrates scripts assist in the transformative process where students go from being "shy and quiet" to being able to cope with the flux of social interaction without getting "tongue tied". Students could not rely permanently on a script given the inevitable spontaneity of human interaction (Leidner, 1993) and the fact that regardless of a customer's relationship with a salon, 'each visit to the hairdressers is itself a unique event' (Holmes, 2014: 491). Moreover, as Hannah hinted at, over-usage of scripts reduced the encounter to that of a formulaic "box-ticking" process that is unlikely to address the individualistic needs of each client. Over-reliance upon a script therefore

risks a seemingly disingenuous or 'canned' performance unlikely to satisfy the demands of customers who are increasingly seeking a service that exudes authenticity (Grove et al, 1992; Goffman, 1961; Seymour and Sandiford, 2005).

The on-going experience of 'performing'

Building upon the theatrical analogy of the service encounter and extant sociological research, it emerged that fluidity is required to adapt and cope with the unpredictable course of interaction. These situational discrepancies demand an intuitive performance that is attuned to the distinct relational context (Mann, 1997; Tseëlon, 1992; Grove et al, 1992). An attuned level of interpretation is necessary to effectively identify 'transaction defining cues' (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989) as well as signs given off by the client during the actual performance (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Sheane, 2011). This results in a self that is 'a product of a scene' (Goffman, 1959: 245), but also one that is relationally steered by the customer. Identified as another way of "reading and communicating" (Tony), students were taught to remain emotionally literate and responsive throughout the whole encounter. As well as being customer-focused, students were taught to remain aware of "posture, having open and friendly body language, how much eye contact you make" (Carol). Reflecting the self and other-orientated realities of performing emotional labour, students were taught how to manage their 'own emotions and seek to manipulate those of the customer or the client' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005: 695). Such emotional intuition and self-reflection allow the detection of the signs, subtleties and nuances that inform and steer the encounter, redirecting it if necessary. Where empirical research has shown emotional labour to be both self and other orientated (Hochschild, 1983; Sheane, 2011), the data therefore revealed it to be highly situational as well.

'Real working environments' or placements within the industry exposed students to diverse interactional conditions induced by a heterogeneous clientele. As relational skills are 'automatic […] improvised and enacted', formalised learning and instruction can only go so far as skills 'have to be practiced to ensure a smooth performance' (Holmes, 2014: 485). Adjusting to the ebbs and flows of social interaction is therefore, tacitly learned by being 'thrown into' situations and adapting, rather than developing a rigid 'blueprint defined in advance' (Segal, 2017: 474). Through experience, students breached their one-dimensional mode of interaction: "where students haven't had that type of experience at home, they come from maybe a family where maybe it doesn't matter whether they're talking to their doctor, teacher or best friend, they've got one way of communicating and that's the only way they communicate" (Rosie). Any semblance of homogenised interaction was shattered by the reality of a working salon where individual customers presented with distinct demands: "when they go on placement that's huge, because they can see the industry and that they're going to have to deal with customers and be on reception and deal with different requests from the public" (Lily). This reflects the notion that for relational and embodied skills to flourish, one must experience the rich variability of service interaction.

In seeking to reshape students' embodied attributes, domestic backdrops lingered on as deeply inscribed markers. There was a consensus among training providers that "not all home lives are as good as what you or I have. It's not as good. It's like you've got to know everything" (Ashley). Poignantly, domestic backdrops were noted as incurring potentially detrimental effects upon student's progress, as apparent during an in-situ interview conducted during observation at the training academy. For example, two

training providers expressed concern about a student's upcoming assessment being negatively impacted by her home life, which amongst other things was acknowledged as reinforcing use of an inappropriate lexicon comprised of regional colloquialisms and informal language. Several other training providers spoke of students interacting with clients in a manner that was overzealous, identified by Rosie as "they're [students] too loud, that they're bullish, it's hard". The harsh and intense expression of visceral emotion, whether that is distress, anger or laughter, risked incapacitating the actor and fundamentally disrupting an otherwise harmonious performance (Goffman, 1959). It is also incongruent to the constructed norms of emotional control and suppression that typify service work (Nixon, 2009). In emphasising the dramaturgical positioning of the self as highly structural rather than entirely situational, the analysis considers performing in a service encounter as a broader developmental process embedded specifically within enduring class relations.

Turning students into "little ladies": the (re) orientation of embodied class markers

Assuming the role of a stylist and/or beautician was located as more than the mobilization of available props or tools. It was positioned as encompassing an embodied transformation that entailed a redirection of deeply engrained attributes. In transforming students into "little ladies" (Laura), attempts were made to "soften all the hard edges" (Charlie), ameliorating undesirable attributes through a process of reorientation. Seemingly the 'hardness' of students was inferred as emanating from their working-class upbringing, which imbued them with embodied cultural capital, exuding a 'valued cultural bearing in one's 'bodily hexis' or body techniques' (Crossley, 2005: 30). For students, the deprived reality of their upbringing rendered them

incapable of performing 'the good self because they do not have the cultural resources to do so' (Skeggs, 2005: 974). However, training providers positioned their work as an intervening opportunity allowing students to carve out an alternative occupational trajectory and ostensibly shed their markers of 'Eliza Doolittle Syndrome' (Gatta, 2011; Crossley, 2005), gradually (re) emerging as capable and confident service workers.

The extant sociological research discussed in chapter 2 and 3 illustrated a leaning toward service workers whose embodied dispositions are suggestive of a cultured upbringing (Wright, 2005; Boyle and Keere, 2019; Warhurst, 2008). Successive research has since reflected some disparity in the embodied traits sought after across different service contexts (Pettinger, 2004). Salons are no exemption as each one operates by a distinct set of norms and rules; certain embodied traits may be tolerated in particular salons while in others they may be deemed inappropriate (Lindsay, 2004). Despite potential disparities engendered by "the culture of a salon" (Charlie), training providers generally sought to (re) orientate and (re) shape students' habitus in order to "create that professional image" (Hannah). However, a disruptive domestic background seemingly leads students to 'communicate, articulate and perform their emotional selves' (Nixon, 2009: 306) in a manner incongruent to normative organisational standards.

In reorientating the habitus of students to accommodate the cultured dispositions sought after across the service industry, these skills were regarded as transferable. Students could, therefore, move into alternative service rolls including retails jobs in the likes of "McDonalds or into Tesco" (Becky). Alternatively, students could venture into "the caring role, you know healthcare and social care, some go into travel, cabin crew"

(Lucy). Access to these roles was possible on the basis of the dispositions acquired through education that speak to a more refined level of comportment. It is, however, worth pointing out that while the occupational landscape of students may have been broadened, this expansion was largely horizontal. The options that emerged in light of a more cultured, deferential habitus appropriate for service work, were those characterised by minimal status, low pay and a relatively flat career trajectory, thereby minimizing scope for social mobility.

The observational and interview data collected in the training contexts richly illustrates the early developmental stages of assuming a service role. As outlined earlier in the thesis, extant empirical research that has focused on the experience of service workers has been largely 'present'-orientated, in that it has looked at the skills applied to navigate moments of customer interaction. This suggests that the management of customer relations through a complex interweaving of emotional and aesthetic labour occurs automatically. Yet, the data reveals that the seamless application of relational and embodied skills represents an ongoing accomplishment that is tacitly learned. As the changeable contours of social interaction are experienced, students learn to navigate interaction in a way that allows for variation and fluidity. In moving away from sameness and uniformity, the data suggests that performances of emotional and aesthetic labour become increasingly nuanced, informed by the broader service climate and the distinct relational trajectory with each client. In furthering understandings of service work, the following section broadens these insights by firstly rebalancing the empirical focus to include an analysis of the customer experience and illustrating how the intricate particularities of a service encounter incite a nuanced performance.

9.3: The impact of enduring relational trajectories

Having richly illustrated the tentative development of relational and embodied attributes or 'soft skills', the data also speaks to a customer experience that is highly individualised and agentic. At best, research has analogised the customer as part of an audience (Goffman, 1959; Grove et al, 1992). The dramaturgical representation does confer greater engagement than extant sociological research where the customer is either absent or disruptive. However, this engagement is posited largely as compliance and conformity to the norms and schemas governing the stage where the performance occurs (Grove et al, 1992). An audience can however, derail, alter or disturb a performance, yet the lived experiences of the 'audience' and their agency remains poorly represented in empirical research. Through a constructivist analysis that focuses on space, this thesis illustrates the tenacity of particular customers, whose behaviour is neither that of complete conformity or defiance. In sustaining a dynamic focus, I regard the customers' navigation of the salon as emanating from a unique relational trajectory that is continuously evolving (Harness et al, 2020).

An on-going process of (re) configuration elevates the space from being a 'physical container' (Bitner, 1992: 61) that 'constrains action, structures opportunities for action and [...] remains stable over time' (Best and Hindmarsh, 2019: 250). Rather, interaction and space are deeply entangled in a dynamic symbiosis, each (re) shaping and (re) orientating the other (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Mulligan, 1998). The material and symbolic landscape of the salon is therefore, conditioned through continuous engagement by those who claim, appropriate and reorganise it. Use of the space is dependent upon an established socio-spatial trajectory comprised of ritualised

endeavours that inform future interaction. The 'stage' of the salon is co-created through evolving social relations that transpire as part of a performance. As these relations are often quasi-intimate and enduring, the salon may emerge as a 'third place'. This reflects the affective climate of the salon, reproduced by occupants who consciously embed themselves within the affective and enveloping landscape.

The client as an active co-creator of the commercial space:

Space is deeply significant, emanating from 'intelligible or meaningful material arrangements, which are tied to the performance of particular activities' (Crabtree, 2000: 2). Though the overarching physical landscape and structure of a space may remain fairly static (Goffman, 1959), space bears a mutable materiality that facilitates and embodies the social relations it houses (Mulligan, 1998). The sociality that imbues space with meaning and orientates its physical landscape engenders emotionality (Majors, 2001; Soja, 1985), symbolically conditioning the space as 'an anchor for attachment' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 907). This speaks to the potential sentimentality with which some customers may relate to the salon. For them, it is more than a place to get their haircut or a stage upon which to perform in the role of 'customer', it is a "second home" (Ruby) where sprawling social relations and an idiomatic social milieu offer an important source of emotional fulfilment. Reflecting this sense of belonging through a series of rich vignettes, I also illustrated how a commercial space is subject to a co-creational process that re-organises and blurs normative territorial demarcations.

The data therefore broadens empirical accounts of organisational space, which have explored how employees meaningfully construct their workplace (Shortt, 2012; Ashforth et al, 2008), as they 'use, inhabit, experience and, in doing so, constitute their

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workspace' (Best and Hindmarsh, 2019: 249). In departing from the focus of meanings attributed to a space by those paid to occupy it (employees), the field notes focused more upon the spatial usage of those paying to be there (customers), who 'co-produce and participate in the workspace' (Best and Hindmarsh, 2019: 249). Patronage has long been acknowledged as harbouring the potential to be 'disruptive or creative in generating alternative notions of hospitality and space' (Lugosi, 2009: 403; Griffiths and Gilly, 2012). Acknowledging the constructive potential of clients' movement, interaction and embodied practices, customers are elevated from a passive representation as recipients of '(de) personalised care and attention' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005: 686). In broadening the 'transformative service research paradigm' identified by Rosenbaum et al (2007), the data reflected how commercial spaces are subject to an on-going process of (re) construction and configuration borne out of distinct socio-spatial trajectories.

