

*Hair, The Hairdresser and  
The Everyday Practices of  
Women's Hair Care*

by

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**THESIS CONTAINS  
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**Dedicated to the late David Holmes  
(1949-1998)**

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**Salon Videos (see enclosed DVD)**

Video 1	Cutting
Video 2	Highlighting/streaking
Video 3	Hair washing
Video 4	Hair drying and styling
Video 5	Straightening hair
Video 6	Setting hair
Video 7	Removing set from hair



## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Nicky Gregson for the countless hours she has devoted to me and this thesis. I cannot really do justice here to how grateful I am for all her help and support over the last four years - thank you! I would also like to thank my second supervisors, Jess Dubow and Eric Olund, for the vast amount of time and attention they have given me throughout my PhD, and for always being available to answer queries, read drafts and provide comments! Their encouragement has been invaluable, especially over these last few months. My gratitude also goes out to all of the participants who kindly agreed to take part in my research and were more than happy to answer what may initially have appeared as some rather strange questions! Of course, in discussing my research I must also mention the salon. Without Kirby's none of this research would have been possible and, although I cannot disclose the salon's identity, I am immensely grateful for being given the opportunity to work there and meet such lovely people. I would particularly like to thank: Patricia for letting me loose in the salon and not showing too much dismay at my various misdemeanours; Parr for his eternal wit, and his willingness to explain even the most simplest of hairdressing practices to me several times over; and Linney for her honesty and helpfulness. My gratitude to my friends and family goes without saying. Over the last few years, there have been many points where I have been on the verge of wanting to pull out my own hair, let alone write about anyone else's! Therefore: mum, Sarah, Debs, Gill and everyone else who has put up with some sort of rant/moan/cry off me over the years - thanks! Lastly, I would like to thank Nick - for keeping me sane, never wavering in support, and for coping so well with living with a self-confessed workaholic! Thank you.



## **Summary of Thesis**

This thesis is concerned with reclaiming hair as a site of everyday practice and the role of the hairdresser as a skilled craft worker. Focusing upon the blindingly obvious substance of hair, it explores the lively and inimitable qualities which make hair truly unique to each of us. It is this uniqueness, or as I term it, the palimpsest of hair, that influences everything we do with hair, from our regular hairdressing appointment to its everyday home maintenance. Engaging with social and cultural geographies, this thesis speaks to bodily geographies, and workplace geographies. However, its key thematics are also drawn from wider approaches, particularly practice-based approaches, materiality and craft production. Using practice as a lens through which to research hair, the thesis tracks the customer journey from hair salon to home and back again, illustrating how the hairdresser, the palimpsest of hair and hair's wearer converge and diverge. Beginning in the salon, I highlight how the relationship between hairdresser and client does not always conform to the scripted encounters attributed to other forms of service work, but can involve genuine feelings and individualised performances. Through the practices of hair production, I illuminate the craft of hairdressing, demonstrating how the hairdresser and customer co-corporeally produce the palimpsest of hair. Moving from the salon into the home, I discuss how the customer reproduces their hair at home, through what I term the DIY hair project. I convey how these DIY hair practices are bound by normalised anxieties, articulated through individual temporalities. Finally, I explore the customer's return to the salon and how the temporalities of the salon appointment illuminate the choreographies of women's lives. Thus, I contend that hair is a substance worthy of academic study and should be included in debates on the politics of the body and of the everyday.

*When I was seven they cropped it and I looked like a boy. I cried for about six months, well not six months but for a good couple of weeks. And people laughed at me in school. That scarred me for life, but I've always been (.3) I think that's why I've had my hair long for so long because I was scared of like going in and having it cut off.*

(Jennifer, Focus Group 2)

*Now this is a bit of a story because after I had both my children my hair fell out, it fell out in droves. It happened both times. It was the second time I got pneumonia. While I was pregnant it was brilliant, my hair was lovely. When I gave birth to Josh my hair was lovely, really, really nice, and then I fed him, and the minute I stopped feeding him at three months my hair started to fall out, (.3) erm gradually. And like it was long when I'd had Josh and like you'd pick him up out of the Moses basket, anybody came visiting, and there was hair everywhere. There was hair all over the house, there was hair everywhere, and then it started to grow back, after a few months. But I could run my hand through my head, and it would feel like a man's beard!*

(Carolyn, Interview)

*A few years ago I was blonde, I had blonde highlights. Erm but when I first started having them I went to this place in Anytown and I came out and it was proper stripey, like really..... It was awful. So I put up with it for a few months and then my mum was sick of me going on about it. And she said "Right I'm going to sort this out. You're going to go to Gerry's and get this done." So she said "I'll help you pay. We'll go halves." Cos she knew it was going to be well dear, "And they'll make it right." It was just awful. So I went the day after and it cost £73, but when I came out it looked absolutely amazing to what it had done before. So it was well worth it.*

(Ruby, Focus Group 5)



## Roots

### **1. Introduction**

Everyone has a story to tell about their hair. From the disastrous cut as a child, the once horrendous highlights or the traumas of hair loss, whether you have any or not, hair is substance everyone can relate to. On the one hand, ubiquitous, mundane and ordinary, on the other, unique, distinctive and terribly personal; hair is an intrinsic feature of the human body and an inherent constituent of individual identity. Accompanying us through life's journeys, our hair marks out specific events and times passed, changing with us as our body ages and our tastes change. Yet, despite hair's continued presence within our lives, it is often trivialised and disregarded. Any pre-occupation with it is seen as vain, superfluous and self-obsessed. What is more, hair seems to be regarded as operating in a hyper-feminine domain – the ditzy blonde female hairdresser, obsessed with her own appearance and charged with improving those of equally identity fixated women. Hair is trapped in the classic identity trope of 'you are what you buy/eat/wear/look like' (Fiske 1989) and those that work upon it are scorned for fuelling the fires of narcissism. This thesis is concerned with freeing hair from its prison of symbolism and reclaiming it as a site and substance of everyday practice. It is also about challenging the stereotypical denigrated role of the hairdresser, and recognising them as a highly skilled craft worker.

In this introductory chapter, I situate my thesis both conceptually and empirically, as an account of hair's everyday mundane importance and the hairdresser's significance within people's lives. Weaving together individual experiences with substantial ethnographic material, I focus upon the lively and inimitable qualities which make hair truly unique to each of us. As I argue, it is this uniqueness which influences everything we do with hair and have done to it: from our regular hairdresser appointment, to its everyday home maintenance. Through the lens of hair practices, this thesis tracks the journey from the hair salon to the home and back again, focusing upon four key themes: the labour of the hairdresser; hairdressing as craft production; DIY maintenance of hair; and, finally, hair's temporality and the hairdressing appointment.

I begin this chapter by discussing why this thesis is about hair. In doing so, this introductory chapter sets up hair's position within wider academic debates, focusing

in particular on hair's relevance to feminist politics of the body, and also how this thesis speaks to various strands of social and cultural geography. This broader positioning of the thesis enables a more nuanced review of the literature which relates directly to hair in the following chapter. Having situated the thesis, I move on to account for my research methodology, describing the ethnographic research I undertook in a hair salon. Finally, I provide a summary of the structure of the thesis and the strands which link each chapter together.

## **1.1 Why Hair?**

Despite hair's bodily ubiquity, it has had 'a neglected history' within scholarly study (Thrift 2008 p.20). This neglect makes hair a difficult subject to position within academic debate. Therefore, in the section that follows, I answer the question of why hair is a subject worthy of academic study and shore up a position for this thesis and for hair within academic debate. In doing so, I stress how hair can be included in feminist work on the politics of the body, whilst also addressing how hair speaks to various strands of social and cultural geography.

### **1.1.1 Hair and body politics**

Just as hair is found at the 'margins of the body' (Kwint 1999 p.9), so it has also been positioned at the peripheries of feminist debates on the politics of the body. At the turn of the twentieth century, feminists both in England and the United States were writing about women's reproductive rights and the need for access to birth control (see Margaret Sanger 1920, cited in Rossi 1973 & Annie Besant 1877, cited in Rowbotham 1977). Alongside these debates, feminists were also campaigning for equal political rights for women and voicing their concerns over women's undervalued economic status. Women's bodies and what they did with them therefore operated as a politicised and contested material.

As Caroline Cox (1999 p.43), writing about the history of hair fashions, conveys, this period in women's emancipation was paralleled by a 'democratisation of fashion'. It is, indeed, no coincidence that the 1920s not only saw women gain the right to vote, but also cut their hair short for the first time. The new 'Eton crop' was symptomatic of women's changing status. Never before had women's hair been cut, let alone in such a 'masculine-inspired' style (Cox 1999 p.49). Yet, despite the furore this caused, with social commentators claiming a 'crisis of femininity' (Cox

1999, Trasko 1994), hair and fashion remained on the periphery of feminist debate. Whilst new liberated hairstyles denoted the symbolic power of hair and its capacity to make a political statement, their significance during this period paled in comparison to feminist struggles for reproductive rights and political and economic equality.

Hair's marginality continued as feminist debates turned from campaigning for political equality to addressing how challenges could be made to the patriarchal order. By the 1970s, a victory had been won for reproductive rights in the form of 1967 Abortion Act. However, feminist concerns were now also growing over the sexualisation of the female body. Pornography, clothing, and beauty regimes were all critiqued for their production of patriarchal idealised and eroticised female bodily norms (Chapkis 1988, Dworkin & MacKinnon 1988, Wolf 1990). Even body hair featured, albeit partially, in such debates: as several studies have discussed, female hairlessness is a normative bodily expectation, serving to construct an idealised femininity (Brownmiller 1984, Cooper 1971, Hope 1982, Toerien & Wilkinson 2003). However, notwithstanding body hair's acknowledgement, head hair had yet to be recognised as part of a politics of the body.

Instead, feminist work has been interested primarily in the lived, fleshy, experiences of the body. Such work has engaged with bodily fluids and functions, exploring the corporeal experiences of the 'leaky' body (Grosz 1994, 1995a, 1995b). Yet, whilst many of these studies have brought into question the boundaries of the body, exploring substances such as menstrual blood, fat and even clothing at the body's margins, hair has never featured. This is despite its location at the margins of the body. So, even when feminist debates on the body have turned to the body's margins, hair has remained on the political periphery. In part, the explanation for this is that to focus upon hair, a substance shared by men and women, is to create a much messier and more complicated politics of the body. This thesis is concerned with doing just that, albeit that it confines itself to the study of women's hair. Drawing upon the corporeal experience of hair, as explored through the lens of practice, this thesis will shore up a position for hair within the politics of the body. In turn, it highlights how hair is a feminist issue.



### **1.1.2 Strands of social and cultural geography**

Although the previous section has already discussed work on the body, the thesis also engages with bodily geographies. Taking its cues from feminist debates, both bodily geographies and the bodily studies of other disciplines have focused upon the body as a site of cultural inscription. Chris Shilling's (1993) notion of the 'body as a project' has been used to describe how 'what we eat/buy/wear/do' (Fiske 1989) to our bodies determines how our identities will be 'read' by others (Entwistle 2001). Thus, alongside feminist studies into the construction of the female body through dieting, exercise and beauty regimes, have also been studies on body building (Johnson 1998, Monaghan 2000), tattooing (Featherstone 2000, McCarron 2000, Pitts 2003) and plastic surgery (Gimlin 2006), all stressing the body's cultural malleability. In keeping with feminist bodily studies, none of these studies have engaged with hair. The thesis speaks to these debates, drawing upon and expanding the notion of the 'body as a project' to explore the normalised practices and routines which encompass the everyday maintenance of hair.

Through its focus upon the material maintenance of hair, the thesis also converses with geographical work on temporality (Crang 2005, Glennie & Thrift 1996, Thrift 2000, Thrift & May 2001). Whilst earlier work on temporality addressed how time is categorised (Thompson 1967), more recent work has focused upon how people experience and appreciate time (Adam 2004, Frow 1998, Southerton 2006, Glennie & Thrift 2009,). Engaging with these debates I explore how the maintenance of hair can be used to appreciate the complex choreographies of women's lives. Many studies on time have paid particular attention to the control of time, the perception that 'the pace of life is accelerating and that there is an increasing shortage of time' (Southerton *et al* 2001 p.3). In particular, women with families are regularly described as being in a 'time bind' or 'time poor', as they struggle to juggle paid work with family life (Hochschild 1997, Jurczyk 1998, Shaw 1998). Rather than starting with time, as many of these studies have done, the thesis begins with hair practices, exploring how hair's materiality gives rise to temporal experience.

Geographical appreciations of time-space relations are equally important to the thesis as it tracks across the spaces of the salon and the home. In so doing, it engages with geographical debates on the workplace, the home and also the production of 'public' and 'private' space. The salon as a workplace is addressed in

the following chapter, and a core thematic within the thesis is the extent to which the hair salon is a site of service work. Stemming from this is an appreciation of the spatialities of hair salons. Although geographical studies have never engaged with the hair salon, I contend that the hair salon has a particular geography, shifting from a 'private' home-based activity to a 'public' practice. Until the 1920s women's hair was never cut. Rather it was dressed - by a friseur, if a woman was wealthy enough, or, if they were not, it would be wound into a simple bun (De Courtais 1973). Whilst the cutting of women's hair was the revelation of the 1920s, the rise of the female hair salon caused an equal stir in the late nineteenth century. Up until this point, the dressing of women's hair had been very much a 'private' affair, done in the space of one's home. The 'public' space of the street was a place for gentleman and 'loose women', and no self-respecting woman would be seen out alone. However, the arrival of the department store provided a 'newly sanctioned space' for 'public' female consumption (Smith 2008, p.56), and with it came the first female hair salons (Cox 1999). Although these salons were only open to wealthy women, this sea-change in hairdressing, from a very 'private' practice to a much more public activity, highlights the instability of 'public'/'private' divisions and the changing position of women within society. This instability has remained throughout the hair salon's history. Indeed, in the 1920s, as more barbers turned to female hairdressing, cubicle systems were introduced into salons to protect the privacy of their female clients (Smith 2008). The public-private dichotomy continues to define contemporary hair care practices, most notably in the overlap of procedures which can be performed in the home and in the salon. As the thesis explores, whilst the home is a space physically separate from the salon, the two are intertwined by the maintenance of hair and the ongoing work that hair's materiality requires.

Returning to the hair salon, its rapid growth as a space of female 'public' consumption in the late nineteenth century also produced a specific spatiality. Originating in city-centre department stores, hair salons diffused from such 'temples of commodity capitalism' (Benjamin, cited in Buck-Morss 1991 p.83), to more marginal locations, such as 'back-street' barbershops. Hence, the geography of hair salons, during this era, reflected the classic core-periphery models of 1960s urban geography, whereby the 'opulent luxury' of the department store 'stood in contradistinction to the many small salons that had to cope with unsuitable or

cramped interiors and clumsy, old-fashioned furnishings' (Smith 2008 p.58). For some this historical diffusion is still reflected in the service one can expect in contemporary salons. According to Debra Gimlin (1999), who studied a hair salon in New York, a hierarchy of hair salons exists. Gimlin argues that city centre salons are staffed by 'artists' and offer 'fashionable styles', whereas salons located in more peripheral urban zones employ 'service workers' and offer 'out dated' hair fashions. Such a simplistic view not only standardises stylists' skills as either 'fashion' (art) or 'non-fashion' (service), but in doing so it completely ignores the cultural contingency of taste. As Karen Stevenson (2001 p. 147) argues, 'the fashionability and stylishness of a salon becomes dependent upon its ability to appear as an arbiter of taste'. In other words, the geography of hair salons is not dependent upon geographical location. Rather it is dependent upon reputation, and the styles and skills a salon has to offer.

In situating the thesis, I have opened up a position for hair within feminist debates on the politics of the body. Similarly, although hair has never been addressed by geography, I have established lines of connection between hair and various strands of social and cultural geography. Although hair may be a subject with little academic credence, lingering on the peripheries of scholarly debates, this thesis insists that hair is a subject worthy of study in its own right. In producing this thesis, I aim to bring hair, the hair salon and the many practices, routines and tools it encompasses to the attention of academia.

## **1.2 The Ethnography**

### **1.2.1 Introducing the fieldwork**

Given the importance of hair practices to this thesis its primary fieldwork site is the hair salon. Whilst hair practices take place in the home (see Chapter Five – *Doing-it-Yourself*), there they must compete with all manner of other practices and substances. So, for a period of 12 months, I worked as a salon junior in a hair salon, in Bolton, North West England, engaging in and observing the practices I explore in this thesis. Running parallel and anchoring the ethnographic fieldwork, was an extensive programme of focus groups, followed up by subsequent one-to-one interviews with interested participants about their hair practices. In addition to this, I also attended an evening college course on hair care and styling for a period of six

months, which enabled me to experiment with the practices I could only ever observe in the salon. Whilst there are undeniable advantages to conducting solo-ethnographic research, as is the case with this project, there are also many limitations and pitfalls. This section positions my research, addressing how my ethnographic account is framed by my positionality, reflexivity and embodied and situated knowledges.

### **1.2.2 Setting up**

The polarisation of the ethnographer as working either at 'home' or 'abroad' has been discussed at great length within academia over the last thirty years (for example see Burawoy 2007, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Cohen 2000, Holmwood 2007, Marcus & Fisher 1986, Strathern 1986). Debates in both cases have centred upon the politics of neutrality, the position of the researcher and their abilities to 'reflect back' on themselves (MacDonald 1997). I entered my fieldwork with the naïve assumption that my social identity was a local one and that I was by all accounts conducting an ethnography 'at home'. Born and bred in Bolton, I grew up just a few miles away from the salon, I will call Kirby's, and had attended a school which several of the stylists and juniors had also been pupils at, albeit sometime after I had left. Kirby's location on a busy high street, home to a strip of mainly independent retailers, including a travel agent's, several newsagents, a tanning shop and a chip shop, was also once occupied by a large home retail chain I had spent two years working in as a teenager as a Saturday sales assistant. Thus, despite having lived away from the North West for six years and currently residing some 20 miles away from the salon, this was, I thought, familiar territory.

Yet, as Marilyn Strathern (1986 p.16) points out, 'the grounds of familiarity and distance are shifting ones' and determining when one is 'at home' is not so straightforward. Despite identifying Bolton as the place I had called 'home' for 27 years, I was unprepared for the realisation that my 'solid' local identity was actually somewhat fractured. As Amanda Coffey (1999 p.158) contends, 'research begins from where we are', and in my case this involved a complicated 'return'. I believed that my familiarity with the local area would enable a smooth transition into the salon (Strathern 1986). I saw myself as a young, white, heterosexual woman going to work with a group of other young, white heterosexual, women. I thought I would understand their norms, codes and language, even if I did not necessarily identify

with, or always conform, to them (Ely *et al* 1991). It was such presumptions about my identity and those of the people I would meet that made things complicated.

The arrangement that I would work at Kirby's came about through a conversation with a friend of a friend who was neighbours with Kirby's owner, Patricia. After an initial telephone conversation with Patricia, who was more than happy to employ me as a voluntary junior, I arranged to visit Kirby's to meet everyone and confirm a start date. I set off for that initial meeting with pre-conceived ideas about the people I would encounter, would be washing the hair of and be working with during my time there. In line with the stereotypes this thesis disputes, and discussed by other studies, such as Beverley Skeggs' (1999) on class, gender and respectability, I imagined a group of young, working-class women whom beauty and appearance were central to, and anything to do with education and studying boring. However, I was taken aback by the differences between myself and the salon staff.

Firstly, I was considered 'old'. Out of Kirby's staff, only Patricia the owner and a Saturday woman called Gill, were older than me. In a way I think Gill's position as a junior in her forties helped ease my transition into the salon. Gill, whose 18 year old daughter, Sacha, also worked as Saturday staff, joked that she was 'the oldest Saturday girl in the world.' Assistant manager, Linney, and stylist, Parr, both who feature heavily throughout this thesis, were at the time in their mid-twenties, and the rest of the stylists (Beth, Nina, Sophie, Alana, Tina) in their early twenties. However, all of the other juniors and Saturday staff, were in their teens with the youngest being straight out of school and aged 16. (See *Appendix B* for more detailed profiles of Kirby's staff).

Secondly, my age led to both the salon staff and customers making assumptions about my life. I was surprised at the numbers of times I was asked throughout my research if I had children or was married. I had prepared myself for numerous questions about my PhD and why I wanted to work in the salon for free, but they never came. Right from that initial meeting it was clear that I was just another voluntary worker, like the numerous college students and work experience pupils who came and went over the time I was there. The main and most intriguing difference was that I was 'old' and had no children. My wish to research the salon as a workplace and to listen to the experiences and opinions of staff and customers was inconsequential. My higher education had no value within the salon. What set me

apart from everyone else was my nonconformity to the hyper-feminised norms of the terrain. At times this nonconformity led to me being asked some very intimate questions about personal life. Many of these I interpreted as a test of my character, a sort of initiation ceremony for the new and 'odd' member of staff. I was quizzed, particularly by younger members of staff, about my relationships, whether I had ever taken drugs or committed any crimes. These I answered honestly, and attempted, whether rightly or wrongly, to hide any shock I may have displayed if I was asked such things in any other situation by people I barely knew. Thus, contrary to my initial assumptions that my 'local' knowledge would ensure a smooth transition into the salon, in the end it was my honesty, coupled with a desire to get on with the job, which assured my position in the salon.

### **1.2.3 Positioning Kirby's**

As *Figure 1.1* shows Kirby's is a big salon. Long and narrow there is space for ten clients to be worked upon at any time, with a waiting area for a further four, sinks (known as backwashes) to wash the hair of three people, two beauty treatment rooms, a sunbed and a spray tanning area. Employing the national average of 13 members of staff (Habia 2007) whilst I was there, the turnover of customers is phenomenal, sometimes averaging around 70 customers a day at busy times. Like most hair salons in the western world, Kirby's is doubly gendered both in terms of its staff and its customers. It is a female space where 99% of the customers and all but one staff member are women. Recent statistics corroborate Kirby's position as a typical female hair salon. The Hair and Beauty Industry Authority (Habia) in the UK estimate that 90% of the UK hairdressing workforce are female (Habia 2008). Similarly, a recent Mintel (2008) report estimates that British women visit the hair salon on average once every two to three months. In addition, research by Boots (Boots, cited in Farrington 2009) suggests that the average British woman will spend £37,000 on her hair in a lifetime, compared to men who will spend just £750.

Given this female bias, although my research has involved speaking to men about their hair through focus group activities, this thesis is about the hair care practices of women and the role of the female hairdresser. Critics may argue that by focusing upon women and a female hair salon, that I am merely replicating gendered and sexualised constructions of hair and the hairdresser. However, on the contrary, I contend that by engaging in a sphere with such established gender patterns that there

is the opportunity to 'displace existing discourses by creating new ones,' thus 'yielding new possibilities of subjectivity and action' (Gibson-Graham 2004 p.407). This thesis is set in a working-class salon where both customers and staff are predominantly female, white and heterosexual, and, it is the stories of these women that this thesis illuminates.

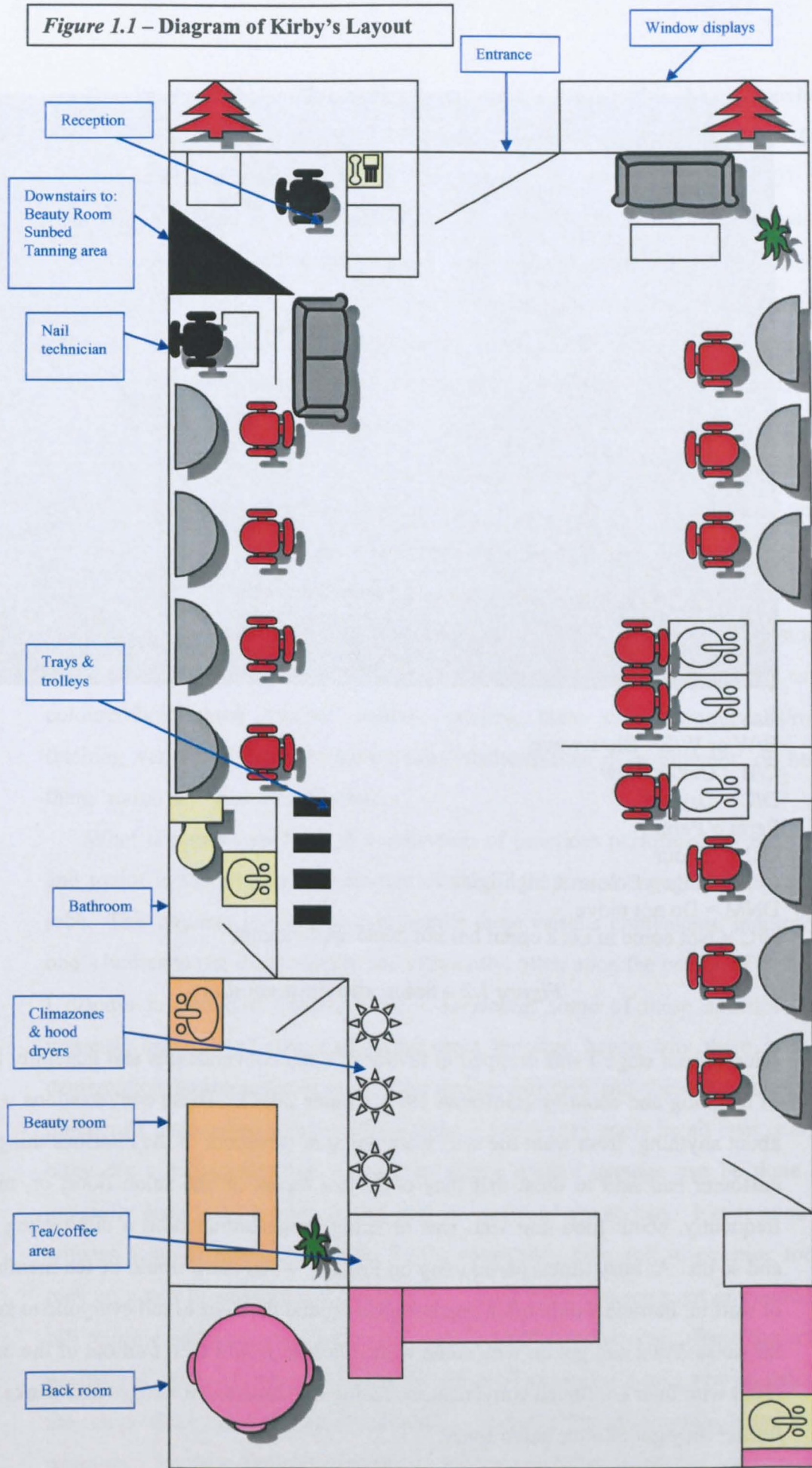
This leads me on to my second point regarding Kirby's customer base. Kirby's customers are mainly from the surrounding suburban area, living and working within close proximity. When asked, stylist, Parr, described the average customer as in her mid-forties, living within a mile of the salon, having a local part-time service-type job and coming in for highlights every six to eight weeks. Yet, even though the majority of Kirby's customers may live locally and be of a particular working-class socio-economic grouping, they do vary greatly in age and requested hair procedures. From babies coming in for their first hair cut, to women in their mid-twenties wanting their hair straightened for a night out, to elderly Mrs B (more on Mrs B in Chapter Six) in her nineties and visiting once a week for a shampoo and set, the hair practices required of Kirby's staff are diverse. Even though chronological accounts of hair fashions (see *Appendix A* for my own example of such an account), contend that hair styles have a perceived shelf-life certain 'old' fashions live on in spaces such as Kirby's. *Figure 1.2*, the salon appointment diary, illustrates the collision of styles found in Kirby's. With repetition and practice these styles become engrained in the skills of Kirby's staff and are thus woven into the fabric of the salon. In turn, they form part of the salon's attraction to potential customers.

#### **1.2.4 Doing the research**

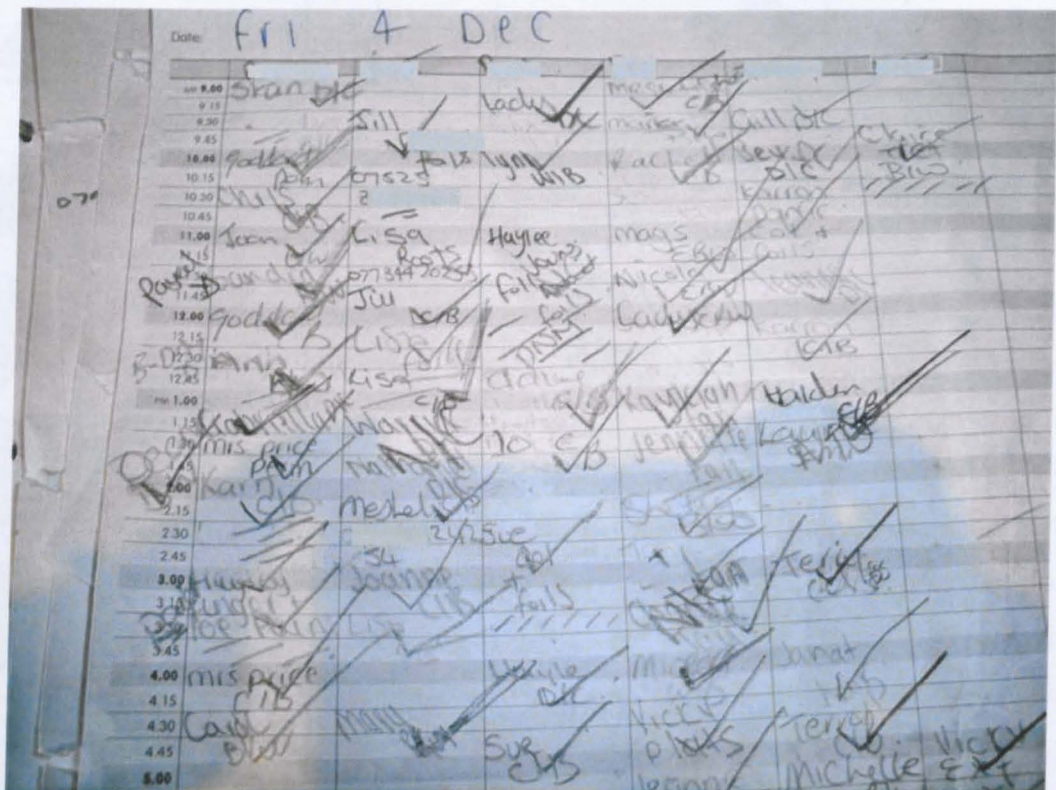
From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007, I began working at Kirby's two days a week (Wednesdays and Fridays), as a salon junior. Despite my initial fears surrounding my fieldwork choice, working at Kirby's was a privilege. And, from the experience, I have a new group of friends, not to mention a new hairdresser. However, those first few weeks were challenging, as I was faced with not only learning the job as quickly as possible, but also making a place for myself as a slightly too old junior, doing a project on hair.

In those early months, a great proportion of my field diary centred upon the talk I was party to in the salon. Most of this took place in the back room (see *Figure 1.1*), a classic 'back stage' space where the professional identity displayed in the

Figure 1.1 – Diagram of Kirby's Layout







**Key:**

- B/W or W/B= Blow wave
- C/B = Cut & Blow
- D/C = Dry cut
- Perm = Perm
- Col = Colour
- Col & Foils = Colour & highlights
- DNM = Do not move
- N/C = Not come in i.e. a client has not made appointment

**Figure 1.2 – Salon appointment diary**

salon ('front stage') was dropped in favour of open conversations and generally lots of laughing and shouting (Goffman 1959, Coates 2000). These conversations were about anything: from what the staff were doing at weekend; to the hilarious things a customer had said to them that they could not repeat on the salon floor; or, most frequently, about food and who was ordering breakfast/lunch/on a diet/feeling fat and so on. At busy times, particularly on Fridays, when there would be ten members of staff in, Patricia would often pop her head around the door to tell everyone to keep the noise down and get on with some work. People would then trail out of the back room with their continued conversations fading into muffles or nudges and winks the further they got into the salon space.

Despite always being illuminating, over time my focus within the salon switched from documenting conversations to trying to make sense of the practices I was engaged in and observed the stylists conducting. As Nicky Gregson (2007 p.17) discusses in relation to her research on household practices of ridding, it is essential when studying practice 'to find ways of positioning ourselves as researchers in the enactment of doings'. For me, my work in the salon gave me ample opportunity to engage in hair practices and to appreciate their embodied physicality. Thus, my body became a research tool used to understand the activities of hair care (Gregson 2007). Answering what seemed like a constantly ringing phone; washing the hair of numerous clients, lathering, scrubbing, massaging their scalps; ripping hundreds of foils for highlights, sweeping hair up off the floor; making endless cups of tea and coffee; getting down on my hands and knees to wipe skirting boards; or balancing on my tip toes to reach the top of windows, were all practices I performed in my role as salon junior. In addition to this, I regularly helped the stylists attend to customers. Amongst many other practices this involved: holding hair out of the way as they coloured/highlighted another section; passing them clips/perming-rods/rollers; fetching various styling products/combs/brushes/pieces of equipment; or helping them 'rough dry' a customer's hair.

What is paramount from this collection of practices performed by both stylist and junior is the phenomenal amount of 'stuff' they must engage with to do their jobs. This requires learning how to handle these various implements, manipulating one's bodies to use them quickly and efficiently, often upon the bodies of others. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Four - *Servicing*, some of these abilities require immense amounts of time and effort spent training; hence why there is a clear demarcation between the practices the stylists perform and those allocated to the junior. At times when it is incredibly busy, a junior may apply an all over colour, or blow dry a customer's hair - practices where limited damage can be done - but generally such tasks are left to the capable hands of the stylists. Never once did I witness a junior weave highlights into a customer's hair, roll in perming-rods, or pick up a pair of scissors and begin to cut. Such practices were out of bounds until full training had been completed and a junior staff member was offered the coveted position of stylist. However, despite the allure of the stylist's role, few juniors climb the rungs of the salon's hierarchical ladder. Many fall by the wayside, either leaving when they become disgruntled with the low pay and their continual lowly position,

or being dismissed for not being skilled enough. Whilst I was at Kirby's one junior was sacked because of her attitude and another left because she had simply had enough.

As I quickly discovered, I had enough trouble mastering the basic practices of the junior, never mind worrying about those of the stylist. As Cohen (2000 p.317) describes, 'crises in fieldwork are common' and we regularly have to muddle through awkward encounters. I had several 'crises' trying to perform my role as a Kirby's junior: from soaking several clients through when I washed their hair (to the point where they had to be dried off with a hairdryer!); to accidentally accepting a forged £20 note when taking a customer's payment; to booking people in for appointments when logically there was not enough time. Yet, it was through such 'crises' that the importance of these practices and their position as collections of practices came to life. When I messed up it affected everything else - other staff had to rush, customers had to wait. Thus, whilst appearing as distinct and separate activities, as this thesis illustrates, practices are relational, connecting bodies and people. What is more, this ethnography required me to be responsible. This was a business and my mistakes cost time, money and quite probably customers.

Nevertheless, one of the limitations of my salon fieldwork was my position as a junior. Whilst I had the opportunity to mess up washing people's hair, and to engage in lots of cleaning and sweeping, I could never enact the practices of the stylist, such as cutting, highlighting or perming. Whether I would have really wanted to take such a risk with no training is another matter! On the flip side, I did regularly take the position of customer, having my own hair done in the salon to experience hair practices being done to me by others. This is quite normal for a member of staff, as getting your hair done is a 'perk' of the job. Yet, this has limitations for my research. Besides being a member of staff and therefore treated differently, working and observing in the salon meant I also had some prior knowledge of how practices should be enacted and could anticipate the performance. Therefore, I could never really experience what it was like to be a customer.

To overcome my inability to access all of the salon's practices fully I enrolled on a local college course entitled 'Hair care and Styling'. Designed as a pre-cursor to those wanting to go on to study for the NVQ in hairdressing, this six month course was an introduction to hairdressing for beginners. Taking place one evening a week for three hours, it offered me the perfect opportunity to practice the activities I had

witnessed in the salon. As *Figure 1.3* shows, a great deal of the practices we performed throughout the course were done to 'blocks', which are doll's head with human hair woven on to the doll's scalp. However, we also had a chance to try out both colouring and highlights on willing volunteers other pupils had brought along to the class. Although I never had the opportunity to practice cutting, just attempting to weave a section of foil highlights illuminated the complexities of hairdressing and the deeply engrained skills required (see *Figure 1.4*). What took me three attempts and over five minutes to do would take a stylist at Kirby's a matter of one minute, if not less. In addition, the college course also provided me with an insight into some of the scripted nature of hairdressing. We were taught how to look after your client's needs, ensuring their comfort at all times; how to perform a customer consultation, including analysing hair type and face shape; and how to deal with 'delicate situations', such as a customer having nits. All in all, it proved invaluable to my appreciation of the practices I was observing at Kirby's, and would eventually discuss with my focus group and interview participants.

As the year rolled on, I managed to survive the bedlam that is Christmas in a hair salon. Attending the yearly Kirby's Christmas outing and sitting down with everyone around the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve to open all the presents off customers, I felt part of their team and at ease with my role within the salon. Perhaps some would argue that becoming so engrained in a fieldwork site is a limitation to ethnographic research, and that neutrality was therefore impossible. I agree with them. However, I never entered into this aiming to be a distanced, neutral observer. On the contrary, if I had taken such an approach, I would not be conducting ethnographic research and I certainly would not be writing a thesis about practice. Ethnography requires intimacy (Appadurai 1997). It is a practice of 'intimate, long-term engagement with people's everyday worlds' (Horshelmann & Stenning 2008 p.340). For me this intimacy was granted because I 'mucked in'. Despite the background differences and my extended education, I became and remained a Kirby's junior because I fully embraced the role. The only tangible limitation I have experienced from this intimate involvement has been my difficulty to detach myself from the salon now my research is over. Even now, almost 18 months later, I am still called up to work, I still attend the annual Christmas outing, and I still get my hair done there. However, I perceive this to be merely a

methodological limitation. The time I spent working at Kirby's has enriched my life on both a professional and a personal level.



**Figure 1.3 – Photographs of college work**



*Figure 1.4 – Highlighting at college*



*Figure 1.4 (cont.) – Highlighting at college*



*Figure 1.4 (cont.) – Highlighting at college*

### **1.2.5 Focus groups and interviews**

By the start of 2008 I had established good relationships with some of the regular customers, so much so, that they would ask me how my work was going, and I felt able to ask them for their help in recruiting focus group participants. Through their help, and various other 'snowball' type initiatives, such as contacting a local gym near the salon and speaking to friends of friends who were local, I arranged ten focus groups, each with between three to five people. Although my fieldwork was based in a female hair salon and this thesis focuses upon the experiences of women, I decided to also speak to men through the focus group activities. Therefore, six of the groups were all female, one was mixed, and the other three were all male. The age ranges of these groups varied (see *Appendix C*), the eldest participant was in her sixties, and the youngest in her early twenties. They all lived locally, but their socio-economic status varied slightly. My aim within each group was to discuss the practices which had emerged from my research in the salon and to see what people thought about them. Wishing to listen, participate and empathise (Townsend 1995), I kept the conversation unstructured and informal, offering suggestions for

conversation rather than asking closed questions. I was interested to understand how they felt about visiting a hair salon, what they liked and disliked, and also their thoughts about their own hair. Each conversation was recorded with the permission of the participants.

From these discussions it quickly became apparent that whilst all the women I spoke to regularly visit a hair salon, most of the men visit a barbershop or cut their hair themselves (or get a partner to) at home. Whilst, fascinating, and a potential area for further study, the men's experiences did not relate to my work in the hair salon. For example, one of my key areas of interest was hair washing, yet many men will get their hair cut dry at a barbershop or have it damped down. What is more, the women I spoke to found it much easier to talk about their hair and their relationship with a hairdresser or a particular hair salon. The male groups, on the other hand, seemed to view it as an opportunity to mock each other for going bald or turning grey. Such a reaction is as illuminating of group dynamics and my position as a young, female researcher, as it is about men's feeling towards their hair. Their mocking of the subject confirmed popular appreciations of hair and the hairdresser; hair was a frivolous feminine topic to be joked about and should not be taken seriously.

Following the focus groups, a number of key themes emerged which I wanted to pursue further. Using my work in the salon as an opportunity to reflect upon these themes, I also decided to speak to one person from each focus group in a little more depth. I picked these people based on things they had had to say in the focus group which I found interesting and wanted further discussion about. The interviews with men proved even more illuminating. Whilst the discussions I had with them still did not relate to the practices I was experiencing in the salon or which are relayed in this thesis, they were much more open and serious about the subject matter. At the end of my fieldwork at Kirby's, and after all the focus groups and interviews, I also conducted a further focus group with the salon staff. This enabled me to discuss my findings with them and to get their views on some of the key themes which had emerged from the other groups and interviews. It also afforded me the opportunity to formally close my research in the salon.

As with the focus groups, the interviews were also recorded. All material was subsequently transcribed and coded, using etic and emic codes, enabling me to reflect upon it (Gerson & Horowitz 2002, Winchester 1996). To ensure the



narratives and experiences of the people I spoke to are given 'voice', I have used direct quotations throughout this thesis (Madge *et al* 1997). However, as with any research, these accounts have been influenced by my interpretation of events, as is reflected through their following presentation. To enhance the focus upon practice, I have also enclosed a number of pictures and video clips to illustrate the activities being discussed.

### **1.2.6 Videos**

In this thesis video has been used to bring hair practices to life for the reader. As Holliday (2001 p.509) discusses, in contemporary consumer society saturated with televisual imagery, video enables researchers to capture 'lived cultural practices'. I was particularly concerned that whilst I was able to write and describe the practices which take place in the salon in detail, I could not relay their complexities and skills using words alone. Whilst photographs provide visual representations of practices within the salon, and offer a useful accompaniment to the narrative description, they cannot capture the essence of the embodied actions which such practices involve. However, using video to capture the experiences of hair practices could do just that. Coupled with narrative descriptions, the videos of hair practices which form part of this thesis enable the reader/viewer to appreciate the energy and embodied nature of the hair practices taking place within the salon, ensuring that the narrative description is brought to life.

I could have provided commentary over the video, recounting the description supplied in the text of the thesis. Nevertheless, I feel that to do so would 'take away' from the practices being performed, and, I think it is better for the viewer to absorb and interpret the practices in their own way. One particularly interesting approach I also could have taken with the video clips was to ask the hairdressers, or maybe even the customers involved, to provide a running commentary. Yet, in many ways I feel that this may also conflict with the captivating energy of watching such practices being performed and forming one's own opinions. Regretfully, I had to remove the sound from the video clips for ethical reasons. This undoubtedly limits their effectiveness at relaying the sensory experience of these particular moments of hair production, such as the noise of the hairdryer or the background chatter of the salon space. However, to leave the sound as it was would have revealed the identity of the salon and also of its customers' and staff, a matter I could not compromise.

### 1.3 This thesis

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the structure of this thesis is based on a customer journey to the salon, home and back again. However, in the chapter that follows, I firstly begin by reviewing the literatures which inform this thesis. The first part of Chapter Two, *Setting-Up Hair*, addresses literatures which have dealt with hair. I argue that their prioritising of hair's symbolic value over its material potential as an object of research limits their use for this thesis, as it fails to address hair's agency and vitality. Therefore, in response to this, the latter part of the chapter explores literatures which may not have had dealings with hair, but whose ideas are crucial for this thesis's approach. In addition to this, and as also explained previously, Chapter Two addresses literatures on labour and women's work. Incorporating studies focused solely upon work in the hair salon, alongside those on other forms of service work, I discuss the various concepts of labour which can be applied to the salon. Drawing together emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork, I illustrate how each of these concepts can be applied to the hair salon, but are also limited in their ability to fully appreciate the work of the hairdresser. Incorporating work on the body and identity, I then move on to address how the work of the hairdresser is caught up in the construction of the bodies and identities of others.

In Chapter Three, *Servicing*, the journey begins in the hair salon. Focusing upon the hairdresser's labour, this chapter further develops the concepts of emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork. I begin by examining the essentialised character of 'women's work' and how this is projected on to the role of the hairdresser. Using Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour, I convey how the role of the hairdresser requires prescribed emotional performances, as evident within other forms of service work. However, I also contend that the encounter between hairdresser and client can be much more than a standardised, scripted event. Applying the term 'unique relationship', I discuss how the relationship between a hairdresser and their client can be genuine, individual and enduring. Extending the concept of emotional labour, I then move on to discuss how the hairdresser mobilises aesthetic labour to resist the gendered and sexualised constructions of their role. On the one hand, I illustrate how the hairdresser embodies a professional and clinical image to resist sexualised stereotypes. Whilst, on the other, I argue that in many ways the hairdresser challenges such constructions by overtly embodying them, in an

attempt to elevate the status of their profession to glamorous and well-paid. In the final part of Chapter Three, I introduce the concept of bodywork, detailing how hair's erotic association and the hairdressers care-giving activities are typical bodywork activities. Extending these ideas, I argue that bodywork should not just be concerned with constructing the genders of the salon staff, but, given the hairdresser's activities upon the bodies of others, is also about how they work upon the genders and identities of their clients.

In Chapter Four, *Crafting*, I continue to discuss the labour of the hairdresser, however, my focus now turns to addressing the craft production of hair. Arguing that the hairdresser is a modern day artisan, I illustrate how the craft labour of the hairdresser encourages unique relationships with their clients, not just through the trust of such attachments, but through their abilities to deal with the uniqueness and vitalism of hair. Drawing upon the work of Richard Sennett (2008) and his theories on craft production, I contend that hairdressing must be perceived as a craft because it is repetition and routine which produce excellence. I argue that hair is like a palimpsest, full of vitalism and agency, and it is the hairdresser's job to use their craft skills to still this vitalism and bring it under control. Calling upon various moments of hair production, I then bring together the customer, the hairdresser and the hair to illustrate this quest for control and the corporeal journey through a salon appointment. These moments begin with the initial consultation, before moving through the practices of washing, colouring, cutting, styling, and, lastly, the final revealing moment.

Chapter Five, *Doing-It-Yourself*, sees the thesis follow the customer out of the salon back home, where they must deal with their hair on their own, through what I term the 'DIY hair project'. I argue that, unlike any other DIY project, the DIY hair project is ongoing with no finite start or end. I demonstrate how it is made up of fragile and highly individual hair care routines which are interwoven with a variety of practices, objects and tools. In turn, I convey how this DIY hair project is part of a much bigger and ongoing DIY body project, whereby women work upon their bodies to stabilise the 'coherent self' (Mol & Law 2004 p.56). Using temporality as a vehicle to explore women's DIY hair care routines and their continual quest for the 'coherent self', I begin by drawing upon two home hair care practices – washing and home colouring. With each of these practices, I illustrate their varying temporalities and how these temporalities are bound by normative practices and expectations, but

are also influenced by the unique materiality of the palimpsest of hair. I contend that these practices and their associated values are simultaneously affected by other practices, tools and technologies. In the second half of the chapter, I turn to investigate how DIY hair care routines can be ruptured. Using the example of the ceramic hair straightener and the practices of hair straightening, I begin by illuminating how tools and practices make the transition from salon to home. I demonstrate how such transitions can create moments of fragility within the hair care routine, and that the success or failure of their incorporation can be a great source of anxiety. To illustrate this further, I use the example of hair straightener manufacturer, ghd™, to explore how hair care product companies play on such incorporation anxieties to sell their goods. Finally, I move away from focusing upon ruptures to DIY hair care routines, to investigate the subtle revisions and refinements women make to their DIY hair practices. I highlight how such refinements often result in collections of unused tools and products, further demonstrating the fragile nature of the DIY hair project.

Having dealt with their hair at home, the time eventually arrives for the customer to return to the salon. Thus, the penultimate chapter of this thesis, *Returning*, explores the maintenance of hair as exposed by the temporalities of the salon appointment. As I illustrate, for many women the temporality of their salon visits appears to be motivated solely by the unique materiality of their hair. In other words, continuing on from Chapter Five, they are driven to the salon because they can no longer cope with the palimpsest of hair using just DIY practices. However, as I illustrate there is much more involved in such temporalities of maintenance than the practical restoration of one's style, cut or colour. Illuminating the personal narratives of participants, I convey how for some, such as Mrs B, going to the hair salon is a collective social outing steeped in historical appreciations of weekend leisure time, as it is about hair maintenance. I contend that for others, such as working mothers, the leisure value associated to the salon is about personal 'time out', legitimated by the maintenance element of the salon appointment. In opposition, I highlight how for some, time spent in the salon is seen as a waste of time, adding to the time pressures of their lives. As an alternative, I introduce the mobile hairdresser as a way of regaining control over time. Finally, I turn to how hair appointments can be ruptured by the influence of the calendar. As I discuss,

Christmas, Easter, holidays and even monthly paydays appear to affect women's usual appointment practices, often having a collective element to them.

In the final chapter, I draw the thesis to a close, reflecting upon the journey it has taken from salon to home and back again. Drawing upon the key themes which have emerged along this path, I highlight the potential trajectories the findings of this thesis may take. The first, 'labours of care', illustrates how my work adds to debates on service work, workplace geographies and also new and emerging debates on craft work. The second thematic, 'bodies becoming' highlights the contributions that studying hair and everyday hair practices can make to work on the body. Finally, the third, 'choreographies of practice' discusses the intricacies of people's lives and the significance of this thesis to debates on practice. To conclude, I return to the beginning of this chapter and hair's place as a part of the politics of the body and also of the everyday.

*Those curious locks so aptly twin'd,  
Whose every hair a soul doth bind.*

*(Thomas Carew, Poet, 1594-1640)*



## Setting-Up Hair

### **2. Introduction**

Just as sixteenth century poet, Thomas Carew, describes the intertwining of strands of his lover's hair binding together her soul, so this chapter will weave together the many strands of literature which inform this thesis. The chapter draws upon three primary fields: two of which have had limited engagement with hair and the hair salon; whilst the remaining one has not addressed hair, but its literatures are nonetheless central to this thesis. The first field I engage with is cultural studies and semiotics. My main criticism of this body of work is its constant appraisal of hair as a cultural symbol. In the second part of this chapter, I turn my attention to literature on the hair salon, and the overarching field of studies on labour. This field provides the single largest body of work informing this thesis, drawing together salon-based studies, service work literatures and also accounts of women's work. I use these literatures to explore the concepts of emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork, and the complexities of the hairdresser's role as a service worker working upon the bodies of others.

In the latter half of the chapter, I move into the first strands of literature which have not engaged directly with hair, but are nonetheless essential to this thesis. I begin by considering work on the body and identity, and how the work of the hairdresser is caught up in the construction of identities as well as bodies. From this, I move on to discuss the final field of literatures, all of which revolve around practice. I argue that, despite having never engaged with hair, practice-based studies, and their wider positioning within the discipline of science and technology studies, have a great deal to offer this thesis. Using practice as a lens, I draw together literatures on materiality, temporality, consumption and maintenance, highlighting how they are central to understanding hair and hair practices, yet are limited by their lack of engagement with the body. In turn, this leads me to focus upon literatures on DIY and craft production. I discuss how the former is crucial to appreciating home hair care routines and the latter the role of the hairdresser as craftworker.



## **2.1 The Absence of Hair**

In this section I reflect upon hair's absence from academic thought. I draw upon the minimal spaces in which hair has figured, whilst simultaneously discussing those arenas which have been in prime position to address it, but for some reason have failed to do so. Beginning with the earliest studies on hair, I explore anthropology's and sociology's initial engagements with the symbolism and ritualism of hair, before considering more recent studies. In all these cases, the focus is upon the symbolism rather than the substance of hair. I then move on consider cultural studies approaches to hair, led by subculture projects such as those of Dick Hebdige, and how these too focus upon hair's symbolism. Staying with cultural studies approaches and the desire to study difference, I recapitulate on why the works of early feminist writers seemingly chose to ignore hair as a valid subject matter, despite a strong emphasis upon the politics of appearance and clothing (During 1993). However, as I move on to discuss, hair has received some academic attention, albeit partial, from studies on race and ethnicity. I conclude the section by showing that the only field which has considered hair in some depth is that of fashion history, yet this too has its limitations.

### **2.1.1 Hair's symbolism and ritual**

It was the discipline of anthropology which first engaged with hair, most notably beginning with a study by Edmund Leach (1957) entitled, *Magical Hair*. Prior to this study, there had been some focus upon hair and mourning ceremonies (Wilken 1886), but Leach was the first to consider hair's wider symbolic status. Since Leach's paper, such 'symbol over substance' (Gregson & Crewe 1998 p.40) approaches have remained *de rigueur* for the minimal studies on hair which have emerged. Yet, whilst such work is undoubtedly important to the history of hair and, therefore, the academic foundations of this thesis, its scope is limited because it only deals with the semiotic significance of hair. As this chapter illustrates, though such studies have their place, my research wishes to 'rematerialise' (Jackson 2004 p.172) research into hair, focusing not simply upon its symbolic status, but more importantly upon its materiality, agency and individual appreciations. I begin by outlining some of these founding semiotic studies on hair, alongside some of the more contemporary accounts available.

Edmund Leach's (1957), *Magical Hair*, was in response to that of psychoanalyst, Charles Berg's book (1951), *The Unconscious Significance of Hair*. Writing from an established anthropological tradition of ethnographic research in remote places, Leach attempted to provide a global perspective to Berg's patient driven findings. According to Berg (1951), head hair is understood as a symbol of the genital organs, thus the cutting and shaving of hair is therefore symbolic of castration. Leach extended this argument, discussing how hair figures centrally within many cultural rituals. Drawing upon examples, such as Borneo head hunters decorating their war shields with the hair of their foes, or Hindu widows shaving their heads to indicate their celibacy, Leach's (1957) main contention was that hair has a magical potency that endures separation or castration from its owner. As Leach (1957 p.157) explains, 'head hair' is 'magical stuff, potent in itself even when separated from its owner.' Such magical potency is engrained in its ritualised context, removed from its owner through rites of passage – birth, death, marriage. Thus, hair becomes the symbol of the rite of passage, alive with meaning through the very act of its removal.

Since Leach's initial essay, further accounts of hair's cultural symbolism have emerged sporadically over the past 50 years. However, none of them defer from Leach's argument that hair is the stuff of the soul, made significant because of the rituals it is engrained within (Firth 1973, Kwint 1999, Leach 1957). Indeed, a recent study by Laura Peers (2003) into the cultural practices of the Ojibwe native American people, discusses how Ojibwe cut hair is carefully disposed of to prevent it from being 'used magically to harm the person from whom it comes' (Peers 2003 p.81). Thus, continuing hair's magical symbolism. Similarly, many sociological studies have focused upon the importance of hair's symbolism in rituals surrounding death and mourning. I have already referenced Wilken's account from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, yet such studies began even earlier with that of 17<sup>th</sup> century writer Thomas Browne (1658) in his book *Urne Burial*. Browne concluded that 'teeth, bones and hair give the most lasting defiance to corruption' remaining long after death and burial, giving credence to the notion that hair's potency endures its separation from its owner. Nearly 350 years later, and the same symbolic emphasis is placed upon hair's persistence. As both Elizabeth Gitter (1984) and Marcia Pointon (1999) discuss, the Victorian practice of sealing a loved one's hair in a piece of jewellery signifies attempts to keep dead souls alive, 'bodily trace metamorphosed into

document' (Pointon 1999 p.40). Pointon (1999) even concludes that hair continues to grow after death, promoting its magical and ethereal symbolism, even though this is scientifically unfounded (Ryder 1973). In such instances, the substance of hair is at least given some consideration, yet the focus very much remains upon hair's symbolic value.

Hair symbolism also figures centrally in many sociological accounts on the ritual of marriage. In these studies hair generally remains on the head of the wearer, but is altered in some way to reflect the bride's changing marital status. Such accounts sustain Leach and Berg's initial argument that hair symbolises sexuality, yet still none engage with hair's materiality. In Turkish society, the bride's hair is braided to symbolise the taming of her sexuality (Delaney 1994) and in Slavic culture long hair is cut off to represent the transition from virgin to matron (Williams 2003). The covering of the bride's head with a veil, so common in many cultures, likewise signifies the control of sexuality (Young Hong 2003). Such practices are undoubtedly linked to wider practices of female head covering, adopted in particular by Jewish and Muslim cultures, and the perceived sexuality of a woman's hair (see Anijar 2000, Daly 2000, El Guindi 2003, Goldman Carrel 2000, Moor 1998). Interestingly, many historical studies have also focused upon Victorian society's obsession with controlling female sexuality and how the containment of a woman's hair, alongside her body, became symbolic of morality and respectability (see Birchall 2006, Fields 1999, Gitter 1984, Lawrence 2006, Nead 1988, Steele 2001, Summers 2001, Webb 2006).

For C.R. Hallpike (1969), it is this control of hair which is of paramount importance. In his words (1969 p.261), 'cutting the hair equals social control', and is not to do with sexual castration, as Leach and Berg originally advocated. Drawing upon the ritualistic head shaving of prison inmates, hospital patients and even the rite of passage into the armed forces, Raymond Firth (1973), writing about symbols 'public and private', reaches the same conclusion. Yet, whilst such accounts would seemingly appear to be repeating the well versed 'symbol over substance' narrative (Gregson & Crewe 1998) – this time hair's removal symbolising social control, as opposed to sexuality or the stuff of the soul – Hallpike's idea that hair is controlled by society is actually fundamental to this thesis, albeit in a much more substance focused sense. Hallpike (1969 p.260) positions unruly hair as 'outside society', hence it requires taming to become socially acceptable. Thus, even though not

developed or stated, hair's agency is at last recognised. Left to its own devices hair does what it wants. It is vivacious, alive and uncontrollable, its very material acting of its own accord. It is the intricacies of such vivacity and their individual impact upon the wearer of the hair that is a central theme of this thesis. Visiting the hair salon is undoubtedly an experience steeped in normative conventions surrounding acceptable appearance, but it is also an act of maintenance and control over the unruly substance of hair. Whilst semiotic appreciations of hair and its 'rituals' have a place in academic thought, they fail to engage with hair in the practice and material focused ways this thesis does.

### **2.1.2 Subculture, resistance and difference**

Emerging alongside studies into the ritual symbolism of hair was also a body of work on subcultures. Thus, whilst the likes of Leach (1957) and Firth (1973) concentrated upon the hair rituals of individual cultures, or in Hallpike's (1969) case those of mass Western culture, further academic research was being conducted on subcultures and hair's importance as symbol of resistance and difference. This subcultural focus emerged from the wider cultural studies movement which began in Great Britain in the 1950s (During 1993). Up until this point, culture had been perceived as locally produced – 'pub life, group singing, pigeon fancying...dances, holidays at camps and close by seaside resorts' (During 1993 p.4). All the things celebrated and researched by the British ethnographic research organisation, Mass Observation (also briefly mentioned in this thesis), established in the 1930s to produce 'a poetry of the people' (Madge 1937, cited in Jeffrey 1978). Such colloquial culture was slowly replaced with what cultural studies founders, Richard Hoggart (1957) and Raymond Williams (1958), perceived as 'culture organised from afar' (During 1993). Focusing upon these changes, Hoggart established the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964. By the 1970s critiques were being made of mass culture's hegemony. Cultural studies began to focus upon mass culture and its promulgation by the hegemonic structures of government, the cultural industry and the media, drawing upon structuralist theories, such as those of Foucault and Levi-Strauss. A number of empirical research projects were born out of these critiques, and their subsequent theoretical engagements. These included, Dick Hebdige's studies into the subcultures of the 'Mods' (1974a) and 'Reggae Rastas' (1974b), and also John Clarke's (1975) study on 'Skinhead

culture'. As I go on to discuss, such projects explored the wider political implications that such fetishized styles evoked, with hair as a principal focus. Nevertheless, once again, whilst these cultural studies approaches are invaluable to the history of hair and, thus, this thesis, they were still concerned primarily with the symbols of cultural identity, rather than the materials of their substance or the agency of their being.

In *The Style of The Mods* (1974a), Hebdige discusses how 'the mod dealt his blow by inverting and distorting the images so cherished by his employers and parents'. Sharp clothes and short, neat hair became the visual symbols of the Mod generation, alongside the obligatory Vespa™ or Lambretta™ scooter. Clashes with the police and rival Rockers, drug taking, and other behaviour deemed inappropriate by normative society, marked out the Mods and their iconic appearance as resisting the hegemonic political and social forces of the time (see also Cohen 1972 [2002]). The influence of hair as a subcultural symbol is even greater in *Reggae Rastas and Rudies* (Hebdige 1974b). The dreadlocks of the Rastafarians became the symbol of their acceptance of the Rastafarian way of life, and ultimately their alienation from normative society. For the Rastafarians, their hair was symbolic of their African heritage and a way of life which celebrated marijuana and opposed marriage. For normative society, dreadlocks signified criminal and anti-social behaviour. Similarly, as John Clarke's (1975) study on 'Skinhead culture' concluded, – the Skinhead became synonymous with football hooliganism, racism and homophobia. Thus, in all of these studies, hair is drawn upon as a political symbol of counterculture, providing fascinating detail on the intricacies of such subcultural identities. However, such a focus still only deals with the symbolic value of hair. Writing a decade later, Anthony Synnott (1987) follows in Hebdige's wake with his essay, *A Sociology of Hair*. Alongside hair as a symbol of gender, the sexual significance of particular hair colours and the various meanings entangled with facial and body hair, Synnott also discusses hair as an expression of subcultural ideology. A particularly broad and generalised account, Synnott complies with previous semiotic studies, further perpetuating hair's symbolic focus.

### **2.1.3 Feminist disregard**

In contrast, whilst the above studies have engaged with hair, albeit with a semiotic focus, the feminist movement appears to have ignored it. As I discussed in Chapter

One, despite second wave feminism's affiliations with the cultural studies movement and more radical sociologists of the 1970s, hair has remained a peripheral substance. The backbone of feminism in the 1970s had a Marxist engagement, fighting for equality for women in the work place and society. In this context, topics such as hair and beauty were considered trivial and irrelevant. Nevertheless a number of feminist cultural studies projects were undertaken during this period, producing various critiques of subcultural studies and their disinterest in women (Garber & McRobbie 1976, McRobbie 1977), alongside analyses of how subcultural groups enabled men to play around with gender identities, but women less so (McRobbie 1980). Jenny Garber and Angela McRobbie (1976), writing in the same text as Hebdige, discuss the images symbolic of particular subcultural representations of women. For example, 'The Mod Girl', who 'like her male counterpart....demonstrated the same fussiness for detail in clothes, the same over-attention to appearance' (McRobbie & Garber 1976 p.217). In another account, McRobbie (1980 p.48), draws parallels between aspects of punk's style and those of feminists:

*Although the stiletto heels, mini-skirt and suspenders will, despite their debunking connotations, remain unpalatable to many feminists, both punk girls and feminists want to overturn accepted ideas about what constitutes femininity.*

Yet, whilst undeniably valid, such feminist appraisals of subcultures completely ignore one of the key symbols of punk style – blunt, aggressive and garishly dyed hair (Langman 2008).

In fact, since early second wave feminist work on subcultures, hair has remained invisible in most feminist accounts. Instead feminist work has continued classic cultural studies approaches, with a particular emphasis upon texts (for example, McRobbie 1977 [2000] on Jackie magazine). This disregard of hair is despite a primary focus on the body and in particular, fashion and appearance. Noteworthy examples are of course: Elizabeth Grosz's (1994, 1995a, 1995b) and Judith Butler's (1993a, 1993b), work on the politics of the body; Susie Orbach's (1978, 1984 [1982]), Naomi Wolf's (1990) and Susan Bordo's (1993) on the ideologies perpetuating 'ideals' of feminine appearance; and Angela McRobbie's (1989, 1997, 2008) work on feminism, consumption and fashion. Yet, none of these studies engage with hair. Interestingly, Orbach (1978) famously called fat 'a feminist issue',

just as McRobbie (1997 p.85) has also referred to 'fashion', yet nobody has drawn the same conclusion about hair and women's relationships with it. That is up until now. As I argued in Chapter One, with many key battles for equality having been fought (some may argue won), and academia encouraging a move away from spectacular, symbolic consumption to focus upon the mundane and ordinary, there is real scope for a feminist engagement with hair.

#### **2.1.4 Black hair**

Cultural studies increasing focus upon feminist issues from the 1980s onwards, was also coupled with a greater interest in ethnicity and race. 'The culture of difference' (West, cited in During 1993 p.12), as it was termed, wanted to celebrate otherness and embrace internationalism. Interestingly, this is one branch of cultural studies which engaged quite emphatically with hair – black hair. As the following literatures show, racial debates around hair have focused predominantly upon 'black' hair as opposed to white, and other racialised constructs of hair, whilst undoubtedly evident, have been somewhat overlooked.

Appreciations of race as a social construct, designed to perpetuate white hegemony at the expense of all other races, was not a new realisation in the 1980s (Wade 2004). Indeed, as Bobo *et al* (2004) discuss, black studies programmes were being established in the United States from the 1960s onwards. This is not to mention that 'ground breaking volumes containing radical reinterpretations of Black history' had already been published from as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bobo *et al* 2004 p.1). Concentrating upon the social inequalities faced by black people, black studies scholars have deconstructed the hegemonic ideologies promoted by white supremacy. In particular, they have focused upon constructions of race as based upon biological characteristics (Wade 2004). As Sarah Cheang (2008) discusses, hair, skin and eye colour have been used as markers of racial identity, which in turn become synonymous with specific cultural characteristics to produce an ideological hierarchy of races. Inherently flawed and fundamentally racist, such anthropometrical approaches completely ignore ethnicity, placing race as the key differential between people (Harvey Wingfield 2009). As Anne McClintock (1995) explores, with reference to racial classifications perpetuated throughout the Victorian era, biological 'racial purity' operated as an idealised fetish during the period to prevent 'racial mixing'. Significantly, McClintock (1995) adds that such ideologies

of racial purity were similarly interwoven with constructions of class and sexuality. As she notes (1995 p.60), Victorian prostitutes were figured as 'white negroes'.

Such appreciations of race as interwoven with other constructs were also central to early cultural studies approaches to race and ethnicity. Paul Gilroy's (1987), *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, was a key study (and still is), exploring race and nationalism within Britain. Concentrating upon 'black expressive culture', as discussed through the musical cultures of reggae and rap, Gilroy (1987) considers how imaginaries of British nationalism are positioned alongside constructions of race, class and whiteness. Similarly, Stuart Hall *et al* (1978) paid close attention to policing during the 1970s and positionality of mugging as a crime conducted predominantly by working class, young black males. Thus, the discipline of cultural studies has played a significant part in academia's engagement with racial and ethnic histories and the colonial/imperial legacies which continue to bolster social inequalities in contemporary Britain and the wider world.

However, even though many of these literatures have mentioned hair's significance as a biological marker of race, there have been many other studies which have focused solely upon the symbolism of black hair. Kobena Mercer (1990), for example, has written about the politics of black hair styles, in particular the Afro. Mercer talks about how blackness, as symbolised by the Afro and other 'black' styles such as the 'conk' and also dreadlocks, have been positioned by cultural values as 'opposite to beauty' (p.250). Similarly, several academics have discussed how cultural practices employed to straighten black hair in the early nineteenth century were part of a white 'civilising' process, attempting to assimilate black people into hegemonic white society (Cheang 2008, Cox 1999, Graham & Graham 1995, Harvey-Wingfield 2009). As Mercer (1990 p.248-249) notes:

*Hair is never a straightforward, biological fact....hair is merely a raw material constantly processed by cultural practices which thus invest it with meanings and values*

Although, I disagree with Mercer's trivialising of hair as a mere raw material to be 'fully mastered and dominated' (Latour 2000), his appreciation of hair as being crafted by a set of cultural practices is not only key to understanding the racial connotations hair becomes imbued with, but also one of the key thematics of this thesis. Dealing initially with the former, as Mercer discusses (p.263), 'there are no



black hair styles, just black hair styles.’ In other words, it is the structure of society, and its practices, that determines what are and what are not ‘black hair styles’. Furthermore, he notes how hair styles seeming to ‘belong’ to specific racial groups often become creolised as they are reworked with other ideas. As examples, Mercer draws upon the ambivalent meanings surrounding the 1940s conk style or the 1980s curly perm. Likewise, Robin Kelley (2007), notes how in the 1960s the Afro was perceived as a symbol of black ‘au naturel’ hair, and a rejection of white ideals, yet how it was first adopted in the 1920s in high fashion circles and was instead a symbol of high feminised chic. Indeed, the very notion of ‘black hair styles’ is inherently flawed by its use of racial classification to describe a multitude of coexisting ethnicities (Harvey Wingfield 2009). And, as discussed, it ignores the many other racial classifications outside of ‘black hair’ also at work.

However, it is such studies’ appreciation of cultural practices and the tools of practice which is of most interest to this thesis. Unlike cultural studies approaches, or any of the previously mentioned anthropological and sociological accounts which focus only upon hair’s symbolism, studies into hair’s ethnicity engage with its substance. Mercer (1990), for instance, notes how black styles like the Afro or dreadlocks require cultivation. Whereas, Kelley (2007) discusses the diversity of black hair and black styles, noting how mud and clay were used in the 1960s, before the creation of specific styling products, to create the desired matted look. Thus, finally, hair’s materiality is being given some consideration. Whilst Kelley (2007) also mentions the Afro comb, Carol Tulloch (2008) devotes a paper to it. Even though both of these accounts do focus primarily upon the significance of the Afro comb as a symbol of political activism and black identity, they at least engage with the tools of hair care. As Tulloch (2008 p.127) notes, ‘the Afro comb was the requisite tool to create and maintain the style’ and needs to be ‘strong, rounded and smooth...preferably made of steel to provide a rust-proof strength’. Hence, the Afro comb had specific material qualities to deal with the materiality of the Afro style. Tools, practices and people come together through the substance of hair. Due to the dynamics of the project and its location in a particular hair salon, the focus of this thesis is upon white/Caucasian hair. I will therefore not engage any further with racial and ethnic constructions of hair, other than to maintain that like black hair, white hair and whiteness is also racialised. However, what is vital to this thesis is

this, and what I take from this literature is its appreciation of the materiality of hair and the practices and tools involved in maintaining it.

### **2.1.5 Fashion history**

The final body of work I explore with relation to studies into hair and hair's absence from academia is that of fashion history. I have already touched upon some of this literature in the above sections, yet as it features heavily throughout this thesis it warrants its own section. Admittedly fashion studies engagement with hair is minimal, when compared to the great volumes of literature devoted to clothing. Nor has hair's contemporary relevance been dealt with to the same extent that say the wedding dress (see Boden 2001, Bradley Foster & Clay Johnson 2003, Friese 2001), the sari (see Banerjee & Miller 2008, Niessen *et al* 2003) or shoes (see Brydon 1998, Cox 2004, Nahshon 2008, Riello & McNeil 2006) have been (see also Berg's *Dress, Body Culture* series). Yet, unlike other disciplines, fashion studies, and in particular fashion history, have devoted noticeable attention to hair. Caroline Cox (1999), for example, has written an in-depth book into the history of British hairdressing. Engaging with the wider shifting cultural landscape of twentieth century Britain, *Good Hair Days: A History of British Hairstyling* (Cox 1999), details the growth in the female hairdressing industry over the period, exploring changing styles, practices and cultural expectations. In one key chapter, entitled *To Dress or to Bob: Hair and Femininity*, Cox examines what the feminist movement has preferred to ignore – hair's importance as a feminine marker. In another text, co-authored with Lee Widdows (Cox & Widdows 2005), Cox considers the relationship between hair and fashion, drawing upon various hair conditions – 'long', 'short', 'curly', 'colour', 'fake' – to discuss their history and contemporary fashion status. Such texts act as up to date versions of earlier works, such as those of Georgine de Courtais (1973) who has charted a history of hairstyles in England from AD600 to the 1970s, or Stephen Zdatny (2006) who wrote about hairstyles and fashions in twentieth century Paris (see also Jones 1990).

Nevertheless, whilst such accounts are undoubtedly invaluable to this thesis in providing the foundations of certain hairstyles and the hairdressing industry, they are limited by their historical and mainly chronological focus. Although both Cox (1999) and Zdatny (2006) do consider the wider cultural relevance of hairstyles and hairdressing, all such accounts gloss over hair and its wearer's individuality.

Arguably, the substance of hair is dealt with to some extent, in the sense that the tools and practices involved in various hairstyles past and present are described at length. But, just like the many symbol focused studies previously discussed, hair is lumped together into various styles as expressive of particular periods of history (see *Appendix A* for a chronological account of hair styles). As Cox and Widdows (2005 p.59) describe:

*A haircut, then, can provide a tonsorial touchstone, as emblematic of a decade as a chair design or skirt length.*

In other words, such studies ignore not only the longevity of hairstyles - instead preferring to focus on hair fashions as sequential - but in doing so they also ignore the agency of the individual and their hair. The individuality of hair is paramount to this thesis, hence why its findings are driven extensively by ethnographic research and the narrative accounts of individuals and their hair experiences. Something such widespread, all-encompassing studies into the history of hair fashions cannot provide. What is more, and as I turn to in the following section, though many of these studies engage with the hair salon and its importance in creating hair, it is only considered for its part in creating these emblematic styles – nothing else. Added to this, that such accounts only have historical evidence based primarily on very famous salons (Zdatny (2006) drawing upon the *pensées* of Emile Long and his Parisian salon, whereas Cox (1999) focuses upon Antoine de Paris, Marcel Grateau and Vidal Sassoon) – and we get a very limited appraisal.

#### **2.1.6 Foundations**

Thus, in conclusion to this section, hair's relative absence from academia highlights the need for its comprehensive study. As I have detailed, whilst studies from various disciplines have attempted to engage with hair, such attempts have been somewhat limited in scope. In many respects, hair is mundane, ordinary and everyday, but rather than trivialise hair, it is these qualities which make it a fascinating subject to study. As Mary Douglas (1966 [2000]) concluded, the mundane can be just as revealing of social order as the dramatic and spectacular. Only race and ethnicity studies have illustrated hair's importance. Through their studies of black hair, they

have highlighted how hair is not trivial, but can operate as an important site of political and social struggle.

Yet, as with the majority of literature discussed from this overall field of cultural studies, race and ethnicity studies prioritises hair's semiotic qualities. By focusing upon hair's symbolic potential, these literatures disregard the substance of hair and its individuality. Admittedly, some studies, including those of race and ethnicity and also fashion history, do begin to focus upon the substance of hair by detailing the practices and tools of hair care. However, they fail to use these practices and tools to tease out the individuality of hair and hair experiences. What is more, and as I move on to consider in the following section, semiotic accounts fail to recognise the people who create and maintain hair's symbolic status, and the spaces in which such activities take place. Undeniably, this body of literature does have an important place in the scant archives of studies on hair, but for the purpose of this thesis its input is primarily descriptive. Therefore, this thesis will use such accounts as a backdrop to research, building upon and moving beyond them to create an experience-focused, material-led account of hair and hair practices.

## **2.2 The Hair Salon: Work, Bodies, Identities**

In the majority of the accounts discussed in the previous section, the importance of the hairdresser and the hair salon in creating the desired cultural symbol is recognised. However, as I already mentioned, whilst these studies can be applauded for their acknowledgement of the salon, just as they neglect the substance of hair they also fail to engage with the space of the salon as anything other than a place where hair is dealt with. The role of the hairdresser and the space of the salon are over-shadowed by the need to classify hairstyles as representative of certain generations and cultural practices. Nothing is said about the salon as a work environment, the labour of the hairdresser or the individual experiences of the customers. In the following section, I address this absence. Weaving together the scant salon-based studies available with broader literatures, I position the hair salon and those that work there in the wider context of work, bodies and identities. I begin by examining the early salon-based studies of Louise Kapp Howe (1977) and Debra Gimlin (1996). Moving on to discuss emotion work, or emotional labour as Arlie Hochschild (1983) termed it, I argue that many accounts of service work, though accurate in some respects, over generalise matters and ignore the genuineness of

hairdresser-customer relationships. From here I engage with literature regarding another form of labour, aesthetic labour. Using a recent salon-focused study by Adia Harvey Wingfield (2009), alongside various other service-based studies, I discuss how aesthetic labour is important to the salon I researched and thus this thesis. Drawing these literatures together, I illustrate how emotional labour and aesthetic labour are fundamental forms of 'women's work'. What is more, both types of labour form a triad with a third form of essentialised female labour – bodywork. In the last section, I use one final salon-based study, by Karen Stevenson (2001), to discuss how work upon the body conducted in the salon also involves working upon identity. Introducing Merleau-Ponty's (1962 [2002]) notion of the 'lived' body, I engage with literature which explores the instability of identity, weaving it together with an awareness of the vitalism of hair.

### **2.2.1 The hair salon as a place of work**

Although hair salon-based studies are very few and far between, three which have been crucial to this study have focused primarily upon the salon as a place of work, particularly women's work. The first of which is Louise Kapp Howe's (1977) study in the 1970s. Kapp Howe (1977) was interested in women's work and lack of equality in seventies America and set about researching five 'typically' female jobs – including waitressing, sales work, office work, home maker and hairdressing. Spending a summer in a salon in a predominantly working class area of San Francisco, she explored in detail the daily rhythms of the salon. Appreciating the ambience of the salon environment, the breadth of tasks the salon staff must complete, and the necessary personal skills, Kapp Howe's study has many similarities with my own. Indeed her conclusions that hairdressers are perceived as low skilled, easily replaceable, low paid labour reflects many of my own findings. Using a different focus, Debra Gimlin's (1996) study on a hair salon in downtown New York also explores the role of the hairdresser. Focusing more upon the relationships between stylists (hairdressers) and clients, Gimlin reaches the same conclusion. Though stylists may attempt to 'nullify the status differences between themselves and their clients' (Gimlin 1996 p.512) using their professional knowledge, their role is still perceived as low status. Gimlin (1996 p.516) moves on to to discuss how it is the emotion work that stylists must perform, being 'confidantes, friends, and, to some extent therapists', that 'serves to undermine their

claims to professional identities.’ This is where this thesis and these previous studies differ.

Whilst, I fully agree that the general perception of hairdressers is, as a recent newspaper article concluded, a profession which is mocked (Henley 2008) – low skilled and low paid - as this thesis will argue such perceptions are not down to the emotion work performed by hairdressers. In fact, it is the emotion work undertaken by hairdressers which can help to break down such stereotypes. Both Gimlin (1996) and Kapp Howe (1977) emphasize that the relationships between stylists and clients are based solely upon the value of the exchange. Kapp Howe discusses how the stylists ignore what the clients are saying, whereas Gimlin argues that they listen because they have to, to keep the customer happy and paying. My thesis completely refutes such claims. Not only do such generalisations assume that all relationships between clients and hairdressers are the same, but they also disregard the many friendships and close relationships which do exist.

### **2.2.2 Emotional work**

What is more, such accounts tend to view the emotion work, or emotional labour, as it is generally termed, undertaken by the hairdresser as a prescribed, scripted approach. Such claims are supported by wider literature on the insincerity of service work and the scripted nature of emotional labour. As I explore in Chapter Three of this thesis, a great deal of service work literature relies upon the notion of this artificial, scripted relationship taking place between customer and worker. Arlie Hochschild’s (1983), *The Managed Heart*, is the most well quoted text on the subject. Hochschild’s study into the labour of flight attendants concludes that service workers are trained to work upon their own feelings and those they serve to create particular emotional states, conducive to the environment they operate in. Similar, studies have been conducted on waitressing (Crang 1994, Ehrenreich 2002, Hall 1993a, 1993b), shop work (Pettinger 2006), fast food operatives (Leidner 1993), nurses and careworkers (Lee-Treweek 1997) and sales representatives (Leidner 1993, Ehrenrich 2002). However, this notion is not new, as earlier studies, such as those by 1920s & 30s Chicago school ethnographers Paul Cressey (1932 [2008]) and Frances Donovan (1920, 1929) on the taxi dance hall, waitressing and saleswomen illustrate, respectively. Such notions of various types of service work as forms of prescribed emotional labour, draw heavily upon Erving Goffman’s (1959 p.245)

equally well-known concept of everyday performance and the 'self' as 'a product of the scene'. However, as I argue in Chapter Three, I do not disagree that service encounters are performances, as, I might add, I believe all encounters are. My issue arises with the perception of the emotional labour of all service encounters as being insincere and artificially scripted. As this thesis will illustrate, many relationships which exist between salon customers and hairdressers are anything but artificial and pre-scripted. In fact, I argue that the close relationships and enduring friendships I have witnessed are a 'unique' form of service encounter, creating unique relationships.

### **2.2.3 Aesthetic work**

Adia Harvey Wingfield's (2009) study, *Doing Business with Beauty: Black Women, Hair Salons and the Racial Enclave Economy*, supports my claims that a visit to the hair salon is more than just a prescribed service encounter. Though writing predominantly about systemic gendered racism, which has created racial enclave economies of black entrepreneurial women hair salon owners in America, Harvey Wingfield describes the supportive environment such salons offer their customers. As she notes (2009 p.38), and with reference to previous discussions on ethnicity and hair:

*....these salons became places where women could, in the company of each other, continue to create a space where they became beautiful despite the messages of systemic gendered racism which said otherwise.*

As Harvey Wingfield (2009) continues, many salon owners and their employees use the products and engage in the practices that their salon offers. Thus, offering customers personal testimonies to how these products and procedures helped them achieve a sense of beauty. Whilst this thesis is not based upon a black hair salon or specifically upon procedures more popular in black hair salons, such as chemical relaxing (Harvey Wingfield 2009), this notion of staff as part of a salon's promotional tool box is key. Alongside my development of the concept of emotional labour, I will also engage with another strand of service work literature, that of aesthetic labour.