The breaching and (re) construction of spatial boundaries:

Spatial (re) construction transpired firstly in relation to the symbolic demarcation of private and public domains. Private areas such as staff rooms and toilets are analogised as a 'backstage' area, typified by evasion from the prying eyes of one's audience (Goffman, 1959). As a site of 'role release' (Goffman, 1961: 96-99) 'time out' (Van Maanen, 1986) and 'role-relaxation' (Ashforth et al, 2008), individuals are able to cathartically discard the mask they don for their 'front stage' performances (Goffman, 1959; Lewis, 2005; Wager, 2007; Bolton, 2005). For stylist Kelly, the privacy of the staff room was key in coping with the emotional demands of customer interaction: "I like everybody to see everything open and then obviously close the staff room door and then that's our little domain, we can have our coffee in there and our 5 minutes chill and we have a break". Occupying the backstage allows performers to 'decompress' by

engaging in practices incompatible with their front stage persona such as 'loosening one's attire, venting, gossiping, joking with co-workers [and] talking about personal and network matters' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 25). Back stage areas may be spatially designated domains such as 'back offices, lunchrooms [and] restrooms' (Ashforth et al, 2008), or the staff room commonly found in educational institutions (Richards, 2010).

In the salon context, the backstage area of the staff room, concealed by a closed door, allowed stylists time to engage in practices intended to enhance the process of impression management (Goffman, 1959; Grove et al, 1992). Notional boundaries were temporally reinforced through the designation of a 'lunch hour' in which no appointments were scheduled. The backstage area was perceived as so crucial to a smooth front stage performance, by facilitating the expression of resultant tension, that Goffman (1959) identified the two as symbiotically linked. Practices such as spritzing deodorant/perfume, speedily coiffuring one's own hair and using mouthwash all minimized the possibility of offensive aesthetic attributes disrupting the sensorial experience enjoyed by the customer. However, in a divisive act of 'audience segregation' (Goffman, 1959: 57), stylists co-conditioned traditionally private domains as accessible to certain customers. Rather than derailing the performance by shattering illusions of perfection, 'access to backstage-areas, activities and stories' represented a 'gift' awarded to particular clients with whom strong relational bonds were established (Debenedetti et al, 2013). Extant research has illustrated how even the most unassuming spaces can be 'humanized' as people confer feelings of ownership toward a space where they feel they can truly be themselves (Shortt, 2015).

Out of sight areas in organisational spaces are often conceived as enabling authenticity for the workers who don a façade while on the front stage (Goffman, 1959; Ashforth et al, 2008). However, I contend that the very pockets of space that offer a veil of privacy are appropriated by particular clients seeking to symbolically embed themselves within the landscape and confer a more intimate relationship. For certain clients, their entry into the back area appeared as ingrained and as ritualised as them having their hair washed at the sinks beforehand. In other words, it represented a symbolically loaded component of their overall customer experience and was particularly significant in reaffirming their sense of relational belonging (Collins, 1990). The sense of familiarity acquired through episodic, recurrent encounters intensifies the intimacy through which the client relates to the space, allowing clients to confidently navigate both spatial and social aspects (Debenedetti et al, 2013; Bookman, 2014). Moreover, the situational, tacit understanding manifests as embodied capital (Bourdieu, 1984) that facilitates ease of navigation and an enhanced sense of belonging. An inclusive climate is cultivated, as clients are encouraged to comfortably linger and navigate the salon's landscape in a seemingly autonomous manner (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012).

Spatial co-creation therefore emerges as a temporally located phenomenon, underpinned by a relational trajectory distinct to each client-stylist dyad. The resultant rituals are deeply purposive and intensify the client's 'feeling of membership' (Collins, 1990: 34). This reaffirms the salon as a 'pleasant, congenial and positive social environment' where co-creation transpires with greater ease (Yi and Gong, 2013). In conceiving of the 'interaction rituals' that emanate from longstanding client relations (Hill and Bradley, 2010: 54), the client's usage of the salon could be conceptualised as a distinctive 'socio-spatial ritual', a habitual practice loaded with 'emotional overtones'

that through the mobilization of material and social properties reaffirmed the client's sense of spatial attachment. Rituals are also highly purposive and performative, being that they have the potential to reconfigure the demarcating aspects of a commercial space (Bookman, 2014).

Spatial engagement that subverts normative usage to better suit customer's individualised agenda speaks to complex relational asymmetries that manifest as situational territorialism (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012). The materiality of a space has long been acknowledged as communicating power imbalances (Siebert et al, 2018), though the exertion of control is typically allocated to managers who 'continuously plan, build and change an organisations physical surroundings' (Bitner, 1992: 57). However, through their role as 'many-sided, complex and sophisticated actors' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005: 686), clients engaged in territorial practices within the salon, arguably with the intent of establishing and reaffirming a spatial claim reflective of their sense of belonging within the space (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012; Duncan, 1996; Sandiford, 2019). The salon therefore becomes subject to individualised symbolism, allowing for interaction and movement that is both meaningful and purposive. Client's spatial practices therefore emanated from a collaborative process premised upon an enduring trajectory in which their distinct spatial relations were supported and reaffirmed by stylists.

The salon as a co-constructed 'third place':
The spatial mobility borne out of longstanding embedded social relations speaks to the salon functioning as a 'third place'. Generally, the salon fosters various criteria identified as typical of a third place, including 'informality, neutrality and inclusiveness

within convivial environments' (Sandiford, 2019: 1109). The latter attributes allow social ties to flourish and cultivate a light-hearted atmosphere wherein 'joy and acceptance reign over anxiety and alienation' (Oldenburg; 1999: 38). The data speaks to a socio-spatial dynamism (re) conditioning the salon as an inclusive space, where stylists and clients co-affirmed relational status through embodied and meaningful practices. The 'social actions' that constitute daily life nullify any semblance of 'static 'meanings'', reconstituting the space through the 'events and activities within a day' (Best and Hindmarsh, 2019: 250).

Reproducing the client's sense of spatial belonging and ownership allowed them to re-'root' themselves with each visit (Nguyen et al, 2019) and enjoy a customer experience that felt 'more home like than home' (Oldenburg, 1999: 36-39). Allowing clients to experience a 'sense of homeyness' is 'highly valued and seen as atypical for a commercial setting and is thus appreciated as a treasured gift' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 904-909). Examples of this include 'employing comfortable seating arrangements, allowing customers to linger, and allowing them to participate in the servicescape décor' (Rosenbaum et al, 2007: 55). Complimenting the 'homey', non-perfect décor of the salon, particular clients were often encouraged to linger following the cessation of their appointment. Clients lingering in the salon was occasionally accompanied by additional chatter. Yet, clients were also observed simply just sitting in the waiting area seemingly enjoying the salon's warm social atmosphere. In explaining her frequent attendance, a regular client Brenda reported attending the salon to evade the hustle and bustle of society: "there are times when you're so busy you just come here for a bit of peace and quiet, there was a time when the only time I could read my book was when I came here". At times, the salon appeared more as a public dwelling space on account of

the regular clients who arrived early and/or lingered after their appointment. These clients were often observed leisurely reading a book and enjoying an additional cup of coffee provided by the stylists, seemingly without an impetus to leave.

In a way, a client simply dwelling in a commercial space is at odds with profit objectives and efficiency. However, the lingering presence of customers cultivates an affective climate that can be enjoyed past one's 'official' appointment. When considering the organisation of the salon it is, however, important to acknowledge the economic incentive motivating the stylist's behaviours. The support offered, the sympathetic reception and the welcoming ambiance of the salon constitute situational embellishments contingent upon the client's repeat attendance (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Bookman, 2014: Lugosi, 2009). Interaction beyond the situated confines of the salon could be perceived as altruistically motivated (Hansen, 2019). However, within the context of the salon it is crucial to locate client-stylist relations within their economic context.

This is not to imply that relations are solely motivated by economics. Rather, different motivations may intersect and overlap as client-stylist relations change and evolve. Moreover, as relations progress the objective of remaining relationally detached during the encounters may become unfeasible (Ashforth et al, 2008), given the discussion of emotive and highly intimate topics. Within such a prolonged relational dynamic, a superficial 'wooden smile' is less likely to retain clients than an emotional frontage typified by authenticity (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005; Seymour, 2000). Attesting to the underlying economic asymmetry of the exchange, the empathetic ear offered by stylists is inevitably commoditised as self-disclosure intended for those who pay for it. Of

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course, authenticity remains a highly perceptive construct. Therefore, despite enduring commercial interests that underpin each encounter, the client may experience interaction as 'spontaneous and not primarily driven by commercial motives' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 912). The relational intimacy and emotional ties that blur the distinction between pecuniary and philanthropically motivated interaction are also what condition the salon as an affectively infused 'third space'.

Existing as a 'third place': personal disclosure, catharsis and relational trajectories

Extant empirical research based in hair and beauty has long acknowledged the salon as a site of social significance (Ward et al, 2016; Furman, 1997; McFarquhar and Lewis, 2000), as it enables patrons 'to establish new relationships or build existing ones' (Lugosi, 2009: 398). Despite being depicted as 'site of pain and suffering', organisations can also operate as 'places of healing where caring and compassion are both given and received' (Kanov et al, 2004: 809). Such reciprocity was commonly observed in the salon, as stylist and client 'entered into a more humane form of interaction' (Hancock, 2013: 1005), divulging personal and at times, sombre detail. Social ties were subsequently enhanced (Bettencourt and Guinner, 1996), and relations were (re) produced as highly affective, boundary open relationships (Price et al, 1995). The elicitation and retention of biographical detail not only strengthens the emotional ties, but also demarcates a space as increasingly home-like (Warner et al, 2012; Debenedetti et al, 2013; Nguyen et al, 2019).

Social familiarity was upheld in the salon through frequent recollection of other's biographies, demonstrating the retention and cumulative amassing of personal detail.

Moreover, a sense of community was cemented by encountering the same faces, creating a 'face block' community where members are aware of one another; even where close relations are not shared (Hickman, 2013). This was particularly notable among the most regular clients who appeared as metaphorical cornerstones of the salon's client base, given that they were often known and recognised by other clients and were regularly discussed within the salon. An affective climate comprised of familiar social relations allows catharsis through the disclosure of personal information (Furman, 1997; Ward et al, 2016). The resultant compassion cultivates connections between individuals, assuaging feelings of isolation (Kanov et al, 2004; Bookman, 2014; Fullager et al, 2019).

During observation, it was common to experience a collective sense of elevation upon the sharing of celebratory news, while loss and distress were received with solemnness. This shared emotional offloading and reciprocity is further suggestive of the salon's hospitable affect 'involving welcoming, inclusion, sheltering and reciprocity' (Lugosi, 2009: 399). Prior research has however illustrated the tendency for topics premised upon 'personal-emotional, marital, money-job and alcohol' to emerge as central in the affective climate of the salon (Cowen et al, 1981: 236). This does however, contrast with the pedagogical discourse discussed in chapter 6, where training providers prescriptively instructed students to avoid certain taboo topics. As well as avoiding topics with the potential to distress and/or offend clients, students were also cautioned against veering into intimate conversations that incur a personal/professional blurring. It was however, observed in the salon that relations could become reciprocal, as stylist Amelia conveyed strong attachments to particular clients during an in-situ interview:

"I've been through marriage divorce, had three children, I'm remarrying in a few weeks and they've been with me the whole journey so very much they like a therapy to me, sometimes I have a bad day, I come into work and you can chat with clients and they actually make you feel better, they say 'oh Amelia are you ok?' they ask me what's happened in my life so it's a two way thing" (Amelia, stylist).