Aesthetic labour, as discussed by Annie Witz *et al* (2003 p.37) is understood as moving beyond emotional labour, 'recuperating the embodied character of service work'. Workers are encouraged to embody the company ethos through their clothing, demeanour and overall attitude. Thus, this idea takes emotional labour a stage further, not only must workers say the right things, they must also embody the company values as part of their bodily schemas – they have to look the part. As Lisa Adkins (2000 p.206), discussing the aestheticisation of the 'lesbian' at work, notes:

*....a new sovereignty of appearance, style and image is understood to be at play at work, where stylized workplace performances have emerged as key resources.*

Similarly, research by Melissa Tyler and Pamela Abbott (1998) into the airline industry offers examples of female flight attendants who are encouraged by airline companies to lose weight, or dye their hair to fit the company ethos (see also Tyler & Taylor 1998). Joanne Entwistle (2002 p.322) likewise writes about the aesthetic economy of fashion modelling, and how models' looks need to constantly change 'in response to the fluctuations of the fashion system.' Even though I may disagree with current understandings of emotional labour, there are elements of aesthetic labour that are relevant to this thesis and to the hair salon I completed my ethnographic research in. Building upon some of this literature, this study will discuss how hair salon staff mobilise aesthetic labour to their own gains, creating both a professional and glamorous persona of their role.

#### **2.2.4 Women's work**

Interestingly one of the main claims of Witz *et al* (2003 p.35) is that 'it is by no means only female labour that is subject to commodification via aestheticization.' Whilst I have no evidence to refute such a claim, it is apparent from all of the previous studies discussed, which engage with emotional labour and/or aesthetic labour that they all focus upon service jobs which predominantly employ women – waitressing, shop work, the hair salon. Moreover, there is a vast body of literature, extending over several decades, which considers the gendered nature of employment (for example, Halford *et al* 1997, McDowell 1997, McDowell & Pringle 1992, Smyth *et al* 1992, Witz 1990). Though many may not term what they discuss as 'emotional' or 'aesthetic' labour, the similarities are undeniable. For example, the



notion of 'service with a smile' to describe the subservient, eager to please, female worker, conducting a form of emotional labour, is developed by: Rosemary Pringle (1989) in her study on secretaries; Christine Griffin (1985) in her research on the types of jobs female school leavers in the 1970s took; and Elaine Hall (1993) on waitressing. Similarly, Kapp Howe (1977 p.18) describes how Suzy, the manager of the salon she researched, is 'trained to look happy' and 'to smile always with delight'. As Robin Leidner (1993 p.195) discusses, particular jobs require particular performances of gender and 'assumptions about proper gender behaviour are built into worker's routines'. Women's work is deemed to involve skills which women are deemed to possess simply because they are women. Such essentialised approaches commodify the skills of women as being feminised and sexualised (Tyler & Taylor 1998). Thus, the concepts of emotional labour and aesthetic labour are intrinsically linked to the gendered nature of work. Workers are encouraged to play out gendered, and also sexualised, constructions of labour using both their bodies and actions (Acker 1990, Adkins 2000, Coates 2000, West & Zimmerman 1987).

Although I may not agree with all aspects of either emotional labour or aesthetic labour as concepts, I cannot deny the doubly gendered character of the hair salon. The predominantly female staff and customer base of the salon are central to the findings of this thesis. As I explore, the labour conducted in the salon is a gendered, and to some extent a sexualised form of labour, and one which perpetuates not only its own gendered construction but also the identities of its staff and clients. Returning to Adia Harvey Wingfield's (2009) study on black hair salons, the products and practices sold by the hair salon's staff that she studied not only reinforced the position of black female workers within the wider cultural and political economy, they also reinforced the dominant gendered and racist ideologies of feminine beauty. Thus, the gendering of the space of the hair salon is not just about how it perpetuates gendered constructions of labour and the hairdresser. Such gendered performances have a double effect of gendering the bodies of those upon which hairdressers work.

### **2.2.5 Bodies and bodywork**

The body within geographical work has been described by Adrienne Rich (1986 p.212) as 'the geography closest in', a space within space, marking the boundaries between self and other. In keeping with the earliest studies on hair by Leach (1957)

and Berg (1951), the body is understood as a site of inscription acting as a symbolic marker of our identities, values, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, sexualities and genders (Grosz 1994). A multitude of literature exists on bodies (for example: Grosz 1994, 1995a, 1995b, Longhurst 1995, 1997, Nast & Pile 1998, Shilling 1993, Valentine 2000), a great deal of which relates closely to many of the accounts discussed above on women's work and the construction of gendered, race, ethnic and sexualised performance based on bodily difference. After all, it is the essentialised character of women's bodies and women's identities which have deemed them 'ideal' for particular employment and also societal roles.

Like emotional labour and aesthetic labour, bodywork is also regarded as women's work. That is bodywork is understood as paid work performed upon the body of others, and working upon the bodies of others is deemed part of the essentialised skill set women are constructed to possess. It embodies both feminised notions of caring for others, alongside sexualised elements of women using their bodies to work upon the bodies of others (Wolkowitz 2002). Originating from studies into nursing and care work (see Lee-Treweek 1997, Twigg 2000a, 2000b, 2004), bodywork is perceived to operate in an ambivalent space, somewhere between sex-work (O'Connell Davidson 1995, 1999, Sanders 2005), alternative therapy (Oerton 2004) and beauty treatments (Black 2002, Sharma & Black 2001). Whilst it may not be relevant to many of the accounts of women's work discussed so far in this section, in the studies it does occupy it is frequently linked to both emotional and aesthetic labour, thus, forming a triad of feminised types of work. Importantly for this study, a significant, even though small, part of this literature is also salon-based. As Sharma and Black (2001 p.925), in their study on beauty salons, describe, the beauty therapist must ensure that her client leaves the salon 'feeling that her emotional needs have been met' from the bodywork appointment. Likewise, she must conform to an aesthetic 'code' which requires workers 'to look neat but also reasonably attractive...' (Sharma & Black 2001 p.923). Hence, all three forms of labour are at work within the beauty salon.

However, as Sharma and Black (2001) move on to discuss, and what is paramount for this thesis, the emotion, aesthetic and bodywork performed by the beauty therapist cannot be described as a scripted, organisational requirement, yet it can be understood as gendering the bodies of those they work upon. As Sharma and Black (2001 p.926) discuss, the beauty salon worker conducts 'therapeutic activities

which address the client's subjective feelings quite as much as they address identifiable deficits in appearance'. In other words, whilst their labour is non-standardised, the bodywork they undertake is aimed at creating an appealing feminine identity for the client, which meets societal expectations of gender and sexuality.

Equally, similar conclusions have been drawn about the hairdresser working upon feminine identity by several salon-based studies on the hair care of elderly women. Frida Kerner Furman (1997) describes the hair salon she studied in America, frequented mainly by older women, as a friendly, supportive place, where women's weekly hair appointments are about maintaining mainstream feminised ideals about appearance. In a comparable study, based in the UK, Anthea Symonds and Caroline Holland (2008 p.42) likewise conclude, that the elderly women they spoke to felt pressured into undertaking 'age appropriate behaviour' and having the same feminised, age-identifying hairdo each time. Thus, as this literature informs this thesis, the bodywork the hairdresser or beautician undertakes is as much about working upon the identity of the client as it is their body.

#### **2.2.6 Bodies, hair and identity**

In the final point on this section positioning the hair salon, I move away from appreciating the salon and the hairdresser as the perpetrators of just gendered bodies and identities, to focus upon literature which considers the body as occupying 'lived' space (Davidson 2000). For Bryan Turner (1984 cited in Valentine 2001 p.28), this concept of the 'lived' body, occupying 'lived' space involves focusing upon 'the material body' and 'the personal sensuous experience of embodiment'. As Joyce Davidson (2000) similarly discusses, using this approach involves refuting Cartesian separations of mind and body and appreciating that identities are formed by where we are and the sensations we experience. This idea is central to understanding how identities and bodies are reflected upon and altered within the salon.

Regrettably, few of the salon-based studies I have already mentioned consider the construction of individual identities in such a way. However, Karen Stevenson's study on the organisation of the gendered self within the hair salon is an exception. Stevenson (2001 p.148) notes how the salon is a site where 'we become more aware of the self-conscious construction of our identity'. Thus, it is positioned as space where the instability of our identities is recognised. As Stevenson (2001 p.148) goes

on to discuss, part of this awareness is due to the mirrored interior of the space of the salon beckoning our personal bodily reflection and providing us with ‘a scopophilic feast’ of those around us. Thus, we find ourselves in what Martin Jay (1994 p.11) terms a ‘mutual gaze’, at once subject and object, as we observe those around us and they observe us. Alongside this visual cornucopia, our bodies and identities are subject to the work being done upon them. As Annemarie Mol and John Law (2004 p.56) discuss, with reference to managing hypoglycemia, we are always working to create the ‘coherent body’, stabilising its boundaries. Yet, in the hair salon the management of our bodies is taken over by another, the hairdresser. As I explore in Chapter Four, our bodies are worked upon by the hairdresser during our salon visit. Moving through various stages of hair’s production, we experience a plethora of sensuous corporeal moments. Coupled with the destabilising effects of the mutual gaze, these corporeal moments, at the hands of the hairdresser, ensure that the coherency of the body and identity are subject to disruption.

What is more, and as I develop throughout this thesis, our attempts at the ‘coherent self’ are constantly threatened by the vitalism of hair. Hair’s position, at what Nigel Thrift (2008 p.19) terms the ‘borderline’ of the body’, has been given little thought within academic study. Marcus Kwint (1999 p.9) refers to hair as operating at the ‘dead margins of the body’, yet such an account downplays hair’s energy and endurance. As this thesis continually stresses, and as I explore again later in this chapter, hair is very much alive. Its growth is unstoppable and persistent. Our attempts to master and control it are futile, relentlessly jeopardising our desired identity. All we can do is try to maintain it through regular visits to the hairdresser and, as Chapter Five concentrates upon, our own DIY coping strategies.

### **2.2.7 Bridging the academic lacuna**

Thus, as this section illustrates, the presence of the hair salon within scholarly work is as scarce as that of hair. Whilst several invaluable salon-based studies do exist, they are hardly enough to produce the vigorous academic attention that hair and the hair salon really requires. Nevertheless, these studies are fundamental to this thesis, particularly in informing understandings of the labour at work within the salon and the gendered nature of its construction. Weaving them together with wider service work accounts, I have conveyed how a triad of labour - emotional, aesthetic and body - criss-cross the site of the salon. Yet, as I explore in the thesis, such

approaches have their limitations. Moreover, many such salon-based studies focus only upon the labour of the salon staff, ignoring the outcomes of this labour upon the bodies and identities of their customers. Hence, it is up to wider work on the body and identity to inform this thesis, providing it with the scope to explore the salon's affect upon the battle for the 'coherent self' (Mol & Law 2004 p.56) Yet, even this work has its limitations, and as I addressed in the final point of this section, wider work on the body and identity does not engage with the vitalism of hair. Thus, having discussed where literature on hair and the hair salon currently resides, I can clarify that the importance of this thesis as an academic study is twofold. Firstly, it provides further engagement with hair and the hair salon, hoping to fill the lacuna in academic thought. Secondly, it approaches hair in a way no study has done before, by appreciating its individualism and vitalistic qualities. In the remainder of this chapter, I will engage with various disciplines and their literatures which do not focus upon hair or the hair salon, but whose theories, ideas and approaches have been vital for producing this thesis and understanding hair.

### **2.3 (Re)positioning Hair and The Hair Salon**

In this next section, I (re)position hair and the hair salon within academia, using various approaches and theories from disciplines which have not traditionally engaged with hair or the hairdresser. Drawing out a number of themes from these literatures, which are imperative to this thesis, I illustrate how these themes and their theoretical backgrounds are often closely related, enabling me to weave together the key elements of my research. I will begin by focusing upon material culture studies and its usefulness in appreciating hair's vitalism. Incorporating recent literatures on 'ordinary' consumption, I also discuss how studies of temporality and maintenance are important to my findings on hair appointments and the temporal nature of hair. Moving on from this, I situate my thesis under the dominant umbrella theme of 'practice', bringing together the materiality, temporality and maintenance of hair as being intrinsic elements of hair practices. This enables me to consider other practice-based accounts and their location within the wider discipline of science and technology studies. Focusing upon a recent paper by Nigel Thrift (2008) on the practices of glamour, I highlight how the body is predominantly absent from practice-based accounts despite renewed interest in Do-It-Yourself (DIY) home-based improvements. This leads me on to further criticism of Colin Campbell's

(2005) notion of the craft consumer; an adage I feel is unsuitable for use in this thesis, regardless of its links with DIY home practices. Nevertheless, Campbell's axiom does enable me to draw together materiality, temporality, maintenance and practice through my final theme of craft. As I discuss, craft is an ambiguous concept, fragmented within academic literature. Yet, drawing upon wider definitions, such as those of Richard Sennett (2008), I illustrate its relevance for understanding the role of the hairdresser and the practices they engage in.

### **2.3.1 The materiality of hair**

Throughout the first half of this chapter, I have continually referred to hair's absence and a lack of appreciation of hair's substance as the major criticisms I have with the limited hair literatures available. As I have mentioned, my critiques are bolstered by recent calls, particularly from the fields of material culture, anthropology and geography, for the 'rematerialisation' (Jackson 2004 p.172) of social and cultural studies and a focus upon substance rather than symbol (Gregson & Crewe 1998). Material culture interweaves objects with culture, concentrating upon the substance of things - their fibres, textures, patterns and forms (Miller 2005). Unlike Actor Network Theory (ANT), which also prioritises substance over symbol, material culture has a hierarchical structure. Thus, as Dant discusses (2005), material culture perceives the agency of objects as being acquired from humans. As opposed to ANT, which has a flat ontological structure where neither human nor 'thing' takes precedence. As a body of work, material culture has levied criticisms predominantly at consumption studies and its focus upon 'spectacular consumption' as endorsed by the many studies on shopping malls and commodities as cultural markers (for example see Featherstone 1991, Goss 1993, Fiske 1989). Instead it allies itself with recent work on ordinary consumption (Gronow & Warde 2000) – for example, second hand shopping (see Clarke 2000, Gregson & Crewe 2003, Gregson 1997, Tranberg Hansen 2005) food consumption (Miller 1997, Miller 2002 [1998]) and the revival of retro fashions (see Gregson *et al* 2001).

Taking an approach which mirrors Appadurai's (1986 p.5) calls to 'follow the thing', many material culture studies 'begin at the beginning' (O'Connor 2005), following an object or commodity from its raw material through to its disposal or re-use. Examples include: Ian Cook (2004) following papaya from it being picked in Jamaica to a supermarket in England, and Lucy Norris (2005) following discarded

Western clothing to recycling centres in India where it is made into blankets and other items. Thus, many such studies deal not just with an object's consumption, but also its creation, purchase, use and disposal. But material culture is not just about following objects from their creation to their end. It is also about appreciating the relationships that cultures and individuals form with objects. Sophie Woodward (2005), for example, has studied the relationships women have with their clothes and how individuals assemble outfits. Martin Hand and Elizabeth Shove (2007) investigate the relationships people form with their freezers. And, Rachel Hurdley (2006) has explored how the objects on people's mantelpieces act as narrative props to explain their identities. Hence, branching out from both material culture studies and consumption studies is another body of literature which focuses upon practice, particularly practices which fall under the wider umbrella terms of consumption and production. This practice literature features heavily in this thesis, so I will deal with it in a separate section later on.

Returning to material culture and its importance to this thesis, as I have identified, material culture is focused upon the object and the relationships it gives rise to. In my research, the object of interest is of course hair, and throughout this thesis it remains the focal point. My aim throughout is to tease out the materiality of hair using individual accounts to reveal hair's liveliness and the relationships women have with it. This individuality is essential to fully appreciate hair's material qualities. As I have already mentioned, and as I explore further in Chapter Four, everyone's hair is unique to them, meaning that, unlike mass-produced commodities with intended purposes, their experiences with it are vastly different.

What is more, as I touched upon in the previous section on bodies and identities, hair is never fixed or bounded. A major drawback of material culture literature is that it ignores the body as an object of production and consumption. Many such studies explore dressing the body, but few have considered the work which takes place to or on the body, and the corporeal and material experiences of this. Joanne Entwistle's (2002) aforementioned study on the aesthetic economy of fashion modelling does engage with the material nature of fashion modelling and the economic necessity of models' to achieve the fashion season's latest bodily look. Similarly, Nicky Gregson *et al's* (2000) work on charity shop consumption discusses how charity shop workers attempt to remove the bodily traces of previous owners from donated clothes. Yet, there is a general academic neglect of work upon the

body in this subfield. This avoidance can potentially be attributed to the complexities of focusing upon the body. After all, it is considered as a site which is constantly altering and whose boundaries are deemed leaky and unstable (Kaiser 2001, Csordas 1994, Fawcett 2002). Moreover, to concentrate upon the body as a site of materiality could be perceived as potentially risking a return to the 'you are what you buy'/ consumption as cultural marker tropes (Featherstone 1991, Fiske 1989, Miller 2005). However, it is the instability of hair which is crucial to appreciating its materiality and the constant production and consumption it requires.

### **2.3.2 Maintenance and temporality**

Hair requires maintenance. It is not fixed or stable, but is perpetually growing and altering. As Chris Shilling (1993 p.24) notes 'the body is always in the process of becoming' and as I explore throughout this thesis so is hair. Academic engagement with maintenance has been very limited. Yet, what is available is closely allied to material culture studies, consumption and practice theory. Drawing upon Bill Brown's (2001 p.4) work on 'thing' theory, and how 'we begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us', maintenance studies focus upon objects as illuminated through their repair. Gregson *et al* (2009), for example, have studied the maintenance of consumer objects within the home, discussing how items such as a dining room table have been through several phases of repair and maintenance. Similarly, Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift (2007) discuss the politics of maintenance and repair, arguing for the need to recognise the invisible work which sustains infrastructures and economies. However, as with material culture literature the focus of maintenance studies is always upon non-human objects, never the body. Nevertheless, it is still invaluable.

Like Brown's (2001) thing theory, Graham and Thrift (2007 p.2) discuss how 'things only come into visible focus as things when they become inoperable'. In other words, they only gain our attention when they require maintenance. This idea is fundamental to appreciating hair's vitality. Hair requires constant maintenance be it brushing and washing it at home ourselves or greater forms of repair, such as having it cut when it gets too long and we can no longer see. This maintenance has a layered effect, with each layer affecting the next one. Using the archaeological term *palimpsest*, in Chapter Four, I explore how these layers of previous hair experiences affect subsequent productions of hair, storing the labour of maintenance and repair



within their materiality. Thus, there is also a profound temporality within the materiality of hair.

Alongside the materiality of hair then, this thesis also considers hair's temporality. Hair's constant growth, always in the process of 'becoming', reveals its temporal rhythm. Indeed, the very sequencing of the thesis chapters mirrors the temporal nature of hair maintenance, from salon appointment, to dealing with hair at home, to needing to once again make another appointment. However, as I argue, particularly in Chapter Six, these rhythms are unique to both hair and wearer, and are not always governed solely by hair's materiality. Using studies which have focused on temporality and gender, I explore how notions of 'women's time' are engrained within the salon appointment (see Bitzman and Wajcman 2000, Hochschild, 1997, Jurczyk 1998, Shaw 1998). Similarly, I draw upon several studies by Dale Southerton (2001, 2003, Southerton & Tomlinson 2005) on time, and the perceived 'squeezing of time' to appreciate how temporalities of the salon appointment and the maintenance of hair are not only experienced differently by different people, but also have temporalities of their own, perpetuating established traditions and habits.

### **2.3.3 Practices**

So far another crucial theme, missing from this (re)positioning of the presence of hair and the hair salon, is practice. The relationships people have with their hair, how they maintain it and the temporalities of that maintenance, all require practices of various sorts. Often practices are thought of as defined and organised activities – such as painting or cooking. Yet, as practice theorist, Andreas Reckwitz (2002 p.250) argues, practices include:

*Forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.*

Therefore, for Reckwitz everything is a practice. For Theodore Schatzki (2002), another practice theorist, sociality is created through practice. Thus, practices create societies and cultures. Incorporating elements of both of these ideas, practice-based accounts are inherent throughout the thesis, and I draw upon various literatures which have used a practice approach to their research to bolster my own.

As already discussed, a large part of this research overlaps closely to material

culture and consumption studies, focusing upon the relationships people have with objects and the practices they engage in. For instance, in Chapter Five discussing hair at home, I have incorporated ideas about how practices are consumed and (re)produced using the example of Nordic walking (Shove & Pantzar 2005). Similarly, I have drawn upon discussions on how new technologies are appropriated through practices and how practices create wants and desires, based on research on freezer use (Shove & Hand 2007) and kitchen renewal (Shove & Hand 2003) to explain the appropriation of hair straighteners. Likewise, I have employed understandings on how alternative uses for objects occur, and how objects produce and sustain hierarchies, based on research on New York subway workers and their tools (Molotch and McClain 2008), and also the implementation of an electricity infrastructure on the Ivory Coast, Africa (Akrich 1992). In addition, some of this literature focuses upon temporalities, emphasising its links with material culture and consumption studies. In particular, Hand *et al's* (2005) study into the practices of showering and the invention of the electrical shower has been useful in appreciating the temporalities of hair washing practices and their associated technologies.

#### **2.3.4 Practices approaches and science and technology studies**

A considerable amount of this research comes from the field of science and technology studies (STS), and, like its closely linked ally, material culture studies, it focuses upon objects and their agencies. As a body of work, this STS literature is interested in applying the theories of academics such as: Bruno Latour (1992, 2000), who has focused upon how objects are studied within social science; and Donna Haraway (1991) who has explored the cyborgian body. The practice literature I have layered within this thesis, generally focuses upon Latour's theories, and his emphasis upon rendering objects visible within our research, and not using them to reflect society, 'as if the reflected society existed somewhere else' (Latour 2000 p.113-114). As I have explained in the section on materiality, I too will focus upon the agency of hair. Whilst I draw upon participant accounts to explore hair, as I make explicitly clear, it is through the practices people engage in, the ongoing maintenance of hair, which illuminates hair's vitality and agency (Graham and Thrift 2007).

However, there are two general drawbacks to this literature which require further clarification; firstly, the positioning of practices and objects. In practice theory, the

practice is central to the account, yet in STS theory the object or 'thing' (Latour 2000) is given priority. This is something of a chicken and egg situation – which came first and should be prioritised? Yet, there does not appear to be any clarification of this within practices literatures. Material culture studies focus upon how objects are given agency by humans (Dant 2005). Hence, material culture positions humans at the top of a hierarchical structure giving agency to objects below. Thus, practices performed by humans are prioritised over objects. Similarly, Charles Spinoza, Fernando Flores and Hubert Dreyfus (cited in Harrison 2000), argue that we have to have practices to engage with objects. However, these approaches refute Latour's (2000) Actor Network Theory. Latour argues that objects should not be regarded as simply 'reflections' of society, but instead should be positioned as equal actors within relations of networks. In other words, humans, and the practices they engage in, cannot be prioritised over objects. Instead, both must operate together. I do not have an answer to this debate. However, within this thesis, and particularly in Chapter Five, I explore objects and practices as working in tandem and affecting each other.

The second drawback to practice-based and STS studies is that the majority of accounts focus upon practices with non-human objects, and rarely involve the body. The only exceptions to this are Shove and Pantzar's (2005) work on Nordic walking, and also Alan Warde's (2005) study on the practices of motoring. Such neglect of the body is despite Reckwitz's (2002) emphasis that practices are any activities – mental, emotional or bodily. Whilst, I do not agree with Reckwitz's claims that everything is practice and nothing can be individual, I do agree that practices can be more than activities with non-human objects. One practice-based account which does touch upon this is that of Nigel Thrift (2008) on *The Material Practices of Glamour*. Drawing upon elements of material culture, consumption studies and practice approaches, Thrift positions the contemporary celebrity as the pinnacle of modern glamour. He discusses how glamour is an aesthetic commodity, embroiled in many materials, technologies and practices to create a 'total geography of objects' (Harman cited in Thrift 2009 p.19), 'neither person nor thing but in-between, an unobtainable reality, an imaginary friend, an accessory' (Thrift 2009 p.19). Remarkably, Thrift's example to illustrate these glamour practices is hair. Although not a detailed engagement, Thrift touches upon many of the themes explored in this thesis – hair's position at the margins of the body, the technologies of hair care and

the ability to change hair at a whim. As he notes (Thrift 2008 p.20), 'glamorous celebrity uses this [hair] technology to produce new surfaces, which combine with other accessories to produce a particular look'. Hence, glamour and the female pursuit of glamour is another theme running through the veins of this thesis.

### **2.3.5 DIY**

However, there is still one element of practice-based research which I have yet to discuss, but which is crucial to this thesis, and that is DIY. My interest in DIY is twofold. Firstly, as a concept it is particularly useful for understanding home hair care practices, outside of the professional salon environment. Secondly, DIY has been very closely linked to the notion of 'craft', and it is this that I turn to in the next and final section of this (re)positioning of hair and the hair salon. DIY, or Do-it-yourself, became popular in Britain in the 1950s and the aftermath of the Second World War (Browne 1997). Wrapped up in post-war reconstruction and ideologies of domesticity and modern consumption, the notions of make-do and mend were endorsed by several new home improvement magazines (Browne 1997). With little money or resources, many working class and lower middle class householders turned to such home improvements out of necessity, yet these modernisations also generated a sense of pride, achievement and creative accomplishment.

Such home DIY production has remained popular in Britain since the 1950s, however, it is only in the last few years that academia has begun to engage with its prevalence. Emerging out of these interlinked STS, practice, material and 'ordinary' consumption-based approaches, several studies have investigated contemporary DIY production. However, key to these accounts is that DIY is not just understood as producing something, but it is also appreciated as a form of consumption. As Matthew Watson (2008 p.9) notes, DIY is a 'grey' area, where 'the boundaries between consumption and production are distinctly fuzzy'. DIY operates as a 'work-based form of consumption' (Watson 2008 p.9), interweaving traditional appreciations of production and consumption. Watson and Shove (2008) use this appreciation of DIY to explore home improvements, noting how previous academic focuses upon DIY are only ever interested in the outcomes of DIY, the end product, never the actual 'doing'. They discuss how embodied knowledge is united with knowledge embedded within tools, all coming together through DIY practices. Such work and the notions of DIY, although once again do not focus upon work on the

body, are invaluable to understanding DIY home hair practices. In Chapter Five, I draw upon these literatures to explore how women work upon their hair at home, using a variety of practices and tools. I contend that this work can be understood as a DIY hair project. Yet, unlike the projects discussed by the DIY literatures, this project has no end or beginning, but instead is lifelong. I contend that through this ongoing DIY project, women develop routines for coping with the vitality of their hair. When unpicked, these routines illuminate a plethora of values, motivations, and anxieties constructed around practices and objects.

Nevertheless, there is one element of DIY literatures which I have so far neglected and that is their focus upon DIY as craft consumption. The concept of the 'craft consumer' has been put forward by Colin Campbell (2005), as a means to explain the prevalence of DIY or home production. As Peter Dormer (2002) clarifies there are more people engaged in amateur domestic forms of craft, in other words DIY, than there are people interested in contemplating the crafts and arts of professional spheres. For Campbell, the concept of the craft consumer fills the lacuna left by other consumption adages, such as Don Slater's (1997) 'cultural dupe' or Mike Featherstone's (1991) 'post modern identity seeker'. As Campbell (2005, p.27) describes, the craft consumer is:

*Someone who chooses the design for the product, selects the materials needed and generally personally makes (or at least directly supervises the making of) the object in question.*

Thus, the craft consumer is involved in all elements from design, to production, to consumption, a concept which configures Watson and Shove's research on home improvement practices. Whilst I agree that such a framework is very useful for explaining the interlinking of design, consumption and production which takes place with home hair care practices, and other forms of DIY work, such as home improvements (Watson & Shove 2008), unlike Watson and Shove (2008), I do not believe it is useful to apply it to my research. In my opinion, such frameworks are inflexible to the multiplicity, fluidity and individuality of hair care practices, preferring to prioritise chronological appreciations of design, production and consumption, as performed by a lone worker upon a non-human object. However, what is particularly useful from Campbell's approach, is the concept of craft as an approach to understanding hair practices, especially those conducted by the

hairdresser.

### **2.3.6 Craft and its fragmentation**

Whilst Campbell's craft consumer is not a useful axiom for this thesis, the concept of craft is. I have already discussed the forms of labour operating within the salon, and in many ways craft is another appreciation of the hairdresser's work. Yet, as I will illustrate, craft within the salon is much more than just a form of labour. It involves a plethora of practices, it defines the role of the hairdresser and, most significantly for this thesis, it enables much greater exploration into the hairdresser's work upon the palimpsest of hair; hence, its position in this chapter following discussions on the materiality, consumption and the practices of hair. However, as I will discuss craft is a polysemous term, overlapping both art and design (Greenhalgh 2002, Ihatsu 1997). It is also a concept which has been engaged with by academia in a notably fragmented manner, seemingly picked up and incorporated into a variety of disciplinary approaches and studies.

Very early engagements with the concept of craft outside of art and design studies had tended to focus rather nostalgically upon declining cottage/folk type industries washed away by the omnipotency of mass production and consumption (Farleigh 1939, Wymen 1949). Positioned in opposition to the low-skilled, mechanised forms of mass production, such 'cottage' crafts were elevated to sacred and near extinct status. The constant references to Luddism in more recent texts, only highlights the longevity of such concerns (Dormer 1997, Greenhalgh 2002). Yet, in the last five years craft has started to make something of a revival within wider academic disciplines. Debates about what actually constitutes a 'craft' have also raged for many years, particularly within the disciplines of art design and craft studies. The principal debate, and the most enduring within these disciplines, is concerned with what is craft, and how is it different to art (Attfield 2000, Becker 1978, Fariello 2005, Kritzer 2007, Ihatsu 1997). To fully engage in such debates for the purpose of this thesis would be pointless, particularly because there does not appear to be any definite answer to the question. However, by way of a brief summary, the debate centres upon: what is being created? Is it an original or will multiple copies be made? And, who buys it? Is it commissioned by someone or created and then sold (Becker 1978, Dormer 1997)?

In some respects, these debates are useful to understanding the confusion as to where hairdressing sits as a practice. Particularly, when one considers the number of hairdressing manuals with both art and craft in the title, such as: Foan & Wolters's (1961) *The Art and Craft of Hairdressing*; Radford's later version (1974), *The Art and Craft of Hairdressing including Beauty Therapy*; or Flitman's (1959), *The Craft of Ladies' Hairdressing*. In Chapter One, I explored Debra Gimlin's (1997) appreciation of the salon workers she studied as 'service workers', compared to the 'artists' in upmarket salons. I illustrated how Gimlin not only argues that there is a hierarchy between salons, based on 'art' and 'service', but also a huge difference in skill and output. Hence, confusion over what hairdressing is - art or craft - remains. For some this ambiguity over what constitutes a craft can be addressed by history. 'The crafts' are thought to have originated from medieval guilds, such as bookbinders and shoemakers (Crossick 1997). Interestingly, for this thesis, in the sixteenth century barbering became a guild when Henry VIII formed the United Company of Barbers and Surgeons (Schmidt 2006). As I discuss in Chapter Four, the parallels between hairdressing and the traditional craft guilds are surprising, particularly surrounding the notion of the historical artisan. Using work by historian Geoffrey Crossick (1997), I illustrate how characteristics essential to the historical artisan, such as trust, a loyal customer base, apprenticeship schemes and also embracing a particular lifestyle, can all be identified in the contemporary hairdresser. Thus, this bolsters an appreciation of the hairdresser as craftworker.

This notion of the contemporary artisan appears to have been incorporated by other studies wishing to embrace the concept of craft. For example, Sara Berry (2009) has explored the car mechanic as artisan in Nigeria, whereas Susan Terrio (1996, 2000) has concentrated upon the crafting of handmade chocolates in France. Thus, the concept of craft appears to have been 'opened' up to practices not traditionally deemed artisanal. In keeping, Peter Dormer (1997) offers a loose definition of what craft is:

*....craft means a process over which a person has detailed control, control that is a consequence of craft knowledge.*

Dormer's appraisal of craft therefore acknowledges the practices of craft as being the important part of their definition, anything which requires detailed control and

knowledge – in other words, skill. Nevertheless, despite Dormer's holistic appreciation of craft, most craft-based studies, including his own, still focus predominantly upon the end product of craft. The bounded non-human objects which are produced take centre stage, rather than the practices at work.

Richard Sennett's (2008), *The Craftsman*, refutes this object centred account. Instead, Sennett includes all manner of practices from medicine to CAD programming as craft practices. For Sennett, being a craftsman is not about what you produce or what you work upon, it is about your skills and devotion to practice. In his words (Sennett 2008 p.295):

*Craftsmen take pride most in skills that mature. This is why simple imitation is not a sustaining satisfaction; the skill has to evolve. The slowness of craft time serves as a source of satisfaction; practice beds in, making the skill one's own.*

As I explore in Chapter Four, applying Sennett's appreciation of craft practice to the hair salon enables me to illustrate how hairdressing is a craft, which like all crafts, the skills evolve with time. Sennett's focus upon practice rather than output is also crucial to appreciate how this thesis deals with the craft of hairdressing working upon the vitalism of hair. He pays close attention to the craftworker's close relationship with their tools. Drawing upon this, and also elements of STS literatures, I consider the relationship the hairdresser has with their scissors. I explore how the practices of hairdressing as craft involve sensory and embodied proximal knowledges (Hetherington 2002) to create body centred performances, where craftworker and tool work as one with speed and agility upon the lively material of hair (Waquant 1995). Therefore, the practices of craft unite the materiality of hair with the objects and tools of the craftworker hairdresser through the production and consumption of a person's hair.

### **2.3.7 Key themes**

Thus, as I have illustrated within this section, there are a number of key themes addressed within this thesis that have, as yet, had no grounding in studies on hair, yet are vital to understanding my research. The main overarching theme I have developed is that of practice. Using practice-based literature I have conveyed how numerous practices run concurrently throughout this thesis, incorporating elements



of materiality, temporality and maintenance. I have explored how craft, understood by academics such as Sennett (2008), as a practice, is crucial to exploring the role of the hairdresser and their position as much more than simply low skilled salon workers. The relational themes of materiality, maintenance and temporality are also central to this thesis, enabling me to consider hair's vitalism and the practices put into place to deal with the ever changing palimpsest of hair, be they DIY or salon-based procedures. My key issue with the majority of literature discussed in this section is its focus upon the non-human and the disappearance of the practices and materialities of the body. In other words, the corporeal relationships we have with the material of the body and the bodily practices we engage in are written out of practice and material focused studies. This thesis wishes to add the body back in. As I discussed at the start of this chapter, there are many ways I could approach this thesis. Yet, by focusing upon hair, a subject none, bar one, of the literatures discussed above have considered (Thrift 2008 being the only one), I will convey the diversity of hair and the many insightful ways it can be employed to enhance academic thought and understanding.

*once a month I would wait several hours  
in that realm of intimacy  
for my turn in her magical chair  
for my four vigorous shampoos  
for her nimble fingers to massage  
my hair follicles to arousal  
for her full bosom to embrace  
my willing head  
against the war of tangles  
against the burning metamorphosis  
she touched me naked  
taught me art  
gave me good advice  
gave me language  
made me love something about myself.*

Extract from: *Hair: A Narrative*, by Cheryl Clarke (1982)



## Servicing: The Hair Salon

### **3. Introduction**

The above extract from the poem, *Hair: A Narrative*, by Cheryl Clarke, captures many of the themes this chapter will explore. Though writing from a particular racial and political context, Clarke's poem highlights some of the values many women place in their hairdresser. Yet such values are regularly subdued by negative, derogatory and gendered stereotypes, which trivialise the space of the hair salon and the practices of the hairdresser. Using the concepts of emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork, in this chapter I explore the essentialised nature of the hairdresser's work, and its position within feminised and sexualised constructs. I contend that, whilst useful for appreciating the hairdresser's role, emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork are limited, perceiving all service encounters they incorporate identically. Instead, I illustrate how they can be extended to recognise the individuality of hairdresser/client interactions, in terms of the hairdresser and client as individuals and the individuality of the material of hair. This I argue aids the creation of unique hairdresser/client relationships.

I begin the chapter by examining the essentialised character of 'women's work' and women's spaces. Trivialised, feminised and sexualised, I highlight how women, by virtue of being female, are perceived as possessing certain skills making them ideal for particular jobs. Using participant quotes and fieldwork extracts, I convey how within hairdressing such 'essential' feminine skills are smiling, listening and being friendly. Similarly, I illustrate how sexualised and gendered constructions extend to the role of the male hairdresser, exploring why he is always stereotyped as being gay. Introducing the concept of emotional labour, I convey how like other forms of service work, emotional states are trained, performed and managed within the hair salon to create a standardised customer/worker encounter. I demonstrate this with particular reference to the work of the salon junior. Yet, unlike the shop worker, the waitress or the flight attendant, I argue that the emotional labour of the hairdresser involves much more. Whilst, the junior engages in scripted performances, I contend that encounters between stylists and their clients are original and enduring.

Extending the concept of emotional labour, I introduce the notion of aesthetic labour. Understood as 'recuperating the embodied character of service work' (Witz

et al 2003 p.37), I draw upon aesthetic labour to explore how the hairdresser embodies a professional and clinical image to resist the overtly sexualised construction of their profession. Furthermore, I argue that in many ways the hairdresser challenges such constructions by overtly embodying them. By positioning themselves as having glamorous, wealthy lifestyles, surrounded by the latest consumer goods, I contend that the hairdresser attempts to elevate the status of their profession away from its typical low-skilled, poorly paid and vulgar associations.

The third concept of labour I introduce is that of bodywork. Understood as paid work upon the bodies of others, like its counterparts, emotional labour and aesthetic labour, bodywork is also assembled around particular feminised and sexualised ideals (Twigg 2000a, 2000b). And, as I contend, these are evident within the salon through hair's erotic associations and the hairdresser's caregiving activities. Indeed, I extend bodywork as not only constructing the gender of the salon staff, but also those of their clients. Yet, as I contend, bodywork within the salon is not just about working upon gender it is also about working on identity.

### **3.1 Gendered Space, Gendered Work**

#### **3.1.1 A feminine space**

*Georg: Erm (.2) and he's just been to a proper salon in Manchester, it was £23 but you know he said "Oh she washed my hair and gave me a head massage, and all this girly stuff" and he loved it and he's been back and has paid another £23 to have it done again.*

As I illustrated in Chapter One, the space of the hair salon is doubly gendered both in terms of its staff and clientele. The above quote from Georg reiterates this, referring to the 'girly stuff' that takes place in the salon. Such participant perceptions, reinforce understandings of the space of the salon as 'a woman's place' (Gimlin 1996 p.506), 'ultrafeminine in the pre-feminist sense' (Kapp Howe 1977 p.17), and 'an overwhelmingly female experience' (Black 2002 p.4). As Liz Bondi (1992) contends, feminised spaces are often culturally trivialised and denigrated. Similarly, I contend that the people that work in such spaces are equally trivialised, as is the case of the hair salon and its appreciation as a place of women and 'women's work.'

Given that 90% of all hairdressers in the UK are female (Habia, 2008), comments such as those of Firth (1973) that the hairdressing industry has 'a comically serious belief in its own importance' (p.270), or a recent article in the Guardian newspaper (Henley 2008) claiming that we do not treat hairdressers 'with the respect they deserve', illustrates the derision for such feminised roles.

The 'girly' skills the hairdresser is deemed to possess, clarifies the 'essentialist' and misogynist appreciation of her (in keeping with the stereotype) work, as performing a 'feminine' job, ideal for her feminine abilities (Adkins 2000, Tyler & Taylor 1998). Like her female counterparts the waitress (Hall 1993), shop worker (Pettinger 2006), office worker (Pringle 1989), nurse (Lee-Treweek 1997), careworker (Twigg 2000a, 2000b, 2004) and prostitute (O'Connell Davidson 1995, 1999, Sanders 2005), the hairdresser must be seen to possess and perform particular feminised skills – the 'girly stuff' needed to conform to the feminised and sexualised constructions of 'being' a hairdresser (Leidner 1993). Thus, female workers, such as the hairdresser, are encouraged to use their bodies and actions to play out gendered and sexualised constructions of their employment roles. Their gender is (re)created through their 'doing' (Butler 1990).

### **3.1.2 Commodified sexuality**

However, in the hair salon, these gendered and sexualised constructions also extend to the role of the male hairdresser. Just as stereotypes of the female hairdresser are constructed around notions of femininity, so those of the male hairdresser centre upon his sexuality. Despite more men choosing to become hairdressers (Habia (2007a\_ estimates that there has been a 12% rise in the number of men entering the profession between 2005 to 2007), the male hairdresser is pigeonholed as homosexual. Therefore, whilst feminine skills are deemed an essential requirement to perform the role of female hairdresser, so being gay is perceived a necessary prerequisite for the male hairdresser. This is illustrated particularly well by Parr's role within Kirby's. Whilst, Parr is openly gay, his sexuality is used to define his place within the salon. The other salon staff and customers ask him about his boyfriends, and nights out in the gay bars. His sexuality is often the centre of jokes within the salon, for example his effeminate hand gestures, or love of botox and revealing clothing. Similarly, he plays on this himself. When the salon dressed up in fancy dress to raise money for charity, Parr came as an elf, and was quite happy to

pose in a number of provocative, and what were described as ‘camp’, stances for photos. Thus, Parr’s sexuality often makes him the centre of attention within the salon. He is a novelty amongst the staff and customers, and he uses this to his advantage. His ‘gay, male hairdresser’ status means he is often treated differently to the other staff, getting away with being cheeky to customers and also to Patricia.

As Phil Crang discusses (1997 p.153), with reference to tourism employees:

*....employees selves become part of the product being worked at and sold. Products may be personalised and personhood is commodified.*

In Parr’s case, it the homosexual aspect of his ‘personhood’, that defines his position within Kirby’s. Similarly, Lisa Adkins (2000) concludes, in her study on desire in the workplace, that homosexuality can be commodified at work, just as heterosexuality is. Parr has never mentioned whether he enjoys having his sexuality constantly marking out his role. However, it continues to keep him in a position of difference from the other members of staff. He is the exoticised ‘other’ within the salon. Thus, stereotypes of both the female and male hairdresser are constructed around heteronormative conventions. Hairdressing is a feminine profession. Therefore, if a man does it he must be gay. What is more, to succeed at the role he must display hyper-feminine attributes.

In the following sections, I explore how these sexualised and gendered constructions come into play within the hair salon. In so doing, I draw upon three concepts of labour: emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork. However, as I contend, whilst useful for appreciating service work encounters between workers and customers, and also the gendered nature of service employment, such concepts cannot be used to fully comprehend the nature of the hairdresser’s work or their relationships with their clients.

## **3.2 Emotional labour**

### **3.2.1 ‘Essential’ Skills**

*You can teach pretty much anybody to cut hair. (.3) Whether they will be any good at it is another thing. That’s why you have got crap hairdressers and good hairdressers. Because the ones who are good are*

*the ones, saying that the ones who are good aren't necessarily good hairdressers, they can be good listeners.....I would say a good hairdresser is 50% service and 50% hair.*  
(Heather, former hairdresser, Focus Group 8)

*I think you've got to have a little bit of everything. It's no good if you're a hairdresser and you don't like talking to people, you might be best cutter in the world, but if you can't interact with your customer then, there's no point.*  
(Ruby, Interview)

*They've got to have a bit of both haven't they? You've got to have the personality and everything to go with it and then they've got to have the skills to be able to carry the whole thing off.*  
(Verity, Focus Group 7)

Whilst none of these participant quotes explicitly mention the gendered construction of the hairdresser, they do all mention the 'key' mix of hairdressing skill and personality required to be a good hairdresser. Being able to listen and hold a conversation with customers is just as important as being able to cut and style hair. Interestingly, as mentioned in Heather's quote, 'anyone can be taught to cut hair' but not everyone has a flair for it or can be taught the personable skills. This idea of having an innate ability with hair was mentioned by several of the participants and also the salon staff and is something I shall explore in the following chapter about the production of hair. However, for the purposes of this chapter, being a hairdresser is not just about being able to deal with hair, or put the skill you have been trained to do into practice, it is much more. It requires key skills, skills which, as I will go on to discuss, are particularly feminised – such as listening, empathising and smiling. Without these skills you cannot be a good hairdresser, they are a prescribed part of the job, and, as I shall illustrate, a part of the job which must always be kept up.

### **3.2.2 'Service with a smile'**

*I mean I guess they must have bad days like the rest of us, hangovers, worries at home that sort of thing, but you don't really get that do you. How scary would it be though to have a hairdresser on an off day?!! You just wouldn't want to know would you!*  
(Lisa, Interview)



*I think it's a performance isn't it. It's a performance from start to finish. From you go in "Hiya come in, sit down, can I help you." There's some sort of, I'm not saying they're acting but, it's (.2) it's a certain performance that they've got to put on everyday, you know "Come in sit down, yeah lets have a look. What do you want?" And they've got to try and make you feel comfortable and relaxed...*  
(Verity, Focus Group 7)

*It depends on the individual, I think generally hairdressers they have to sort of no matter how they're feeling every client, they have to sort of treat the same and be as chatty with them as they were the last person, even if they don't feel like it.*  
(Ruby, Interview)

As these quotes illustrate, no matter what sort of a day the hairdresser is having or however bad they are feeling, they must present a calm and confident image to their clients. Smiling and friendly the hairdresser must ensure that their client remains relaxed and comfortable. 'Service with a smile' has long been associated to feminised service roles, to describe the subservient, eager to please waitress (Ehrenreich 2000, Hall 1993), shop worker (Pettinger 2006), bar worker (Adkins 2000) or flight attendant (Tyler & Abbott 1998, Tyler & Taylor 1998). Louise Kapp Howe (1977 p.18), in her study on an American hair salon, discusses how stylists are 'trained to look happy'. Similarly, Debra Gimlin (1996 p.516), also studying a salon in America, notes how hairdressers are required to act as 'confidantes, friends and to some extent therapist to their clients'. As a recent salon industry journal article even emphasised to its salon employee readers, 'smiling costs nothing – but it can be good for business' (Buckley 2009). Thus, displaying certain emotions in feminised service roles, such as the hair salon, is paramount to performing the role.

It was Arlie Hochschild's (1983), in her study *The Managed Heart*, who coined the term 'emotional labour' to describe how service workers, in the case of Hochschild's study - flight attendants, are trained to work upon their own feelings and also those they serve to create particular emotional states, conducive to the environment they operate in. Such work is also based upon that of Erving Goffman (1959), and his study into the presentation of the self, and the performance of everyday life. Goffman argued that 'life itself is a dramatically enacted thing' (p.78) and it is always in our interest to use the everyday performance of ourselves to 'control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment' of us (p.15). For Hochschild, these everyday performance skills are honed and trained to present a

particular employee performance, as described by the quotes above from participants on how the hairdresser must always appear. Unsurprisingly, such 'conventions of feeling' (Hochschild 1979 p.552) have been attributed to all the feminised service roles already discussed (see: Crang 1994, Hall 1993, Ehrenreich 2000 on waitressing; Pettinger 2006 on shop work; Twigg 1997a, 2000a, 2000b, 2004 on carework; Lee-Treweek 1997 on nursing; Sharma & Black on beauty therapy; and Tyler & Taylor 1998, Tyler & Abbott 1998 on flight attendants).

Specific examples of such trained emotion management manifested themselves clearly in several ways within Kirby's. Certain rules exist regarding what you can and cannot do in the salon, such as eat, make a personal telephone call or swear. All of these activities are restricted to the back room, which, by virtue of its name and also its purpose, directly corresponds to Goffman's (1959) famous frontstage/backstage regions. Such regions mark out the zones where audiences reside and performances take place (frontstage – the salon), and where performers relax (backstage –the back room). One particular example of such training transpired with the arrival of Tina, a new member of a staff, who had previously worked at a more upmarket salon. As the following fieldwork extract depicts, Tina's training was somewhat different to the other salon staff:

*One thing Tina did say, which was interesting, was that in her previous job you would never shout another member of staff to let them know that their customer had arrived. Instead, you would tap them on the shoulder once. According to Parr, this happens in a lot of places and in some places the code continues by tapping someone twice on the shoulder if their customer is still waiting.*  
(Fieldwork diary extract, August 2007)

Similarly, rather than holler across the salon floor, as was the norm, Tina had been instructed to say nothing at all. Instead, she used a secret code to alert a stylist that her next client was in, so, as if by magic, the stylist would appear at the client's side. Such 'secrets' (Goffman 1959) make the operations of the salon appear calm and smooth, with everybody knowing exactly where they should be and when. The salon staff also spoke about the performative element of their work during the focus group:

*Helen: .... you've got to keep your cool haven't you?*

Patricia: *Oh God yeah!*

Parr: *Keep your cool! Once we bleached somebody's eyebrow we had to put toner on her eyebrow without her knowing. Try doing that! We went "Oh, we've got a bit on your eye there, I'll just wipe that off," putting tint on! ((laughing from others)).*

(Salon, Focus Group)

Staff are trained, or at least encouraged, not to panic when things go wrong. In this example, Parr had made a mistake, but rather than panic the client and risk upsetting her and potentially losing her custom, instead he quickly solved the problem before the client had realised anything was wrong. Parr kept up his performance and the client's emotions remained constant and calm.

### 3.2.3 Script work

Parr's training not to panic the client, or Tina's secret codes, like many service encounters require prescribed performances of emotional labour. As Hochschild (1979 p.569) concludes, 'conventionalised feeling may come to assume the properties of a commodity'. Workers must adopt specific emotions to deal with particular situations. Such specificity of behaviour has led many studies to investigate the 'scripted' nature of service work. Robyn Leidner (1993), in her study on fast food operatives working at McDonalds™, discusses the minute detail to which workers every tasks are prescribed, right down to the very words the operatives are expected to speak with customers. Similarly, Phil Crang (1994) illustrates the 17 step 'full order of service' expected of a waiter or waitress working in the restaurant he studied. Such homogenisation of service roles has been portrayed as damaging to workers, eroding away their individuality and replacing it with an artificial corporate gloss (Twigg 2000a, Leidner 1993). Places, such as McDonalds or multi-chain supermarkets such as Wal Mart or Tesco have even been described as 'non-places', spaces of consumption that people simply pass through (Auge 1999, Everts 2008). Equally the workers in such places are depicted as 'non-persons' - nameless, unmemorable face in a sea of other 'non-persons' (Hall 1993, Leidner 1993). As Fred Davis (1959 p.158) conveys, in his study 50 years ago into cabdrivers and their relationships with their passengers:

*The relationship between the big-city cabdriver and his fare is random, fleeting, unrenewable and devoid of socially integrative features....*

Encounters between workers and customers in such service-based circumstances are fleeting and inconsequential. Thus, emotional labour appears to not only nullify worker's personalities, turning them almost into robots, but it also homogenises the consumption experience – places are identical, workers are standardised and behaviours are uniform.

Such prescription seems apparent in the salon environment: as I have illustrated, staff are given instructions on how to behave, and, as I shall explore in more detail later, they are also told how to look. As Kapp Howe (1977) discusses in her salon studies, stylists are trained to listen and smile, even though in fact they are uninterested in what the client has to say. Likewise, Gimlin (1996) notes how hairdressers only listen to their clients because they have to appear interested to keep the client coming back. In other words, they prescribe to the norms of emotional labour to ensure they get paid. Taking this a stage further, Gimlin claims that such emotional labour undermines hairdressers' professional identities, as their subservience becomes expected.

Yet, whilst I agree that forms of emotional labour do take place in Kirby's and other salon spaces, I cannot agree that every action involves emotional labour in the prescribed, scripted sense. Nor do I concur with Kapp Howe and Gimlin that salon staff fake the relationships they have with their clients to keep them coming back. Many academics have disputed the notion that emotional labour is damaging to the worker, as Hochschild (1979) portrays, illustrating the pleasure employees can gain from their emotionally managed interactions with customers (Twigg 2000a, Adkins 1995). Whilst I agree with these arguments, I think that emotional labour is not quite as straightforward as being either enjoyed or hated. Instead, I contend that the experiences of emotion management are not only particular to the type of service work performed and to the individual performing them (as people obviously have different feelings towards a particular job), but, to borrow Goffman's (1959 p.245) idea, 'the self is a product of a scene' and every performance is completely different. This idea appreciates all interaction as a performance, rather than just specific encounters. As I shall go on to explore, emotional labour, such as that which takes place in the hair salon, is not always something which is faked, prescribed or put on. It can and does involve genuine feelings and unique relationships, as expressed through the exchange of labour.

### 3.3 The Unique Relationship

#### 3.3.1 Friendship

*Yeah cos they do get to know your hair and they get to know you and it's (.2) it's a bit of a unique relationship isn't it! A very trusting one!*  
(Jennifer, Interview)

The concept of a unique relationship, as expressed by Jennifer as existing between her and her hairdresser, is a far cry from the notions of prescriptive script work where every customer is treated identically, and the service worker is forced to pretend about how they feel. Instead, Jennifer describes a relationship which is personal to her, consisting of encounters which are not fleeting or artificial but enduring and meaningful. Jennifer is not alone in feeling this way. In fact, many of the participants I spoke to describe the friendships they had with their hairdressers. I will illustrate this relationship by focusing initially upon one participant in particular, Nancy.

Nancy's account is particularly helpful to this exploration of the unique relationship because at the time I spoke to her she was considering leaving her hairdresser, Debbie, and the dilemma was causing her considerable angst. Having been with Debbie, a senior stylist at a reputable chain salon, for 8 years, Nancy had described her at the first focus group as 'just brilliant' at cutting and being really happy with the relationship she had with her. However, by the time I saw Nancy again several months later for an interview, her work circumstances had changed and she was no longer within walking distance of Debbie's salon. This had caused her some issues, and after passing a 'really funky hairdressers' close to her new place of work she was considering leaving Debbie and trying this new salon. However, the decision was not proving an easy one:

*Nancy: Well with my new job, erm there's a really funky hairdresser nearby so I've kind of walked past, checked it out. Erm yeah and it looks really funky. The girls that work in there are really quite cool and they actually bank with us. I've met the owner she's really cool, erm and they use all the Bedhead and Tigi products, so I was saying to my friend at work I'm quite tempted to go and give it a try.*

*Helen: ((Mock sharp intake of breath))*

*Nancy: I feel like a traitor! I feel like a traitor! I've been proper getting stressed about it. She was saying like "Well where do you normally go?" And I was saying "I've been going to G&B, I've been going for years. I said "I've had the same girl for like eight years." And I said "As much as it's great. It costs me like £48 every time I go to get my hair cut and I've only got short hair." So, and it's kind of like do I do it? But then I was thinking I'm scared because what if I really like it?*

When pushed as to why Nancy feels like a traitor to Debbie because, after all, she is only paying for a service, Nancy describes her close relationship to Debbie and how well they get along:

*Like I will go once every six weeks now. I've got a memory like a sieve, I've got a really, really bad short term memory, and I will go and see her and then six weeks later I'll go back, I won't remember what I've spoke to her about since I was last there, she remembers ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING that I've told her. I mean if you think about how many people she sees on a daily basis cos she's like one of the senior stylists as well, so she'll see, I'd say she'd have at least four appointments a day, for a period of like six weeks, I mean it's a lot of people that and she remembers absolutely everything. (2.0) And we have the same opinions about things, it's not like your typical, you know people say "Oh yeah I go the hairdressers, and we'll talk about this that and the other, we'll talk about Big Brother and X Factor." It's not like that with Debbie, we have like really in depth conversations, like about politics and you know what I mean....*

*And to be honest, I honestly think as well, and this is not me bigging myself up, but I think she'd be gutted as well if I stopped going to her because I honestly think she really looks forward to me going in. And she's told me, she's actually told me. She's said "Oh I love it when you come in," cos we just have really good conversations. And like I said, she doesn't forget anything. She does the same thing with Kelly as well ((Nancy's sister)) and it's cos she obviously listens, and cares about what you're actually telling her.*

The cynics amongst us may argue that Debbie only remembers all the details of Nancy's life because it has the desired effect of making Nancy think that she cares, hence she keeps coming back. Such an account would mirror the conclusions both Kapp Howe (1977) and Gimlin (1996) came to. However, whilst I do not doubt that remembering details about a client's life does make them feel special and does aid their return, it does not mean that the stylist is not interested in the client or does not

care about what they have to say. As the following quote from stylist, Parr, conveys, the stylists consider some of their clients as friends:

*I do think that you build up a relationship with your client. I do think that sometimes that the clients might think, like they won't just come in for a trim. They can go anywhere and just have a trim, but they come back to you because you kind of build-up a friendship with them. Some of my clients send me funny text messages.*  
(Parr, Salon Focus Group)

This relationship between stylist and client can be a friendship and is not necessarily one based simply on maintaining the client's return through standardised, prescribed behaviour. Former hairdresser Heather (Focus Group 8), talking about the clients at the salon her mother owned, notes, 'because they've been her clients for the last 20 odd years, half of them are her best friends.' Thus, what may begin as a monetary exchange for services rendered, over time can develop into something more.

### **3.3.2 Doing away with the script**

Finding that common ground between stylist and client is important though. Several participants made reference to their annoyance at always being asked the same questions wherever they went, particularly the 'Have you been on your holidays?' or 'Are you going out tonight?' questions. Yet, as Parr (Salon Focus Group) responds, 'It's how you get started'. Holidays are common ground that most people can relate to, hence why such questions are used by salon staff to start off conversations. What is more, as the following quotes illustrate, such 'scripted' questions tend to be asked more often than not by the salon juniors, not the stylists:

*Donna: The young girls (.3). Veronica used to have this young girl who washed your hair and everytime she'd say, "Are you going out tonight?"*  
*Vanessa: Yeah that's what they always do in mine.*  
(Focus Group 1)

*Laura: And she's trying to talk to you a little bit "Are you going on holiday?"*  
*Louise: "Did you have a good weekend?" And you go "Yeah." And, apparently cos she's a Saturday girl you get asked.*  
(Focus Group 8)

As these quotes show, scripted work in the salon does exist, but it tends to be done by the salon juniors not the hairdressers. As Chapter Four conveys, the salon juniors are called upon to perform activities to the client's hair, such as washing it or blow drying it. Yet, as most salons have several juniors, and unlike hairdressers, juniors do not have their own client base, then a customer is likely to be tended to by several juniors when they visit the salon, they are not assigned a specific one. Hence, such encounters, like the service ones discussed in the previous section, do tend to be fleeting and much more random. The junior has little time to establish a relationship with the client and is not sure if they will ever have to deal with them again. Thus, they are much more likely to perform scripted roles.

With the hairdresser things are different. After repeat visits the hairdresser and their client get to know each other better and conversation flows much more easily. As Nancy states, she and Debbie have 'in depth conversations' about things they are both interested in. Similarly, Lisa (Focus Group 2) describes how she talks to her stylist about their shared love of music and clubbing. Rebecca (Focus Group 3), mentions how she chats to her male stylist about football and mountain biking. And Carolyn (Interview), notes how when she visits the salon, she will have 'a laugh and a gossip' with her stylist friend. Some clients feel so comfortable with their hairdresser that they will divulge their innermost secrets:

*Patricia: Oh God! If I (.5) if I told everything that people had told me I'd be...*

*Helen: You'd be locked up!*

*Patricia: I would, I would, I'd be in a straight jacket myself because (1.0) oh yeah who's having an affair with who, who is shagging who*

*Beth: And it's always one of your clients that you know isn't it*

*Patricia: Yeah it is. I remember once when I worked at Maddie's where we had these two ladies in and we had to put one downstairs and the other up because one of them had ran off with the other one's husband.  
(Salon Focus Group)*

This confidence in salon staff has been discussed by other salon studies (see Gimlin 1996, Sharma & Black 2001), highlighting the salon worker as providing emotional therapy. Ironically, Parr often wears a t-shirt to work with 'Therapist' emblazoned across it. Listening to clients' problems and managing delicate situations, such as the one Patricia describes above, is a form of emotional labour and is an inherent part of the job. According to Gimlin (1996 p.523), 'personal information only operates in



one direction'. Whilst I agree that stylists might not be quite so willing to disclose personal secrets to all their clients, I oppose Gimlin's conclusions, arguing that personal information is nearly always passed between the two to ensure that conversation is maintained. In some instances, this information may be of a secretive nature depending upon the particular stylist-client relationship.

### 3.3.3 Enduring and trusting

It would seem the longer the relationship between the client and the stylist the closer they are and the more candid the dialogue is. Sitting in on a conversation between Patricia and Dot, a client of Patricia's for over 30 years, the talk centred upon their families and what they were doing. Patricia mentioned how she was concerned about her son going off to university, whilst Dot spoke of her ill health. Therefore, although the relationship has an exchange value, in terms of Dot paying Patricia to do her hair, it is also based upon mutual friendship. The hairdressing experience offers them a chance to catch up. This is not to say that some of these relationships do not exist outside of the salon - they do. Over the years, Patricia has been to many funerals of clients and also several weddings. Whilst I was working in the salon everyone was invited to the engagement party of Denise, one of the regular clients. Similarly, Samantha (Focus Group 8) mentioned how she invited her hairdresser of 17 years to her wedding. Returning to Nancy, she also thinks that much of Debbie that she would like to invite her to her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party:

*It's like, it's my 30<sup>th</sup> next year and I would definitely invite her. So you know what I mean? And this is a person I see once every six weeks, it's so weird isn't it. And it's not like a loyalty thing, I think it's just a simple fact that I really like her. I really, really like her and she's just such a lovely person.*

Nancy recognises the uniqueness of this relationship, remarking 'it's so weird isn't it.' This is a person who she has met through a service encounter, like paying a cashier in the supermarket or ordering food from a waiter in a restaurant. Yet, because of the specifics of such encounters - frequent visits to the same person, for prolonged periods of time, requiring conversation and interaction - a relationship builds up, and this relationship can become friendship. Unlike the supermarket or fast food restaurant, the hair salon is appreciated as a 'place', a space of consumption

which people can identify themselves in and cultivate relations with others through (Auge 1999). Nancy's relationship with Debbie recognises that Debbie is a 'person', a friend and confidante, offering a unique relationship. So much so, that ending such a relationship can be like 'breaking-up with a boyfriend' (Jennifer, Interview).

Nancy's turmoil at the prospect of leaving Debbie and going elsewhere to get her hair cut is not simply because of the business Debbie will lose, but is based primarily upon the loss of the friendship. Yet the friendship cannot continue without the service encounter, as ultimately that is the glue which holds it together. Nancy going elsewhere would be akin to shunning Debbie's skills and with it her amity. Jennifer explains how she felt about changing hairdressers a few years ago:

*No it was a strange one cos I really did like the way she did my hair... but I got to the point where I was just so fed up with my hair and I wanted something completely different and I didn't think if I went to her she could give me what I wanted or what I needed... I felt terrible about it. I felt like I'd betrayed her...I feel awkward. I feel really bad every time I talk about her....*  
(Jennifer, Interview)

Fundamentally, the hairdresser-client relationship is built upon the exchange - the service encounter, and any friendship develops from this. For the relationship to be maintained the service encounter has to continue to meet the expectations and needs of the client. The client has to continue to trust the hairdresser's abilities and the value of the relationship. When the service encounter fails to live up to their expectations, for instance, Nancy having to travel further, or Jennifer wanting a complete change then, despite the friendship, clients start to look elsewhere. The overall value, both monetary and personal, placed upon the exchange starts to alter. As Nancy describes, 'If I didn't get on with somebody who cut my hair, no matter how good the cut was I wouldn't go back.' Likewise, even if she got on fabulously with them, but did not like the cut then she would not go back. It is this intricate balance, the complex mix of having the right hairdresser with the right personality that makes the relationship between client and stylist so unique.

Of course, there are many participants who did not stay with one hairdresser, and were quite happy to move around and never build up a relationship. For some, participants, such as Lisa, the emphasis was placed upon returning to the same salon rather than the same stylist - a sort of pseudo-relationship with an organisation

(Gutek *et al* 2007). For others, having the same hairdresser or visiting the same salon was simply not important. However, poignantly there were also those who were envious of the relationships they saw others having with their hairdresser, as the following two quotes highlight:

*But I've not really shown any loyalty to anyone. I would like to, cos I'm quite envious of people who have this rapport going with their hairdresser, but I've just never...*  
(Eileen, Interview)

*Yeah cos loads of people I've seen there (.5)... and other people have massive conversations. And I sit there and think "Should I be jealous of this hairdresser /person relationship whatever. I (.2) I should be having a lot more involvement with the hairdresser.*  
Vanessa, Focus Group 1)

As these quotes show, the unique relationship does not exist for every customer. Some women do not have the rapport with their hairdressers, that Nancy or Jennifer have experienced. Thus, there are other forms of relationships at work within the salon.

Smiling, listening, chatting are all aspects of the feminised construction of being a hairdresser and performing emotional labour, but they are not always faked or forced, just as they are not the only outcomes of the service encounter between hairdresser and client. Emotional labour is part of the hairdresser's job, but the relationships they can form with clients extend much further than any prescribed, scripted, emotionally managed and feminised performance. By appreciating that all interaction is a performance of sorts we can begin to understand how hairdressers weave aspects of emotional labour into their job (staying calm and in control) alongside their own personality and the skills they offer (divulging personal information, gossiping with clients) to forge unique and individual relationships with their clients. Thus, encounters within the salon can never simply be just artificial, scripted or feminised. However, as I shall continue to discuss in the following sections, emotional labour is not the only form of labour which hairdressers engage with and which informs the unique relationships between stylists and clients.

### 3.4 Aesthetic Labour

#### 3.4.1 Short skirts', 'Cleavage', 'Dizzy blondes' and 'brainless bimbos'

Whilst, smiling, listening and chatting are all deemed 'essentially feminised' activities of the hairdresser and their conduct of emotional labour, similar notions exist surrounding the hairdresser's appearance:

*Karen tends to wear little skirts, with little vest tops, and she's always really tanned, and she always looks really perfect. And her hair is big and bouncy.*

(Jennifer Interview, talking about her hairdresser, Karen)

*Like the girl that cut my hair today, to look at her, she looked awful. She had like a white, what was meant to be a white t-shirt but it was like grey and horrid. And she had this like little mini ra-ra skirt which again was completely off white. ((Laughing from others)). Everything that she had was far far too tight for her.*

(Phoebe, Focus Group 5)

*Oh Penelope's! Oh even though he'd love to go to Penelope's for the experience, and the short skirts and the cleavage.....*

(Eileen, Focus Group 5, talking about a local hair salon)

'Little skirts', 'cleavages' on display, 'big and bouncy' hair, all refer to a sexualised stereotypical appearance of the hairdresser. Similarly, 'dizzy blondes', 'air heads', 'Paris Hilton, Chantelle wannabes', 'thick as pig shit', are all terms which have been used throughout the focus groups to describe the general perception of hairdressers as unintelligent women only interested in vanity. Ursula Sharma and Paula Black (2001 p.917), in their work in beauty salons, discuss how the beauty therapists they interviewed were aware of the stereotypical 'brainless bimbo' role to which they were regularly assigned. Likewise, Debra Gimlin (1996 p.510), researching a New York hair salon, draws upon the images of the hairstylist played by Dolly Parton in the film, *Steel Magnolias*, 'a frosted, painted, girdled icon of fabricated femininity', and the 'beauty-school dropout', from the film, *Grease*, to also emphasise the vain, dim-witted stereotype. As one participant noted:

*The problem with hairdressers is they don't have a right good (.3) you just think they're dizzy blondes don't you?*

(Eileen, Focus Group 5)

Thus, operating alongside essentialised notions of what constitutes the right feminised skills to be a hairdresser, are also stereotypical ideals of their sexualised appearance and the way they 'should' or are perceived as looking.

As Bourdieu (1986 p.190) highlights, 'the body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste' and throughout history the female body has been used to position women in particular classes. Anne Lawrence (2006), writing about female appearance in 17<sup>th</sup> century England, notes how upper class women were encouraged to appear wholesome and clean, neither too vain, nor disinterested in their looks. Similarly, it is well documented that during the Victorian era the resulting urban expansion of the Industrial Revolution heightened anxieties surrounding the potential mixing of social classes. In response, discourses of respectability, morality, sexuality and class began to emerge with female appearance as the focal point. The delicate, corseted bodies of middle-class women were positioned in opposition to the unrestrained, vulgar bodies of their working-class counterparts (see Webb 2006, Birchall 2006, Fields, 1999, Nead, 1988, Steele 2001, Summers 2001). One hundred years later, Beverley Skeggs (1997 p.82), writing about notions of respectability as understood by a group of young women in the 1990s, describes how 'the respectable body is white, desexualised, hetero-feminine and usually middle class', whereas the working class body is excessive, vulgar, and overtly sexual (Skeggs 1997, 2001). Thus, the 'aesthetic stance' (Bourdieu 1987 p.57) of the hairdresser, 'little skirts', 'cleavage' on display, 'dizzy blondes', are bodily markers of a particular working class-based femininity which she has been assigned to. Her body is essentialised as a body of excess, over-feminised, over-sexual and, therefore, working class.

In some ways, these markers of the hairdresser's working class and sexualised femininity, their 'aesthetic stance', can be appreciated as a form of aesthetic labour. In other words, the hairdresser uses their body to commodify the essentialised constructions of being a hairdresser. Whilst emotional labour is understood as affecting the worker's actions and emotions, aesthetic labour takes the concept of emotional labour a stage further and is focused upon the worker's appearance. As Annie Witz *et al* (2003 p.37) illustrate, aesthetic labour is positioned as moving beyond emotional labour, 'recuperating the embodied character of service work'. Workers are encouraged to embody the company ethos and branding through their

clothes, style and bodily schemas (Witz *et al* 2003, Pettinger 2006). Thus, just as smiling, listening and chatting form the staple part of the hairdresser's emotional labour, so short skirts, blonde hair and cleavage can be appreciated as structuring the key part of the hairdresser's aesthetic labour. However, just as I argued that emotional labour is not so clear cut within the salon, so I will contend neither is aesthetic labour.

### **3.4.2 A professional image**

Whilst stereotypical appreciations of the hairdresser's aesthetic labour position her as sexualised and vulgar, I argue that hairdressers also utilise elements of aesthetic labour to negate such perceptions. In the salon, embodiment of Kirby's branding and style is not only encouraged to create a particular 'Kirby's ethos', but is specifically mobilised to present a professional, almost clinical image:

*Final point to note, was a conversation between Linney and Amelie: one of the other members of staff (a Saturday girl) had come into work last Sat wearing a pink top and white trousers (uniform is all black, or black trousers, red top). Linney had said to her as she was leaving "Normal uniform next week, please."*

(Fieldwork diary extract, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007)

*When I arrived Parr, Patricia and Beth were already there and were discussing their new uniforms. These had been ordered last week and looked really smart. They consisted of a tunic style top, like a shirt, fastening down the middle with slim, silver buttons; the sort of style that a nurse or dental nurse would wear, quite clinical, but in red or black.*

(Fieldwork diary extract, 22nd August 2007)

*Helen: Is it important that your own hair looks good when you're in work?*

*Parr: To be honest you shouldn't really turn into work with grey roots to your ears, but it does happen. ((laughing from others))*

*Beth: I would straighten my hair every morning and make sure it looks nice for work but it just gets greasy and I just refuse to.*

*Parr: I don't think anybody (.2) if anybody actually comes in with their hair looking a mess, people do actually say something.*

*Patricia: I do mine, I do back comb it when I put it up.*

(Salon Focus Group)

As the fieldwork extracts illustrate, wearing the correct clothing is important in the salon, as is making sure your hair is presentable. Both of these convey a professional appearance to the customers, promoting trust in the stylists' abilities and Kirby's as a reputable salon. As Ruby (interview participant) noted, 'if they look rubbish, then you're not going to have much confidence in them doing your hair are you?' The red and black of the uniforms matches the rest of the salon, creating Kirby's brand colours. Goffman (1974, cited in Hochschild 1979) states 'when they issue uniforms they issue skins' to describe corporate attempts to clone staff members' appearances. However, only the female members of Kirby's staff have to wear the red and black tunics. Parr, being the only male employee, wears his own clothes. This is because they are designed for women, being depicted throughout the workwear manufacturer catalogues as worn by female models. However, this further confirms the feminised constructions and the gendered division of labour at work within the space of the hair salon. Tunics are designed specifically for women workers, validating the hair salon as a 'typically' female space. Hence male workers, such as Parr, are exempt, and he wears what he likes. This once again highlights Parr 'different' status within the salon and his position as the 'gay male hairdresser'.

Furthermore, I contend that the uniforms and the emphasis placed upon appearance within the salon illustrates how only certain people can fit Kirby's bodily schema. In particular, there are huge pressures upon stylists to be young, and look youthful. The narrow age range of Kirby's staff, being between 16-28 years old, is testament to that, as are recent hairdressing statistics which report that 83% of new salon employees are aged under 26 years old. This could possibly be due to the physical demands of the job, being on your feet for 8-12 hours at a time. However, as Barbara Ehrenreich (2002 p.35) points out, in America, the best service jobs, such as restaurant waitressing or door to door selling, often go to 'good-looking young college educated' types. This suggests that the average female hairdresser has a 'shelf-life' as an employee in a salon of approximately 15-20 years, or until the age of 35-40. Of course, life stage factors also come into play here. There are not many opportunities within hair salons for part-time work. Statistics estimate that 72% of the UK hairdressing workforce is employed full-time (Habia 2007a), with 20% of female stylists working part-time hours (Habia 2007b). Hence, women with families must often resort to other options, such as going mobile, buying their own salon or

leaving the profession. Thus, the hair salon is positioned as a young persons' workplace.

### **3.4.3 A clinical role**

Even though not mentioned explicitly by the stylists, based on other salon studies, the 'clinical' style of the uniforms is not only used to promote professionalism but also to resist any sexualised associations (Oerton 2004, Sharma and Black 2001). Sharma and Black (2001) found that beauty therapists were encouraged to find a balance between looking smart and conventionally feminine, without looking too sexualised, or, likewise, too clinical and desexualised. I argue a similar balance is promoted within the salon to ensure that the stylists embody a particular look, tempered specifically for the aesthetics of Kirby's.

This clinicalisation of the role of the stylist also extends into other elements of customer service within the salon, particularly regarding the customer consultation process and the selling of products. Consultations generally take place with a new client or with a regular client who has booked in for something different. *Figure 3.1* is a copy of the consultation assessment sheet which I was given on my hair care and styling course. The stylists do not use anything like this, but they will assess hair texture and face shape and will ask if the customer has used any colours or permed their hair. Thus, stylists are encouraged, both through their training and also within the salon, to diagnose their customers' hair and provide sufficient labels, be it 'short', 'curly', 'wavy', 'greasy', 'coloured', and so on. Secondly, stylists are urged to then 'prescribe' the best 'treatment' for the hair, as the following fieldwork extract about salon training the staff had from the ghd™ sales representative portrays:

*One of the highlights of the day was a visit by the ghd™ sales rep, who I'll call Jodie, with the latest ghd™ offer which is a pair of the styling irons, with a black carry case, heat resistant mat and some styling spray.... However, what was most interesting about this is rather than it all being pre-packed (the packs only come with the irons and the carry case - the stylist has to 'prescribe' the right spray for the customer. These were the words used by Jodie and repeated by Patricia, Parr, and Linney to the other stylists. There seem to be medical associations here - the stylist is the professional, like a doctor, prescribing the client the spray which is best for their unique head of hair - the client cannot decide for themselves, it must be left in the hands of the professional. (Fieldwork Diary Extract, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008)*



### Hairdressing – Level 2 Client Consultation Sheet

<b>Student Name:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Client Name:</b>	
<b>Client consultation for services:</b>	
<b>Services required:</b>	

**Hair Information:** (tick or circle relevant information):

Hair Texture:	Course/medium/fine	Previous Chemical Treatments	Tests carried out
<b>Hair Type:</b>	African Caribbean/Asian/Caucasian	Perm/Relaxed	Elasticity
<b>Hair Condition:</b>	Normal/Greasy/Dandruff/Dry	Semi-permanent	Porosity
<b>Volume:</b>	Thick/Medium/Thin	Tint/Quasi	Incompatibility
<b>Movement:</b>	Straight/Wavy/Curly	Bleach	Skin test
<b>Hair growth patterns:</b>	Nape Whorl/Calf Lick/Widdows Peak/Double Crown	Highlights/Lowlights	Pre-perm test
			Strand test
			Test cutting

<b>Washing Hair:</b>		
<b>Type of shampoo to be used:</b>		
<b>Time taken:</b>		
<b>Conditioner:</b>	Surface/Penetrating/Treatment	
<b>Equipment used:</b>		
<b>Drying &amp; styling hair</b>		
<b>Tools used:</b>		
<b>Styling products:</b>		
<b>Finishing products:</b>		
<b>Drying Techniques</b>		
Roller setting	Blow drying	Finger drying
Finger waves	Natural drying	Pin curls

**Contra-indications** (circle as appropriate)

<b>Skin sensitivities:</b>	Yes/No	<b>Other know allergies:</b>	Yes/No
<b>Skin disorders:</b>	Yes/No	<b>Incompatible products:</b>	Yes/No
<b>History of previous allergic reaction to colour/perm products:</b>	Yes/No	<b>Medical advice or instruction?</b>	Yes/No

**Client Face Shape (circle which is correct):**



Oval



Rectangle



Inverted triangle



Heart



Pear



Square



Round



Diamond

<b>Cutting Look Required</b>	<b>Tick</b>	<b>Cutting Techniques used</b>	<b>Tick</b>
One length:		Club cutting:	
Uniform layer:		Free hand:	
Short graduation:		Scissor over comb:	
Long graduation:		Other, please state:	
With fringe:		Time taken:	

<b>Perming</b>	<b>Tick</b>	<b>Colouring</b>	<b>Tick</b>	<b>Colour application</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Virgin hair:		Virgin hair:		Full-head virgin hair:	
Chemically treated hair:		Chemically treated hair:		Full head chemically treated:	
Barrier cream used:		Temporary colour:		Re-growth:	
Pre-perm treatments:		Semi-permanent:		Highlights:	
Perm lotion:		Quasi-permanent:		Lowlights:	
Neutraliser:		Permanent colour:		Pulled through:	
Nine section wind:		Bleach:		Woven:	
Directional wind:		Skin tone considered:		Slicing:	
Brick wind:		Heat required?		Record card updated?	

**Figure 3.1 – Copy of the consultation sheet**

'Consultation', 'diagnosing', 'prescribing', 'treating' all have medical connotations. As the extract suggests, this is the hairdresser positioning themselves in a pseudo-medical role, the professional ready to remedy any hair problems. Sarah Nettleton (1989) charts the medicalisation of the dentist, a figure closely associated in history to early barbering (see *Appendix A* for details on the history of hairdressing). Nettleton (p.1187) notes that via visual and verbal interrogation of patients the 'dental gaze' is produced, through which power can operate. Therefore, the dentist is placed in a position of authority. I argue that this also happens in the hair salon through the processes of diagnosing, prescribing and treating different 'types' of hair. Furthermore, Nettleton contends that evaluative procedures, such as questionnaires and forms, are used to objectify patients and confirm the dentist's power by documenting patients' issues. Likewise, client cards, which record details of past salon procedures, sanction and professionalize the skills of the stylist and the salon, as they have the 'knowledge' and recorded history of the clients' hair. Moreover, the consultation sheets used by trainee hairdressers at college (see *Figure 3.1*) serve to develop these skills through the process of client classification. Thus, by employing clinical terminology and adopting medical doctor/patient categorisation techniques, the hairdresser draws upon elements of aesthetic labour to produce a professional persona. This persona enables her to resist the negative, overtly sexual stereotypical ideals placed upon her body and activities.

#### **3.4.4 'Cause celeb'**

However, putting the clinical and professional elements of aesthetic labour aside, I also contend that part of the hairdresser's aesthetic labour draws upon stereotypical ideals of being overtly sexualised and feminised for their own gain. What is more, I contend, that while on the surface such ideals are criticised by outsiders - as the participant quotes at the start of this section illustrate, if we delve a little deeper, such negative stereotypes are in fact wrapped up in feelings of envy, guilt and bodily insecurities:

*....but in that kind of scenario where you know all the hairdressers are all sort of perfect, gorgeous figures, perfect hair and you're sort of sitting there feeling really inadequate and you're put in this chair in the middle of the place and you're thinking "Please don't look at me! You're looking at how fat I am!" That's another thing I always worry*

*about what I wear when I go to the salon. And I have to think "What did I wear last time? I don't want to wear the same thing again." Not that they'd remember ....Because again they've got a very distinctive style....so I always try to put something on that I feel nice about myself in, not something dead scruffy that I'd wear when I'm taking the kids to the park do you know. (Jennifer, Interview & Focus Group 2)*

*So when I go to a hairdressers I already feel a bit like (.2) you know this is how the other half live. This is how the capable women live. I'm kind of stepping into it.  
(Amber, Focus Group 2)*

For Jennifer, like many participants, a visit to the hair salon worries her, as she believes that she will be compared to the ultra-feminine, sexualised body of the hairdresser. Hence, she makes more of an effort with her appearance to make her 'feel nice about' herself. Interestingly, Jennifer is concerned that she will be the one who will be read as having bad taste for not making enough effort, or for being a woman of excess who is too 'fat' or too 'scruffy'. Similarly, Amber believes that the space of the hair salon is full of 'capable' women, able to do their hair and look fabulous all the time. Such quotes not only highlight the indefinable balance between 'too much' and 'not enough' femininity, and the instability of gender constructions, but they also show how the aesthetic labour of the hairdresser is reflected through their client's insecurities.