Extant research acknowledges the therapeutic role assumed by stylists, yet the data gathered in the salon spoke to enduring relations where attachment and disclosure of personal detail is reciprocated. Although this signals a blurring between the personal and the professional, Amelia illustrates the significance of time in allowing these relations to flourish. Time inspired relational trajectories that spanned decades and placed the client and stylist as peripheral figures privy to the major events during the life course (marriage, children, divorce) (Harness et al, 2020). This perhaps explains why training providers instructed students to demarcate their personal and professional selves among clients. Unlike experienced stylists in the salon, students did not have a relational history with their clients. Where stylists had time to learn the nuances of their client and, if permitted, bear witness to the highs and lows of their life course, students' encounters with clients were based upon initial exchange of superficial chatter.

In the salon it was the *sharing* of sensitive personal detail that conferred deeper social connections (Furman, 1997) and nurtured a 'commercial friendship' (Price and Arnould, 1999). When informally asked about their relationships with clients, stylists spoke of attempts to maintain professional boundaries. However, there was an acknowledgement that gradually relations veered into a quasi-friendship as efforts to

surface act diminished and stylists became increasingly open and forthcoming with their own personal stories (Harness et al, 2020). Of course, not all clients desired such an intimate relationship with their stylist as many were content with superficial pleasantries of small talk. However, for others the stylist-client relationship remedied the 'negative symptoms associated with social or emotional isolation' (Rosenbaum, 2009: 59; Rosenbaum et al, 2007). In emerging 'as a response to shared problems' (Fine, 1979: 740), the culture of the salon functioned as a means of negating the loneliness experienced particularly by the salon's elderly patrons. The 'embodied-enacted process' of storytelling (Ward et al, 2017: 1297) serves as an 'important outlet for self-expression' particularly in light of the impending social marginalisation associated with old age.

Storytelling for elderly clients in the salon provided a co-present and receptive audience, momentarily filling the social void experienced in the absence of a spouse and/or nearby family (Hickman, 2013; Jeffres et al, 2009). Attesting to the ingrained sharing of personal detail, Ruby jokingly claimed that she could "write a book about some of the tales and some of the stories" that she had been told during her years as a stylist. Subsequently, through its idealised representation, the salon community functioned as a remedy to the loneliness experienced in contemporary society (Bauman, 2001; Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982). The 'driving restlessness' that emanated from the combined lack of emotional support and companionship led certain clients to harbour a strong dependency upon the salon (Weiss, 1973: 18). The support and attention 'gifted' to clients by stylists was so gratefully received that clients initiated a dynamic interactional process centred upon 'over-reciprocation and ambassadorship' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 905).

Stylists could, however, remain somewhat detached and maintain the professionalism espoused by training providers in chapter 6. The simple and non-verbal act of stylists nodding demonstrated their receptivity and maintained 'the flow of the conversation' (Bonaccio et al, 2016; 1050). As indicated by extant empirical research, it is essential that stylists perform roles such as therapist, counsellor and/or life coach as part of their work (Furman, 1997; Sharma and Black, 2001; Black, 2004; Gimlin, 1996; Soulliere, 1997; Hanson, 2019). This reflects the fact that stylist's work is both emotionally enriching as it is aesthetically enhancing (Cohen, 2020). Clients therefore leave a salon 'feeling both physically and emotionally pampered with a desire for more' (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007: 163). Within extant literature, this emotional pampering has been noted as engendering 'ultimate loyalty' of frequent attendance (Rosenbaum, 2006: 67), generous tipping (Debenedetti et al, 2013) and the tokenistic offerings of birthday cards, Christmas gifts and thank you notes.

The provision of an emotionally indulgent service does, however, pose a constant risk of subordination by demarcating them as relationally inferior. The organisation of an appointment in many service contexts has been acknowledged as echoing subordinate imagery of sovereign relations. In a sense, this is intensified in hair and beauty as the customer sits upon the salon chair, symbolically comparable to a modern day 'throne' where they await attention and adornment (Kang, 2010; 144; Korczynski, 2013). However, stylists could assert professional status through the valued application of his specialist judgment and 'subcultural knowledge' (Fine, 1996: 98), necessary to reassure the client about the quality of their hair. This was also apparent in chapter 6, where

training providers emphasised the importance of students drawing from a technical lexicon to evaluate the feasibility a client's request.

The evolution of relationships in the actual salon instigates opportunities to re-establish and bolster relational status through language. For example, colloquially referring to younger clients as "Princess" or courteously titling elder clients a "Mrs" reinforces relational inferiority. However, these were countered through the use of diminutive language such as "honey", "little monkey" and "darling". Here the stylist is able to discursively rebalance the power dynamic by semantically identifying the client through informal pet names that diminish client authority. This reflects the democratization of the worker-client relationship, increasingly typified by a levelling out of asymmetrical status enabled by access to specialist knowledge and capital (Fine, 1996; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Sheane, 2011). Interaction therefore facilitates an opportunity for reclaimed status in the face of relational threats imposed by service work. The accumulated stock of referential capital and technical expertise therefore acts as a symbolic buffer (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Fine, 1996) to the asymmetries posed by providing 'emotional 'pampering'' and indulging client's confessional practices (Hanson, 2019: 150).

Customers may indeed, revel in the emotional indulgence and attentiveness provided as part of the service (Korczynski, 2013). For certain customers, the service facilitates a desired sense detachment and catharsis through a designated 'time for the self' (Black, 2002: 5). In broadening sociological understandings of the customer, the data also speaks to a less hedonic and indulgent impetus toward the salon. Rather, a communal pull persists on account of the salon's conditioning as a quasi-hospitable domain that

offers empathetic support. The salon's demarcation as a socially significant domain was further constituted through the presence of salon regulars, and the response they collectively elicited from the salon through their occasional absence (Warner et al, 2011; Debenedetti et al, 2013). This again illustrates the active and significant role assumed by clients, whose presence becomes a definitive feature of the space. The ties exhibited by regular clients are suggestive of place attachment, which theorizes that 'it is to those social relationships not just place qua place to which people are attached' (Lou and Altman, 1992: 7).

Time plays an important role in the development of place attachment and flourishing of commercial friendships. The inevitable passage of time evolved client-stylist relations in an increasingly nuanced way, whether that be into a quasi-friendship or simply a commercial exchange. In this regard, the struggle experienced by students discussed in chapter 6 emanates from client relations that remain in a state of undeveloped infancy. Relations simply cannot develop into 'commercial friendships' or the like without recurrent contact (Price and Arnould, 1999), hence students could not feasibly foster a client relationship that breached its commercial underpinnings in any meaningful way. These affective relations were not however, an automatic by-product of episodic client-stylist interaction. Relations took time to flourish; yet interaction was also crucial in facilitating the disclosure of one's deepest intimacies. In tentatively nurturing an affective rapport with clients, small talk was essential. Such phatic chatter is often misinterpreted as unimportant, existing only 'at the margins of big talk' yet as research has shown, the role of small talk 'is anything but small or marginal' (McCarthy, 2003: 60). Toerien and Kitzinger's (2007a: 657) research further problematizes the longstanding assumption of small talk as 'independent of the 'official business' of the

institution'. Despite being regarded as 'mundane talk' that is 'referentially unconnected to the specific service' (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018: 223), the inoffensive and innocuous pleasantries of small talk can be highly purposive in the context of relational development.

This peripheral 'salon chat' which is 'context-dependent and context-renewing' also reaffirms the salon as a habitable, inclusive domain (Ward et al, 2017: 1294). In this regard, even the most trivial and inconsequential topics and utterances with seemingly little impact function in a highly purposive manner. Gently asking about holidays, family, work or discussing the weather crucially guide and inform the direction of an enduring relational trajectory to be built upon with each exchange. This echoes the discussions of training providers in chapter 6, who spoke of restricting students' conversations with clients to the aforementioned topics. These topics seemingly qualify conversation as 'friendly and open' and through the passage of time stylists' role evolves from 'agent-client [to] friend-friend' (Ashforth et al, 2008: 22). Through cumulative instances of 'small talk', an ever-amassing stock of personal detail amounts to an encounter that more closely resembles that between two friends. Ultimately, the client and stylist share a relational trajectory that is entirely unique to their dynamic, informed by interactions of the past (Harness et al, 2020).

Where interactions in the training context were bound by temporal constraints that encumbered development, relations in the salon were free to develop in whatever way the client desired. Quite often, the course of relational development incited a humorous dialogue that reaffirmed notions of friendship and belonging. The humour used in the salon was often reciprocal and premised upon self-deprecating commentary, citing

issues of personal appearance, family or bodily composition. It was common for elderly clients and stylists to jointly lament the physiological ailments and deficiencies that define an increasingly aging body. The collective onslaught of laughter and shared sense of problematic physiology cemented both parties' relational involvement (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009). Moving away from notions of passivity and inactivity, the customer is no longer restricted to simply laughing at jokes made by others, but actively makes jokes and furthers humorous dialogue in the salon.

In light of the recurrent contact and affective interactional terrain, it is possible for a 'truly social relationship to emerge', which enables a ''bleeding through'' between a practitioner's emotional and professional selves' (Hanson, 2019: 152). This poses a stark contrast to insights from the training academy, where service-orientated discourse imposed a seemingly rigid distinction between public/private self and customer/friend. Drifting amongst these dichotomies risked the embodiment of a service role that is detached and professional. However, the reality of salon life illustrated the significance of time in allowing the evolution of relations that inspired distinct interaction. The conversations observed therefore aligned with what Klapp (1969: 273) defined as 'non-discursive symbolism' where the idiomatic lexicon is predicated upon localised knowledge acquired from prior encounters, which resultantly (re) strengthens existing social ties. Moreover, as a symbolically loaded space, the salon serves a mnemonic purpose by inciting an onrush of memory amongst its occupants, who concurrently strengthen their own relations by collectively reflecting upon shared memories symbolically located within the physical confines of the salon. The sense of memory, familiarity and nostalgia emanates from enduring social relations, rather than those early encounters with new customers or inexperienced stylists.

The familiarity generated through the routine occupation of a particular space typically equates with an elevated sense of comfort and security, thereby strengthening emotive, spatial bonds (Debenedetti et al, 2013; Rosenbaum, 2006; 2008). The passage of time also imbues a site with an interactional past composed of memories associated with that place often engendering positive, nostalgic reflections. Client's often reflected and reminisced about their past encounters at the salon, though their attachment was bolstered not only by lingering memories of old, but also by the security of those envisaged for the future. The temporal trajectory underpinning an individual's place attachment is, therefore, not just past-orientated but also driven by an envisioned future. Through symbolically significant co-creational practices that are both spatial and interpersonal, the salon becomes increasingly located within the client's life course as a site of past, current and future encounters. This furthers the development of temporally situated, commercial encounters that may evolve to resemble 'quasi-friendships' or remain situational exchanges premised upon superficial chatter. In furthering insights into co-creation, the following section looks to how the distinct conditions of bodywork warrant a dialogue premised upon engagement, negotiation and alignment.

9.4: The distinct conditions of 'aestheticizing body work'

Finally, this thesis considers the distinct relational conditions of bodywork. Here the service output does not consist of an intangible experience or a physical product, but rather becomes inscribed upon the client's body as a semi-permanent aesthetic modification. The burgeoning socio-cultural premium attributed to one's body (Gimlin, 2000; Mears, 2014; Giddens, 1991; Holton, 2019) heightens the importance of navigating the encounter appropriately, ensuring that the necessary information is

elicited, interpreted and enacted. In this regard, the customer's role is essential in co-creating a service where the outcome becomes embodied. This underlying aesthetic objective also warrants consideration of employee's corporeality and the material servicescape (Bitner, 1992). The embodiment of staff and immediate proximal environment coalesce as important resources in the affirmation of an aesthetically rooted evaluation of service.