What is more, I contend that hairdressers utilise these appearance-driven, over-glamorous, sexualised aspects of aesthetic labour, and its subsequent effects upon their clientele, to elevate their own status. By adopting, or appearing to adopt, a glamorous, expensive lifestyle, the hairdresser attempts to overcome the low status, cheap and vulgar appreciations of their role:

*The conversation then turned to saving tips up for a trip to London that they all had planned later in the year, when they were going to go shopping in Harrods. Linney said that her tips were not going to give her enough money for the £800 Chloe handbag she wanted. I asked her is she would not be too scared to take it out because it cost so much. But Linney laughed and said "I had a Yves Saint Laurent purse which cost £60 and I dropped it down the loo."  
(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2009)*

*Linney also mentioned that all stylists earned £12k a year, which surprised me given the cars they drive, Linney, Tina, and Beth (all have*

*cars which are less than 2 years old), the phones they have and the amount they seem to spend on clothes, perfume and cosmetics. Until working here I'd never heard of Chopard diamonds or Jo Malone perfume. (Fieldwork Diary Extract, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007)*

Brand new cars, the latest clothes, perfumes and cosmetics were all presented to me as part of the hairdresser lifestyle. Whilst I worked at Kirby's, Beth was given a brand new BMW by her parents and Parr remortgaged his own home to buy two further houses which he was planning to rent out. I have been informed by hairdressers working elsewhere that Kirby's stylists £12,000 a year salary, with 10% commission on everything they earn, plus tips (which I was told were on average between £50-100 a week), is a very good wage package for a hairdresser. Especially, when one considers that the latest statistics on low wage labour concludes that hairdressing is one of the lowest paid jobs in Britain, with the average wage of a stylist at £9,506 (Office of National Statistics 2008). However, judging by conversations regarding money issues, I do not think it covers the 'luxury' lifestyle many of them lead and it became apparent that credit cards, bank loans and goods bought on 'higher purchase' funded many of these expensive trappings. Employing consumption studies discourse, in contemporary society 'you are what you buy' and consumer goods, such as cars, clothes and cosmetics, act as signifiers to identity, status and lifestyle (Entwistle 2001, Featherstone 1991, Fiske 1989, Goss 1993, Jackson and Scott 2001). For Paul du Gay (1996, cited in Walkerdine 2004), studying retail employees of the Disney Corporation, workers have to become part of the personality that the store sells. Arguably this does happen in the salon. Customers visit the salon to purchase 'looking good', maybe even glamorous, and the stylists are encouraged to, and are often more than happy to, embody such an image.

As already discussed, the hair industry, like the fashion industry, is heavily influenced by celebrity culture. As Nigel Thrift concludes (2008 p.18), celebrities are 'a massive source of value in the modern world', possessing 'sex appeal, luxury' and 'wealth'. It is the values placed upon celebrities which the stylists at Kirby's wish to mimic. Gimlin (1996), in her work in a New York hair salon, discusses how the stylists there attempt to position themselves as social equals to their clients through their knowledge and emotional labour, yet they share neither social class nor common interests with them. Similarly, Ehrenreich (2002 p.117), describes how low

wage work makes 'you feel like pariah', the underclass of a supposedly caste free society. I would argue that in Kirby's the stylists are the same class as the majority of their clients and, particularly with regards the younger ones, do share common interests – one of those being an interest in celebrity culture. By positioning themselves as leading a glamorous and expensive lifestyle, the stylists portray an image to their clients that they are in some way superior with a well-paid professional job. Sporting the latest fashions, having the celebrity hair cut of the moment (of course, done free of charge by one's stylist friend), driving expensive cars and acting as though money is no object are all part of the allure of being 'something' (Thrift 2008 p.19), 'someone', a mini-celebrity in one's own sphere of the salon.

This potentially explains Jennifer's and Amber's inferiority at being surrounded by all these 'perfect', 'capable' women. It also explains Jennifer's surprise when she realises the types of cars the staff drive at the salon she visits:

*And they all drive these like big expensive cars, and you just think "My God!" The receptionist I think she must either be married to someone who's dead rich, or won the lottery or something. She drives a brand new Audi A4 Cabriolet. And she's the receptionist!!*  
(Jennifer, Interview)

Valerie Walkerdine (2004), talking about neo-liberalism, femininity and choice, concludes that young women workers today are increasingly coerced by neo-liberal discourse into presenting a commodified persona of freedom and choice. The 'expensive lifestyles' of the young women Walkerdine spoke to were 'a way of tolerating the present through a fantasy of a better future, produced through the fantasy of 'being someone'' (p.26). In other words, having the money and choice to purchase expensive consumer goods not only positions the owner as having a particular lifestyle, but also acts as a form of escapism from their present working/life conditions. This, I argue, is why the stylists place such emphasis on material goods. They not only show their 'worth' and promote a better status of their role, but they also act as a form of escapism and the choice to 'be someone'. According to a recent newspaper article, hairdressing is said to be in the top three most iconic jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, alongside celebrities and management consultants (Henley 2004). Thus, in celebrating and copying celebrity culture,

hairdressers glamorise their profession, challenging the negative, denigrated stereotypes of their work as being low-skilled, mundane and poorly paid.

### **3.5 Bodywork**

#### **3.5.1 Hair's eroticism**

Whilst the hairdresser works upon their own body through aesthetic labour, it cannot be ignored that they also work upon the bodies of others, through what has been termed 'bodywork'. Like emotional labour and aesthetic labour, bodywork is also gendered. Understood as paid work upon the bodies of others, it embodies feminised notions of care and eroticism, operating in an ambivalent space somewhere between sex work (O'Connell Davidson 1995, 1999, Sanders 2005), alternative therapy (Oerton 2004), nursing (Lee-Treweek 1997, Twigg 2000a, 2000b, 2004) and beauty treatment (Sharma & Black 2001). As I will argue, through bodywork the hairdresser's body becomes gendered, as does the body of those which they work upon. However, as with all of these forms of work which I have discussed in this chapter, 'bodywork' does not fully explain the activities which take place in the salon.

As the customary aspects of emotional labour and aesthetic labour can both be identified within the salon, so can the sexualised and care-giving features of 'bodywork'. In terms of eroticism, then the substance of hair, particularly that of women, has an extensive history as a sexual symbol and remains as such within many cultures and religions (see Bartman 2001, Delaney 1994, Firth 1973, Gitter 1984, Leach 1957, Pointon 1999, Stevenson 2001, Synnott, 1993, Trasko 1994, Wietz 2001). Though none of the participants I spoke to made a direct connection between the salon and the sexual symbolism of hair, hair's peripheral place on the borders of bodywork was implicitly referred to by several male participants, significantly at the site of the backwash:

*If I got given him, the young lad washing my hair, I used to think "Bloody hell I've not got up on a Saturday morning for this!" ((laughing from others)) I don't want a lad doing it. I never have to be honest. I never have.  
(Craig, Focus Group 10)*

Stuart: *Well (.4) I (.2) I felt a bit self conscious. I thought "What am I doing, a bloke, sitting here having my hair washed. It really isn't me here."*

Helen: *Was it a man or a woman (.4) washing your hair?*

Stuart: *It was a woman. She was very polite, lovely conversation to break the ice it needed it. You know (.3) how frightened I was. "Get off my hair!" ((laughing from others)) So there you go. I wouldn't say I would go back because that was it.*

(Focus Group 3)

Erotic associations of water and bathing coupled with the sexualised character of touch within Western societies are what made these experiences uncomfortable for Craig and Stuart (Twigg 1997a, 1997b, 2000a, Wilkie 1986). Craig implies that he looks forward to having his hair washed by a woman and his sexuality is in some way threatened when it is done by a man. Whereas, Stuart conveys that having his hair washed is too intimate, something he does not enjoy and does not want to happen again. Thus, working with hair can be interpreted as incorporating some of the sexualised features of 'bodywork'.

### **3.5.2 Hairdresser as carer**

The other feature of bodywork is that of caring. Many academics have linked women's role as mothers and carers to their ongoing representation as those who maintain the bodies of others and thus engage in the 'dirty' aspects of 'bodywork' (Twigg 2000a, 2000b, 2004). Working with hair has always been considered a 'dirty' job, and the barber deemed an 'untouchable' member of society (Brubaker 1979) (see *Appendix A* for more detail). Societal values of 'dirt', as the substance left over after any exchange value has been taken, are legacies of the Victorian past, when preventing 'dirt' and 'the dirty' from transgressing social boundaries was of great significance (McClintock 1995, Twigg 2000a, 2000b, 2004). Ungerson (1983) has suggested that women's association with the bodily waste/'dirt' of others reflects a wider perception of women as polluted. Given the gendered character of the hairdresser and the messy, potentially 'dirty', qualities of hair, it is easy to see how the role of the hairdresser is considered a polluted one. This is perhaps best illustrated using Mary Douglas's (1966 [2000] p.35) argument regarding 'dirt as matter out of place', which is particularly pertinent to hair which has been cut and left on the salon floor for staff to sweep up:



*I wouldn't want to pick up someone else's hair because you don't know whose it is. It could be someone with nits or dirty hair....*  
(Jennifer, Focus Group 2)

*Lena: It's like when they sweep up at the hairdressers and there's all that hair, it's just so unattractive.*

*Georg: Hmmn. And people associate that more with being dead, rather than when it's attached to your head.*

(Focus Group 1)

The 'half identity' (Douglas 1966 [2000] p. 161) of the cut hair, no longer attached to its owner's body but still retaining some essence of their being, is what makes severed hair 'dirty'. Thus, it makes the job of the hairdresser, in dealing with this matter, also 'dirty'. Whilst, many of the stylists at Kirby's attempted to resist such 'dirty' jobs by giving them to the juniors, at times everyone, even Patricia, took on such tasks. Such perceptions reinforce the portrayal of hairdressing as a feminised, low skilled, working class job, part of what Barbara Ehrenreich (2002 p.117), in her study into low wage work in America, refers to as 'the untouchables of a supposedly caste-free and democratic society'.

However, the 'caring' role of the hairdresser and their bodywork activities extends much further than cleaning up leftover hair.

*First thing to note was Patricia sent Sophie again to do Mrs Z's hair at home. Mrs Z hasn't been in the salon now for sometime and I believe that Patricia has possibly agreed with Mrs Z's daughter and main carer that her hair is done at home. Sophie came back about an hour later, seeming quite distressed. She had apparently turned up at Mrs Z's to find her in her underwear (she had opened the door like this), and she had then had to dress her, including getting her into clean underwear before she did her hair. I was quite shocked by this, as going to someone's home is beyond the call of the salon-based hairdresser as it is, but actually providing this sort of care, normally undertaken by a trained carer (who incidentally turned up just as Sophie was about to leave) seems way beyond the call of duty. However, as Sophie said, "What else could I do? I couldn't leave her there like that."*

(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008)

Both Kapp Howe (1979) and Black (2002) discuss the salon worker's role as akin to nursing, involving the care of others. Visiting clients at home is not part of the service the salon offers, especially considering travelling time and the inconvenience

of getting all equipment ready. Yet, several Kirby's hairdressers, particularly Patricia, would frequently visit customers who were too ill or too immobile to travel to the salon in their homes. However, whilst doing their hair is one thing, as the above extract regarding Mrs Z illustrates, these extras often extend much further into other areas of bodywork. In the case above, Sophie was Mrs Z's carer, as well as her hairdresser.

Many studies draw upon the difficulties the elderly and infirm face in terms of completing everyday tasks, such as washing and dressing (see Bartky 2001, Bytheway & Johnson 2001, Fairhurst 1998, Twigg 1997, 2000a, 2004). In particular, hair washing and styling, become increasingly difficult with age. As hair thins, the texture becomes coarser and movement and dexterity become limited, hence why older women visit the hair salon more regularly than younger women (Twigg 2000a, Symonds and Holland 2008). Regular visits to the salon, or home visits by a hairdresser, are wrapped up in notions of presenting oneself as groomed, respectable and in control of one's body and one's life (Kerner Furman 1997, Twigg 2000a, Symonds and Holland 2008). As Julia Twigg (2000a p.53) concludes:

*The head and the face are always important in the presentation of the self, but become all the more so once the body is frail and mobility lost.*

Wrapped up in this battle for dignity is an effort to remain feminine, whilst avoiding looking like 'mutton dressed as lamb' (Fairhurst 1998). Gerontologists, Anthea Symonds and Caroline Holland (2008 p.42), studying a hair salon frequented mainly by elderly women, suggest that older women are pressurised by an 'iterative process of doing age appropriate behaviour' to have the 'same hairdo'. In other words, to conform to an appearance deemed appropriate for women of their age. Through caring as a form of bodywork, the hairdresser (re)constructs gendered ideals of appropriate feminine bodies. Despite Mrs Z's dementia it was up to Sophie to ensure that Mrs Z maintains this outward, respectable, age appropriate feminine appearance. Changing her underwear and getting her dressed were just extensions of such gendered constructions.

Thus, the bodywork undertaken by the hairdresser reproduces feminine ideals. In addition, this bodywork links with the aesthetic labour of the hairdresser. In other words, just as the hairdresser works upon their own body to conform to gendered

constructs about their role, so they subsequently work upon the bodies of their clients to do the same. As Adia Harvey Wingfield (2009) discusses, in her study into black hair salons and the American racial enclave economy, hairdressers endorse specific gendered ideologies of feminine beauty to their clients because of the beauty practices they engage in and the appearances they project. Hence, the hairdresser's bodywork is not only perceived as incorporating 'essentialised' feminine skills, but it is also about using those 'skills' to perpetuate gendered constructs and produce specific feminine identities upon the bodies of others.

### 3.5.3 Mirrors

What is more, the space of the salon encourages continuous consideration of such ideal feminine identities:

*Lena: Yeah, like "You've just not made me look attractive whatsoever!"  
And they always sit you in the window; that really annoys me.*

*Vanessa: Oh I don't sit in the window. But when I go to the hairdressers  
and I haven't got my makeup on I think "Shit!" cos you never look right  
do you?*

*Donna: You look awful in hairdressers.*

*Georg: And all you're doing is sitting there looking at yourself in the  
mirror, thinking "Oh Christ Almighty!"*

*All: Yeah!*

*(Focus Group 1)*

*Yeah cos you can't help it can you! You're like, I try and keep my head  
down as much as I can but you can't help it can you. And especially if  
you're like looking at people who are around, you look through the  
mirrors don't you!*

*(Jennifer, Interview)*

The mirrored interior of the hair salon calls for constant assessment of our reflected appearance. Its intrinsic material being makes reflection and comparison unavoidable. This reflection is often not the one we entered the salon with, being altered through the procedures which take place there, such as hair washing or colouring. Sat in front of the mirror, faced with an unfamiliar and often disconcerting reflection of our bodies in a state of change, we have ample opportunity to compare the reflections of those around us to our own (Goss 1993). Everywhere we look we are presented with reflected images, ourselves in the mirror in front of us, then again in another behind us. Always a partial view, be it our

anterior, the back of someone's head, or the profile of a face. Through the salon's many reflective surfaces, 'we are provided with a scopophilic feast' of those around us, customers and hairdressers (Stevenson 2001 p.148). We are caught in the space of the 'mutual gaze', at once the object and subject (Jay 1994 p.11). Skeggs (2001 p.304), researching performances of femininity in the space of the female public toilet, argues that the mirror is central in creating 'uncomfortable liminal zones where gender is tested and proved.' Mirrored spaces confirm our gender value, where our 'position in social space' is and where we momentarily sit in the indeterminable constructions of femininity (Bourdieu 1987 p.57).

Nevertheless, such spaces not only test the constructions of our gender, they also highlight the instability of our individual material identities. The numerous reflections of our self, like being in an amusement park's hall of mirrors, can cause confusion and disorientation. Is that me? I look so different? The salon is a site where we attempt to create the 'coherent body', stable and together (Mol & Law 2004 p.56). Yet, through the processes of bodywork which take place there, reflected all around us, we recognise the body's intrinsic instability and its impact upon our outward identities. As Stevenson (2001 p.148) notes, the salon provides a site where 'we become more aware of the self-conscious construction of our identities'. The embodied experiences we have in the salon, as explored in the next chapter, momentarily mould and shape the 'lived body', affecting our perceived identity. Thus, the bodywork undertaken by the hairdresser may be shrouded in gendered expectations, but it is also very much about the impact upon the individual client. Whilst many studies into bodywork ignore this individuality, preferring to focus upon the labour of the staff rather than the outcomes of that labour, I contend that bodywork is very much about working upon identities and the materialities that construct the individual. It is this focus that makes bodywork a key part of the unique relationship between stylist and client.

#### **3.5.4 Bodywork and the unique relationship**

Whilst, the activities of bodywork do reinforce gendered ideals, this is not all they are about. Undeniably, there are elements which extend the established concept of bodywork and emphasise the unique relationship between stylist and client. The example of Kirby's stylists visiting clients at home, such as Sophie with Mrs Z, is also a clear illustration of the unique relationship which exists between them and

some of their clients. The following extract from my fieldwork diary corroborates this:

*This was a fascinating example of the sort of extras the hairdresser provides. Dot is a client of Patricia's who has been coming to her for 30 years (she probably mid to late 60's). She used to come regularly to the salon once a week, however, due to ill health she can no longer get there and so instead Patricia visits her at home.*

(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

As this extract and the earlier one, regarding Sophie and Mrs Z, convey, treatment of Kirby's customers is based on the needs of the individual. Unlike the scripted behaviours associated to service work - where every customer is treated the same and products and staff interactions are standardised, in the salon every customer is considered unique and their individual bodywork needs are catered for. Dot and Mrs Z are restricted by their bodily capacities from getting to the salon. Therefore, the salon comes to them. In contrast to other service encounters, there is flexibility in that of the salon and recognition of individual personal and bodily needs.

What is more, this appreciation of individual needs extends further than just bodily capacities, it is also primarily concerned with the uniqueness of the substance it is dealing with. As I explore further in the next chapter, every head of hair is different and truly unique to the individual. As one participant Samantha notes:

*Samantha: Because everytime anybody else has cut my hair, which was only three times, I hated it. But everytime I've had it cut somewhere else I don't like it. But Heather ((another hairdresser)) has explained that to me because they need to factor cutting your hair.*

*Helen: Oh getting used to your hair?*

*Samantha: Yep, and Diana ((her own hairdresser)) is used to my hair.*

(Focus Group 8)

Every salon customer must be treated differently because the product is always changing. The hairdresser does not deal with one client's hair, and then get the exact same hair on another client in their next appointment. As Samantha confirms, the hairdresser has to get used to your hair, emphasising the individuality of hair's materiality.

### **3.5.5 Trust**

This individuality of the materiality of hair is further reflected through participants focus upon the 'trust' they have in their hairdressers:

*Helen: How did you feel when Gerry's ((hairdressers)) sorted it out for you, when you had the big blocks of highlight?*

*Ruby: Oh! Relief! Relief! And that's why I stayed with the lad that did it. Cos I trusted him, and he'd (.2) he'd rescued it basically. Erm yeah it was just such a relief.*

(Ruby, Interview)

*It's about trust because there's nothing worse than a girl with a bad haircut.*

(Katherine, Focus Group 8)

'Trust' was a word used frequently by participants throughout the research. Being able to trust your hairdresser with your hair is of paramount importance to avoid hair 'disasters'. For Ruby, this 'trust' was instilled because her hairdresser had 'rescued' her hair. For Katie, 'trust' is the difference between a good hair cut and a bad one. As Ruby notes, the stylist that 'rescued' her hair instilled 'trust' in her because he understood her hair and transformed it through the bodywork he performed. This 'trust' is an essential part of the hairdresser/client relationship because of the nature of hairdressing as bodywork and hair's position as part of the 'coherent body/identity.' Unlike, for example, a service encounter in a restaurant where cold food may be sent back to the kitchen, once hair is cut/coloured/permed the affects are not so easily altered. What is more, the recipient cannot walk away from the problem, as they could in restaurant. Hair is obviously attached to their body, it cannot be sent back, but operates as a constant reminder of its inadequacy/incoherency. Thus, the trust clients have in their hairdressers, highlights the uniqueness of the relationship. To trust someone with your hair, a substance transformed in a heartbeat with the snip of the scissors, but not so easily replaced, requires individualised interaction. The hairdresser needs to understand the individual and their unique head of hair, something a script cannot do.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

I began this chapter about the space of the salon and the role of the hairdresser with an extract of a poem by Cheryl Clarke, describing her experience of visiting the hairdresser. Throughout this discussion, I have explored the aspects of trust,

friendship and care that Clarke so beautifully describes. Using the concepts of emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork, I have illustrated how all three converge through the activities of the hairdresser. Yet, as I have argued, none of these concepts, whether united or applied alone, can fully engage with the role of the hairdresser.

Hence, as I have claimed, emotional labour cannot simply be understood as involving scripted interactions. As my concept of the unique relationship conveys, whilst emotional labour, understood in the scripted, artificial and very much gendered sense, is undoubtedly evident within the salon there are other activities which are very much genuine and sincere. These activities can be understood as emotional labour due to the very virtue of their exchange value and the status of the service worker tending to the customer, yet they are far from the standardised gendered behaviour expected. The hairdressing encounter is not like buying a Big Mac (Leidner 1993), taking a flight (Hochschild 1983, Tyler & Abbott 1998, Tyler & Taylor 1998) or hailing a taxi (Davis 1959). Instead, what has become apparent from my research are unique and often enduring relationships between hairdressers and clients, based on friendship, loyalty and trust. To re-iterate Goffman, 'the self is a product of a scene', and the hairdresser's interactions with their clients involve individualised forms of service.

Similarly, as I have discussed with regards to aesthetic labour, the typical aesthetic appreciation of the hairdresser is not only incredibly feminised but also particularly sexualised. Yet, as I have illustrated, using aesthetic labour to their own advantage, the hairdresser can attempt to overthrow such constructions by presenting a professional and also clinical image, using uniforms, hairstyles and embodying company values. What is more, this aesthetic labour overflows into the hairdresser's activities, and salon procedures also become clinicalised. However, as I have explored, another atypical utilisation of aesthetic labour by hairdressers, attempts to resist essentialised stereotypes by overtly embracing them. By glamorising their lifestyles with the latest fashions, brand new cars and other expensive commodities, the hairdresser tries to elevate their own status; shrugging off the typical low-skilled, cheap and vulgar positioning of their profession and instead being 'someone'.

Finally, I introduced the concept of bodywork as the third concept of labour forming this triad operating within the hair salon. As with emotional labour and aesthetic labour, established appreciations of bodywork centre upon 'essentialised'

feminine constructions. In the case of the hairdresser, these include the eroticism of hair and of those working with hair, and their role as caregivers. Whilst I have conveyed how both of these constructions are at work in the salon, I have also contended that the bodywork conducted in the hair salon is not just about the labour of the hairdresser upon the 'faceless' bodies of others. Instead, it has to be recognised for its impact upon the individual client and the instability of their identity. This focus upon the individual enables bodywork to be a key part of the unique relationship. Hair, as I explore further in the following chapter, is a substance truly distinctive to its owner, thus the hairdresser's dealings with it have to take this originality into account. Therefore, interaction can never be completely prescribed. Customers put their trust in their hairdresser's abilities that they understand this uniqueness and how to deal with it.

Thus, through this extension of emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork, I have explored the uniqueness of the hairdressers' role and the relationships they form with their clients. The triad formed by the expansion of these three concepts of work, reflect the triad of friendship, trust and care which can exist between the hairdresser and their clients. Unlike buying a Big Mac (Leidner 1993), taking a flight (Hochschild 1983, Tyler & Abbott 1998, Tyler & Taylor 1998) or hailing a taxi (Davis 1959), the hairdressing encounter is not artificial, forced and fleeting. It can be genuine, sincere and enduring. As Kim Smith (2008 p.64) concludes, writing about the emergence of the ladies' hair salon in the twentieth century, the hair salon is 'more than a place simply to have a haircut,' just as the hairdresser is not simply a person who cuts hair.





*She did not own the worsted on which she worked; it was never hers, neither in bundle form nor after she had exercised her energies on the bundles, mingled her labour with its greasy mass, and turned it into a commodity –yarn- for sale. It was lent her, loaned her, given to her on trust, for payment that came only after the labour was complete.*

Extract from: *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age* by Carolyn Steedman (2007 p.42)



## **Crafting: The Production of Hair**

### **4. Introduction**

In the previous chapter I explored the labour of the hairdresser, weaving together emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork to illustrate the complexities of the hairdresser's work and the unique relationships they form with their clients. As I have illuminated, the bond between hairdresser and customer can be enduring, built around friendship, trust and care. In this next chapter, I extend this consideration of the hairdresser's labour and the enduring qualities of the relationship with their clients, to consider the hairdresser's role in the craft production of hair. Arguing that the hairdresser is a modern day artisan, I illustrate how the craft labour of the hairdresser facilitates enduring client relationships, not just through the trust and care of such attachments, but through their abilities to deal with the uniqueness and vitalism of hair. Using, what I term, moments of hair production, I explore how the hairdresser, the client and hair converge and diverge through the activities of the salon. The quote above from Carolyn Steedman (2007), describes how 18<sup>th</sup> century maid servant and worsted spinner, Phoebe Beeston, tended to the fibres she was 'loaned' to turn them into yarn. Working upon the worsted with her hands and spinner's tools, Beeston mingled her body and skill into the fibres to create something different. Her distinctive position as temporary guardian of the worsted, manipulating and changing it without ever having any true ownership over it, is key to this chapter and the practices of hair production which take place in the salon. Though there are marked differences between Beeston and the hairdresser - the influence of the customer and the uniqueness of the hair itself being two crucial ones - by replacing the fibres of yarn with strands of hair, and the spinner's spindle with the hairdresser's scissors, I explore how the hairdresser mingles his/herself into the hair they work upon. They invest their body and energy - their craft, only to watch it walk out of the salon, just as Beeston's yarn was taken away to be sold.

I begin this chapter by picking up on the notion discussed in the previous chapter that hairdressing involves an innate flair. Drawing upon the work of Richard Sennett (2008) and his concepts of craft production, I argue that such 'talent' is not simply due to innate ability but stems from hairdressing as a craft practice, where repetition and routine produce excellence. This leads me to introduce the concept of the hairdresser as contemporary artisan. Identifying the links between the hairdresser

and the historical figure of the medieval artisan, I explore the kinetic techniques the hairdresser develops through the practicing of their craft and the proximal connections they develop to their tools. In the second section of the chapter, I present the notion of the palimpsest of hair, a layered, biographical material operating at the 'dead margins of the body' (Kwint 1999 p.9). Drawing upon participant quotes, I convey the vivacity of hair. Arguing that hair is always in the process of 'becoming' (Shilling 1993 p.24), I illustrate how the hairdresser's craft is called upon in attempt to temporarily still this vitalism and bring it under control. It is this agency of hair that leads me on to my final section - the moments of production which take place within the hair salon. Bringing together the customer, the hairdresser and the hair, I transport the reader into the salon space, enabling them to appreciate the corporeal moments of hair production and the quest for control. As with any salon, there are various moments of production occurring simultaneously at any time, to any number of customers. Therefore, I will offer a snapshot of some of these activities rather than focusing upon an individual trajectory (*Videos 5, 6 & 7 and Figure 4.1* show some of the other salon activities not discussed in this chapter). I begin with the initial consultation, before moving through the practices of washing, colouring, cutting, styling and, lastly, the final revealing moment.

#### **4.1 Hairdressing as Craft Production**

##### **4.1.1 'Natural' ability**

In Chapter Three, I drew upon several participant quotes to illustrate how the hairdresser is seen to require a mix of skill and personality to cut hair. To recap, one participant, Heather, a former hairdresser, suggested that 'anyone can be taught to cut hair'. Whilst such a comment suggests that anyone could pick up a pair of scissors and start cutting hair to an adequate standard, as I shall argue, what Heather's comment illuminates is that hairdressing is a craft. That is, when one understands a craft to be a skill which can be done by anyone but only evolves after an activity is practiced thousands of times (Sennett 2008).

For many of the participants the 'magical' abilities hairdressers have stem from some sort of 'natural' affinity with hair:

*You've either got it or you haven't....I think some people are more natural at hairdressing than others.*  
(Alana, Salon Focus Group)

*Erm with first year junior you've got ones who will just pick it up. Just pick it up straight away. There are ones that no matter what you try and what you do – nothing.*  
(Heather, former hairdresser, Focus Group 8)

Both of these quotes, including a further and somewhat contradictory one from Heather, suggest that good hairdressing is not something which can be learnt, but comes 'naturally'. However, I perceive this in a very different way. Whilst there are different levels of aptitude and learning speeds between people, hairdressing is a practice and, like any other practice, the more it is repeated the better one becomes at it. Work in Kirby's is divided up between stylists based on skill and speed. When a junior shows a "flair" for a particular skill then this is practiced, repeated and honed to become a key talent. But where do these "flair's" come from in juniors who have apparently had no previous experience of dealing with hair? On the contrary, I contend that many juniors have ample prior experience of dealing with hair because it is something they have done for many years before vocational training. Ruby and Eileen illustrate this, talking about a girl on Ruby's hairdressing course that is better than everyone else:

*Ruby: And I know it's only a small thing, but when we first started she could do ghd™ curls like that, it's just natural to her. Give her a head and she can transform it in half an hour.*

*Eileen: She'll have spent hours and hours and hours [practicing in front of the mirror]*

*Ruby: [Doing her own. Yeah, yeah cos she is, like you catch her and there she is gazing at herself.*

(Focus Group 5)

Similarly, several of the juniors at Kirby's told me how they had always been interested in hair, plaiting that of their friends at school, or as they got older helping to colour their mothers'. Thus, such a "flair" for hair has already been cemented through practice. As Richard Sennett (2008 p.20), discussing the role of the craftsman, notes, 'ten thousand hours of experience are required to produce a master carpenter or musician' and I argue the same can be said of the hairdresser. Through the 'rhythm of routine' (Sennett 2008 p.268) the skill becomes 'natural', magical

even, to the admiring customer. This is not to degrade the role of the hairdresser in any way. In fact it is quite the opposite. Sennett (2008) refers to the highly acclaimed roles of doctor and musician as also craft professions. Referring to the hairdresser as a craftsperson elevates the seriousness of their profession, highlighting the required perseverance and dedication to the practices of hair production.

#### **4.1.2 The hairdresser artisan**

It is these characteristics of craft production that lead me to contend that the hairdresser is a modern day artisan. The word artisan is derived from the French *artier*, which means 'instruct in the arts,' yet its definition is almost identical to that of 'craft' (Oxford English Dictionary 2005). An 'artisan' is defined as 'a skilled worker who makes things by hand' and 'craft' is explained as 'an activity involving skill in making things by hand' (Oxford English Dictionary 2005). It is this ambiguity between art and craft, which has served as a source of great debate amongst academics (see Attfield 2000, Becker 1978, Fariello 2005, Kritzer 2007, Sennett 2008). It also seems to have been an issue for the authors of early hairdressing manuals, judging by titles such as *The Art and Craft of Hairdressing* (Foan & Wolters 1961), *The Art and Craft of Hairdressing including Beauty Therapy* (Radford 1974), and *The Craft of Ladies' Hairdressing* (Flitman 1959). However, in keeping with Sennett (2008 p.290) and for the purposes of this thesis, I contend that hairdressing cannot be labelled as simply one or the other, but that 'all techniques contain expressive implications.'

Historically, the artisan trades consisted of merchant companies which were formed during the reign of Edward III (Camp 1924). These included grocers, drapers, goldsmiths, haberdashers and fishmongers (Camp 1924) and were exclusively recognised as masculine enterprises (Crossick 1997). As mentioned Chapter Two, it was not until the sixteenth century that barbering, another masculine trade, was recognised as a guild when the United Company of Barbers and Surgeons was formed in 1540. From then on, until the 1920s, the dressing of women's hair took place in the privacy of their homes. However, according to Geoffrey Crossick (1997), an expert in artisanal history, though women had no formal role in artisanal industry and were excluded from the craft guilds, their contribution was immense. What is more, many of these tradeswomen were engaged in hair-related industries. Elizabeth Musgrave (1997), also an artisanal historian, writes about women who

were employed as barber-wigmakers in eighteenth century Nantes, whereas Crossick (1997 p.14) makes references to a number of 'female trades such as linenmakers, seamstresses and hairdressers with their own formal statues and apprenticeships' appearing in eighteenth century Paris. One can only presume that these female hairdressers were *frisiseurs* who visited women in their homes to dress their hair. This demonstrates that hairdressing, alongside its masculinised counterpart, barbering, has historically been associated with artisanal practices.

However, contemporary hairdressing practices also have strong links to historical artisan concepts. Crossick (1997 p.5), for example, discusses how 'artisanship was at the heart of one's social being and personality' and similarly, as I have already argued, being a hairdresser is not just a job but a lifestyle appropriation. At Kirby's, the stylists often spend their free time together outside of the salon going shopping or for a drink. They also regularly do people's hair at home. Thus, there is little delineation between being a hairdresser at work and being a hairdresser at home. It is an integral, constant part of their identity, as they are always 'doing' hair or talking about doing it. Trust was a key element of the artisan trades and is likewise reflected in the confidence people place in their hairdressers. The artisan took responsibility for their craft, forming relations with customers who commissioned their work or bought goods from them, just as the hairdresser fosters the unique client-stylist relationship (Goodsell 1992), as discussed in the previous chapter. The artisanal apprentice scheme is also mirrored by the salon's hierarchy of stylists and juniors. The part college, part job-based training that all the salon juniors had to complete at Kirby's is even termed a 'Modern Apprenticeship', stressing the links between junior hairdresser and apprentice artisan. As Patricia confirmed, she would never employ anyone who had been to college full-time because they would lack those 'hands-on' skills, implying that a junior learns from being in the salon, as an apprentice learns from their artisan master. It is these 'hands on' skills, only learnt through the repetition of practice, which I now turn to.

#### **4.1.3 Kinetic Technique**

As discussed, a craft becomes 'naturalised' through practice. However, there is a specific corporeality to this naturalising of practice. Over time, such practices no longer require concentration to ensure that the neurological functions, enabling motor neurone information to be passed to and between the central nervous system,



continue to produce just the right physical output. Instead, they appear to become automatic. As Sennett (2008 p.20) concludes, 'technique is no longer a mechanical activity; people can feel fully and think deeply what they are doing'. There is a physiological change affecting one's abilities whereby practice eventually becomes part of one's corporeality. Similarly, Loïc Wacquant (1995), in his research into how boxers perceive their trade, describes how they use:

*a kinetic technique consisting of trained physical, cognitive, emotional and cognitive dispositions that cannot be handed down or learned via a medium of theory but must be practically implanted.... (Wacquant 1995 p.504)*

I argue that such 'practical implanting' and 'body centred performance' (Wacquant 1995 p.509) also occurs through the hairdresser's production of hair. Becker (1978 p. 865), writing about craft production, refers to these abilities as 'virtuoso skills', working with speed and agility to do things that others would find difficult. Such as the girl on Ruby's hairdressing course who could curl hair like a professional. However, in keeping with the idea of hairdressing as a craft, a great deal of this body centred performance relies on a distinct connection to one's tools.

A wonderful example of this is the hairdresser's affiliation to their scissors, as discussed by the salon focus group:

Helen: *The thing that amazed me, you know when you told me about how everyone holds their scissors differently, and how you all know if someone else has had them, and I can't quite get my head round that.*

Parr: *You use different parts of the blade*

Patricia: *You know my new ones?*

Parr: *Hmmm*

Patricia: *Someone has had them and they're fucked them now. They're blunt.*

Alana: *Someone's being cutting card or something with them ((giggling from others))*

Helen: *How do you know though?*

Alana: *Cos you can feel.*

Patricia: *You just do.*

Parr: *Yeah the hair bends instead of cutting.*  
(Salon Focus Group)

Watching a hairdresser at work with their scissors is a site to marvel. The synthesis between hairdresser and tool is almost undivided, like a prosthetic extension of the

body. *Video 1*, showing the cutting process (also discussed in the moments of production), helps to illustrate this, as do *Figures 4.2 to 4.4*. In *Figure 4.2* the scissors are unattended, awaiting their owner. In *Figure 4.3* the section of hair is shown being combed. *Figure 4.4* shows the repetitive sequence. Starting from one end of the section and working across to the other, the hairdresser combs the hair through the section, moving the scissors into the crook of their right hand as they do so. Stopping where he wants to cut, he places two fingers where the comb was, whilst simultaneously moving the comb out of the way to sit between the left thumb and forefinger. Swiftly moving the scissors into prime position, holding with the right thumb and first two fingers, he begins to cut from left to right. This sequence is repeated over and over until the section of hair has all been trimmed. It then begins again as another section of hair is let down. The smooth rapidity of this sequence, repeated sometimes hundreds of times on one person's head within a matter of minutes is incredible. It clearly emphasises how the hairdresser and their tool(s) become one through the rhythm of craft practice (Sennett 2008).

The only occasion when the divide between the object and the self becomes apparent is when the hairdresser catches their other hand holding the hair, (as Patricia who is incredibly quick often does, hence she always has cuts on her left fingers), or when, as described above, the hairdresser feels that their scissors have been used by another. There is no way of telling by looking at the scissors if they have been used by someone else. It is only through the intricacies of practice, utilising embodied and sensory proximal knowledge (Hetherington 2002) that 'you can feel' the difference (Alana, Salon Focus Group). Just by using the scissors the hairdresser knows instantly if they have been tampered with. A hairdresser's scissors, like a fishmonger's gutting knife, or the file of a goldsmith can be understood as creating a cathexis; forming an unmistakable, emotional bond with the object that links them to the world (Attfield 2000). Without this tool, the craftsperson cannot perform his/her job, it is a fundamental part of what makes them a hairdresser, a fishmonger, or a goldsmith. It is unique to them, no one else's scissors, knife or file will do. This personalised use of tools ensures that the craftsperson's work is always distinctive to them. As former hairdresser, Heather (Focus Group 8) confirms, 'It's like somebody's handwriting, everybody is different'. The hairdresser leaves a pattern, a history of their activities upon the heads of their customers. Coupled with the distinctiveness of every head of hair,

being truly unique to its owner, such patterns form part of what I term the palimpsest of hair.



*Figure 4.1 – Photographs of perming*



*Figure 4.1 (cont.) – Photographs of perming*



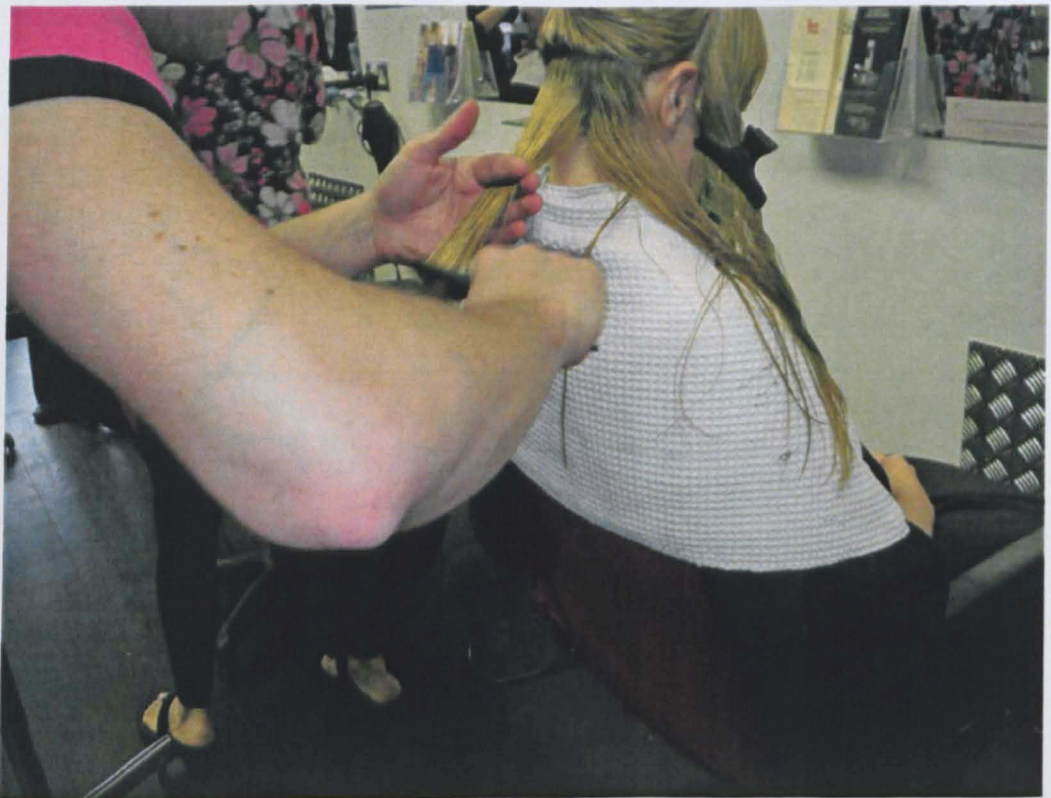
*Figure 4.1 (cont.) – Photographs of perming*



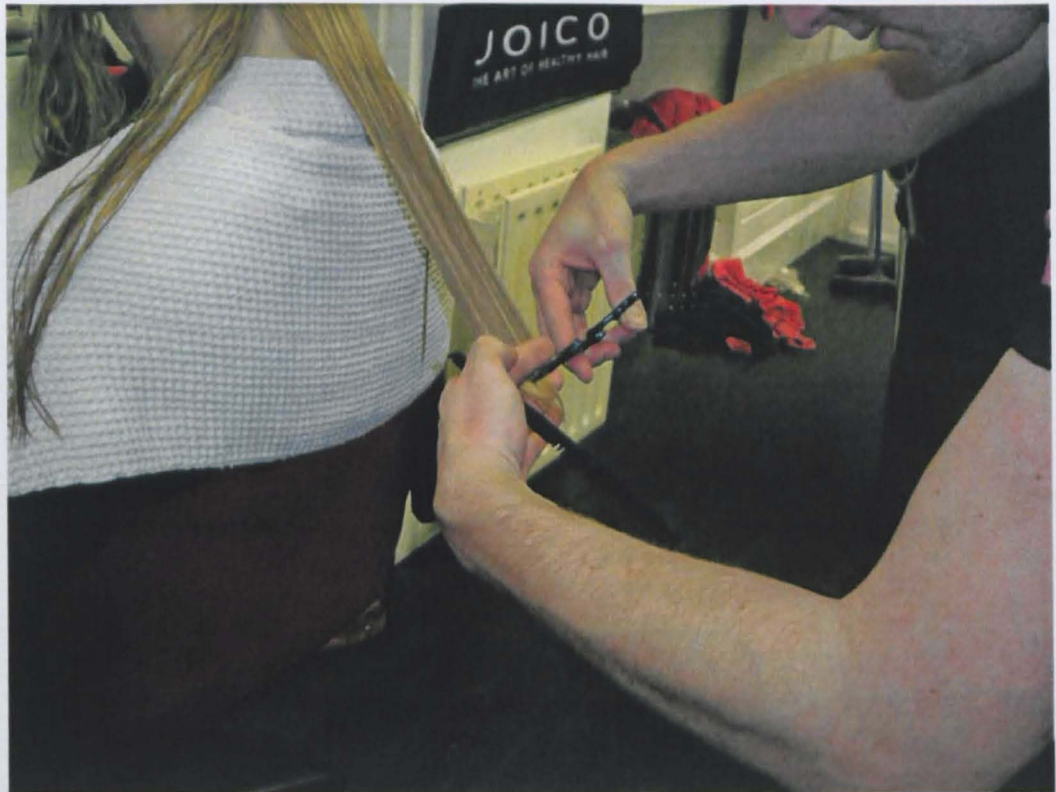
*Figure 4.2 - Photograph of hairdresser's scissors*



**Figure 4.3 - Photographs of hair being combed ready to be cut**



***Figure 4.4 - Photographs of sectioning, combing and cutting hair***



**Figure 4.4 (cont.) - Photographs of sectioning, combing and cutting hair**





*Figure 4.4 (cont.) - Photographs of sectioning, combing and cutting hair*

## 4.2 The Palimpsest of Hair: Completely Unique

### 4.2.1 A life of its own

Biologically, hair is dead matter. The only living part being the hair bulb, a structure of actively growing cells inside the hair follicle (see *Figure 4.5*) which eventually produce the cylinder type structure of a hair. Despite its inert biological status, the substance of hair, particularly head hair, is regularly described as having living, animate material qualities:

*In any humidity it just goes like Monica, off Friends, not as frizzy as Monica's, but it goes big.*  
(Ruby, Focus Group 5)

*I'll wake up in the morning and half will be stuck up here and other half will be flat to my head.*  
(Vanessa, Focus Group 7)

'Going frizzy', 'sticking out', 'getting greasy', 'being fly away', all describe things that the substance of hair does, aspects of hair's materiality. Hair is described as acting, having a life of its own. One participant, Carolyn even mentions the 'life' her hair has:

*And I hate it straight because I can't straighten it, it doesn't really suit me, it's not how it's meant to be. It's like pulled and messed around with to an inch of its life.*  
(Carolyn, Focus Group 4)

This language of vivacity is also used throughout the advertising of hair products, promising to make hair stronger or healthier, as if it is a living, breathing being (Smith 2008).

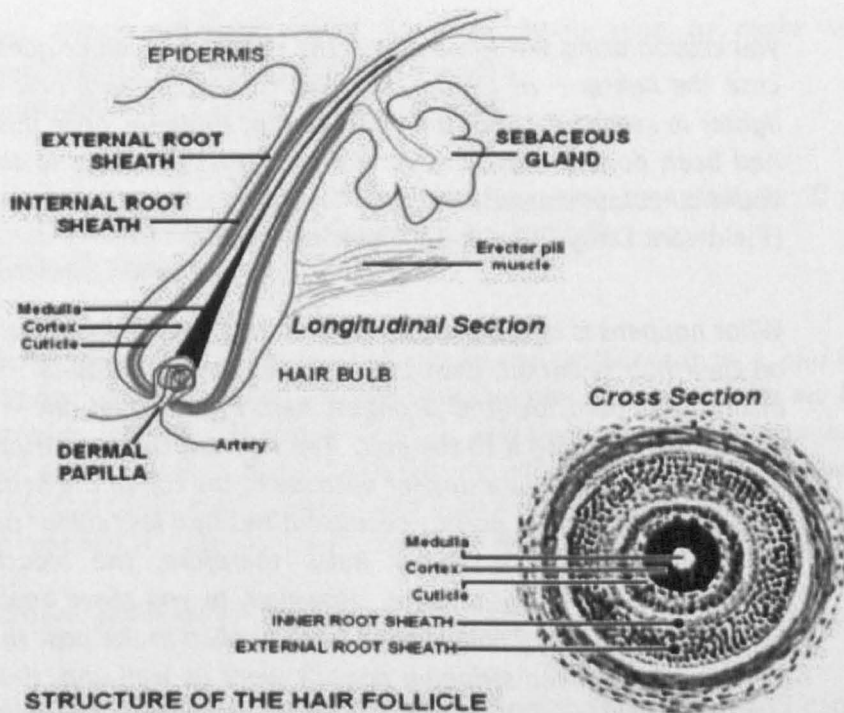
However, I do not wish to assume that just because hair is found at the 'dead margins' (Kwint 1999 p. 9) of the body, and that humans provide hair with a language of life for its behaviour, that it is devoid of agency. On the contrary, drawing upon the work of Bruno Latour (2000), I contend that hair is quite capable of 'acting back' and objecting to things we try to make it do, and it is this which positions hair as a lively substance:

*I think the more I try and make it do something, the less it does. Actually I think it's better if I don't touch it and then it looks better.*  
(Lisa, Focus Group 2)

*Mine won't grow past my shoulders. When I was younger I had very curly hair. My mother wouldn't let me have long hair, too much hard work and then as I got older I thought "I'm going to try and grow it now." and it just wouldn't grow.*  
(Charlotte, Focus Group 4)

*Sometimes when I've had it cut though it just sort of does its own thing.*  
*((Sounds of agreement from others))*  
(Lena, Focus Group 1)

As the above participant quotes illustrate, hair is an unstable and often uncontrollable substance, a 'quasi-object,' as Latour (2000 p.119) refers to 'things'. 'Much too disputed' and 'uncertain....to play the role of a stable, obdurate and boring' entity. Paradoxically though, hair is not only a 'quasi-object' but is also part of the 'quasi-subject,' growing from the subject, surviving from them, and being affected by them, yet having agency of its own. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, Annemarie Mol and John Law (2004) conclude that the body is not whole and that work must be done to try to make the body coherent. It is through these practices of attempted coherence, the efforts involved in the production of hair, that hair's agency becomes visible. Similarly, as Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift (2007 p.2) argue, in their study on repair and maintenance, 'things only come into visible focus as things when they become inoperable.' Object (hair) and subject (wearer) blur together, only becoming apparent when one disturbs the other – for example the wearer cuts the hair or the hair will not grow for the wearer. I argue that it is this complex blurring of hair and wearer, where quasi-object disturbs quasi-subject or vice versa, that encourages humans to appreciate the lively materiality of hair. Unlike a table or a chair, hair's agency is recognisable and continually experienced because it is attached to our heads. It is part of us, yet also able to act alone. Hence, hair is described through a language of vivacity because it is vivacious.



**Figure 4.5 - Diagram of a hair follicle**

#### 4.2.2 The palimpsest

Adding strength to my claims that hair has a life of its own, is the argument that ‘every head is different’ (Ruby, Focus Group 5). To explore hair’s uniqueness I will employ the term ‘palimpsest’. The concept of the palimpsest has been used within many disciplines, including literature, archaeology, psychology and landscape studies (Bailey 2007). The palimpsest’s historical heritage lies in its definition as ‘a parchment or other surface on which writing has been applied over earlier writing which has been erased’ (Oxford English Dictionary 2005). However, it has been commonly used in contemporary thought to describe ‘something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form’ (Oxford English Dictionary 2005). Allying with the latter, I contend that every person’s hair is a unique palimpsest, a material record of their lives and the life of their hair. This is illustrated particularly well through hair colouring, and how layers of colour build up overtime effecting subsequent ones:

*One of the first topics of conversation today was Linney’s hair. It had been done over the weekend by Nina and Tina between them and according to Linney was now breaking off...I asked Parr and Beth why it would break and they told me that this happened when colours were overlapped. Parr explained that it was a bit like crayoning – the more*

*you crayon using the same colour the darker the colour goes (or in this case the lighter – as Linney has tried to get her dark hair lighter and lighter in sections). Beth then added that, similarly, once this crayoning had been done it was hard to rub out – just as trying to then change your hair colour caused problems.*

*(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007)*

*What happens is that if a person wants to go, say blonde, but the colour on their hair is darker, then they have to have it stripped. This means mixing 40's peroxide (the strongest before the illegal one – 60's) with bleach and applying it to the hair. The hair will then be stripped and go lighter. Bands of colour appear because at the top of the head, near the root, the hair is more porous because it has had less colour applied to it in the past (as it is newer hair), therefore, the bleach/peroxide combination works easily there. However, as you move down the hair, where more layers of colour have been applied in the past (because it's older hair), then the stripping doesn't work as well and, thus, sends it either red or ginger; the nearer the ends of the hair (the oldest hair), the least the effect.*

*(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007)*

As the two fieldwork extracts convey, artificial colouring of the hair leaves a permanent record upon it, affecting how further colours will behave on the hair. Like a dendrochronologist's tree rings, bands of colour can follow through the hair indicating previous colouring processes. These various phases of colouring mix together, each time slightly (or in some instances drastically!) reworking the palimpsest.

Yet, additions and alterations to the palimpsest not only occur through modifications to the surface of hair. Complicating matters previously discussed surrounding the morality of hair and its location at the margins of the body, the palimpsest of hair can also be affected by the wearer's (subject's) bodily actions:

*Only a few things to note today: firstly, an interesting discussion took place about hair and medication today and how medication shows up in/affects hair. Parr described that in some instances it can be determined from your hair what medication you have taken. Someone else chipped into this, that this was how arsenic poisoning was determined, through the state of someone's hair. I asked if they could determine when the medication was taken by looking at which part of the hair was affected –i.e. nearer to the root more recent, nearer to the tip longer ago, and Parr thought they could. He also said he wondered*

*what affect colouring would have on being able to make such investigations, as this changed the pigment.*  
(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008)

*But when I was pregnant with Tom (son) my hair went straight. It was very curly until I had Tom and then it went straight.*  
(Charlotte, Focus Group 4)

*When I gave birth to Josh my hair was lovely, really really nice, and then I fed him, and the minute I stopped feeding him at three months my hair started to fall out, (.3) erm gradually... and then it started to grow back, after a few months. But I could run my hand through my head, and it would feel like a man's beard. And then my sister in law she said, when she touched it "Oh my God! You can feel it. Really feel it growing back."*  
(Carolyn, Interview)

Hormonal changes, pregnancy and chemicals consumed by the wearer can all affect the palimpsest and alter its state. This highlights the blurring of the boundaries between hair and wearer, and the difficulties faced in producing hair. Hair can be affected by the wearer, but is never fully under their control. Your hair can effectively give you away, disclosing personal details about your life you may wish to keep hidden (Gitter 1984). This also calls into question the idea that hair is biologically dead. If it can be considered part of the 'living' body and can be affected by internal changes within in it, then maybe the binary categories of 'alive' or 'dead' are not so easily applicable to it, thus, emphasising its quasi-status. Hair has agency, whether this agency is determined as magical powers which reside within it (Leach 1957, Peers 2003), through everyday battles to control it, or via its uniqueness as a palimpsest. As Shilling (1993 p.24) notes, the 'body is always in a process of becoming,' as is hair. It is always open to change, whether 'dead' or 'alive', 'object' or 'subject', 'attached' or 'separated'. And it is this 'becomingness' of hair, coupled with the uniqueness of the hairdresser's craft, not to mention the will of the wearer, which makes the production of hair a complex and fascinating process indeed.

#### **4.3 The Moments of Production**

Having introduced the unique craft of hairdressing and also the uniqueness of the palimpsest of hair, I now explore how these two come together, along with the

desires of the wearer, through various moments of hair production. As these moments illustrate, the production of hair which takes place between stylist, client and hair is often a moment of tension, where ambiguities reside over whose responsibility the hair is. I begin with the moment of consultation, the point when hair is initially assessed and categorised by the hairdresser and any hidden practices are revealed.

#### **4.3.1 Consultation**

For regular customers, the moment of consultation often consists of them simply being asked “Same as usual?” by the hairdresser. This is because of the established relationship the hairdresser has not only with the client, but also with the hair. As many participants illustrated, they stay with the same hairdresser not just because of the friendship element of the unique relationship, but because their hairdresser ‘knows’ their hair. Thus, each time they visit, unless they want something different, a consultation is not required. However, for the new customer this is not the case.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the hairdresser uses the consultation process as an opportunity to categorise the customer’s hair (see consultation sheet *Figure 3.1*) be it thick, fine, greasy, wavy, curly and so on. This ten to thirty minute discussion, helps the hairdresser build-up a picture about the customer’s hair and its potential, whilst situating the hairdresser in a position of power and knowledge (Nettleton 1989). Nevertheless, it also acts as an opportunity for the hairdresser to discuss with the customer their wishes and, more importantly, judging by Heather’s comment below, assess the customer’s capabilities at doing their own hair once away from the salon:

*Yeah walking out of the salon looking a million dollars, but that client will not come back to you if they can’t do their hair themselves at home. So as a (.2) as a hairdresser you’ve got to find out the customer’s ability first (.2) it’s not about what they want, it’s about what they can do.*  
(Heather, Focus Group 8)

The consultation process is the start of the battle over whose responsibility the hair is when it is in the salon, and to some degree also when it is outside the salon. As former hairdresser, Heather, states ‘it’s not about what they want’, highlighting the position of authority the hairdresser is deemed to have over the hair and what the

customer does with it. The consultation practices of touching, feeling and observing the customer's hair all bolster this position of the hairdresser as the master of the hair, the one in charge of its production. From here on in, the hair is given up to the employees of the salon. Thus, the consultation process is almost like a rite of passage into the salon environment. Control of the hair, a part of the body, is handed over to the hairdresser, in keeping with hairdresser's pseudo-medical role, as illustrated in Chapter Three. The customer is expected to follow where the hair is led and watch passively as it is dealt with and brought under control. However, as I shall go on to reveal, such detachment is only ever partial and both hair and customer frequently 'act-back'.

#### **4.3.2 Colouring**

If a customer is having their hair coloured in some way (be it highlighted sections or all over colour) then this follows immediately after the consultation process. Seated and robed in front of a salon mirror, the customer is temporarily left alone whilst the stylist disappears to mix their colour(s). Being one of only a handful of salon activities which is performed to dry hair (the others being a dry cut and the various hair dressings which take place such as curling or 'putting up'), this temporary pause in the customer's salon journey enables them to reflect upon the visual and material condition of their hair. Like most of the salon's activities, the aim of colouring the hair is to control hair's vitalism, and this period of reflection, before activities commence, allows the customer to assess the extent of hair's current unruliness. Roots of the hair's genuine colour showing through at the parting, or flecks of grey appearing as the dye used on hair fades over time, are all at the forefront of this moment; filled with anticipation for the hairdresser's next act.

In the back, the hairdresser mixes the chemical colouring concoction. Choosing from a plethora of colours, they squeeze out the dye into a plastic dish and add a measure of peroxide. The peroxide acts as the chemical catalyst to the dye, and comes in various strengths which determine how quick the colour will take. If a customer is having their hair lightened, in other words, colour taken out, then sometimes bleach powder is mixed with the peroxide. However, unlike a dye, which once the colour has taken to the hair the reaction stops, bleach and peroxide continue to lift the hair. Therefore, it has to be carefully timed or the person could end up with white hair! With the colour, or colours mixed (if the person is having more



than one, or maybe highlights and lowlights), the hairdresser returns to the customer's side and begins applying the mixture to the hair. There are many ways that colour can be applied to the hair. If the customer is having highlights it can be done by pulling fine sections of hair through holes in a rubber cap, by wrapping fine sections in tin foil (see *Video 2*), or by using a spatula which coats each section individually. However, for the purposes of this section I will focus upon a colour application to cover roots. This is done by 'painting on' the mixture directly upon the head.

Parting the hair in what is referred to as a 'hot cross bun' pattern the hairdresser begins with the bottom sections and applies the mixture along the axis of the cross (see *Figure 4.6*). Initially cold and slimy upon the head because of the chemicals involved, the mixture can soon start to burn the customer's scalp, occasionally causing an allergic reaction. To combat this, the hairdresser will sometimes add a barrier product to the dye mixture to soothe the skin. Once all of the root area is covered, a process which should take no more than 10-15 minutes, the customer is then left on their own while the colour develops. Offered a magazine, and maybe a drink, the customer then has approximately 30-45 minutes contemplating their new reflection and looking at those around them:

*..... it's just a hold load of faffing around, sticking highlights in your hair, doing an all over colour and you sit there looking like some kind of idiot with all this stuff in your hair.*

(Amber, Focus Group 2)

*And all you're doing is sitting there looking at yourself in the mirror, thinking "Oh Christ Almighty!"*

(Georg, Focus Group 1)

As the quotes from Amber and Georg highlight, this period of waiting while the colour takes can be one of the initial moments where we come to face to face with 'the self-conscious construction of our identity' (Stevenson 2001 p.148). As I discussed in Chapter Three, the space of the salon and its mirrored interior call into question the stability of our identities. Being presented with this image of ourselves in this state of flux, appearing unfamiliar and strange, is disconcerting.



**Figure 4.6 – Photograph of colouring**

What is more, whilst appearing straightforward, colour application is the most haphazard of all salon activities. As I considered in section 4.2.2, the way a colour takes to the hair depends very much upon the palimpsest. Other colours which have been used before, more porous ‘virgin’ hair at the root, medication and even self-tanning products which have touched the hair, can all have an affect on how a colour takes to the hair. As the following quote from Carolyn illustrates, it is not an exact science:

*I've had it every bloody colour under the sun. I go to the salon, it's darker this week, it wasn't supposed to be, it was supposed to be the same colour. It's like a magical bloody mystery tour when I go to the salon. (Carolyn, Interview)*

Thus, there appears to be an element of alchemy to the craft of colouring hair. Whilst a customer may put their trust in their hairdresser, they can never have complete faith that the colour will turn out as desired. This is not always the hairdresser's fault, but is often due to the vitalism of the palimpsest of hair asserting its agency. Hence, whilst sitting waiting for the colour to take, considering the

mirrored reflections of their body in a state of flux, the customer will probably also experience apprehension about how their hair will look – will it be right or drastically wrong?

### **4.3.3 Washing**

Depending upon the customer's desired procedures, hair washing will either follow directly after the consultation, or directly after colouring. In this instance, I consider hair washing following the consultation. Moved from the consultation area, the customer is robed in a gown and towel, and led towards the backwash area. Once seated, the head is tilted backwards over the sink, with eyes to the ceiling and neck exposed. The water is switched on and the practices of washing begin. The customer's head is in the hands of the washer, and they are incapacitated by their supine corporeal position. Like the consultation, this control of the customer's body operates as another manifestation of the shift of responsibility from customer to salon. One discourse surrounding the washing of hair and bathing is its symbolism as an act of purification, cleansing the wearer of their previous self, ready for the rebirth of another (Twigg 1997a, 1997b, 2000a). In the salon, a similar symbolic act occurs. Washing of the hair cleanses it, removing physical traces of the customer's life outside of the salon – dirt, grease, hair products. This physical removal of the outside world and whatever the owner has previously done to their hair also acts as a symbolic ritual of their admittance into the salon. Hair washing provides a blank canvas from which the hairdresser can begin, whilst ensuring that nothing 'nasty' is left in the hair. This is the first stage in the quest to control hair's vitalism.

In Chapter Three, I discussed how 'dirty' jobs, such as hair washing, are left to the junior members of staff, and it is through these jobs that script work is performed. As the following quotes illustrate, the performances of these mundane jobs act as a physical representation of the salon hierarchy:

*I was washing a ladies hair, called Barbara I think .... and I noticed when I first wet the hair, that the water was running out dirty. I believe this lady smoked (as I could smell it on her) and I wondered if it was nicotine making the water dirty, and slightly brown in colour. Other than that maybe she had put a colour on her hair, but more likely I believe this was dirt. This disgusted me a bit.*

(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2007)

*Last thing to note is one of the regulars coming in for his colour. For the purposes of these notes we'll call him Marty. He had come in the week before and I had to wash his hair. He smelled of body odour quite badly which made washing his hair rather unpleasant. It really is not very nice having to touch the hair of someone who smells, as you automatically presume that their hair is dirty.*

(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008)

These material representations of dirt, made obvious through the practices of hair washing, reinforce the position of the junior at the bottom of the salon's hierarchy. However, there are other workers even further below them. These are the Saturday staff, brought in to cope with the demands of the salon on Saturdays. Unlike the junior, who is there to learn and may get the opportunity to experiment with their budding skills, the Saturday staff are merely a form of additional labour, brought in to wash hair and sweep floors. Thus, what the practices of hair washing illuminates, is that, in addition to the artisan apprenticeship scheme, there is an invisible, unaccounted form of casual labour at work within the salon.

Yet, despite the perceived mundanity of hair washing, and its position as an easy activity requiring no prior skill or knowledge, the practice of hair washing does encompass a range of techniques and knowledges:

*After that we were told that today we were to start with shampooing techniques – the first being 'effleurage', whereby the shampoo is smoothed over the head, keeping the fingers wide and palms flat to the head. This is meant to ease tension and relax the client. According to the tutor the first shampoo should not lather up, something I have found in the salon. The second movement being 'petrissage' whereby the hair is cleaned and scrubbed, a much harder movement kneading the head in circular movements, aimed at apparently breaking down adhesions and fatty congestions in the skin. Also 'friction' is applied with the fingertips. There are other movements including 'tapotement' which is like a tapping movement to stimulate the nerves, and also 'vibration' a shaking movement similar to friction but deeper. The whole process should take no longer than 15 minutes.*

(College Fieldwork Diary, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2007)

*Video 3 and Figures 4.7 to 4.9 illustrate these techniques, highlighting how even the most simple of tasks require knowledge and skills to perform them properly within the salon environment. This skill of hair washing adds professional credibility (if only internally within the profession) to the ritual cleansing of the customer's hair*

and the perceived 'knowledge-less' status of the junior/hair washer. However, the standardisation of such techniques also confirms the junior's position as the script-worked within the salon.

As the customer gives their head over to the junior, and the junior begins to handle the customer's hair, so they both embark on an intimate corporeal experience, bringing hair's materiality to life. As the above quotes from my fieldwork diary illustrate, washing someone's hair is an embodied and intimate act, involving the touch of another. 'Touch', as Marcus Kwint (1999 p.5) writes, in relation to material memory, 'is the most liminal and taboo laden of the senses', exerting 'pressure on both toucher and touched' and 'upsetting the distinction between subject/object.' For the hair washer, this distinction is most at risk when the hair is deemed unclean. As if the dirt, grease or smell can in some way defile their own body and threaten their self-integrity (Lupton 1996). One junior I worked with for a short time in Kirby's actually insisted on wearing gloves when washing hair. She said this was to protect her hands from the dermatitis which many juniors are afflicted with from the constant hair washing. However, one cannot ignore the physical boundary this put between herself and the customer.

For the customer, the embodied experience of having their hair washed can also be traumatic:

*I hate it. I end up saying "Just condition it. I don't want any of that. I hate it. I just don't like people touching it, which is why (.2) obviously having your hair cut they do need to touch it. Oh I don't like it at all. It's always like the junior member of staff isn't it. And there just there "Is this nice? Shut your eyes." And I'm just there "No, just rinse it off!"*  
(Carla, Focus Group 2)

*She has one of these sinks where you lean back and I find it hurts my neck....And I'm sort of wriggling around a lot of the time, thinking come on hurry up. Plus, I don't like hearing my hair scrunched on to to my head, so I don't like it.*  
(Charlotte, Focus Group 4)

These two quotes from Carla and Charlotte, illustrate how the intimacy of the act of hair washing and being touched makes them feel very uncomfortable. It is the



**Figure 4.7 - Photograph of the Effleurage hair washing technique**



**Figure 4.8 – Photograph of the Pétrissage Technique hair washing technique**



**Figure 4.9 – Photograph of the Friction hair washing technique**

corporeality of the experience which Charlotte in particular describes as problematic. Having her head back in an uncomfortable position and hearing and feeling her hair scrunch on to her head, highlights both the physical and emotional vulnerability she experiences as the object of another's touch. The scrunching specifically conveys the materiality of hair coming alive through the production process, its physical qualities made evident to both customer and hair washer.

However, in contrast to these intrusive experiences of hair washing, are those who find the practice's material and corporeal aspects pleasurable:

*But when I did used to go and see her at the shop especially if I'd had a difficult week, or I'd felt quite tired, it was nice just to put my head back and have somebody massage my head because she did it, she did it really good and I'd be like "Don't stop just yet. Just do it a bit more."*  
(Verity, Focus Group 7)

Samantha: *I do like it though when they start going "Errrrrrrrr"*  
*((mimicking head massage))*

Kelly: *Head massage.*

Louise: *Yeah*

Laura: *Love it.*

(Focus Group 8)

These participants appear very comfortable being the object of touch, in fact, they relish the experience. For Verity, having her hair washed is a chance to relax, and the act of having her head massaged by another appears to release the tension of a busy week. Thus, in this instance, the materiality of hair, as realised through the practice of hair washing, operates as a vehicle for physical and emotional relaxation. Aside from the wanted/unwanted touch of the hair washer, for many participants one of the main issues of having their hair washed is the varying temperature of the water and the corporeal experiences this gives rise to:

*The other thing I hate when you're getting your hair washed at the hairdressers, "Is the water too hot?" "Yeah." "Is the water too cold?" "Yes." It's like there's no happy medium with the water. It's either freezing or it's boiling.*

(Nancy, Focus Group 7)

*Lena: I like having my hair washed, but they always asks "Is the water alright?" and I always say "Yeah." no matter what.*

*Vanessa: Yeah it can burn your head off.*

*Lena: Or be freezing!*

(Focus Group 1)

Even though water upon the hair cannot be felt (once again emphasising hair's position at the dead margins of the body) water upon the scalp is. Having done my fair share of hair washing in Kirby's, the issue here for me resides in the differences of sensitivity between hair washer and customer. What may feel okay on one's fairly desensitised hand, generally feels very different on someone else's rather sensitive scalp. Getting this balance right in a place where the back wash water supply is constantly competing with flushing toilets and washing machines is virtually impossible. Hence, unfortunately the customer tends to experience fluctuations in water temperatures – 'boiling or freezing'. This addition of the substance of water, alongside the aromas and textures of the various shampoo and conditioning products used in hair washing, adds to the corporeal experience of the practice, whilst also emphasising the power relations between object and subject, touched and toucher. Interestingly, whilst Nancy is happy to say that the water is burning her head, Lena feels less able to be so honest. This again illuminates some



the complexities surrounding the production of hair and whose responsibility the hair is in the salon. Thus, hair washing as a moment of hair production conveys not only the multiple contexts in which hair production is experienced, but also hair's shifting corporeal and material appreciation at the boundaries of the body. Hair becomes alive with sensation at the site of the backwash.

#### 4.3.4 Cutting

After the hair is washed then the customer will be passed back to the hairdresser so it can be cut, or if the person is having a blow wave - styled. This involves the customer moving from the back wash area to a work station with wet hair and a towel around their neck to catch any dripping water. As mentioned with reference to colouring, the mirrored interior of the salon calls for constant reflection of the self, and this reflection is most disconcerting when the body is in a state of change. For several participants, the moment of facing oneself in the salon mirror with wet hair is another of the most embarrassing and disconcerting moments throughout the production of hair:

*Carolyn: I think again once you've had your hair washed and slapped to your head, you look different don't you*

*Ava: Hmmm*

*Carolyn: You don't look that good do you until you get your hair blow dried.*

(Focus Group 4)

As with colouring, hair washing reminds the customer that the body and identity is in a state of flux.

Once seated, the customer will then have their hair 'combed through'. This is generally the final activity of the junior before the customer is passed over to the hairdresser.

*Lena: I'm constantly sitting there going "Ouch! Ouch," When they feel the need to brush your hair afterwards as well, the hair wash people.*

*Vanessa: Yeah they just comb it all directions don't they?*

(Focus Group 1)

As the above quotes from Lena and Vanessa illustrate, many juniors, myself included, struggle to get a comb through the tangled mess which occurs from long

hair being washed, hence the task is often left to the hairdresser. I regularly marvelled at this skill in Kirby's, the swift no-nonsense way in which the stylists could glide a comb through a tangle of knots making the hair conform to a sleek, wet look. Nevertheless, having had this done to my own hair on several occasions, I have learned to appreciate that it is actually much more about having the confidence, and I might add the professional 'right', to inflict pain on the customer. As the comb is dragged through the hair, so the customer's head is yanked back, as if a tug-of-war contest is taking place between customer and hairdresser with the hair as the rope.

With the combing over and the hairdresser satisfied that the hair is knot free, the customer is then at the mercy of the hairdresser's scissors. With long, particularly straight hair, discipline of the customer's body at this stage is essential to ensure the cut is neat and even. "Keep very still," "Drop your head right down," "Uncross your legs," are popular commands given to the customer. As described in section 4.1.3 (see *Video 1* and *Figures 4.2 to 4.4*), slowly and methodically the hairdresser works, sectioning the hair off in clips and dealing with each section at a time, continually comparing the length of one section with another. With scissors poised in one hand, the hairdresser runs the index and middle finger of the opposite hand down the shaft of the section of hair stopping at the place where they want to cut. Holding the hair tightly between the two fingers and bent over or crouched down to see below their hand, they begin to cut the hair beneath.

Breath held, the customer watches in anticipation as the scissors make contact:

*And I knew. I nearly stopped her. I could see her cutting this piece, it was like slow motion. It was hideous! But it was like six inches this piece. You know I said to her two-three and I could see her doing it and I just thought "What the hell are you doing?" I was in tears by the time I'd driven home.*

(Eileen, Focus Group 5)

Eileen's account of her disastrous hair cut is described like a scene from a horror film. In slow motion she sees the hairdresser about to attack with the scissors, yet feels powerless to say anything. The hair is the hairdresser's responsibility in this moment of production and the customer can only sit and watch the reflection of their actions.

However, whilst the customer may appear obedient and silent during the practices of cutting, the hair often does not (Latour 2000):

*They like cutting straight hair, cos they know what to do with it don't they. But (.5) you know I've had hairdressers and you can tell as soon as they get hold of your hair whether they're going to be able to cut it. Because they gingerly get hold of curly hair and they look where to cut it. You just think "Oh get hold of it and put the scissors through it!" and they don't. And I can tell, I can tell with a hairdresser when they get hold of it, like picking one piece up "Just CUT IT! MOW it!" ((Laughing from all)) "It doesn't matter!" But you can tell with a hairdresser whether they're good, can't you! But they don't like curly hair, hairdressers do not like it! (Carolyn, Focus Group 4)*

*....last time I went in I asked for a shoulder length cut and she said "Right I'll cut this much off because it's going to spring up" and it was about 3 inches past my shoulder when she dried it.  
(Margaret, Focus Group 2)*

As these two quotes, both from participants with curly hair, illustrate, in some instances, it is the hairdresser who is nervous of the moment of cutting because they are unsure of how the hair will react. Curly hair seems to be particularly problematic because when it is wet it behaves very differently to when it is dry. The hairdresser is unsure of the hair's material abilities, and how it will react to being cut. Unlike, the discipline of the body required for cutting long hair, curly hair requires something different. As Carolyn states, with her curly hair she does not need to keep still and poised, she just needs them to trim it. Yet, the hairdresser's reluctance highlights how hair's agency is at the forefront of the moment of production.

This agency can become even more influential to the moment of production when we consider hair as a palimpsest. As previously mentioned, cutting somebody's hair, is often about following the 'pattern' left behind by the previous stylist:

*Alana: This woman who I did the other week. This Saturday just gone I think it was, she was my first lady, she must have been for a cut and blow. Anyway she had a bob and I could not follow it. I thought "I cannot follow this!" I thought "What has happened here?" So I said "Where did you have your hair done before?" She said "I always have my hair done here." So I thought "You can't say much can you?"*

*Patricia: Was it Clare?*

*Alana: No she said Sophie had done it, she said "Then Beth did it. But I loved it when Clare did it last time, it was absolutely gorgeous!" And I thought it just proves that everyone cuts so differently....And she must*

*have been so happy with the way Clare did it, and I thought I'm going to have to re-cut all this because I can't follow it.*  
(Salon Focus Group)

I have already discussed how the hairdresser as artisan-craftsperson leaves their distinctive mark upon the hair, but what this quote conveys is how the remains of these 'marks' affect subsequent moments of production. As Kevin Hetherington (2004 p.168), writing about the disposal of objects, concludes:

*The erasure of an object is never complete. There is always a trace effect that is passed on its absence.*

Thus, the hairdresser-past seemingly haunts (taunts) the hairdresser-present through the palimpsest of hair, which either responds towards or rebels against the latest layer chopped into its biography. The traces of these previous styles act as corporeal reminders to the customer of productive moments experienced. All three, customer-stylist-hair, become entangled in that one culminating moment where the absent presence of previous productive moments come to bear upon the current one (Hetherington 2004, Munro 2001). Scissors poised, breath held, hairdresser-customer-hair, past-present-future become enmeshed in a tangled web of design-consumption-production, where the boundaries of each practice and each party blur together in the quest to control hair's vitalism. The moment of production may appear final, the material evidence chopped to the floor (see Figure 4.10), hair's vitality conquered, but the production of hair is never given or finished, it is always 'coming-into-being' (Ingold 2000). Hair's vitalism is never truly stilled.

#### **4.3.5 Styling**

Hair cut, hairdresser satisfied, customer still seemingly compliant - it is time for the penultimate task in the production of hair – styling. Styling the hair can involve a range of tools – including products to help mould and shape the hair, and tools such as combs, hair straighteners and curling tongues. However, generally the two main tools required are: a hair dryer to dry the hair; and a brush with which to keep the hair in desired position as it is being dried. Like cutting, this requires particular skills on the part of the hairdresser, disciplining the hands and the body into set positions, so that the brush and the hairdryer can work in tandem to dry and shape

the hair. *Video 4* and *Figure 4.11* illustrates this process. As the brush is pulled underneath a section of hair, so the hairdryer follows it over the top to dry it off.



**Figure 4.10** – Photograph showing cut hair



**Figure 4.11** – Photographs of styling long hair with a hairdryer



**Figure 4.11 (cont.) – Photographs of styling long hair with a hairdryer**

When the brush reaches the end of the section of hair it is quickly substituted by the barrel of the hairdryer to hold the hair in place, whilst the brush is moved swiftly back to top of the hair shaft to begin the movement again. This action is repeated hundreds of times by the hairdresser just in the course of drying the hair of one customer, a practice that given the length of salon appointments should take no longer than 15-20 minutes. And, like many movements in the moments of production, the quicker it is performed the sooner the customer's hair will be dried and the hairdresser can attend to the next customer. Yet, the constant repetition of the movement, the disciplined holding of the body in a set position – one arm holding the hairdryer up, the other pulling the brush through the hair - has its bodily drawbacks. And, it is little wonder that many hairdressers complain of back and shoulder problems. Thus, a corporeal conflict arises. The body which works faster has more economic value within the salon, yet must also pay the physical price of its success.

The moment of styling is noisy, hot and energetic compared to the hushed tension of cutting, and the rhythmical watery intimacy of hair washing. The customer can barely hear the hairdresser above the loud hum of the hairdryer, as

their head is once again dragged then released with each pull of the brush; the stylist's arm muscles contracting and releasing in tandem with those in the customer's neck. All the customer can do is stare at their reflection in the mirror, watching as the hairdresser moulds and shapes their hair into a particular style; be it the one they desire or the one their hairdresser thinks they should have:

*I mean when I was going for wedding trials she did it three times and she did it, to my mind, wrong three times. I wanted straightener curls and she said "Oh it won't work. Let me do this," and she put me in rollers and put me under a dryer like one of those old women in Coronation St, and it was huge. I just had these curls. I looked like Shirley Temple gone wrong. It was awful. And I said to her at the end "This isn't what I wanted. It's awful, it's just not nice." And she said "Oh well I like big hair," and I thought "But it's not your hair. I don't care what you like, I want what I like!"*

(Georg, Focus Group 1)

Hairdressers 'not listening', 'thinking they know best' (Vanessa, Focus Group 1), 'doing what they want' (Ruby, Interview) have been popular complaints throughout the focus groups and interviews. Similarly, Symonds and Holland (2008) found that one of the common issues the elderly women they spoke to had with their hairdressers was that they would not do what they wanted. Instead, they were given a set style deemed 'appropriate' for older women.

Interestingly, the moment of styling is also the moment when many participants' ideas of how their hair should look conflict with the views of their hairdresser, just as Georg did with the hairdresser who curled her hair. As the following quotes highlight, such differences seem to arise from the customer's own abilities at styling their hair, clashing with those of the hairdresser:

*I'd feel awful trying to tell her how to dry my hair. I would. I couldn't do that.....and you can't sort of say "Oh, well actually I wouldn't have dried it like that." Who's to say who's right? But I know when I go on Thursday she's going to do it exactly like that, and I'll just want to go home and sort of get rid of that piece, somehow, but cos she'll have like found the parting and you know really done it, I'm going to have wash it and start again.*

(Jennifer, Interview)

Lena: *I have to go home and redo my hair when they do it*

Vanessa: *Yeah they never do it right*

Lena: *Yeah they don't straighten it well enough*  
Vanessa: *And every woman I've ever met says that. ((Mimics a high pitch whining voice)) "They never do it right!"*  
(Focus Group 1)

*I'd rather go get it coloured, get it cut and then leave because when they start blow drying it they'll straighten the life out of it so that it's just like absolutely scrapped against your head and I don't like that....*  
(Amber, Focus Group 2)

*I love the way they cut it but in terms of drying it it just goes absolutely massive and they don't put the right products on.*  
(Margaret, Focus Group 2)

Of all the moments of production, styling is one moment which is also performed by the customer at home. As I shall discuss in the following chapter, hair washing, and for some colouring, also take place at home, but hair styling is a very personal practice involving set routines, habits and tools used to create one's desired outward appearance. As Stevenson (2001 p.148) concludes, 'while clothing can be played with, hair, despite its plasticity, remains a more constant signifier of self'. For the above participants, their hairdresser is incapable of styling their hair as they like it. This leaves them feeling uncomfortable with the appearance reflected back at them in the salon mirror.

*If self-identity and corporeality are inextricably intertwined, then it seems obvious that changes in the latter will necessarily have some bearing on the former.*  
(Davidson 2001 p.286)

Hair out of place, too straight, too frizzy, not straight enough, are all instances when the participants have deemed the appearance created for them by the hairdresser to be incongruous with their desired identity. The self is out of place, uncontained and crossing bodily boundaries between an acceptable and unacceptable appearance (Bordo 1993, Davidson 2001, Grosz 1994). As one participant stressed, 'you want to go home and put your hands through your hair –don't you?' (Carolyn, Focus Group 4). There is an urge to rectify the balance between self-identity and corporeality, yet the customer must wait until they have left the salon and the hair is once again under their control. As styling progresses, the customer becomes more



aware of the incongruities of their own styling practices with those of the hairdresser. This moment culminates in the final reveal.

#### 4.3.6 The final reveal

With a spritz of hair spray or a daub of serum the production of hair is complete, and all that is left is for the hairdresser to 'reveal' their craftwork to the customer. Using a handheld mirror they show the customer the back of their hair, the reflection doubled as the image in the handheld mirror is subsequently reflected in that facing the customer (see *Figure 4.12*). They may say something along the lines of "Is that okay for you?" Does the customer complain and say they do not like it, as Georg did? In many instances, no:

*It's funny isn't it. I was trying to get to the bottom of like why if you go and you ask for something, that person who does it should be responsible for what they've done, but somehow you still feel responsible because you've asked them to do something and you always think like it's your fault, like you haven't asked them properly. Or you didn't take a picture or whatever; you've not explained yourself well enough. You take it all on yourself don't you?*

(Vanessa, Focus Group 1)

*But I think sometimes that's what (.2) that's what we are like isn't it? You (.2) you sort of talk yourself out of it, and you think "Oh right well I'll pay her. I just won't come here again." Or next time, like you did, when you come you make sure you go on a day when she's not there.*

(Verity, Focus Group 7)

As Vanessa touches upon, what all of this suggests is that there is confusion over where the responsibility for the production of hair resides, even at this last stage. The customer still feels as though the hairdresser has control, despite being about to pay them for their services. I contend that part of the customers' dilemma in speaking-up if they are not happy is due to the perceived time and effort the hairdresser has bestowed upon the hair. As Susan Stewart (1999 p.30), writing about memory and touch, discusses 'materials store our labour and our maintenance.' The hairdresser's labour is stored in the customer's hair. This links directly to the quote by Carolyn Steedman (2007) at the start of this chapter. The hair, like spinner Phoebe Beeston's yarn, is not owned by the hairdresser but is invested with his/her energy and moulded into something new. Hence, the profound attachment and

feelings of responsibility they have towards it. It is these attachments which get in the way of many customers complaining.