Encouraging co-creational dialogue: eliciting customer detail and developing tacit interpretation

Co-creating an effective service encounter is dependent upon collaborative input from a minimum of two parties (Buonincontri et al, 2017; Cossío- Silva et al, 2013; Alves et al, 2016). Navigating the encounter requires clients to mobilize value-creating opportunities that manifest as 'dynamic, interactive, non-linear and often unconscious processes' (Payne et al, 2008: 83-96). Stylists therefore endeavoured to create an emotive and affective climate that established an open platform for discussion. This reflects extant empirical research on co-creation, which illustrated the efforts of customer-facing employees in creating conditions that allow and encourage customer to participate and co-create a fulfilling service experience (Solnet et al, 2016; Cossío- Silva et al, 2013; Payne et al, 2009). In a bodywork context such as hairdressing, the impetus to create these conditions are arguably greater as customer input is necessary to ensure their body is altered according to their preferences. Facilitating such customer input necessitates interactive qualities such as 'courtesy, friendliness and respect', traits that manifest in the social environment and are directly linked to an increased likelihood of customer engagement (Yi and Gong, 2013).

The distinct nature of hair and beauty appointments does, however, restrict the customer's engagement as their body becomes disembodied, existing as a material surface upon which work is performed (Cohen et al, 2013; Wolkowitz, 2002; Algharabali, 2014). The client's mobility is rendered static during their appointment, being that they remain confined to the chair while the work is performed. Their feelings are however, subtly conveyed through facial expressions and dispositional nuances that shift as the appointment progresses (Wisely and Fine, 1997; Sheane, 2011). More directive and explicit customer input may consist of verbal instruction, as well as expressive utterances and body language. Eliciting verbal detail was judged as especially important for the appointment, which depended upon sufficient detail of client's immediate preferences as well as an overview of prior treatments (Hanson, 2019; Eayrs, 1993). Put simply, 'a hair stylist's perm relies on accurate information provided by the service customer' (Grove et al, 1992: 110). Extant research regarding co-creation has judged sufficient customer input as so crucial for the service that it constitutes a norm attached to the 'role' of the customer (Grove et al, 1992; Buonincontri et al, 2017). A lack of customer input renders the service increasingly fragile, as without sufficient customer guidance, 'the quality of the value co-creation may be low' (Yi and Gong, 2013: 1279). Client disengagement not only encumbers providing an effective service but also hinders the organic flow of chatter often associated with the affective conditioning of the salon.

In chapter 7, the data initially illustrated the participation of clients seeking to become 'open', in the lingo' of the salon (Korkman, 2015: 205). However, data discussed further on revealed the difficulties encountered when clients refused efforts to draw them into the idiomatic talk of the salon. Here the emotional pampering normally offered to

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clients as part of the service was supplanted by a level of 'perfunctory politeness' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2005: 696). This reflects the fact that a lack of interaction inhibits the emotional support stylists often seek to provide as part of the service (Eayrs, 1993; Gimlin, 1996; Hanson, 2019). 'Empathetic listening' for example, is regarded as a crucial part of the stylist's work, being that it serves to cement trust and is highly commercial on account of its ability to foster enhanced relations equating with consistent income (Hanson, 2019). However, in observed instances where clients remained silent, any opportunity to listen and respond was removed. This not only made co-creating the client's modified appearance more challenging, it also posed a threat to the stylist's sense of occupational self-worth. Where customers would normally provide 'complimentary performance evaluations' (Hill and Bradley, 2010: 47), their reticence provoked anxiety among stylists, who yearned to know whether or not the client was happy with the application of technique.

Attesting to the challenges of dealing with reticent clients, chapter 6 presented data from training providers who advised students how to delicately draw out some conversation: "it's just learning different topics that you can bring up to try and get the conversation going a little bit" (Nicole). Getting the conversation going "a little bit" was necessary to elicit the necessary detail from clients so as to avoid altering the client's body on the basis of unconfirmed guesswork and suppositions. As indicated by the data discussed in chapter 7, this did however, represent an atypical encounter as the majority of the clients were observed as participating to some extent. With clients that were more reserved there was a profound need to embed task-orientated talk related to 'their professional service' over the pleasantries of affective chatter necessary for relational development (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018: 241). In other words, where

clients were withdrawn stylists tended not to expend effort chatting about the weather or upcoming holidays. Instead, they focused upon obtaining detail that informed the technical process of doing the client's hair.

Among reserved clients, talk from stylists disproportionately focused upon eliciting necessary information rather than engaging in unrelated pleasantries that optimise the development of social relations (Stefani and Horlacher, 2018). However, chapter 7 indicates that such an encounter represents something of an anomaly. Generally, encounters with customers required an interweaving of instrumental and phatic talk. The latter concerns the application of relational skills, essential for the creation of trust (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a; Algharabli, 2014; Yeadon Lee, 2011; Eayrs, 1993; Hanson, 2019). Trust is temporally located as it is composed partially of credibility, wherein the customer possesses confidence in the service worker's skill having had prior experience of it (Bove et al, 2009). Additional pressures may emanate from the intense arrangement of hairdressing appointment, as the stylist and client are trapped in a fixed co-presence that renders the proximal boundaries of physical and social contact subject to constant renegotiation (Algharabali, 2014).

Developing trust is crucial for affirming the stylist's role as counsellor, therapist and friend (Cowen et al, 1981; Soulliere, 1997). Trust is also important given the contextual sensitivity and anxiety that emanates from temporarily allocating control over an 'identity erasing, status-stripping process' of aestheticizing bodywork (Soulliere, 1997: 45; Holmes, 2014; 2018; Cohen, 2020). Any detail or preferences expressed by clients were, however, subject to an interpretive evaluation assessing suitability, feasibility and possible alternate meaning. This was apparent from the data discussed in chapter 6

where training providers cautioned students against surface-level interpretations of client requests. Charlie for example, summarised this interpretive process as "drawing out what the client wants, because they quite often don't know what they want but they think they know what they want but use the wrong terminology a lot of the time" (Charlie). Clients are therefore depicted as framing preferences through laymen terms that potentially fail to accurately convey what they want. Students were subsequently taught to unpack and decipher their request, being savvy to possible misuse of language.

Descriptions provided by clients could not be taken at face value, as apparent during an in situ interview with salon owner Ryan: "its interpreting what people say and people don't always say what they mean and they don't always mean what they say, however you can sometimes tell where the truth lies". Determining where "the truth lies" requires effective identification of 'signs given and given off' by the client (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Goffman, 1959; Sheane, 2011). Being receptive to the subtlest changes in a client's demeanour demanded an attuned level of situational and relational comprehension, enabling a suitable course of corrective action. The ability to 'read' clients effectively and mobilize the 'perceptual knowledge to create an acceptable product' emerged as a tacitly acquired accomplishment (Wisely and Fine, 1997: 164). Conversely, a misalignment in understanding was cited as resulting from insufficient communication and was positioned as a damming precursor for a dissatisfying service outcome.

Stylists did not exist purely to appease the desires articulated by their client, rather they assumed 'the role of the trained professional offering advice and also the service worker

being paid to give the client what she wants' (Black, 2004: 117). Although production

entails 'taking audiences into account', an equipollent emphasis concerns 'negotiating

the work process or product with them' (Wisely and Fine, 1997: 164). Asserting one's

professional opinion while maintaining an agreeable emotional façade and avoiding

undermining the client's input represents a highly skilled interactional accomplishment

(Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007a). Using specialist knowledge to evaluate a client's request

entailed a complex interweaving of 'bodily, material, environmental, cultural,

biographical and economic considerations' (Ward et al, 2016: 1296). Hairdressers must

therefore get 'to know the client's character in order to help shape the hairstyle that

suits her' (Algaharabali, 2014: 49). Judgements about the suitability of a desired

hairstyle are then made in consideration of client's 'character, age, lifestyle and status'

(Yeadon Lee et al, 2007: 15). From here, stylists needed the technical skills to execute

the co-created course of action.

Managing the encounter: interaction and the rhythmic application of craft

Navigating the encounter required a dynamic application of relational and technical

skill, seamlessly embedded and rhythmically executed. Intensifying the application of

technique are the particularities of bodywork, as clients temporally relinquish aesthetic

control over their appearance. Disparaging imagery conceives of bodywork as

'producing "products" (objects, materials or bodies) of inconsequential value' (Holmes,

2014: 492). As the modified output of stylist's work, the importance of hair can be

reduced to that operating at 'dead margins of the body', serving no purpose other than

the primordial provision of additional warmth (Kwint, 1999: 9). However, the social

premium attributed to hair qualifies it as an important marker of femininity (Ward et al,

2016; Gimlin, 1996; Furman, 1997). Hair can categorise, politicise and radicalise self-

identity (Holton, 2019) and the tactful stylisation of it assists in the pursuit of heteronormative femininity, registering women as 'submissive and gentle' (Hielscher, 2013: 257). Hair therefore harbours socio-cultural importance, particularly for women (Furman, 2000; Sheane, 2011; Lawson, 1999; Holmes, 2018).

The cultural significance of hair was evinced in chapter 8, where training providers spoke of students' technical skills being subject to harsh and derailing critique from clients. Hannah for example, explained that "it impacts quite badly, my students get quite upset cause they feel they've done something wrong". Extant empirical research based in service work has illustrated the potential hurt experienced at the hands of demanding, abusive and/or insulting clients. The defence mechanisms available to stylists to rebuff hurt inflicted by customers are less straightforward. Where extant research has shown service workers redirecting customer criticism to the organisation rather than themselves, stylists are vulnerable to scrutiny on two fronts. Stylists must dynamically mobilize their emotional attributes to appear 'personable and able to interact' and balance this with the ability 'to work with hair' (Holmes, 2014: 486). In an effort to preserve students' fledging sense of confidence, training providers neutralise customer expectations by reminding them that in the context of a training salon, both relational and technical skills remain in the early stages of development.

Where clients voiced overly critical opinions, training providers assumed "the leading role within the debate or anything because that can be really off-putting for students, it can knock them right back" (Rose). Although working on clients' bodies during the formative years of development risks stagnating students' progression by inhibiting their confidence, the tactile experience of working with 'real' hair is essential. As a form

of craft, it is through 'the physical performance' of hair and beauty that 'subcultural prestige' can be accrued as technical skills flourish (Fine, 1996: 109). Disparities in the accumulation of such 'subcultural prestige' were especially pronounced in the training context, where training providers' seamless demonstrations of technique were indicative of years of rhythmic practice and application. The resolve to this was repetition, allowing for movement and coordination to become subconsciously ingrained as a highly refined motor skill.

The realities observed in the salon context reified the difficulty of technical application. Namely, stylist's depiction of hair through the use of personifying language illustrated the need its delicate and skilful handling. Imbuing hair with such agentic qualities reaffirms its socio-cultural importance as a highly malleable and vivacious component of self-expression (Holmes, 2014; 2019; Holton, 2019). Moreover, its malleability allows hair to be 'shaped into numerous styles' though inevitable growth causes it to 'frequently reshape itself' (Hielscher, 2013: 259). In bearing a 'temporal dynamic' (Holmes, 2018; 178), hair remains in a constant process of 'becoming' (Shilling, 2012). In needing to be 'designed all over again', (Hielscher, 2013: 259), historical depictions of untamed hair position it as indicative of outsider status, with biblical imagery analgising the cutting of hair as a form of social control (Holton, 2019).