Like Beeston's yarn transformed to something new, the palimpsest of hair is constantly changing. The hairdresser's labour, stored in the hair, is an enduring labour requiring renewal and reinvestment. Thus, the hairdresser's attachment to the customer's hair is not simply a fleeting moment experienced in the salon, but extends outside of the salon space and can influence the customer's daily life:

*Cos I get my eyebrows done in the same place, her sister does them, and there's a few times I've gone in and just felt ashamed because my hair's been that much of a mess. And I always feel like I have to apologise to her....cos they're trying to make it look nice, and you think I'm not doing very well here, or a good job of keeping up what you've done.*

(Jennifer, Interview)

*Erm you feel a bit guilty if they've spent ages doing it nice and then you have it scrapped back, you know and the damage you do.*

(Eileen, Interview)

As these two quotes from Jennifer and Eileen show, the hairdresser's labour continues to be stored in the customer's hair long after the salon appointment, influencing how they deal with their hair. To modify feminist philosopher, Sandra Lee Bartky's (1988) phrase – 'males in the head', what Jennifer and Eileen describe seems to be a case of 'hairdressers in the hair.' The figure of the hairdresser resides with the participants' through the materiality and vitalism of the palimpsest of hair – how it looks, feels and the maintenance it is deemed to require. As Stevenson (2001 p.149) corroborates, the hairdresser 'creates work for the consumer in their daily production and maintenance of the style, as well as future work for themselves'.

Thus, the customer must work upon the hair to ensure that the hairdresser's labour remains intact. When the customer does not keep up that labour, or does something to destroy it, then they face the wrath of the hairdresser:

*One important thing to note about today was something Nina said to Parr about a client which stuck in my mind. She was commenting on the state of a customer's hair who I believe had been in before. She told him that the woman had tufts of hair around her forehead because she had done something to it (I believe coloured it and it had broken off – but it may have been cutting). She then said "Well that's what you get when*

*you mess with your own hair.” This struck me as pertinent because Nina was almost saying if you mess with your hair, and don’t leave it to the professionals then it will end up in a mess.*

*(Fieldwork Diary Extract, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2007)*

There is a fine line between the practices deemed acceptable for the customer to engage with at home to maintain the hairdresser’s labour, and those which blatantly destroy it. In the above instance, the customer had attempted to take over the labour of the hairdresser in the quest to control hair’s vitality, yet it had resulted in the hair ‘acting back’ and its rebellion was there for all to see.



**Figure 4.12 – Photograph showing the moment of ‘The final reveal’**

For some, the moment of the ‘final reveal’ is actually a big disappointment. Unlike those participants discussed earlier who felt threatened by the different appearance reflected back at them, some customers want to be ‘transformed’:

*But I always (.4) I probably don’t now, because I probably know what to expect and what not to expect, but I used to always go into the hairdressers and very often come out thinking I’d look totally different. And I’d feel, I’d feel quite disappointed, and I would be about the hairdresser, and I’d think actually they should have made me look like different person and they haven’t. But I don’t expect that now.*

(Phoebe, Focus Group 5)

*And I'm often disappointed cos I don't think you get it, and I'll sit there and they'll be like "So what we doing today?" and that annoys me a bit cos you think "I've paid for a stylist. Do some styling!" The last place I went to I was impressed because she sort of took it upon herself to decide that I needed a different look and so I was impressed with that.*

(Eileen, Interview)

As both these quotes suggest, some customers want the hairdresser to take sole responsibility for their hair. They want the hairdresser to use their bodywork to change their visual identities. When this does not happen they feel let down and disappointed. The moment of the final reveal is often the pinnacle point at which the complexities of the maintenance of bodies and construction of identities are bought to the forefront of the production of hair. Despite hair's persistent vitality, there is a seeming finality to the act. Once the customer has paid, they are perceived to be satisfied with the service they have received. They will be given back their coat, thanked for their visit and shown the door. Hence, they must speak now or leave the salon disconcerted by their appearance.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have brought together the hairdresser, the client and hair through what I termed the production of hair. The first part of the chapter has discussed the role of the hairdresser as craftsperson, contesting the notion that hairdressing requires innate abilities. As I have argued, by understanding the role of the hairdresser as a craftsperson engaged in the perfection of practice through routine and repetition, the position of hairdresser is in fact elevated to the professional standing it deserves. Appreciating hairdressing as a craft, has led me to contend that the hairdresser is a contemporary artisan. As Crossick (1997) and Musgrave (1997) have illustrated, hairdressing as well as barbering was a prominent trade as early as the eighteenth century, involving female craftspeople. However, it was the parallels between the artisan and the hairdresser which have been of most interest to me. I have argued that the social identity of the artisan, their apprenticeships and consumptive space of trust are all paralleled with the role of the contemporary hairdresser. What is more, so are the kinetic techniques (WacQuant 2004), virtuoso skills (Becker 1978) and proximal knowledges (Hetherington 2002) the hairdresser

develops. As discussed, the emotional bonds the hairdresser forms with their tools ensure that their work is always distinctive to them.

In the second part of the chapter I introduced the concept of the palimpsest of hair. Beginning with a discussion surrounding the quasi-object/quasi-subject status of hair I have attempted to convey its vivacity. In the words of Latour (2000 p.115), 'nothing is more difficult than to find a way to render objects to object to the utterances that we make about them' and a significant drawback to this chapter is that the only utterances the objects make are in the words of the participants, or my own fieldwork diary extracts. Nevertheless, I hope these words, frustrations, and sometimes admissions of defeat/compromise ('I just let it do its own thing' – Lena, Focus Group 1) illuminate hair's ability to 'act back,' even if these actions are expressed through the semantic structure of human language. Emphasising the quasi-status of hair, part object/human, part dead/alive, I have introduced the notion of the palimpsest to describe the biography of hair, exhibiting both the traces of previous external acts upon the surface of hair, but also more internal bodily changes. I argue that hair as a palimpsest is always in the process of 'becoming' (Shilling 1993), and work is always being done (Mol and Law 2004).

It is the process of hair's 'becoming' which I have remained with in the final section of the chapter. Exploring the moments of hair's production and the battle to control hair's vivacity, I have drawn together the hairdresser as craft worker, the palimpsest of hair and the wearer/customer. Taking a snapshot of the salon activities, I considered the moments of consultation, washing, cutting, styling and the final reveal, intertwining the hairdresser, customer and hair, to illuminate the corporeal experiences, ambiguities and complexities of working with hair. Reflecting the quote from Carolyn Steedman (2007) at the start of this chapter, regarding Phoebe Beeston's yarn, I have argued that the hairdresser's labour becomes stored in the hair of the customer. Yet, unlike Beeston's yarn, the labour of the hairdresser can never be finite because of the vitalism of the palimpsest of hair, forever changing and requiring constant maintenance. The hairdresser may exert their influence as the knowledgeable professional in the salon environment, but the hair, and to some extent the customer, always have ways of 'acting back. Ironically, the hairdresser is often perceived as the giver of life to hair. Advertising slogans, like Nice 'n' Easy's™, 'Like you've just stepped out a salon', present this image of the hairdresser providing hair with the elixir of body, shine and 'hair-swishing'

energy. Yet, as this chapter clearly elucidates, their primary task is exactly the opposite. Through their craft production, they are charged with controlling hair's vitality and temporarily stilling its liveliness. In the next chapter, I move on to discuss what happens when the customer returns home and they must try to subdue hair's vitality alone.



*Contending against a restless shower-head,  
I lather my own.  
The hot tap, without a mind, decides  
to scald me;  
The cold, without a will, would rather  
freeze me.  
Turning them to suit me is an act of flesh  
I know as mine.  
Here I am: scalp, neck, back, breasts,  
armpits, spine,  
Parts I've long been part of, never  
treasured much,  
Since I absorb them not by touch, more  
because of touch.  
It's my mind, with its hoard of horrors,  
that's me.  
Or is it really? I fantasise it bodiless,  
set free:  
No bones, no skin, no hair, no nerves,  
just memory,  
Untouchable, unwashable, and not, I guess,  
my own.*

Extract from 'Washing My Hair' by Anne Stevenson (2005)





## Doing-It-Yourself

*'Yeah but do you not think that everybody relies on other things to control their hair? Like I couldn't allow mine to dry naturally and not do anything with it....it would be in an absolute state. So I need my hairdryer and I need my straighteners.'*

(Georg, Focus Group 1)

### **5. Introduction**

Having left the salon and headed home, the customer now has to manage their hair on their own for a period of time. In the previous chapter, I explored the moments of hair production whereby customer, hairdresser and hair all came together. In this next chapter, I focus upon the customer's reproduction of their hair at home, through what I will term the DIY hair project. Research by Boots has found that women spend an average of 41 minutes every day washing and styling their hair (Mintel 2008b). In addition, they spend on average £24 a month on shampoo, conditioner and home styling products (Mintel 2008b). Thus, home hair care is a central everyday practice for many women. In this chapter, I focus upon these home DIY practices and the reliance women have on them to cope with the vitality of their hair away from the salon. I explore how the temporality of the palimpsest of hair, affects the temporalities of home hair care practices and, thus, the intricacies of the hair care routines they are incorporated into. I illustrate how objects and practices are central to these routines, but often occupy fragile positions within them. In turn, I argue that such fragility is bound up with broader values, conventions and 'structural' anxieties (Warde 1997 cited in Shove 2003), affecting how practices and objects are incorporated into hair care routines, and how these routines are subject to constant change.

I begin the chapter by introducing what I refer to as the 'DIY hair project'. This notion combines Shilling's (1993) concept of the body as always 'becoming', with recent practice-based accounts on DIY projects. Drawing upon particular elements from both, it produces an understanding of home hair care routines as ongoing DIY hair projects. I contend that the practices and objects which form these hair projects become repositories of meaning and in turn form part of a bigger DIY body project intent on stabilising the 'coherent self' (Mol & Law 2004 p.56). Using temporality

as a vehicle to explore these hair routines, I move on to focus upon two specific hair practices – washing and home colouring. Beginning with hair washing, I illustrate its ubiquitous and ‘everyday’ nature. In unpicking the temporalities of the practice, I illuminate the values it is construed with, and how individual meanings are underpinned by collective norms surrounding cleanliness and respectability. I highlight how these values are influenced by other practices, technologies and tools. In comparison to hair washing, I then focus upon what I have termed the ‘every-so-often’ or ‘not-at-all’ practices of home colouring. Like hair washing, I contend that home colouring is imbued with many values and expectations. I illustrate some of these with reference to having roots. However, in contrast to hair washing, I also convey how home colouring is not a ubiquitous practice amongst women colouring their hair. I examine the reasons why some women will colour their hair at home, whilst others remain fearful of it and its consequences for the DIY hair project.

In the second half of the chapter, I move away from focusing upon the temporalities of DIY hair routines to explore how these routines can be ruptured. Using the example of the ceramic hair straightener and the practices of hair straightening, I begin by investigating how tools and practices make the move from salon to home, professional to amateur. I argue that such transitions are moments of fragility within DIY hair routines requiring specific knowledges and competences. Following on from this, I highlight participant accounts of successful incorporations into DIY hair routines, along with unsuccessful ones. Staying with the latter, I illuminate the anxieties such failed incorporations produce and how these anxieties threaten the ‘coherent self’ and the DIY hair project. To illustrate this further, I use the example of hair straightener manufacturer, ghd™, to explore how hair care product companies play on these anxieties to sell their goods.

The final section of the chapter remains with changes to DIY hair care routines, however, it concentrates upon the subtle revisions and refinements women make to their individual routines. Focusing upon two instances - holidays and growing hair - I highlight how changes in individual circumstances, can illicit changes to DIY hair care routines. I show how these often subtle amendments to routines require not just revised practices, but also sometimes new tools and objects. In turn, I finish the chapter by illustrating how changing DIY hair routines can result in the assembly of a collection of unused items and products. I contend that such objects illustrate the

fragile and also somewhat sequential nature of DIY hair care routines and their associated practices.

## **5.1 The DIY Hair Project**

### **5.1.1 The DIY body project**

DIY (Do-It-Yourself) has been regarded a popular British pastime since the 1950s. Wrapped up in ideologies of domesticity and make-do and mend, like craft practice, DIY has been regarded with somewhat romantic notions. In recent years, it has been of increasing interest to academia, and, in particular, practice studies. Focusing upon the 'doing' of DIY, practice-based accounts contend that DIY is a form of production and consumption, with embodied knowledge merging with object knowledge through practice (Watson & Shove 2008). Such studies have looked at DIY activities, such as decorating (Shove *et al* 2008), plumbing (Shove *et al* 2008), or assembling flat pack furniture (Campbell 2005). Yet, none have engaged with the body as a site of DIY. This is despite the fact that body is worked upon everyday by people in countless ways, from washing, to dressing, to eating and so forth. Thus, in this chapter, I contend that the body is a site of DIY practice, and the home production of hair is a particular part of a wider DIY body project.

However, unlike decorating a room or assembling a flat pack piece of furniture, the DIY project of the body is ongoing. In Chapters Three and Four, I drew upon Chris Shilling's (1993) notion of the body as always 'becoming'. The maintenance of the 'coherent self' (Mol & Law 2004 p.56) requires continual work to be done. Therefore, the DIY body project is never complete, but demands repetitive bodily practices. Likewise, hair's perpetual vitality ensures that it is a constant DIY project with no beginning or end. Hair continues to grow. It gets greasy, knotty and dirty, insisting upon our attention and action. To cope with its demands we develop routines of practice. Yet, despite the constancy of the DIY hair project, these practices have their own temporalities within the routine. Some, such as hair washing, discussed in the next section, occur frequently, whereas others, such as home colouring, occur once every month or so. One practice may rely upon the success of another to take place. Likewise, many will require alliances with various objects and substances to take place. Thus, routines of the DIY hair project are

dependent upon networks of practices, objects and substances bound up by varying temporalities.

### **5.1.2 Repositories of meaning**

There have been several debates over the relationship between objects and practices and the dominance of either one in producing meaning. According to Latour (2000 p.114), objects/things 'are the stuff out which socialness is made.' In other words, society is given meaning by objects. However, for Theodore Schatzki (2002 p.113) 'sociality is centred on objects to whatever extent it is because of the general ends of the practices through which it transpires.' Thus, it is through practices that objects become illuminated as creating socialness. Taking this idea a stage further, Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores and Hubert Dreyfus (1997 p.17-18, cited in Harrison 2000 p.506) conclude:

*If we did not have practices for working at desks or eating at tables, we would not encounter desks, chairs and tables as meaningful. We would encounter them as mere artifacts, requiring explanation.*

Therefore, for Spinosa *et al*, it is the practices which create socialness through the use of objects, not just the objects themselves.

Rather than prioritising one over the other, I contend that it is practices and objects working in tandem through routines of hair care that create socialness. Hair care practices and the objects they engage with are 'techniques for [the] on-going coping' with hair (Harrison 1997 p.512). As I will illustrate throughout this chapter, the practices and objects which form hair care routines are imbued with meanings and values: from personal values, such as what one person perceives is best for their hair; to wider structural anxieties surrounding social norms, conventions and fashions. These meanings are illuminative of the conjuncture between individual experience and collective understanding. Yet, they are not fixed or stable either. Values change over time, as practices evolve and objects are discarded or redesigned to incorporate new ways of doing things (Hand *et al* 2005, Hand & Shove 2007, Warde 2005). A chance encounter with an object can alter practice, as can the object 'acting back' (Latour 2000). Objects and practices become repositories of values, emotions and structural anxieties, which is what makes the routines of DIY hair projects so fragile. Thus, using temporality as a

vehicle to access the ongoing DIY hair project, this chapter will focus upon the practices, objects and meanings home hair care routines entail. I begin by focusing upon the practices of washing and home colouring, and their varying temporal rhythms.

## **5.2 The 'Everyday' Practices of Hair Washing**

The practice of hair washing is an ideal example to illuminate the everyday character of women's hair care routines and the various objects and values they entail. The opening poem to this chapter describes the author, Anne Stevenson, engaging in the practice of washing of her hair. From the feeling of the water upon her body, to lathering her head with shampoo, it illustrates the substances and corporealities involved in washing one's own hair. It is particularly useful for this chapter because of all the practices described by participants, hair washing is the most taken for granted and, thus, the least described. Correspondingly, it is also the most ubiquitous, with 25% of UK women washing their everyday, 59% two to three times a week, and the remainder once a week or less (Mintel 2007). Yet, the actual 'doing' of hair washing only becomes apparent when something goes wrong or becomes difficult. For example, the elderly women, described in Chapter Three, who, restrained by the corporealities of their own bodies, can no longer wash their own hair. In this section, I focus upon the values illuminated by the 'seemingly mundane task' (Douglas 1966) of hair washing, and how these values are intertwined with temporalities, tools and technologies of the DIY hair project.

### **5.2.1 Rejuvenation and restoration**

*When she did that awful poodle thing I came home in tears. I got straight in the shower and washed it all out. £25 later. I should have just said "I'm not paying for it. It's hideous!" But I paid for it, came home, washed it and went to a ball that night because it had been for something special. I had to wash it and start again.*

(Georg, Focus Group 1)

Hair washing is a fundamental part of most women's hair care routines because of its ability to rejuvenate hair and provide a blank canvas from which to begin again. As Georg's disastrous trip to the hair salon highlights, hair 'is a nearly infinitely

mutable adornment' (Simmel 1950 p.339, cited in Gimlin 1996 p.507), meaning old styles can be washed away with water and shampoo. Hair washing therefore acts as something of a junction within DIY hair routines. It is a practice of rejuvenation, which enables a whole host of other hair practices to occur, such as blow-drying, styling or setting, creating a variety of looks and styles.

However, washing hair is also deemed a practice of restoration (Shove 2003). As time passes between washes, the oils, secreted by the sebaceous glands of the hair follicles, begin to build up making the hair appear 'greasy.' Throughout my research, this greasy condition of hair was perceived a negative, yet temporary, characteristic that needs to be eliminated by the practice of washing. This is illustrated by Katherine's annoyance at the way her hair was washed in the salon:

*But I pay a lot and I think it should be washed properly. Last time I went I said to the girl "Oh it's dying for a good (.2) a good scrub." I thought I'll put it that way. And she did (.2) she did do it alright, but the times before have been terrible....she finished doing my hair, and the day after I had to wash it because it was greasy.*  
(Katherine, Focus Group 7)

As Elizabeth Shove (2003 p.176) discusses, regarding the practice of washing clothes, 'laundry is increasingly represented as an exercise in restoring clothes contaminated through contact with sweaty, smelly bodies.' With hair, restoration occurs through washing away the perceived 'greasy' contamination so that hair feels and appears fresh and renewed. Katherine's desire that her hair is given 'a good scrub' indicates that, for her, the practice of hair washing must involve the physicality of scrubbing to ensure the removal of grease and the restoration of hair to a non-greasy state. Thus, restoration is subtly different from rejuvenating the hair so one can begin again, in that it is about removing grease and restoring hair back to a particular state.

### **5.2.2 Normative expectations**

According to Shove (2003), such cleansing practices are bound up with moral values of what is 'clean' and 'dirty'. The following quote from Ruby illustrates some of these moral values with regards to cleanliness and hair:

*If my hair was greasy I could not go out. I could not go out, I'd have to I don't know. I'd be bothered what people thought, because (.3) and this is really awful I've looked at people in the pub and thought "Oh my God! How greasy is her hair! I'd never go out with my hair like that!"*  
(Ruby, Interview)

Ruby's quote links closely to one of Beverley Skegg's participants, in her study on formations of class and gender:

*You know you see them walking round town, dead fat, greasy hair, smelly clothes, dirty kids.....they just don't care no more.* (Therese 1983, cited in Skeggs 1999 p.83)

As both quotes show, greasy hair symbolises a lack of respectability, letting one's self go and not caring anymore. Despite having no evidence that everyone perceives hair in the same way she does, Ruby believes that if she went out with greasy hair, people would consider her unrespectable and 'dirty'. Thus, to be respectable one must appear to engage in appropriate hair practices.

However, I contend that such values are also bound up with particular temporalities:

*Katie: I started now (.3) when I wash it, cos I only generally wash it once a week.*  
*Verity: You dirty bitch!! ((All laughing))*  
*Katie: It doesn't need it!*  
*Katherine: I only wash it twice.*  
*Katie: It doesn't need it, it's really dry.*  
*Verity: Two-three times a week me depending on what I've been doing.*  
(Focus Group 7)

Verity's mock disdain of Katie for only washing her hair once a week, calling her a 'dirty bitch', illuminates that norms regarding the temporalities of acceptable hair washing practices exist. To leave hair unwashed for so long is deemed 'dirty' and wrong, whether it looks it or not. This is ironic, considering that the amount of oil your glands produce is apparently determined by your genetic inheritance (Gray 2003). Therefore, some people will be able to leave their hair longer without washing than others. Nevertheless, this highlights how the values bound up within practices of hair washing are as much about conforming to specific temporalities of the practice, as they are the visible results. .



This is further emphasized by participant, Eileen's, love of dry shampoo:

*Cos like I'll go to the gym like tonight and my hair is clean and if I went running I'd have to wash it - my hair would be horrendous, it would be wet. But at the gym I don't do that much cardio, so it's just like my roots or where it's touched my face, it will be a bit greasy. But this Batiste is just amazing, plus it's worse you know if you go out and you're like consciously messing with your hair, the back is fine but if you do it at the front, it gets greasy – so it's just wonderful.*

(Eileen, Interview)

As Eileen's quote conveys getting rid of grease does not necessarily always mean engaging in the practices of hair washing. The same results can be achieved using different practices. Dry shampoo offers Eileen a 'guise', giving the appearance of freshly washed hair, even though restoration has not fully taken place and grease has not physically been removed. Thus, whilst Eileen may appear to be conforming to social norms regarding the temporalities of hair washing and 'keeping up appearances', in actual fact, she is not. Her hair is not 'clean' by normative standards. For cleanliness to be achieved, certain tools and substances must unite together through particular and regular practices of hair washing. Therefore, notions of what makes a practice 'right and proper' are not just bound together with temporalities, but also with technologies, tools and infrastructures (Shove 2003 p.79).

### **5.2.3 Temporalities, technologies, tools and other practices**

What is more, the temporalities, technologies and tools of hair washing also bind it closely to other practices, in particular, that of showering. The history of bathing has been well documented within academia, with many studies noting how until recently bathing was a weekly event (see Hand *et al* 2005, Lupton & Miller 1992, McClintock 1995, Twigg 1997a, 2000a, Wilkie 1986). From the 1970s onwards, the electrically powered shower became a feature of contemporary British bathrooms (Hand *et al* 2005). As Martin Hand *et al* (2005) describe, the technology of the shower and the practice of showering quickly became imbued with notions of speed, convenience, reinvigoration, restoration and cleanliness. In turn, these notions were applied to the practices which formed part of showering, such as hair washing. Thus, what was once a weekly, maybe fortnightly, practice, done in the bath, could

now be done whenever one wanted, as could washing the body. As Hackett (cited in Shove 2005 p.85) concludes, cleanliness 'is the outcome of whatever it is that people do in its name'. The introduction of the shower, enabled people to wash their hair and bodies more often, thus they were perceived to get dirty much quicker. Therefore, through the technology of the shower and the introduction of showering practices, new normative expectations and standards evolved around 'acceptable' hair washing practices and their required temporalities. Ironically, this often means that despite the labour-saving abilities of technologies like the electric shower, more time is now spent upon particular practices than previously (Hand *et al* 2005, Southerton & Tomlinson, 2005).

Of course, such practices and the value systems they entail are open to interpretation. Whilst some of the participants I spoke to felt they had to wash their hair every day, others like Katherine, despite being mocked, were happy to do it once a week. Interestingly though, no one said they washed their hair in the bath. Returning to the notion of 'hairdressers in the head', some participants even felt it necessary to wash their hair at home before visiting the salon, as they did not want their hairdresser touching what they perceived was their dirty hair (Carla & Lisa, Focus Group 2). What this section has illustrated is that individual notions of hair washing are worked into a collective framework. Hair washing may be driven by the vitality of the individual palimpsest getting greasy/feeling dirty, but running alongside this are also structural anxieties about cleanliness, and the temporary nature of hair's cleanliness. What is more, this section has highlighted how the values of hair washing are not just driven by the visual results of the practice, but are wrapped up in the norms of the 'doing' of hair washing. This 'doing' involves the use of particular tools, technologies, and also other practices, which all form part of the complex routines of the DIY hair project.

### **5.3 The 'Every-So-Often' or 'Not-At-All' Practices of Home Colouring**

Running alongside the 'everyday' practices of home hair care routines, are also numerous practices with 'other' less frequent temporalities. In this section, I focus upon the practice of home colouring, a practice I refer to as either done 'every-so-often' within the routines of the DIY hair project or 'not-at-all'. As I explore, unlike the ubiquity of hair washing, home colouring is not part of most women's home hair

care routines, with some women not colouring their hair, or others preferring to get it done in the hair salon. According to recent Mintel statistics, almost two thirds of UK women have used home hair colourants at some point in their lives. Yet, as this section highlights, many of them, for varying reasons, have not incorporated the practice into their long-term hair care routines. As with hair washing, I illuminate the values associated with home colouring, exploring how these values are affected by the fears many women have of colouring their own hair at home and the perceived potency of the materials. I begin by looking at the practice of hair colouring in general and the values which underpin it.

### **5.3.1 Roots**

On the surface hair colouring appears a straightforward practice. Hair is coloured using dyes which change the molecular structure of the hair to produce a new colour. As hair grows, the colour grows out and roots appear of the natural colour. To match up the roots to the rest of the dyed hair, colouring must be done again and again each time roots show through. Hence, a repetitive pattern occurs of colouring and re-colouring, led by the individual vitality of the palimpsest of hair. Thus, just as grease (or at least perceived grease) motivates the practice of hair washing, so roots drive the practice of hair colouring. However, as with hair washing, matters are not so straightforward and the practices of hair colouring and ‘touching up’ roots are also underpinned by a variety of normative conventions and values.

The practices of female hair colouring have been a key part of hair care routines since Ancient Greece. However, up until the 1950s, to openly admit to colouring one’s hair was considered a sign of poor breeding and lack of respectability, hence women made every effort to keep such practices hidden (see *Appendix A* for a more detailed account of the history of hair colouring). From the 1950s onwards, the popularity of hair colouring increased, and its adoption by style icons such as Marilyn Monroe, Veronica Lake and Grace Kelly slowly ensured its acceptability. Since then hair colouring has remained a staple part of many women’s hair care routines, whether they get it done at the salon or do it themselves at home.

Yet, whilst colouring is now an acceptable part of the DIY hair routine, it would seem the appearance of roots is not:

*If you go to a ball and you've got a fantastic dress on, I don't want my roots showing because I'll look like a troll.*

(Georg, Focus Group 1)

*Once or twice Joanne's coloured my roots if I've not had chance to go to the hairdressers. Once or twice I've bought a colour for root touch up and Joanne's just done on top where it's showing.*

(Ava, Focus Group 4)

Georg's reference to herself as looking like 'a troll' with roots and Ava's urgency to get hers covered, highlights that whilst the 'doing' of hair colouring is now accepted, relenting on the maintenance of the practice is not. Thus, the palimpsest of hair not only gives away that hair is coloured, but also that these practices have not been kept on top of. This relates closely to the issues of respectability, as exposed through the practices of hair washing. Being respectable is about being in control of one's body and having a sustained routine of appropriate practices to cope with the constancy of the DIY body project and the maintenance of the 'coherent self' (Mol & Law 2004 p.56). When roots come through, this coherency is threatened and a lack of control over the body may be perceived by the self and by others. Hence, why for 1980s punk women, bleached blonde hair with obvious dark roots operated as a symbol of female rebellion against mainstream notions of beauty and control of the body (Cox 1999). Similarly, the practices of hair colouring are often discussed with reference to mainstream ideals around the control and concealment of the signs of ageing (Fairhurst 1998, Kerner Furman 1997, 2000, Symonds & Holland 2008, Weitz 2004). As Frida Kerner Furman (2000 p.16) notes, the older female body is considered 'unattractive and inadequate'. Hence, covering grey hair through colouring is a way of controlling the visible outcomes of ageing; creating and maintaining a coherent self which is acceptable and adequate to outward society. Yet, the practice has to be maintained and repeated if the slippery notion of control is desired.

### **5.3.2 To colour or not to colour**

I argue that it is this constancy of hair colouring practices which drives many women to colour their hair at home, rather than visit a salon:

*Because I just thought if you're having all your hair dyed one colour, what is the point in paying someone to do it because they paint it on with a nice brush. Because it literally (.1) it literally is like £50 to have your hair coloured and it's a fiver to get a colour from the supermarket. And erm (.2) and I'm a bit tight and just thought "I'll just try it."*  
(Vanessa, Focus Group 1)

*I colour my hair now, but that's one thing, where I've drawn the line on cost, cos it's like £80 to get my hair coloured and cut. [So I've started doing it at home now I just can't afford it.]*  
(Rebecca, Focus Group 3)

As these quotes from Vanessa and Rebecca illustrate, one of the main motivators for colouring one's hair at home is cost. Buying a bottle of supermarket hair dye is ten times cheaper than visiting the hair salon. Mintel (2008a) research supports this, highlighting how more women are turning to home colouring because of its relative ease of use and affordability.

Similarly, as the quote below illustrates, time is also an issue:

*Katie: It's the prospect of sitting there for four hours.*  
*Katherine: It's half a bloody day isn't it!*  
*Katie: When I go the hairdressers I can't stand it now! It's a whole morning of a job!*  
(Focus Group 7)

*Yeah just cos it literally takes three hours, so by the time you've got the hairdressers, you sit there, and yeah it just takes so long, and its boring reading magazines, and yeah I just got fed up of it. So it's your whole afternoon on a Saturday or your whole morning.*  
(Lisa, Interview)

I develop time spent in the salon in more detail in the following chapter, however, as these quotes convey, colouring performed in the salon can take several hours. This is compared to colouring at home which can be done within an hour, with none of the waiting around for stylists to become free or juniors to wash off colours. Thus, for many women colouring at home is simply much easier.

### **5.3.3 Limitations, capabilities and risks**

However, home colouring has its own practical limitations, and, as I convey, it is often the 'risks' associated with the practice, which push many women to the hands

of the professional. Firstly, there are the restraints of one's own body in conducting the practice, as the following quote from Verity implies:

*It's like mine, like I've coloured it myself and if you look really closely I probably have got roots, but you can't tell, so who cares you know. I can't see all of it like a hairdresser can, so it's not as accurate. I'm not bothered about it.*

Verity's quote of course could be interpreted as a lack of skill, as well as bodily capabilities. However, it clearly illustrates the constraints the body has on the practices of colouring. Unlike the hairdresser who can see the whole of the customer's head, the person colouring their own hair can only see a limited reflection of themselves through a mirror. Similarly, as with many hair practices, the body physically restrains one from reaching the back of the head. Thus, the practice will never be as accurate.

Nevertheless, even with the help of another home colouring can still be difficult, and sometimes disastrous:

*I did a home colour once. Well Nancy did it for me. It wasn't much darker, but she actually rubbed the whole colour into my roots like that. So I ended up with white here and dark, so I had to run to the chemist and I'd called one of my friend's husbands who's a tricologist, so he's a hair doctor, "What can I do? What can I do?" "Anything that hasn't got peroxide in." So the whole shelf I was like, right which colour "I'll have that, and that and that." And I ended up going home and then putting it on, and it got rid of it. But I literally had like two streaks of white just straight through the roots.*  
(Kelly, Focus Group 8)

Kelly's unfortunate incident with home colouring highlights how a further practical limitation to the activity is a lack of knowledge. Unlike hair washing, colouring involves potent chemicals which react differently to different substances. In Kelly's case, disaster struck because she already had a colour on her hair, hence why at the roots (virgin hair which is more porous) it turned one colour, and on the rest it was another. Thus, particular knowledges are required to successfully conduct the practice of home colouring.

It is a lack of such knowledges and fear of the potency of hair colourant chemicals which deter many women from colouring their hair at home, as the quote from Jennifer highlights:

*But I think I'd be a bit scared doing mine at home. Even though I could see the colour on the box I'd be scared that I'd do something wrong so I personally don't think (.2) you know even if it became really easy, I think I'd rather go and get my hair coloured at the hairdressers.*  
(Jennifer, Focus Group 2)

For others, this fear is expressed through recognition of the temporality of 'permanent' hair dyes:

Helen: *And, I just wondered where the boundary sorts of lies between what you would do at home and what you....*  
Eileen: *Chemicals!*  
Helen: *So would you dye your hair at home? All brown.*  
Eileen: *I'd do like a similar colour, like a bit of wash in wash out, or like a semi, but I wouldn't do a permanent and I definitely wouldn't bleach.*  
(Focus Group 5)

As Eileen identifies, there are vast differences between the permanency (and thus temporalities) of various sorts of hair dye and their affect upon the material of hair. A semi-permanent colour contains few chemicals, and with small molecules temporarily coats the outside of hair, meaning that after subsequent washes it fades and hair returns to its natural colour. Whilst ideal for those wishing to temporarily change their hair, semi-permanents require weekly, possibly fortnightly, re-colouring to maintain their intended shade. Permanents, however, last longer, meaning less maintenance. But as both Jennifer and Eileen's quotes infer, if something goes wrong when using them you are stuck with the results for a matter of months, possibly longer. The only way to erase it is to either let it grow out or re-dye. Thus, I contend that it is the unpredictable and permanent qualities of hair dye, not so much the practices of home colouring, which put women off colouring their hair at home.

I began this section with a discussion on roots, and how collective values attributed to the visibility of roots perpetuates the regular practices of colouring, as part of DIY hair routines. I have argued that, unlike the ubiquity of hair washing, the practice of home colouring is motivated by individual abilities and situations, driving some women to engage with it and others to flee from it. As I have shown,

individual motivations whether to home colour/not home colour, are simultaneously bound up with the temporality and vitality of the palimpsest, the material qualities of hair dye, and the perceived knowledge (or lack of) of the individual. Thus, even though the practices of hair washing and hair colouring are constructed around very different temporal rhythms, tools, technologies, and individual and collective values, they both operate as core practices within the routines of many women's DIY hair projects.

#### **5.4 Rupturing the Routine: Hair Straightening**

So far, I have investigated two key practices which make-up many women's DIY hair care routines. I have exposed how the practices of hair washing and home colouring are constructed around complex value systems, bound together with various temporalities, technologies, tools, knowledges, not to mention, the vitality of the palimpsest of hair. In this section, I will explore the transitory and fragile nature of DIY hair care routines. I will illuminate how ruptures to routines affect the overall DIY hair project and, thus, the battle for the 'coherent self'. As I discuss, such ruptures often manifest themselves as new practices with new associated objects. Equally, they bring with them a requirement for new temporalities, knowledges and techniques. Incorporating them into existing routines becomes a matter of trial and error, and, hence, they also bring a whole host of new anxieties, individual approaches and collective values. To illustrate such a rupture to routine, I explore the practice of hair straightening; a practice steeped in history (see *Appendix A*), which has recently been revived, with great popularity, due to the invention of the ceramic hair straightener. I begin by investigating how the ceramic hair straightener has made the transition from salon to home, and how it has been incorporated into women's DIY hair care routines.

##### **5.4.1 The birth of the ceramic hair straightener**

Since the mid 1990s hair straightening has become a popular practice within many women's DIY hair care routines. As Caroline Cox and Lee Widdows (2005 p.30) note:

*For women, a mainstream look of long straight ironed hair with an almost silicone sheen has popularised in the last few years....*



According to recent Mintel statistics, over a third of UK women own hair straighteners, with under 25s being the prime users (Mintel 2008b). Indeed, out of the 27 women I spoke to only two did not own a pair. Using heat, hair straighteners break-down the hydrogen bonds formed in the cortex of hair which cause it to bend and curl (Galvin & Galvin 1985, Browne 1989). Thus, any waves, kinks and curls are temporarily ironed out of the hair, until it becomes damp again and the hydrogen bonds reform. Initially, the first hair straighteners on the market in the early 1990s were quite harmful to hair because of their metal plates, which had painted on coatings which would peel away, leaving hair susceptible to damage. However, around the early 2000s, hair straighteners with ceramic or tourmaline plates were introduced. These were designed to minimise the damage to hair because of the durability and smoothness of their plate materials. Heating up quickly and offering a constant, even source of heat distribution across the plate, ceramic plates have become almost universal on hair straighteners (Mintel 2008b). The most popular brand of hair straighteners is ghd™, which up until recently could only be bought through recommended ghd™ hair salons (see *Appendix D* for a profile of ghd™).

Like many hair care products and appliances, such as the hair dryer, the hot brush or curling tongues, the ceramic hair straightener began life on the salon floor, before being appropriated into the domestic consumer marketplace. It is impossible to determine one main cause in the hair straightener's transition from salon to home. Reflecting the consumption studies identity-seeker trope that 'you are what you buy,' one could argue that the many celebrities wearing their hair ironed sleek and straight during this time, such as Jennifer Anniston or model Naomi Campbell (Cox & Widdows 2005,) popularised the look and increased the sale of straighteners. As Alan Warde (2005), in his work on consumption and theories of practice, contends, it is practices that create wants and desires, as opposed to objects. Thus, the proliferation of hair straightening on the catwalk, on television and in the salon, led to the proliferation of the sales of the hair straightener for use at home.

However, such arguments tend to ignore the objects themselves and the way they have been designed. As several studies conclude, it is innovators who persuade people that they need objects (see Shove & Hand 2007, Akrich 1992), 'inscribing' a particular 'vision of the world in the technical content of the new object' (Akrich 1992 p.208). The hair straightener, like the more popular hair dryer, (half of UK

women own a hairdryer, according to Mintel 2008b), is an item originally designed for the salon that made the massive leap from professional to amateur. A potential gap/need for an effective home straightener was determined, and, thus, probably with several design tweaks, the product moved from salon to home, enabling the amateur to take on the job of the professional (Shove & Hand 2008, Attfield 2000). Indeed, the recent Mintel report into the UK's Electrical haircare appliance market (Mintel 2008b) states that it was 'the development of the ghd™ brand' 'in the professional market, which assured consumers of its effectiveness and allowed great word-of-mouth to spread into retail and build 'must-have' demand'. In other words, the product sold itself into the domestic market because of its effectiveness within the salon. The same report discusses how customers take advice from their hairdresser on what appliances will achieve that 'salon effect', even if they do not necessarily buy directly from them. The qualities of the object proliferate appliance sales and, therefore, also the practice. Hair straighteners and the practice of hair straightening move from the site of the professional salon to an everyday household item. Nevertheless, this move from professional amateur is not always smooth and successful, but requires specific knowledges and techniques, meaning that not all women who buy straighteners incorporate them into their DIY hair care routines.

#### **5.4.2 Having the knowledge: the amateur tries to become the professional**

As discussed, the hair straightener's appropriation into women's homes can partially be attributed to product development. Using the example of non-drip paint, Shove and Hand (2008), illustrate how the knowledge of the professional has been embedded in the product, enabling an amateur to perform the task to the same result. As they contend (2008, p.78), 'fast-drying, non-drip water-based paints know how to go on to a door.' Similarly, I argue that with the hair straightener, some of the expertise of the stylist in getting hair straight has been embedded in the ceramic straightener through its abilities to heat up quickly, remain hot, and glide over the hair with relative ease. However, despite the hair straightener's inherent abilities to perform as the stylist does, a certain amount of learning is still required on the part of the amateur customer, and the hierarchy between the two remains in force. Even though the hair straightener may 'know' how to straighten the hair, it is still up to the amateur to know how to use it. In other words, they must learn the practice and how to appropriate the tool. Interestingly, when ghd™ hair straighteners are purchased

the customer receives a free DVD and step-by-step guide to using the straighteners (see *Figure 5.1*). Thus, they are provided with a prescribed set of ‘knowledges’ as to how the tool should be appropriated, reducing the opportunity for any unintended uses.