In the salon, stylists were often heard semantically framing their client's hair as an untameable, agentic entity. The wayward and relentless changeability of hair ignites an on-going struggle, as clients seemingly willed for it to "cooperate". The importance of the stylist is therefore elevated as the possession of adequate technical skill situates them among the exclusive preserve of those able to effectively "tame" their client's hair.

The suggested scarcity of ability reaffirms the 'social worth' of their work (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999), as does the moralising discourse that regards the controlling of one's hair as indicative of 'class, respectability and conformity' (Holmes, 2018: 183). The output of the stylist's work extends beyond simply imbuing a client's hair with new 'life' through the cultivation of 'body' and 'shine', rather their work is necessary to 'control and still hair's vitality' which remains in a constant state of flux (Holmes, 2014: 491). The maintenance of hair may be judged as of lesser importance than the actual body, yet its visual decent into an unkempt and wayward state denotes 'suppression, dysfunction and sickness' (Holton, 2019: 2). The routinized "taming" of hair avoids such negative connotations, enabling clients to perform their public selves in a manner that adheres to prevailing aesthetic norms. The on-going management of hair also avoids stigmatising afflictions of a lesser morality and discredited status (Holmes, 2018; Hielscher, 2013). Stylist's talk appeared sympathetic to these aesthetic concerns, being that it often centred upon elevating client's self-image.

Where talk that bolstered self-esteem was heard during encounters, this was particularly common with clients who were marginalised from society on account of their appearance. Older women for example, were compounded by societal norms that dismissed their efforts to embody the coveted feminine beauty (Furman, 2000; Gimlin, 1996; Ward et al, 2016). They were, therefore, the recipients of regular compliments, as apparent during observations when one elderly customer was told she looked like a "Queen" in her formal attire. Moreover, a climate of acceptance was upheld, which conditioned the salon as a safe and hospitable space where the self-driven quest for femininity could be pursued away from the scrutinizing gaze of those who seek to denounce and/or police it. Amidst essentially readying themselves for a forthcoming

front stage performance, clients confidently asserted themselves during a state of physical transformation. The salon therefore serves as an important liminal space in the creation of the feminized self.

The stringent and exclusionary criteria that dictate what is considered beautiful leave most women inescapably bound to the continuous pursuit of ideals that 'are both inherently inconsistent and impossible to accomplish' (Gimlin, 1996: 506). The elderly patrons in the salon embarked upon a relentless pursuit to embody socially constructed ideals grounded in 'sexual attractiveness, youth and slenderness', rendering their efforts pointless due to the inability to physically re-embody youth (Furman, 2000: 10). Regardless of the impossibility of their quest, the salon allowed collective and continued subscription to normative beauty practices that assisted in temporally shirking the markers of old age (Furman, 1997). Grey hairs could, for example, be masked through dying as part of an orchestrated effort to conceal markers of old age (Holmes, 2018; Furman, 2000). The unwavering devotion to these self-enhancing practices is indicative of the deeply ingrained 'fashion beauty complex: a system of corporations which set up norms for acceptable femininity through products, services, information, images and ideologies' (Bartkey, 1982: 135; Furman, 2000). A 'beauty imperative' is (re) produced, positing that the role of women 'is to be attractively arranged and adorned' (Sheane, 2011: 150). The appearance of clients may be governed by broader socio-cultural imperatives, yet the bodies of stylists are conditioned by organisational norms distinct to each salon.

The importance of aesthetics: corporeality, materiality and atmospherics

Various empirical studies have positioned the service encounter as an 'aesthetic experience' that is 'sensuous [and] embodied' with the potential to incite profound emotions (Hancock and Tyler, 2008). As suggested previously in the thesis, a successful service performance is dependent on an embodied symbiosis among the corporeality of staff and the accompanying material environment (Grove et al, 1998; Warhurst et al, 2009). By effectively coordinating a particular aesthetic imagery, organisations can enhance their appeal to current and prospective customers (Pettinger, 2004; Bookman, 2014). Extant research has revealed a leaning toward corporate and professional imagery (Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Cutcher and Atchel, 2017; Pettinger, 2005; Williams and Connell, 2010). However, data collected in the salon reflected relaxed and informal imagery through a lived-in materiality and a fairly lapsed dress code among stylists. This posed a contrast to the training academy, where a more professional and uniform approach toward aesthetics was assumed.

Chapter 8 illustrates the relatively tight regulations that students were subject to in the colleges and training academies. These rules governed their hair, makeup, clothing and even personal hygiene. In one sense, these regulations can be interpreted as a way of assisting students into the role of stylist and/or beautician. An important part of the 'personal front' displayed to others includes an individual's 'appearance and manner' (Goffman, 1959; Smith, 2006; Grove et al, 1992: 100). In signalling the assumption of a particular role, appearance can also evidence one's technical capabilities. Here the 'value and capacities' of technical skill become inscribed upon the body, producing a 'body for others' whose corporeal existence is externally driven to evince expertise and skill (Cutcher and Atchel, 2017). Embodying technical expertise and skill was potentially of particular importance for students, who at the early stages of

development must cultivate trust in the absence of a well-developed rapport with clients.

In conveying the significance of students embodying an appropriate image, training providers presented vivid juxtapositions to illustrate the embodied transformation of students as they morph into stylists and/or beauticians: "they walk through the door and they've got false eyelashes struggling to stay on, leggings on, their hair doesn't look great and then toward the end of year and when they come back after, they've got their lipstick on, their hair looks that bit neater, it just it transforms someone" (Laura). Laura contrasts two depictions of exaggerated femininity, one where students wear "leggings" with misapplied "false eyelashes". The transition toward "lipstick" coincides with "neater" hair, speaking to a more refined form of femininity. The significance of aesthetics is framed as "transforming" someone. This broadens the insights provided by extant research, which depicts the aesthetic particularities of an organisation as embodied during the actual performance of service work. This analysis neglects the early stages of development and the tacit conditioning of aesthetics. Chapter 8 poignantly illustrates the embodied shift toward a nuanced feminine identity where embodied markers of working-class womanhood are supplanted by dispositions espousing middle class comportment.

As part of stylists' personal front, uniform and makeup were frequently regarded as important practices undertaken before a performance (Tseëlon, 1992; Goffman, 1959). Poignantly, training providers framed the wearing of uniform as developing students' sense of identification with the role: "once they get the salon uniform on, it gives them a corporate identity, they belong to something and that can give them a little bit of

confidence as well" (Rosie). Uniform emerged as 'more than simply a theatrical artefact', serving as central to the performer's 'ability to embody the identity' (Hancock, 2013: 1013). Rosie also speaks to the solidarity enabled through a uniform, where the "corporate identity" allows a sense of belonging that in turn bolsters confidence. As a specific 'prop', uniform therefore facilitates an easier transition into one's role and the practices associated with it (Wainwright et al, 2010; Ashforth et al, 2008; Hancock, 2013; Grove et al, 1992).

As previously mentioned, there was something of an imbalance and incongruity between the aesthetic codes upheld in a pedagogical context of training and those actually embodied in the reality of a working salon. Where research has focused largely on organisations with a polished and/or coordinated imagery, there is a comparable dearth of research that conceptually unpacks 'servicescapes' that are less aesthetically impressive and co-ordinated. Though it may be underwhelming, the aesthetics of an organisation remain 'intimately tied' to the type of service it offers (Grove et al, 1992: 105). Therefore, rather than espousing an image of luxury and opulence, the salon endorsed a more colloquial and relaxed imagery that upheld its inclusive communal atmosphere (Oldenburg, 1989; Sandiford, 2019; Nguyen et al, 2019). This is not to imply that all salons cultivate this type of imagery. The aesthetics of a salon can range from those espousing a clean, corporate image (Bax, 2012) to the more informal 'third place' that seeks to reject the 'middle class preference for cleanliness and modernity' (Oldenburg, 1999: 36).

In a way, the lapsed approach to aesthetics observed in the salon proved somewhat surprising given the general emphasis upon professional imagery in service work

(Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Ashforth et al, 2008). Moreover, the salon was littered with material artefacts that reinforce the importance of appearance. A wall of mirrors made avoiding your reflection impossible, magazines littered around the waiting area reinforced feminine beauty standards and finally, the inescapable chemical aromas were a pervasive reminder of the measures taken by customers in the pursuit of an improved appearance. However, the tactile assemblage of artefacts and materiality in the salon still promoted inclusivity. Notions of inclusion in the salon were apparent through its unpretentious and informal interior. This included inoffensive colour tones and worn-in furniture. Moreover, its status as an independently owned, local establishment was reaffirmed through artwork displaying the city's landmarks, neighbourhood advertisements for nearby services and an unofficial book exchange area. In cultivating the 'inducement of homey commercial environments' (Griffiths and Gilly, 2012: 132) typical of third places, the salon therefore operated in the absence of 'extravagance and grandeur' (Nguyen et al, 2019: 218; Oldenburg, 1989).

The personal touches observed throughout the salon were illustrative of long-lasting customer relations. Interpreting objects and artefacts for their meaning as opposed to their function speaks to an 'affective-aesthetic' focus that considers the 'symbolic and/or representational features' (Shortt et al, 2014). For example, several 'thank you' cards with lengthy inscriptions inside were fixed to the mirrors, thereby adding a 'personal touch and tell[ing] a story' (Debenedetti et al, 2013: 912). These features cemented those pre-existing bonds and helped nascent relations flourish by reifying the salon's functioning as an emotionally charged 'third place'. The salon's aesthetics therefore centred upon allowing social relations to flourish among those occupying the space as opposed to housing 'architectural wonderments' (Rosenbaum et al, 2007).

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Overall, the salon's lapsed approach to aesthetics as central to its cultivation of an inclusive, hospitable atmosphere reflects a nuanced 'servicescape'. It may be lacking in grandeur and extravagance, but the salon constructed an imagery that designated it a 'stage for attachment' (Debendetti et al, 2013: 906). The materiality of the salon therefore dynamically adapts to reflect the particularities of its established 'brand and customers' (Juul and Byskov, 2019: 13). In this regard, the salon did not need to portray a corporate or luxurious image as its clients revelled in its familiar, home-like qualities. Although this is at odds with the discourse espoused by training providers that imposed a professional aesthetic code, there was an acknowledgment regarding the disparity amongst salons. This disparity amounted to students being sifted into different salons depending upon how well they embodied the imagery of a particular salon. Ultimately, this speaks to the dynamic co-construction of a performance, where both the stage and its actors are conditioned by the demands of a particular audience. These demands are aesthetically embodied in a way that is both nuanced and changeable.

9.5: Conclusion:

During chapters 6-8 I presented empirical data intended to conceptually unpack the service encounter by firstly isolating the illusive and ever-changing 'roles, skills and demands' that characterise the customer experience (Solnet et al, 2016: 213). The data builds upon sociological research of service work by tracing the development of 'soft skills' to the context of training and education. As service encounters are increasingly premised upon cultivating immersive and affective experiences to envelope their customers (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Oh et al, 2007; Solnet et al, 2016; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Payne et al, 2008), the data indicates that the necessary embodied and relational attributes are tacitly learned through the subjective navigation of

customer relations. This addresses a longstanding lacuna regarding the illusive process of learning and/or obtaining the 'soft skills' needed to for service work (Gatta, 2011; Gatta et al, 2009; Solnet et al, 2016; Warhurst et al, 2000; Dawson et al, 2011; Chathoth et al, 2013).

The data analysis indicated that this process of tacitly acquiring the relational and embodied attributes needed for service work transpires within a socio-cultural matrix that is class-based and gendered (Williams, 1995; Colley et al, 2003; Skeggs, 2005). Cultural imagery coalesces with low pay and status to condition hairdressing and beauty as a minimally skilled vocational pathway prime for working class females (Skeggs, 2005; Lindsay, 2004). In seeking to re-orientate habitus to better reflect the demands of service work (Colley et al, 2003), the data reveals how initially a general approach centred upon embodying a professional, corporate and clean image was endorsed. This was however, countered by a gradual shift toward situational adaption and embodiment of the nuances of a particular salon (Juul and Byskov, 2019), even where these defied normative organisational codes.

The pedagogical insights are contextualised and used to inform ethnographic data gathered within a working salon. Data collected in the colleges and training academies indicated that 'social or interpersonal skills' are increasingly sought after across service organisations and are even at times prioritized 'over formal qualifications' (Brockman, 2013: 357). In then looking to the buzzing 'speech community, created by those present' (Majors, 2001: 121), it is easy to see why such relational abilities are sought after. Emerging as an 'unintentional community for its participants through its friendly relations of caring' (Furman, 1997: 30), the data speaks to the significance of the

'commercial friendships' formed in the salon (Price and Arnould, 1999). In focusing on the customer-stylist dyad, the data also contributes to sociological research by providing a rich account of customer experience. Sociological accounts of service work have endorsed a disproportionate focus on the service worker, disregarding the customer as passive, inactive and/or hostile. The data discussed in this thesis however, showed customers acting with both agency and tenacity.

By adopting a co-creational lens to read customer participation, this thesis broadens the role of the customer and situates them as active participants. As illustrated by the empirical data, their participation may occur through interactive (Debendetti et al, 2013) or spatial engagement (Best and Hindmarsh, 2019). Stylists must counter customer engagement, whatever form it may assume, with support, empathy and if necessary, subtle redirection that preserves customer sovereignty (Korczynski, 2013; Korczysnki and Ott, 2004). The specific empirical context of the salon renders the customer participation and the dynamic interaction that follows distinct, as the negotiated service output becomes inscribed upon the customer's body. Stylists must therefore demonstrate an ingrained knowledge of craft both through movement that is fluidly rhythmic (Holmes, 2014; 2018) and the mobilization of aesthetic competencies (Juul and Byskov, 2019). Beyond being demonstrative of technical skill and serving as a 'walking billboard' for their salon, embodiment fulfilled the more emotive purpose of selling customers the 'dreams and hopes associated with an improved look' (Juul and Byskov, 2019: 11). Having discussed the salient points that emerged from data analysis, the following chapter will situate these insights according to the research questions guiding the thesis. Moreover, the insights provided by the different datasets will be

embedded as part of an overarching conceptual narrative that fills various voids within

service-based research.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

During the final chapter of the thesis I will situate the findings outlined in chapter 9 in relation to the research questions. In doing so, I will discuss how the research contributes to understandings of how service work is performed and experienced. The insights are located within the specific service context where the episodic structuring of encounters creates fertile ground for the development of affective relations. The chapter will begin by addressing the research questions that guided the research, followed by a summation of its main contributions. The chapter will conclude by discussing the limitations posed by the research as well as a reflection upon potential avenues for future study and research.

10.1: Addressing the research questions

What skills are required to navigate high-contact, affective service encounters and how is their initial development conceptualised?

Throughout the thesis I sought to provide a detailed explanation of the skills required to navigate the increasingly emotive terrain that characterises particular service contexts. The skills referred to here are not 'hard' or technical, but rather the social, interpersonal, emotional and embodied attributes that allow for harmonious and effective interaction. These attributes are central to relational development and are crucial in the context of the interaction that accompanies experiential services (Solnet et al, 2016; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Warhurst, 2008). By stepping back from the empirical context of the service encounter, where much previous research has focused, I looked to how soft skills are acquired and developed in the formative stages of training for a service role. In doing so, the thesis builds upon a range of empirical studies that

question how relational and embodied attributes of service workers are acquired (Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996; Bailly and Léné, 2012).

Learning how to interact with customers and form potentially long-lasting relations emerged as part of a broader transformative process that entailed a reshaping of embodied and inscribed attributes. Acquiring the ability to interact confidently differed to the learning of technical practice. In interpreting the development of these relational 'soft' skills, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis was applied. At the heart of the 'performance' were customers, who as the audience were to remain at the focal point of each encounter. Where customers became a peripheral focus, corrective action was necessary to recentralise them and displace any distraction. Training providers also hinted toward efforts to nurture adaptability among students. This included shadowing advanced students, obtaining placements in salons and providing free haircuts for local charities. This acquainted students with the irreducible and unpredictable conditions that characterise interaction with customers. To an extent, homogenised interaction was therefore discouraged, as students adapted to suit the organic flow of conversation (Goffman, 1959; Tseëlon, 1992; Brockman, 2013). Emotional labour therefore emerges as 'other-orientated' in a way that is highly sensitive to the distinct contours of each moment during an encounter. The result is a suitably nuanced performance, subject to continuous adaption in light of a relational trajectory that in an actual salon, could span decades.

Efforts to nurture adaptability and flexibility were however, countered by a more homogenous approach to interaction and embodiment. In relation to embodiment, the data illustrated an ingrained leaning toward dispositions indicative of a cultured

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upbringing. These refined modes of comportment and stylisation have emerged as widely sought after across the service sector. Despite the social conditioning of hair and beauty as a distinctly feminised, working-class occupation (Lindsay, 2004), the habitus of students was denounced as inappropriate for service work. Permeating various levels of display, disposition and perception, the habitus of students was re-orientated to reflect a more culturally refined and professional self. In a sense, the educational discourse toward service work approached embodiment in a more homogenised 'one size fits all' manner. As part of this, fixed and clear boundaries with clients were encouraged to prevent any blurring of the personal/public display. This demarcation of selves extended to the talk initiated with clients, which training providers prescribed as inoffensive, superficial small talk. There was then, a shift between embodying a more static, professional self that adheres to normative organisational display rules and one that adapts to the contours of interaction.

Based upon the data, I contend that time and experience in the role is crucial in distinguishing undeveloped client relations from those that are well-established. The evolving relational trajectories observed in the salon require a mutable form of social interaction that is adapted to each meeting. Similarly, the embodied imagery of stylists' changes in a way that reflects the 'affect' of the salon (Juul and Byskov, 2019). In returning to the original research question, the management of affectively charged service interactions requires an attuned level of relational understanding that is acquired gradually over time (Harness et al, 2020). Performing in a service encounter is, therefore, an on-going accomplishment premised upon constant evaluation of expressions displayed by the self (the service worker) and the other (the customer) (Goffman, 1959; Sheane, 2011). As time passes and relations progress through

recurrent contact, the performance of emotional and aesthetic labour becomes nuanced to reflect the historical trajectory of each stylist-client dyad (Harness et al, 2020). This explains why student interactions with clients were more prescribed with a greater emphasis on surface acting. Here there was no established relational terrain to allow personalisation and a more nuanced display. The nuances to which stylists respond are unique to each customer and are identified through recurrent contact. In answering the following question, I rebalance focus by looking at the customer as one half of a distinct relational trajectory and as an agentic individual able to customize their service experience.

How do service encounters dynamically influence the surrounding 'servicescape'?

In answering the above question, a dynamic focus that considers both the service worker and the customer is essential. Through the interaction that ensues, I regard the service experience and surrounding space as continuously (re) constructed. The customer plays an active role in this process, thereby departing from previous depictions of passivity, reticence and inactivity throughout sociological literature. The data vividly showed how the most intimate of relations were furthered through the customer disclosing personal details and the stylist responding with an appropriate degree of empathy (Furman, 1997; Ward et al, 2016). Well-developed relations that spanned several years were read as a dynamic negotiation between stylists creating an affective microclimate during each encounter and clients opting to relish in the opportunity to share the intimate details amounting to a 'commercial friendship' (Price and Arnould, 1999).

Broadly, customer-stylist encounters reproduced an affective climate in the salon that created an overarching sense of community. The subsequent 'warm' affect envelopes customers, whose participation in the salon's social milieu is steered by their distinct service preferences and relational history within the salon. The social climate that dynamically emerged was read as a 'third place' type domain, continuously reconstituted through 'observable activities, functions and meanings' (Rosenbaum, 2006: 61) borne out of evolving client-stylist relations. Once again, time is crucial in allowing relations to evolve through recurrent contact and the cumulative telling of personal stories. As these relations progress over time, they can become an intimate and important fixture in clients' lives. Clients' enduring bond to the salon and stylists manifested through the most innocuous 'repeated routines of everyday life' (Shields, 1999: 145). These simple, but ingrained acts include being instantly given one's preferred hot beverage upon entry, placing personal possessions in *"my salon chair"* (Brenda) and simply being left alone to read without disruption.

I therefore contend that the organisation of the salon is entwined in a socio-spatial dynamic where it is conditioned by the relations it houses. This speaks to the active role of the customer, whose actions can be read through a co-creational lens as redesigning the space to suit their distinct needs (Best and Hindmarsh, 2019; Griffiths and Gilly, 2012). Occasionally, clients behaved in a manner that defied normative boundaries that symbolically demarcate private/public parts of an organisational space. This reflected the agency of customers and illustrated the significance of client-stylist relations as an overarching contextual backdrop that steers such change. Where customers felt an intense sense of belonging and attachment to the salon, this manifested through distinct, yet routinised forms of behaviour. Customers therefore move beyond the fixed

depiction implied by the dramaturgical metaphor (Goffman, 1959; Grove et al, 1992). They not only observe the performance as it unfolds upon the stage, but steer and reconfigure it accordingly.

How do service worker and customer interact to produce a desired service outcome?

In addressing the final research question, in this research I sought to unpack the interactive conditions required for an effective service outcome. The distinct context of bodywork means that co-creation occurs both experientially through interaction but also through tangible changes made to the client's body. Eliciting the necessary input from customers regarding how they would like their body altered is, however, not autonomic or guaranteed. Rather, it requires the creation of affective conditions that allow and encourage constant customer engagement (Yi and Gong, 2013; Payne et al, 2009). This appeared especially challenging in the absence of an established relational trajectory, as stylists proceeded to work upon clients while tentatively attempting to initiate a rapport. A rapport was needed to assemble a detailed picture of each client, comprising of hair-related and biographic detail (Hanson, 2019; Ward et al, 2016; Yeadon Lee et al, 2007).

For the stylists, obtaining a detailed understanding of a client's lifestyle, personality and hair-related history was essential in evaluating the suitability of their request. Put simply, the data showed that the preferences articulated by clients are not to be automatically or unquestionably appeased. Contrasting the indulgence conveyed by notions of customer sovereignty (Kang, 2010; Korczynski, 2013), co-creating an effective service necessitated a delicate balance of reorienting a customer's request to

reflect a more suitable choice while preserving their sense of superiority. Making judgements about the feasibility and appropriateness of a client's request depended upon technical expertise and in-depth knowledge of the client. Moreover, to further ensure the co-creation of a satisfying service, specialist technical language was used cautiously so as to avoid potential misunderstandings when interpreted through the layman understanding of the client. Misaligned efforts to co-create could also be resolved and/or avoided by the stylist continuously reading the expressions 'given off' by a client (Goffman, 1959; O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Wainwright et al, 2010) and locating these against their contextual backdrop to further inform successive action.

Returning to the research question, an effective service requires collaborative input from both stylist and client (Chathoth et al, 2013; Prahaland and Ramaswamy, 2004; Fliess et al, 2014; Echeverri, and Skålén, 2011). The data shows the importance of customers providing adequate detail and illustrates the fragility that ensues where customers refuse to engage. The latter compels stylists to operate on the basis of uninformed guesswork, which carries greater risk of customer dissatisfaction. Where clients were forthcoming with preferential detail, stylists needed to interpret these requests carefully. The referential capital stylists amassed through experience and technical knowledge awarded them the ability to override a client's specifications, though this threatened to imbalance relational status. Ultimately, this builds upon extant research regarding co-creation by illustrating the democratization worker-client interaction, where normative conventions of asymmetry are disregarded in the joint pursuit of a satisfying service outcome.

10.2: Outlining contributions of the thesis

Overall, through this thesis I sought to conceptually unpack the contemporary service encounter by considering the interpersonal and aesthetic skills required to cultivate its immersive affect and the role assumed by the customer. In doing so, I extend the understandings offered by previous sociological accounts of service work. Building upon extant empirical research, the thesis illustrates how the illusively defined 'soft' skills necessary for service work are tacitly learned in the training context, performed in a working salon and continually developed in light of ever-changing relational trajectories that evolve over time. In looking to relational trajectories in the salon, this thesis fills a longstanding void within sociological service research by offering a rich account of the customer. Assuming a dynamic focus, the relational and embodied skills of workers are considered as operating as part of stylist-client dyad, where the customer's engagement also steers the course of encounter. The participation and experiences of customers are read through a co-creational lens that acknowledges them as actively constructing their service experience.

The skills needed for service work: a tacit process of on-going development

The thesis firstly contributes to sociological research that explores the skills required by service workers, which has previously amounted to concepts such as emotional and aesthetic labour. In building upon these insights, the research stepped back from the context of the actual service encounter to explore how service workers are trained and prepared for the role. The impetus for this focus came both from early analysis of ethnographic data collected in a working salon and relevant literature which spoke of a lacuna pertaining to how 'soft' skills are acquired (Gatta, et al, 2009; Gatta, 2011). Whether conceptualised as interpersonal, relational or social attributes, without these skills there is 'little purpose in attempting to offer complex [...] service' (Solnet et al,

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2016). In other words, recurrent and prolonged contact in services gives rise to a 'relationship between the provider and service encounter' (Payne et al, 2008: 85), which requires careful management through relational and embodied skills.

By obtaining insights in a training context that readies the next generation of service workers, I illustrate how the relational and embodied skills necessary for affective relations are tacitly learned through experience. By experiencing situations intended to replicate those in an authentic service encounter, individuals familiarise themselves with the irreducibility of social interaction. This nurtures an adaptive style of interaction, as every encounter with each customer warranted a nuanced approach (Mann, 1997; Tseëlon, 1992). This thesis therefore illustrates that the soft skills desired by so many service organisations constitute a tacit accomplishment that is on-going. These skills continue to develop as the relational conditions that characterise each customer encounter evolve. In this regard, suggesting that the skills of service workers remain in a fixed, static state masks the complex and nuanced reality of their performance.

A conceptual analysis of the data gathered also speaks to an embodied display that is marked, to some extent, by class status. Extant research has illustrated the advantages awarded to those with inherited capital that manifests through inscribed dispositions of 'language and dress codes, manner, style, shape and size of body' (Warhurst et al, 2000: 6). In aligning the insights gathered in the training context with those obtained in the actual salon, embodiment is a nuanced process. The dispositions sought after by organisations are not always those that embody a cultured upbringing as suggested by sociological research (Bourdieu, 1984; Wright, 2005: Williams and Connell, 2010;

Mears, 2014). Rather, this thesis reflects successive research that revealed a disparity in aesthetic codes and norms depending upon the type of organisation. Developing this analysis further, the embodiment of stylists appeared as entwined with the conditioning of the space. In drawing from research regarding the construction of 'third places' (Oldenburg, 1989; Jeffres et al, 2009; Hickman, 2013), stylists come to embody the warm and enveloping affect that conditions the space accordingly. Customer relations are, therefore, crucial in unpacking the imagery and affect embodied by stylists.

Employee-customer interaction: a dynamic socio-spatial process

As an expansion of the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), organisations are increasingly seeking to entice and enchant customers through enveloping and immersive services that go beyond the satisfaction of utilitarian needs (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Oh et al, 2007; Buonincontri et al, 2017; Solnet et al, 2016). Interaction is regarded as crucial in immersing customers and satisfying their emotional desires (Bookman, 2014; Griffiths and Gilly, 2012; Debenedetti et al, 2013). The moment of interaction between an organisation and client, regardless of proximity or longevity, has long been regarded as highly significant (Payne et al, 2008). This thesis therefore contributes by offering an in-depth account of how such a moment is experienced in the distinct context of an episodic, prolonged encounter where conditions allow for heightened emotionality and involvement. In acknowledging the contemporary emotionality that now governs consumption, the thesis offers further contributions in relation to how the surrounding space becomes affectively charged and (re) conditioned.

In this thesis I therefore build upon research that focuses upon services seeking to indulge the social, hedonic and emotional desires of clients. Whether motivated by a desire for cathartic 'emotional "pampering"' (Hanson, 2019: 149), a social remedy to offset loneliness (Rosenbaum et al, 2007) or to be physically adorned as part of a sensorially immersive experience (Kang, 2010; Korczynski, 2013), the propensity toward 'experience creation will undoubtedly continue and deepen into the future' (Solnet et al, 2016: 218). In demonstrating specifically how stylists provide experiential conditions, clients become embedded within a relational trajectory developed to suit their idiosyncrasies. In exploring the emotive properties and interactive qualities of an encounter, relations are bound within a trans-temporal trajectory. This consists of a fragmentary assemblage of past encounters that cumulatively inform current and future ones. A contribution is therefore made to research regarding commercial friendships (Price and Arnould, 1999; Lin and Hsieh, 2011), specifically in relation to issues of temporality, authenticity and power.

Related to this are findings pertaining to the on-going (re) construction of the salon as an affectively charged 'third place' (Oldenburg, 1989; Sandiford, 2019; Bookman, 2014). The conceptual understandings of 'third places' are furthered by applying a relational constructionist lens to explore the on-going co-creation of a space. Here the salon is regarded as dynamically reconstituted through 'socio-spatial' practices. The assertive movement of clients that shifted and reshaped normative boundaries and spatial properties did not emanate within a vacuum nor were they arbitrary. The data showed that these practices were borne out of an established relational trajectory between stylist and client, which evolves with each passing visit (Harness et al, 2020). In vividly tracing these trajectories, this thesis broadens the depiction of the customer from the

passive and/or hostile depictions endorsed among sociological research. Instead, I regard customers as one very important half of a relational trajectory which they are equally capable of steering and navigating in a way that shapes a service to accommodate their desires (Best and Hindmarsh, 2019; Gilly and Griffiths, 2013).

Co-constructing appearance: the distinct conditions of bodywork

The thesis also contributes to the co-creational literature by exploring the social affect necessary for customer engagement. It is widely acknowledged that providing a satisfying service is contingent upon customer participation (Cossío-Silva et al, 2013; Payne et al, 2009). Creating the interactive conditions that facilitate customer participation imposes 'additional burden and responsibility on the customer-facing workforce' (Solnet et al, 2016: 218). The empirical context of this research arguably intensifies the importance of such engagement, as the service ultimately manifests as a semi-permanent extension of the client's physical self (Ward et al, 2016). In acting as a 'co-creator of their client's publicly presented faces' (Sheane, 2011: 154), the research offers an alternative account of co-creation. Rather than concerning the co-production of a tangible good or an immersive customer experience (Rihova et al, 2015; Buonincontri et al, 2017), as a bodywork occupation hairdressing represents a dynamic process where client engagement is both essential but also peripheral. By this I refer to the fact that customers are unable to physically assist in the co-creational process.

The customer can, however, steer the encounter by explicit input or more subtly through expressive gestures and shifting dispositions. Any preferences conveyed by the client must be carefully evaluated by stylists, rather than unquestionably enacted. Through the application of technical, experiential and biographic knowledge, the

suitability and feasibility of the customer's request must be assessed (Hason, 2019; Yeadon-Lee et al, 2007; Wisely and Fine, 1997). This thesis therefore furthers co-creational research by exposing the enduring complexities associated with the craft of altering appearance. Specifically, the conceptualisation of hair (Holmes, 2014; 2018; Holton, 2019) is broadened through an analysis focused upon the semantic undertones of a shared client-stylist lexicon that draws upon personifying language. This thesis also reveals how the corporeality of salon staff acts as an embodiment of craftmanship. Stylists' bodies are, therefore, inherently mutable. They shift to embody technical skill and ability, but also to reflect the nuanced 'affect' of a particular salon. Educational discourse toward service work endorsed a more culturally refined approach to embodiment, yet the particularities of a salon and the accumulation of experience gradually became inscribed upon a stylist's body.

10.3: Limitations of the thesis

As with any work, I acknowledge that the thesis bears conceptual, empirical and methodological limitations. First, I will outline the conceptual restrictions imposed by use of a dramaturgical analogy. I will then discuss the methodological limitations. The main issues concerning the use ethnographic data drawn from a single salon will then be discussed. Here I will touch upon the risk of facilitating a disproportionate empirical focus upon employees and finally, the unavoidable influence of researcher bias.

Conceptual restrictions imposed by a dramaturgical analysis

Conceptually, throughout much of the analysis I draw upon a dramaturgical lens to interpret the data (Goffman, 1959). Research has previously analogised the service encounter as akin to a performance, applying 'references to frontstage, backstage,

scripts, roles and settings in the context of service encounters, are commonplace'

(Baron et al, 2001: 102). The quality of a service or 'performance' is determined by the

customer or 'audience' (Mann, 1997; Grove et al, 1992; 1998; Goretski and Messer,

2019). The conceptual reach of this analogy facilitates an understanding of

accommodating the diverse needs of different audiences (Mann, 1997; Tseëlon, 1992),

as 'each performance is designed to achieve a very specific audience reaction' (Baron et

al, 2001: 103). Performances may be improved and/or assisted using props such as

uniforms (Wainwright et al, 2010) and/or scripts (Seymour and Sandiford, 2005;

Seymour, 2000; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002), and finally, seeking temporary respite

in the privacy of the back stage (Richards, 2010; Ashforth et al, 2008).

The dramaturgical analogy does, however, impose restrictions particularly in relation to

authenticity. Analogising an encounter as a 'performance' implies that the interaction

that follows is insincere. The thesis does, however, speak to a possibility for the

development of relations that are, in some way, experienced as authentic 'quasi'-

friendships. Customer-stylist relations evolve differently depending upon the

preferences and input provided by each party. Where interactions were characterised

by affectivity and the reciprocal sharing of intimate detail, the performance delivered by

stylists gave way to a partial bleeding through of an authentic persona. Whether

through the discussion of taboo topics, risqué humour or instances of collectively felt

emotion, the display rules that typically govern conduct in the organisational sphere

(Brotheridge and Lee, 2008; Mann and Cowburn, 2005), can be evaded as customer-

stylist relations evolve. Though the latter are suggestive of authenticity, deciphering the

motivations underpinning an encounter represents an enduring feat. Throughout this

thesis I therefore sought to strike a balance; pushing past the implied superficiality and

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falsehood conveyed by dramaturgy, while also recognising the inescapable influence of situational norms and economic incentives.

The dramaturgical analogy also imposes a highly situational view of interaction, where individuals are relieved of front stage pressures as soon as they exit the confines of the stage. I sought to overcome this purely situational analysis of interaction by looking to the development of relational and embodied skills. In presenting the development of these skills as an enduring, tacitly learned process, this thesis regarded the task of satisfying one's audience as neither a finite nor fleeting endeavour. To illustrate how necessary embodied attributes were those that could not be hastily donned prior to entering the stage, Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus was drawn upon. The analysis was however, hindered by the inference that the embodied norms of a particular stage can be pre-identified prior to assuming the role and that these norms are static. Rather, stylists embodied a more fluid image that reflected the social climate of the salon.

Methodological limitations: sample, representation and researcher bias

In terms of identifying the specific limitations of each method, these are outlined initially in the methodology chapter. However, having collected, analysed and reviewed the data comprehensively, additional issues emerge. Several of these issues revolve around the composition of the sample and the allocation of empirical focus. Though the methodology chapter attempted to justify the single site ethnography on the basis that the chosen salon is typical of the UK majority, the microcosmic insights acquired remain tied to that salon's distinct locality and history. Despite generalizations being less of a concern given the qualitative origin of the research, there are perhaps questions regarding the applicability and transferability of insights. In attempting to combat this

concern, additional data used purposive and snowball sampling to secure a larger and more varied sample was gathered. Semi-structured interviews were therefore conducted with training providers working at further education colleges and academies located across the North East of England. These institutions varied in terms of the number of students admitted, variation of courses offered and the learning facilities available. Though this does not completely dispel criticisms levelled due to the limits of the ethnographic data collected in the salon, pragmatic decision-making accounting for time, access and other resources threatened the feasibility of a multi-site ethnography.

A further drawback of this research rooted in its methodology concerned the empirical focus, which on reflection was perhaps disproportionately concentrated upon the stylists and their experiences developing their skillset and navigating encounters. This reproduced the longstanding tendency within service research to neglect the customer (Korczynski, 2013), risking a passive depiction that deprives customers of agency. The initial intent of the research was to maintain a dual focus that considered the stylist-client dyad as premised upon an equal contribution. However, an empirical sidestep exploring the pedagogy of soft skills occurred at the expense of that empirical focus. The resultant analysis instead provides greater focus upon the service workers. Having said that, effort was directed towards representing the customer in a way that awards sufficient agency. Through ethnographic data, customers are depicted as active individuals capable of influencing the course of interaction and the configuration of commercial space. Moreover, customers were not homogenized as an undifferentiated mass, as their personal narratives were maintained through detailed vignettes that sought to capture their individualised service experience.

An additional limitation of the research concerns the social immersion associated with the data collection. Here I refer to the tinting of how I perceived and recorded observations, which inevitability became laden with affective overtones symptomatic of relations forged within the field. In an effort to partially resolve this, I maintained a highly inquisitive inner dialogue that consistently questioned why such detail was or was not being recorded (Wolcott, 2001). This helped to ensure adequate representation of the mundane and normative patterns of daily life rather than atypical observations (Fetterman, 2010; Murchison, 2010; Atkinson, 2017). A further means of maintaining an objective perception entailed the recording of verbatim quotes where possible, though the framing of such quotes remains subject to conditions of personal interpretation.

10.4: Future research:

Having outlined the limitations of the research, I will now discuss potential avenues for future study. The service industry represents an ever-expanding sector (Bell, 1976; Wharton, 2015; Ashforth et al, 2008), where the way services are experienced is changing in light of escalating consumer demands that emphasise emotional fulfilment (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Oh et al, 2007; Payne et al, 2008). Within such services the 'way workers present their embodied self is increasingly significant' due to the organisational value allocated to embodied and affective properties (Bailly and Léné, 2012: 83). Moreover, as customers assume an increasingly active role in shaping their service experience, there is a resultant 'divergence in the skills required' (Solnet et al, 2016: 218). However, there remains an lack of consolidated research discussing the 'new approaches to recruitment, selection, training and management' (Warhurst et al, 2000: 3) that are now required to meet the increasingly emotive and relational demands of consumers. I therefore propose that the main avenues for future research

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concern interrelated areas of the training and development of soft skills, the changing role of commercial space and the embedding of the body as a canvas for consumption.

Furthering conceptual understandings of how soft skills are developed:

In the context of soft skills, research could build upon the insights presented here by further considering the lingering influence of embedded class attributes (Bourdieu, 1984). Though this thesis illustrates how the development of embodied and relational attributes is a tacit process of situational adaption, extant research reflects an ingrained leaning toward dispositions indicative of a cultured upbringing (Wright, 2005; Boyle and Keere, 2019; Warhurst, 2008; Warhurst and Nickson, 2009; Gatta, 2011). Successive research could therefore unpack the processes and practices involved in re-orientating individual habitus to align with the more prescriptive demands made by certain employers. This would allow for a rich, experiential analysis of how the socio-cultural blueprint of individuals is rewired, demanding a re-evaluation of the most basic practices including how to 'talk, stand, walk and eat' (Bailly and Léné, 2012: 9). Focusing upon how embodied attributes are learnt benefits service organisations, being that they increasingly desire a socially competent workforce able to create affective conditions (O'Donohoe and Turley, 2006; Mars and Nicod, 1984; Price et al, 1995). Moreover, demonstrating that it is possible to learn through a gradual process of education and experience avoids excluding those who initially lack such skills from employment opportunities thereby expanding the pool of potential candidates (Grugulis, 2007; Gatta et al, 2009; Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996; Boyle and Keere, 2019).

The ongoing significance and (re) construction of commercial space

An additional avenue for future research concerns the role of commercial space in the lives of consumers. A 'spatial turn' (Siebert et al, 2018) has already furthered research into the dynamic relationship between spatial materiality and its subjective appropriation as something experienced, embodied or politicised (Lefebvre, 1991). Commercial spaces specifically, have been noted as capable of mobilizing affective properties, cementing a symbolic demarcation as a 'third place' (Oldenburg, 1989; Jeffres et al, 2009; Hickman, 2013). Research has previously demonstrated how and why organisations seek to cultivate 'third place' properties (Bookman, 2014). However, this risks a restrictive constructionist analysis that identifies only those with symbolic power, such as managers, as 'set-designers' able to reorganise a space accordingly (Goffman, 1959; Bitner, 1992).

Future research could build upon the customer-based insights offered in this thesis by exploring the spatial experiences of customers and establishing their role as 'co-creators' of the space they occupy (Gilly and Griffiths, 2013; Best and Hindmarsh, 2019). Space is paramount to a customer's overall service experience (Tomb and McColl-Kennedy, 2003) and concepts such as 'place attachment' (Low and Altman, 1992; Debenedetti et al, 2013) illustrate the relational fulfilment provided by social bonds that flourish in commercial spaces. It is, therefore, crucial to sustain focus upon the customer, namely those that tenaciously (re) configure a space through routinized practices. I identify such practices as 'socio-spatial' in order to reflect the enduring symbiosis between spatial materiality and social interaction. Further research could, therefore, maintain a constructionist lens, analysing the movements, experiences and practices of customers and locating them as part of a broader relational trajectory that informs and directs forthcoming spatial encounters.

The bodywork encounter: co-creating an identity project

Finally, research could build upon the insights posed in relation to co-creating the 'face that individuals present and the 'self' they claim to the world' (Sheane, 2011: 153-154). Increasingly, individuals regard physical appearance as a fluid expression of identity demanding constant work (Giddens, 1991; Holton, 2019). The body therefore emerges as a canvas for further consumption, as services are sought that offer assistance in reaffirming and/or reshaping particular attributes (Maguire, 2008; Wisely and Fine, 1997). While this thesis focuses largely upon hair as 'one of the primary tools of identity creation, maintenance and transformation' (Sheane, 2011: 154), future research could explore the co-creational processes that accompany alternative forms of bodywork.

Concluding comments:

The Steinbeck reference I quoted at the beginning of this thesis poetically illustrates how the relational conditions of a salon demarcate it as a commercial space that is alike but also vividly distinct from others. The ingrained yearning and compulsion for a trip to the salon has never been more apparent than during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. At the height of the UK government's lockdown, all salons were ordered to shut. This not only resulted in wild and unruly hair growth for many, but also stripped away an integral avenue for socialisation. For the clients depicted in this thesis, the convivial and inclusive climate of the salon will have no doubt been sorely missed. When hair salons did eventually reopen on the 13th of July, media coverage showed stylists explaining how much they had missed their customers and that they had endeavoured to keep in touch with many throughout the lockdown period. For customers, the long-awaited haircut was widely lauded as allowing people to finally feel like themselves again. I hope that this thesis has shown how returning to the salon and easing back into the familiar relational terrain will have been an experience that is highly personal and meaningful for both parties.

If nothing else, I also hope that this thesis has gone someway to unravelling the widespread longing for something as innocuous and mundane as a trip to the salon. Whether emanating from a desire to reassert control over one's unmanageable locks or simply catch up with someone who has lingered as a fixed yet peripheral presence throughout one's life course for decades, for many customers a trip to the salon offers an opportunity for engagement. Such engagement is met by a response from stylists that is suitably tactile, empathetic and affable, and a co-creational dynamic ensues. Yet, many of the most regular customers, such as Mrs B, for whom the salon represents a

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crucial avenue for interaction, remain unable to frequent, occupy and dwell among the space. Salons may have reopened and then closed and then reopened again as of December 2020, however they undoubtedly have a different 'feel' to them at the moment. Public health measures advise against unnecessary lingering in any indoor commercial space, thereby depriving the salon of its affective magnetism pulling in those simply looking for a place to be, to sit and to belong. Many of the measures currently in place intended to halt the spread of COVID-19 arguably threaten the salons' social climate and the development of client-stylist relations. Facemasks muffle those smiles and kinds words, social distancing engenders a separation that fractures a sense of unity and out-of-use sofas prohibit pre- and post-appointment dwelling. Despite this, the salon exists as a space that is contiguously reconditioned, a point that I have reiterated throughout this thesis. I therefore have every confidence that the 'Mrs Bs' will return to the salon, reclaiming and redefining it as a space as a warm and friendly commercial space, co-constructed by its resident stylists and clients alike.

Appendix 1: Participant details

Participant details from the salon:

Name	Role
Ryan	Stylist/Owner
Steph	Stylist
Ruby	Stylist
Ellie	Junior Stylist
Amy	Junior Stylist

Participant details from FE institutions:

Name	Role	Organisation
Phoebe	Hairdressing tutor	Skills Direct Hairdressing
Rachel	Beauty tutor	South College
Rosie	Hairdressing tutor	South College
Lauren	Hairdressing tutor	South College
Lucy	Hairdressing tutor	Westgate College
Hannah	Beauty tutor	Westgate College
Charlie	Hairdressing tutor	Highspring College
Tony	Hairdressing tutor	Highspring College
Naomi	Hairdressing tutor	Highspring College
Rose	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Lily	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Clare	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Becky	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Terry	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Molly	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Sally	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Nicola	Hairdressing tutor	Brook Training Academy
Katherine	Hairdressing tutor	West Oaks
Allie	Hairdressing tutor	HBL
Laura	Hairdressing/beauty tutor	HBL
Ashley	Hairdressing tutor	HBL

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