For many customers though, learning how to use their hair straighteners occurs through a process of diffusion from stylist to customer:

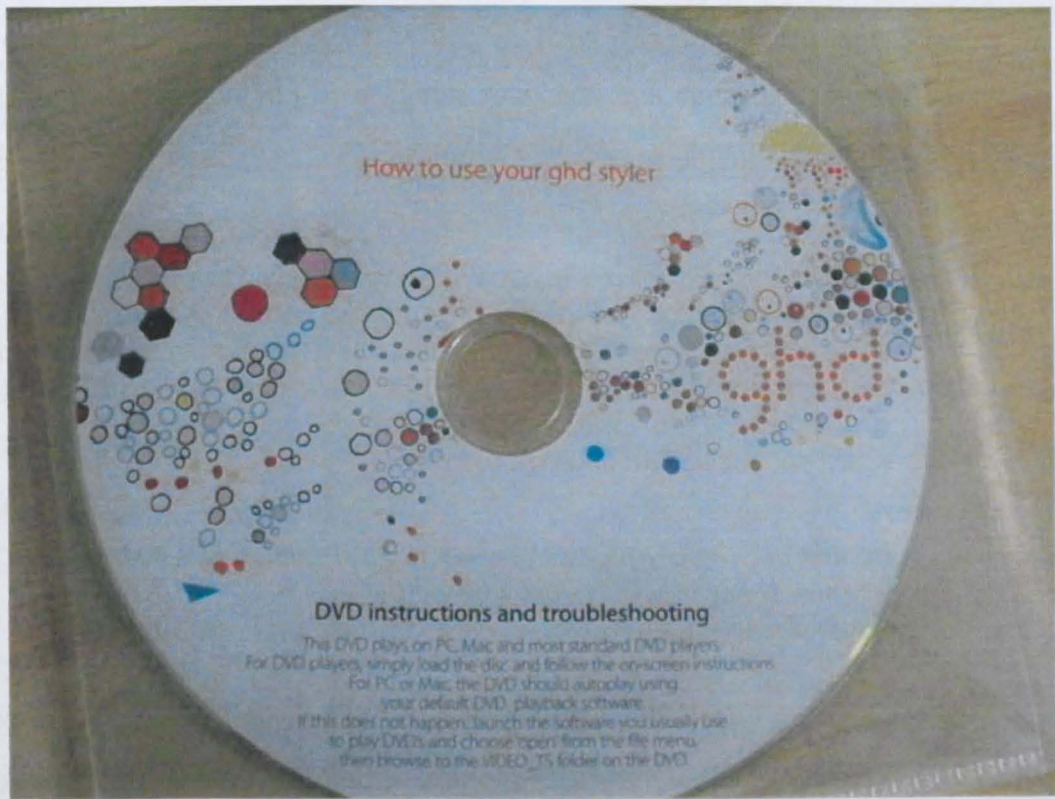
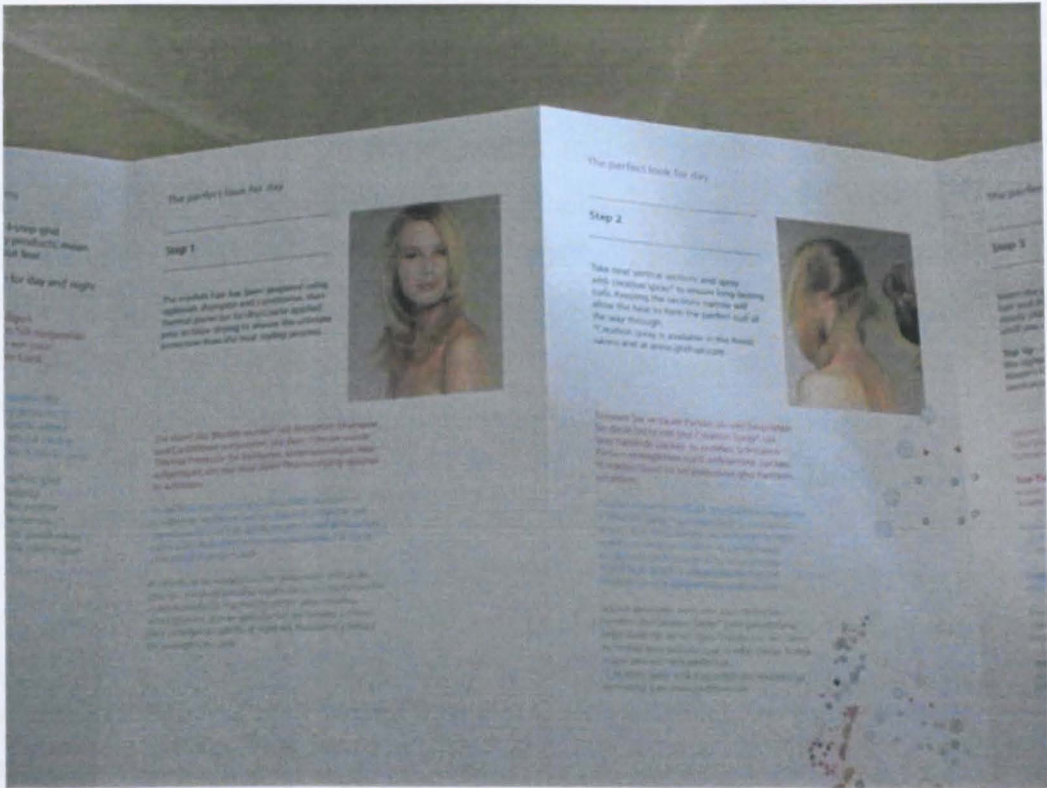
*I sit there and watch in the mirror, watching what she's doing and I think I'm going to do that myself when I get home, but it's never the same!*  
(Charlotte, Focus Group 4)

*But now I'm watching which way she's holding it. Not cos I'm trying to "Oh she's doing that wrong." or anything like that, but more "Oh she's doing it that way!" But it's difficult to think through a mirror well how would I do that.....*  
(Ruby, Focus Group 5)

*Like I do watch what's she's doing, and like she'll always tell me as well how to style it, and stuff.*  
(Nancy, Focus Group 7)



**Figure 5.1 – Photographs of ghd™ Styling guide and DVD**



**Figure 5.1 (cont.) – Photographs of ghd™ Styling guide and DVD**

By observing and taking advice from the stylist, the customer gains knowledge in how to appropriate the hair straightener (see *Video 5* for an example of hair straightening within the salon). This is not to argue that the process of diffusion is simply a one-way transmission. As Wiebe Bijker (1992 p.97), concludes, in his study on the social construction of fluorescent lighting, 'even in the diffusion stage, the process of invention continues.' In other words, design amends are always being made based upon user findings. However, as Marcel Mauss (1992 p.459) discusses with reference to techniques of the body and how practices are learnt, in terms of accomplishing practices:

*The individual borrows the series of movements of which he is composed from the action executed in front of him, or with him, by others.*

Nevertheless, as Charlotte notes, despite watching the movements of the hairdresser her hair is 'never the same' when she attempts to copy the hairdresser at home. This brings us back to the notions of kinetic technique and body centred performance (WacQuant 1995), as discussed in the previous chapter. Unlike the hairdresser and the cathexis they form with their scissors (Attfield 2000), the relationship between the customer at home and their hair straighteners is often somewhat fragmented, disjointed and fumbling. As the following quotes about participant's limitations with straighteners shows:

*There was a young girl working in Kay's shop and she had straight hair and she were doing her own hair and she'd put the straighteners, and she had a comb, so she put's the comb through and then the straighteners after. We can't do that can we!*  
(Carolyn, Focus Group 4)

*I really like the way they straighten it, but I think that's cos they can do the back better, whereas I can only do the sides.*  
(Carla, Focus Group 2)

This is not to say that all of the participants found using hair straighteners difficult. On the contrary, as I shall go on to explore, participant use and deemed ability varies greatly, and thus affects the incorporation of the practice into DIY hair care routines. What I wish to stress at this stage, is that the synthesis formed between the amateur and their hair care tools is significantly different to that between the professionals

and their tools. This is because the knowledge embedded within the hair straightener is still a salon-based expertise. What is more, as Carla's quote conveys, hair straighteners are designed specifically for professional use upon another body. As with the practices of hair washing and home colouring, there are corporeal limitations to the amateur's DIY use of straighteners upon their own hair. The body does not afford us the ability to reach the back of our heads adequately with the straighteners and we cannot see what we are doing. This can only be achieved sufficiently with the aid of another.

As Harvey Molotch and Noah McClain (2008) discuss, in their study on the informal social-material mechanisms of objects used by subway workers, hierarchy is hidden and materialised in the relations between people and objects (see also Knorr-Cetina 1997). Despite the product development of hair straighteners for a domestic market, they are still primarily a salon tool and are designed for use by a professional upon the hair of another. They have distinct similarities to other salon tools in that they light-up, emit heat and require combining with other salon implements, such as a comb, grips to hold back the hair and heat protectant spray (Shove *et al* 2007, Shove & Hand 2007). They need to be held in certain way, applied to the 'right' amount of hair at a time, and in the correct place. In between using, as the next section of hair is prepared, they need to be kept away from surfaces such as the carpets, bedspreads and dressing tables of homes, often hung on appliance hooks or heat resistant shelves in the salon. Thus, even though they may be sold to amateurs, a hierarchy of use remains within them. This ensures that they fit neatly into the salon environment and the skills of the hairdresser working upon the hair of the customer, yet a little more haphazardly into the space of the home and that of a woman conducting her DIY hair routine. As I shall discuss shortly, such incongruence with home DIY hair routines is a principal cause of anxiety about the DIY hair project and the stabilisation of the 'coherent self'.

#### **5.4.3 Individual appropriation: 'I can't live without them'**

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties some women experience in learning how to use straighteners, for some they can become an essential object in their DIY hair routines. In these next two sections, I focus upon the varying experiences of women's attempts to incorporate hair straightening into their hair care routines, with a view to illuminating how new practices rupture routines. I begin by exploring the

experiences of women who have successfully incorporated hair straightening and the hair straightener into their DIY hair routines.

*I have to straighten mine every single day. Even though it's short I still have to straighten it every day.*  
(Nancy, Focus Group 7)

*To the extent that I've been to America twice on holiday and I forget every time I get to America that they won't work and I have to buy some in a chemist....I spent about 100 quid when they first came out from the hairdressers. They were good but they blew up in the end....I loved them so much that I was desperate to do my hair one night and the cord had come out, so I stuck it back in just to do the last bit and got an electric shock!*  
(Eileen, Interview)

As these quotes from Eileen and Nancy illustrate, straightening their hair has become an essential practice within their DIY hair routines. So essential, that when Eileen's hair straighteners 'acted back' (Latour 2000) and stopped working, she took the drastic action of fixing them herself and received an electric shock. Similarly, Mintel (2008b) found that a third of the women they researched claimed they could not live without their straighteners.

For Nancy and Eileen, the values bound up in the straighteners and practice of straightening are primarily to do with the look they can achieve. Nevertheless, if we unpack these values we find that they are sustained by a wide variety of further values awarded the straightener and their newfound place within the DIY hair care routine. In Nancy and Eileen's case, ghd™ straighteners:

*They're unbelievable. They're absolutely unbelievable! They warm up within like ten seconds and it takes me the same amount of time to straighten my hair.*  
(Nancy, Interview)

*Like I've had (.2) I've had (.1) I've spent as much on ghd™ s as I have on other ones, and they've been alright, but ghd™ s are so quick and they feel like healthier cos you're not, cos my hair's so thick, with other ones I'd be doing it for hours.*  
(Eileen, Interview)

Like the shower and its effects upon the temporalities of hair washing, ceramic hair straighteners, in this case ghd™s, are imbued with values of speed, convenience and efficiency. As hair straightening can now take place every day, like showering can, then for some women the practice has become an everyday, essential activity. In other words, straightening can be done, therefore, it must need to be done. Ironically, like the shower, this has probably meant that many women now spend more time straightening their hair than before the ceramic hair straightener was available. Interestingly, Eileen also perceives the speed of the ceramic straighteners as synonymous with being better for her hair, as she is applying heat for a shorter period of time than with other forms of straightener (i.e. non ceramic/other brands). Hence, she feels that the straighteners must damage her hair less, thus, she can use them more frequently. Whilst, there may be some truth in such values, especially given that ceramic plates are better for hair than non-ceramic plates, they ignore the possibility that the hair straighteners are so good because they are so intense. This illustrates how practices can be moulded and adapted around the values which technologies are imbued with.

However, new practices in the DIY hair care routine are also shaped by their position within the routine. As I discussed with regards to hair washing and hair colouring, hair practices are successive, depending on other preceding practices to take place. Hence, hair straightening is a form of styling, and therefore will usually occur after hair washing and hair drying. In turn, alliances and dependencies also form between various tools and objects within the DIY hair care routine (Bijker 1992, Hand & Shove 2007, Shove *et al* 2007). The following quote from hair straightening devotee Nancy, illustrates the complex relations between various practices and objects within her hair care routine:

*Nancy: It's just that this shampoo and conditioner is absolutely awesome on my hair. It just fits with (.2) like I wash my hair erm every morning and condition it like twice, three times a week, and then I literally just put like a bit of spritzer on whilst it's wet, dry it, use my straighteners, ruffle it and it stays. I don't have to do anything else with it. And with other like shampoos and conditioners that I've used in the past it's took quite a bit of effort to get any volume with it. I don't know it just seems to work with like the other products that I'm using.*  
*Helen: That's good. What about other products, is there like one that you have to use?*



Nancy: *Oh God yeah! Lee Stafford's spray wax..... If you said to me "Right you can have two things for your hair, what would they be?" They'd be my ghd™s and my spray wax.*  
(Nancy, Interview)

Nancy's quote highlights the intricate intertwining of practices and objects through the DIY hair routine. Despite each having their own specific tasks and temporalities, no practice or object works in isolation, but instead is reliant, to varying degrees, on all the others. Whilst such alliances illuminate the specificities of DIY hair care routines, these dependencies also indicate the routine's fragility as part of the DIY hair project. A change to one practice or object could disrupt the whole routine, potentially resulting in a threat to one's control over their hair and the maintenance of the 'coherent self'. Although for Nancy and Eileen hair straightening has been successfully incorporated into their hair care routines, as I discuss in the following section, for others the practice has not been so easily integrated.

#### 5.4.4 Abandoned items: 'I don't know what I'm doing with these!'

*I've got my sister's, my sister gave me a pair. Just cos I've not got any.... so I'd tried them once and thought "Oh I don't know what I'm doing with these!"*  
(Charlotte, Focus Group 4)

*I have a pair cos Kay made me buy some. I was 40 when I bought some, cos she kept saying "Have you hair straight. Have your hair straight!" So I bought some when I was 40, and I did have a spell of straightening it and when I look at that, I should have bought you pictures of that, and when I look at that that was horrible. It just looked like a wig! It wasn't me. So I have still got them erm (.3) but no I don't use them.*  
(Carolyn, Interview)

The two quotes above refer to Charlotte and Carolyn's unsuccessful attempts to incorporate hair straightening into their DIY hair care routines: Carolyn because she did not like how her hair looked and Charlotte because she was not confident in her abilities to use them. According to Mintel (2008), three in ten women never get the results they want when styling their hair, and a third of women are disappointed with their hair care appliances. As Shove *et al* (2007) discuss, in their study into kitchen renewal, having and doing are two very different things. Though people may 'acquire new goods to induce desired outcomes' (Shove *et al* 2007 p. 141), often

such practices are ‘unrealised’ and items are abandoned. Unlike Eileen and Nancy, who felt confident in their abilities and were pleased with the outcome of their efforts, neither Charlotte nor Carolyn had the competence and knowledge to use the straighteners to produce their hair in a way they liked. Therefore, the practice and the tool were incongruous with the rest of the DIY hair routine, and were not incorporated as part of their DIY hair care routines.

However, though they may have been abandoned and relegated to life in a bedroom drawer, the influence of the unused hair straighteners and the unincorporated practice remains strong. Their ‘unrealised’ potential (Shove *et al* 2007) can serve as a source of guilt and anxiety for their owners, reminding them of their inadequacy to fulfil their desires or those of their hairdresser (Hand & Shove 2007, Shove & Hand 2003). The following quote from Amber about being unable to curl or straighten her hair illustrates this:

*I think anyone for me who can do sort of hair and make up takes on a sort of guru status anyway....Erm so it's like this kind of mythical art so as a 35 year old woman now, it's like "Oh my God have I got to this age and I just don't know about these things. I'm incapable of using straighteners or curlers or anything ((laughing)). So when I go to a hairdressers I already feel a bit like (.2) you know this is how the other half live. This is how the capable women live. I'm kind of stepping into it.*

(Amber, Focus Group 2)

For others, such as Lena, anxiety stems from being unable to use hair straighteners to their full potential:

*I'd go [to the hairdressers] but that's cos I'm useless. I can straighten my hair, but curling (.3) anything curling I just wouldn't even know where to start and I've got friends that would probably try and do it but I'd rather go to the hairdressers....*

(Lena, Focus Group 1)

Both of these quotes stress the same thing – Amber and Lena’s self perceived incompetence in using straighteners and incorporating specific hair practices into the DIY hair routine. Thus, even though practices are abandoned because of their perceived danger to the fragility of the DIY hair care routine and the maintenance of the ‘coherent self’, anxieties remain because of their abandonment.

As Daniel Miller and Alison Clarke (2002 p.194) discuss, in their study into fashion and anxiety, it is women's concerns that they have an 'inept relation' with fashion that creates anxiety around their clothing choices. In other words, and in a hair context, Lena and Amber feel incapable of using straighteners, hence anxiety is created about doing their hair 'properly'. They feel they should 'live up' to certain images and connotations associated to the hair straightener and the practices it can be engaged in (Banim *et al* 2000, Entwistle 1997, 2001, Shove *et al* 2007, Warde 2005), and when they fail to engage in them anxiety sets in. Such goods and practices are therefore viewed as part of the social fabric of life, maintaining social relations (Money 2007). According to Miller and Clarke (2002 p.197), in such instances:

*Material culture here becomes part of a larger array of objects that include the actuality of other persons and the fantasized image of those persons as "internal objects."*

Friends, family, the hairdresser or the 'capable women' in the salon, are always in mind with respect to anxieties around being unable to use hair straighteners 'properly,' or incorporate popular hair practices into personal DIY hair routines. Hairdressers, in particular, reside in the head, reminding women of how their hair can look with the correct application of the hair straightener. They have failed to live up to the labour stored by the hairdresser in their hair because they cannot recreate the style. The salon haunts the home through the abandoned straighteners and the perceived DIY incompetence of their owners. They are forever reminded of the disparities between their own skills and that of the professional: one able to swiftly produce the desired look, whereby the other continually flounders. As Carolyn (Focus Group 4) describes, 'straight hair's the thing isn't it, you know that everyone aspires to'. The implication being, if you cannot incorporate the practice into your DIY hair routine, or do not want to, then there must be something wrong with you and you are in some way lacking. Thus, whilst practices are rejected because of their perceived threat to the DIY hair project and the maintenance of the 'coherent self', such rejection can manifest itself as a new threat in the form of anxieties surrounding one's capabilities.

#### **5.4.5 'Like you've just stepped out a salon': ghd™**

Using the example of ghd™, in this final section, I will explore how hair care product manufacturers draw upon and exacerbate these anxieties to market their products (see *Appendix D* for a profile of ghd™). I have chosen Clairol's Nice 'n' Easy famous advertising slogan, 'like you've just stepped out of a salon', for the title of this section, to highlight how like many hair care products and appliances, ghd™s are marketed on their ability to produce 'salon' results. In other words, they are promoted as being able to reproduce the labour of the hairdresser. However, as I shall illustrate, with ghd™s the promise of their reproductive capabilities extends much further than most other hair care products.

Whilst promising to give 'salon' results, ghd™s are also endorsed by official ghd™ retailing salons. To buy a pair you must visit an approved hair salon stockist or buy them online at a ghd™ approved online retailer. This endorsement does two things to create an allure around ghds and their capabilities. Firstly, being promoted and sold through hair salons accentuates their abilities to create salon results. Why would salons endorse something that was useless and ineffective to their customers? Secondly, the fact that they are only available from certain hair salons gives them an air of quality and exclusivity, enhancing their promoted 'potential'. This latter point is illustrated by Ruby and Lisa's quotes below about not owning a pair of ghd™s

Helen: *What do your hair straighteners mean to you?*

Ruby: *Not great deal. I've got a pair at the minute, I've never had a pair of ghds. If someone gave me some I wouldn't turn them down. But no the ones I use are eight quid from Tescos, and they do the job.*

(Ruby, Interview)

Helen: *Do you use hair straighteners?*

Lisa: *Yes.*

Helen: *Could you live without them?*

Lisa: *Yes probably, but I would miss them lots...I've got really thin, fine hair so that's why I don't buy ghds, cos I don't think I need them. I mean mine are okay, they cost about 30 to 40 quid.*

(Lisa, Interview)

Ruby and Lisa's acknowledgement that their hair straighteners are not ghd™s, without first being prompted to reveal the make, is illuminative not only of ghd™s revered position as the best brand of hair straightener, but also their exclusivity. As Shove and Hand (2007) discuss, with reference to kitchen possession, people feel obliged to explain the self-perceived inadequacies of their kitchens and why certain

items are missing. Without wishing to infer too much, Ruby and Lisa's explanations that their other branded hair straighteners are 'okay' and 'do the job' are attempts to conceal their disappointment at not owning a pair of ghd™s. As Ruby confirms, she 'wouldn't turn them down' if someone gave her some.

As Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1978 p.110) concluded in their 1970s study on consumption, people are 'more interested in the characteristics of goods than in the goods themselves'. Taken another way, consumers are interested in the branding of goods and the 'status relationships' they are perceived to evoke (Knorr-Cetina 1997 p.15). Of course, such an assumption brings us back to the concept of understanding objects as purely symbolic, rather than also appreciating their substance (Clark 2000, Gregson 1995, 1997, 2002, Gronow & Warde 2001, Miller 1998, Money 2007, Shove *et al* 2007). However, it cannot be denied that ghd™ straighteners are bought not just for how good they are deemed to be, but also because of their exclusivity and endorsed status. Mintel research supports this, stating that consumers perceive ghd™s to be an upmarket brand (Mintel 2008b). Their endorsement by hair salons, as well as 'fashionable' high-profile celebrities, such as Madonna, Jennifer Anniston and Victoria Beckham, only goes to enhance their potential at giving 'salon' results in the amateur space of the home.

However, I contend that this endorsement goes one step further. Alongside certain salons promoting and selling ghd™s, I argue that hair salon staff also endorse the brand through the homogenised straightened styles that they wear. This homogenisation occurs because ghd™ approved salons, such as Kirby's, use ghd™s in the salon upon themselves and their customers. As I have already discussed, salon staff spend a lot of time doing each other's hair, especially when the salon is quiet, so they get plenty of opportunity to practice using ghd™s. What is more, as part of being an official ghd™ salon they receive regular training from a ghd™ sales representative. These representatives are usually former hairdressers who for various reasons have left hairdressing and now travel round to different salons providing workshops on how to use ghd™s and its associated products. The styles the hairdresser's are taught to create are promoted and worn by them in the salon and, in turn, are then recreated upon the customer. The customer then feels compelled to reproduce such styles at home (alongside the various media/brand endorsements) and, thus, purchases a pair of the salon sold ghd™'s. Comforted by their seeming ease of use, salon endorsement, exclusivity and also the included 'step-

by-step' guide and DVD, the promise of such reproduction is great. However, as discussed, this is not always the case, and on many occasions women's inability to use their ghd™s to their full potential is a source of anxiety about their position as 'capable women.'

As Giddens (1991, cited in Southerton 2001 p.181), notes, in a contemporary society imbued with notions of liberation, freedom and choice, ironically we have 'no choice but to choose' an identity for ourselves. The ceramic hair straightener is promoted as 'freeing' the customer from the confines of the salon, allowing them to recreate the homogenised styles they are given by the hairdresser. What ghd™ are effectively doing (as, I should add, are so many other products aimed at women) is marketing their products as part of what feminist, Imelda Whelan (2004), refers to as 'free-market feminism' or fellow feminist, Angela McRobbie (2008) terms 'commodity feminism'. This is where consumer goods are promoted using feminist ideals of choice, freedom and independence (see also Guy & Banim 2000, with reference to fashion). As a hair care tool, ghd™s are promoted as a quick and easy way to take control of one's hair, stilling hair's vitalism and replacing any uniqueness with the fashionable, yet homogenous, sleek and ironed look.

Thus, hidden beneath the promise of 'fantastic' hair, however and whenever you want it, are hierarchies materialised within the hair straightener and manifested through its associated hair straightening practices (Molotch & McClain 2008). Hair straighteners produce an aesthetic labour, which is based around normative expectations regarding the many 'achievable possibilities' of feminine appearance. These 'achievable possibilities' are demonstrated and accentuated by the hairdressers in the hair salon, by celebrities and the media, and are further corroborated by the likes of ghd™'s advertising (for examples of advertising see *Figures 5.2*), DVD and styling guide (*Figure 5.1*). Therefore, the DIY hair project is not just about being in control of the vitality of hair and the constant state of 'becoming' of the body. It is also about producing and maintaining specific and culturally contingent versions of the 'coherent self'. In other words, conforming to a 'coherent social' identity through normalised practice. Washing one's hair every day, colouring every six to eight weeks and maintaining a straight, sleek, ironed style are not solely motivated by the need to control hair's vitality. Rather, the practices and objects hair routines entail, are influenced by a plethora of individual desires, collective norms, technologies, temporalities, knowledges, capabilities, product

branding/advertising, endorsements and influences of others. In the final section of this chapter, I continue this focus upon ruptures to DIY hair routines. However, I turn now to the subtle revisions and refinements individuals make to their routines on an ongoing basis.



*Figure 5.2 – Examples of ghd™ advertising*

## 5.5 Revising Practices/Refining Routines

In the previous section, I focused upon how new practices in the marketplace and new objects, in this case the ceramic hair straightener, were successfully or unsuccessfully incorporated into the DIY hair routine and the anxieties this can produce. In this section, I wish to continue the focus upon hair routine change, but instead explore how individuals make subtle enhancements to their own personal DIY hair routines.

Thus, I argue that operating alongside the ruptures caused by changing fashions, social expectations and collective values, are also individual adaptations and refinements. These produce easier routines, that stabilise the 'coherent self' more effectively. Whilst such enhancements probably take place to routines on a regular basis, in this section I will concentrate upon two situations which have been illuminated by participants. The first of which is being on holiday, and the second changing hair style. I will convey how these two instances involve refining/replacing both practices and tools.

### 5.5.1 Holiday hair

*...cos when we were on holiday, you know what it's like, I've got naturally curly hair so going on holiday and keeping it straight is like fighting a losing battle, so I didn't even bother, but a couple of nights I thought I'll just blast it with the hairdryer, and I just literally got my paddle brush and did it in five minutes. And you know what I thought "I actually think that looks better, than drying it for hours with a brush and curling it under, cos it's just a bit more (1.0) natural I suppose I don't know. So since I've been back of hols I haven't even used my round brush, I've just been getting my paddle brush and then putting the straighteners on for a couple of minutes, and I used to have this piece of hair like by my fringe, that would always fall down on my face, when I'd like straighten it with the brush and it used to do my head in, since I've been doing that since I've been coming home, it hasn't been doing it. I just think I'm going to keep doing it the way I'm doing it.*  
(Jennifer, Interview)

Lisa: *I once had dreads.*

Helen: *Did you?*

Lisa: *Yeah I was in Africa at the time. It took four women four hours to plait amazing dreads into my hair. I had short hair (.1) really short hair at the time and they got blonde dreads and they were down to here. And I had really thin hair so you can imagine the weight....so I was shimmying around....I loved them. I was travelling so it didn't matter.*



Helen: *Would you have them again?*

Lisa: *Only in the same circumstances. I obviously wouldn't go into work with them in.*

(Lisa, Interview)

Aside from the political issues raised by Lisa's experience of having her hair braided whilst travelling abroad, and her discomfort at the thought of wearing such a style in her workplace back at home, what both Lisa and Jennifer's quotes illustrate is the way that a holiday can elicit changes in hair practices. As Maura Banim *et al*, (2005 p.435) conclude, in their study into women and their holiday appearance:

*Exploring different, new images and taking calculated risks with clothes was easier on holiday because if the clothes did not work with the holiday audience then they would not be worn at home.*

I believe that something similar happens with women and their hair practices on holidays. Holidays are supposed to be a time of relaxation away from the stresses of daily life. Therefore, women feel more able to experiment with different looks because they feel more relaxed about the audience and their judging powers. Perhaps, this is because there is a physical distance from the usual perceived objectifying gaze – the hairdresser, in particular, or one's peers and work colleagues. I would also add to this, that there is a temporal difference between styling your hair at home versus when on holiday. Relaxing holidays, such as those described by Lisa and Jennifer, allow more time to try out new hair practices, hence Lisa sitting for four hours whilst her hair is braided. I also contend that on holiday there is more of an 'excuse' if things go wrong. As Jennifer explains, her hair goes curly anyway in the heat, so she does not even attempt to always battle to keep it straight. Likewise, one could be forgiven for not having packed the standard four electrical hair appliances that half of UK women own (Intel 2008b), along with a vast array of hair care products to try to tame hair.

Such opportunities for trial and error with DIY hair care routines do not just occur on the sorts of relaxing, hot, beach type holidays, like Jennifer's, either. As the following quote from Donna illustrates, they can also arise on holidays where there are no mirrors or hot running water:

*When I went backpacking around Peru I couldn't wash my hair. I used to wash it every day, but since then when I had to leave it and use dry shampoo to soak up the grease, I now wash it every other day and instead use a bit of dry shampoo on the day in between.*

As Donna's quote conveys, being away from home can often force a change in DIY hair routines because there is no other option. Leaving her hair was not something Donna would do at home, but with nowhere to wash it in Peru she had to. Yet, rather than having a detrimental effect on Donna's DIY hair routine, she found that she preferred it. Therefore, she incorporated a new temporality to her hair washing practices, along with a new tool of dry shampoo, both of which have continued as part of her DIY hair routine since she returned home. Thus, holidays offer women an opportunity to revise and alter their DIY hair care routines away from the usual strains associated with doing so at home. On holiday, the pressure to maintain the 'coherent self' is diminished, and control over the DIY hair project somewhat relaxed, hence revisions and refinements to routines take place.

### **5.5.2 Changing hairstyles/changing appliances**

Just as Donna was forced to alter her DIY hair care routine whilst on holiday, so changing hairstyles can also force routine changes at home. This has been particularly illustrated by participants' experiences of growing their hair:

*Erm cos at the minute mine's growing out of the bob...I've had enough of it...I just fancy it a bit longer again. So when I'm going out to me it doesn't look right having it down, cos it wants cutting it's sticking out all over the place, hence why it's up at the minute. Erm and I want to have it cut, it needs reshaping, but I'm hanging on as long as can, so that you know I don't have too much off it.*

Nancy: *No. But ask me how long I've been using hair straighteners for?*

Helen: *Go on.*

Nancy: *About 12 months, that's it.*

Helen: *So what were you doing before?*

Nancy: *Not using them cos my hair was shorter, so I didn't need them. And when I started to grow my hair at the back I got some Babyliss ones from Boots, so I thought "I'll give them a whirl," and I'd say about four or five months ago they had a deal on at G&B where if you bought in your old straighteners you get ghd™s and they'd give you £20 off. So that's what I did.*

(Nancy, Interview)

For Nancy and Ruby, growing their hair longer posed a threat to the maintenance of the 'coherent self'. This is causing angst, particularly for Ruby, who describes her hair has 'sticking out all over the place' and being unmanageable. The only way to cope with their changing hair and stabilise the 'coherent self' is to incorporate a new practice, and for Nancy a new tool, into the DIY hair routine. Thus, in these instances, the material affects of the palimpsest take precedence in enhancing and revising the DIY hair care routine.

However, what is also interesting about Nancy's quote is the way she has been able to swap her old hair straighteners for some new ghd™ ones. Whilst, this is revealing of ghd™'s objective of monopolising the hair straightening market (in other words, by giving them your old hair straighteners you can never turn back), it is also illuminative of how women 'hoard' unused/no longer needed hair care items. As the following quotes highlight:

*Oh I do. I stand there and I'm like "Move away from the hair products Carolyn! Cos you don't need any!" I've got loads of products at home. Cupboards full that I don't use.*  
(Carolyn, Focus Group 4)

*You spend pounds, and pounds and pounds on these and end up with loads. Rarely do you find one that's absolutely amazing. So you go for another make next time, it's just like trial and error.*  
(Ruby, Interview)

According to Shove and Hand (2003 p.8), 'people acquire and dispose of material artefacts as their routines and practices evolve.' However, as these two quotes from Carolyn and Ruby illustrate, whilst DIY hair routines may be revised and new practices and objects incorporated, old objects still linger within the home. There appears to be several reasons for this. Firstly, as with hair straighteners, products and tools may be kept because of their 'unrealised' potential. Therefore, they haunt the owner, reminding them of what they could be doing for their hair care routines if they only had the ability to use them properly. Secondly, objects often seem to linger because people have not yet found the time to attempt to incorporate them into their routines. Thirdly, and as illustrated by Ruby's quote, the tools/objects simply may not give the desired 'salon' promised results, but people are reluctant to dispose of them because of the money they have invested in them. Similarly, this investment

within items, also explains why many people keep objects, particularly electrical items, when they no longer require them as part of their hair care routines. For instance, when fashions change or a person's hair changes. Interestingly, this also highlights the cyclical nature of DIY hair care routines and also collective hair practices. Tools and products are kept because of the possibility that they may at some point in the future be needed again, when individual DIY hair care routines alter, or hair fashions change. As Nicky Gregson (2007 p.139) states, in her study on the accommodation of failing kitchen appliances, 'we live with appliances in a relation of continued accommodation'. In other words, even though hair care appliances may become redundant they are valued for their capacities as appliances for the future. Thus, whilst reaffirming the changing nature of DIY hair routines and the effects of collective norms, objects and practices also act as reminders of DIY hair routines past, and potential DIY hair project's of the future.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

I opened this chapter with a quote from a participant, Georg, about the objects she needs to be able to cope with her hair at home, away from the salon. It summarises some of the key themes of this chapter – that women have specific routines to deal with their hair at home and that these routines are constructed around specific practices, objects and tools working together. Throughout the chapter, I have referred to women's hair care routines as being part of a DIY hair project. I have illustrated how this project, unlike a typical DIY project, has no beginning or end, but instead is constant. I have contended that this continuous project to control hair's vitality is part of a wider ongoing body project to maintain, what Annemarie Mol and John Law (2004 p.56) have termed, the 'coherent self'. By focusing upon the intricacies of DIY hair care routines, I have illuminated the plethora of influences upon the battle for the 'coherent self'.

I began by firstly unpicking the practices of hair washing and home hair colouring. Using temporality as a lens through which to explore these practices, I have shown how individual motivations are weaved together with collective expectations. In the case of hair washing, I have demonstrated how values of rejuvenation, restoration, and, in particular, cleanliness and respectability, help to construct the practice and constitute the knowledges and objects required to perform it. In turn, I argue, that these values are affected by other practices, technologies and

temporalities. With home colouring, I have illustrated how DIY hair routines can vastly differ, despite working towards the same goal. Using the example of roots, I have exposed some of the collective expectations which exist around the practice of colouring. However, as I have shown, despite these norms, women's individual values of the practice vary. The decision whether to colour at home is bound up in individual struggles, motivations, knowledges, perceived competencies and, as I have emphasized, the material qualities of the hair dye.

Whilst demonstrating the complexities of women's DIY hair routines, this chapter has also signified their fragile nature. Therefore, the latter half of the chapter has been concerned with ruptures to DIY hair routines, and the consequences they can have upon the DIY hair project and 'coherent self.' Focusing upon the practice of hair straightening and the ceramic hair straightener, I have explored what happens when a new practice infiltrates the DIY hair routine. I highlighted how the transition of a practice and object from salon to home raises specific challenges to DIY hair care routines, particularly in form of adequate knowledges, competences and capabilities. Using participant examples, I have explored the affects of both successful and unsuccessful incorporations. With the first, I have shown how hair straightening can become a key practice, forming dependencies and alliances with other objects and practices within the DIY hair care routine. For the latter, I have conveyed the anxieties which failed incorporations can create. Alongside feelings of frustration and inadequacy, I have argued that abandoned items are a material reminder of the disparities between the owner's abilities to cope with the vitality of their hair and that of their hairdresser's. Thus, the maintenance of the 'coherent self' becomes threatened. Furthermore, using the example of ghd™s, I have examined how the 'coherent self' is culturally contingent, affected by the claims and endorsements of hair care product and appliance manufacturers.

Moving away from ruptures to routines, in the final part of the chapter, I examined the more subtle refinements and revisions which individuals regularly make. I have illustrated how holidays and growing hair out provide, and sometimes force, opportunities to modify DIY hair care practices and amend required objects. Yet, rather than be thrown away, often these objects remain, awaiting another cycle of change within the DIY hair care routine. Thus, this chapter has illustrated the complexity and fragility of DIY hair care routines and how they are constructed by a plethora of influences. It is the multifaceted nature of these routines, constructed

around both individual and collective frameworks, which leads me to question its position within practice-based accounts. According to Reckwitz (2002), there is no room for individuality within practice, but rather everything, from anxieties and emotions to physical activities, are part of collective practices. There is no possession of the individual hidden deep inside. However, as this chapter has illustrated DIY hair care routines are entwined with individual needs, anxieties and temporalities. Therefore, this leaves me at an unresolved crux in my thinking, a matter I will pick up in the concluding chapter. For now though, I remain with the concept of practice to explore what drives the customer's return to the salon.



*I like going out. Like today's the only day I can just flit around on my own, come here, get a taxi back home..... if I wasn't coming here, if I wasn't coming down, I wouldn't come out at all, but I do enjoy my little walk....I don't spend money on anything else, I don't go out, I don't smoke, I don't drink, so this is my little pleasure. It's out of my pension not his!*

(Mrs B, salon client)





**Returning: the hair salon appointment and the temporal practices of hair  
maintenance**

**6. Introduction**

Having had their hair produced in the salon and endured the various moments of production, the customer has then returned home to maintain their hair alone, engaging in the frequent DIY practices of washing and styling. Yet, there comes a time when the vitalism of hair starts to become too much, suggesting they return to the hair salon and the skills of the hairdresser. This penultimate chapter explores the maintenance of hair as exposed by the temporalities of the salon appointment. It continues to build upon the argument put forward in Chapter Five, that whilst hair practices have elements of individuality they are underpinned by collective frameworks. Gregson and Rose (2000 p.434) contend that 'space needs to be thought of as brought into being through performances', not pre-existing to them. Similarly, Merleau Ponty (1962, cited in Davidson 2000 p.645) discusses the concepts of 'lived space' versus 'objective space' with the latter being the 'space of rulers and tape measures', whilst the former is produced through the activities and experiences we engage in. I will argue that temporalities, like spaces, are also brought into being through performances and that objective time, the time of clocks, calendars and diaries, is very different to the vivacity of lived time, incorporating 'a multitude of unfoldings' (Thrift 2004 p.873). As Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift (2007 p.19) conclude, 'repair and maintenance are not incidental activities'. By illuminating the temporalities of hair appointments, I will convey how the performance of time in its widest sense is folded into the maintenance of hair, affecting the values such maintenance is ascribed. According to Paula Black (2002), writing about the importance of the beauty salon in women's lives, beauty practices are not always just about routine grooming, but are motivated by other desires. For many women the temporality of their salon visits appears to be motivated solely by the unique materiality of their hair. In other words, continuing on from Chapter Five, they are driven to the salon because they can no longer cope with hair's vitalism using just DIY practices. However, with closer inspection there is much more involved in such temporalities of maintenance. In this chapter, I will explore

how hair maintenance, as performed in the space of the salon, becomes much more than simply the practical restoration of one's style, cut or colour.

To set the scene, I begin the chapter by exploring such practical restorations of hair and how the material of hair motivates its maintenance. Drawing upon participant quotes, I offer examples of the various ways in which hair's materiality and vitality prompts the wearer to go back to the hair salon. I also illustrate how this materiality has its own temporality through the palimpsest of hair. In the second section, I begin to develop the notion that maintenance is not just about controlling hair's materiality but is intertwined with a whole range of other values. Beginning with Mrs B, I explore how some elderly women have a habitual maintenance appointment each week, giving them the nickname 'The Friday Club'. I argue that such appointments are steeped in historical appreciations of weekend leisure time, and are as much about a collective social outing as they are about maintaining their hair. Staying with Mrs B and 'The Friday Club', I consider whether similar weekly practices of younger salon customers are also ascribed with the same values. Participants, Jennifer and Louise form the focus of the third section, exploring how, for some women, time in the salon is considered a commodity, and an opportunity to 'escape' from their busy lives as working mothers. Employing various studies on women's time and the pressures of time in contemporary society, I contend that working women with families have a lack of quality time. Yet, the salon and the hair maintenance appointment offer them a 'legitimate' space in which to gain some 'time-out' for themselves. Following on from the idea that time in the salon is a commodity, in the fourth section of the chapter I illustrate how the regular maintenance appointment can also be imbued with notions of luxury and pampering. Having focused primarily on some of the positive attributes the temporal experience of the hair maintenance appointment is given, in the fifth section of the chapter I explore some of the more negative ones. Reflecting upon the experiences of participants Amber and Lisa, I discuss how, for some, visiting the salon is seen as a chore, adding to the time pressures of their lives. I introduce the mobile hairdresser as a solution to such problems. In the final section of the chapter, I turn to how hair maintenance appointments can be ruptured by the influence of the calendar. I illuminate how seasonal festivities such as Christmas and Easter, holidays, and even monthly paydays urge some women to change their usual maintenance practices. I convey how in many ways such practices have a collective element.

## 6.1 Material Maintenance

### 6.1.1 Twinkling, greasy, and misbehaving: the material signs hair needs a trip to the salon

The temporality of all hair salon appointments is grounded in the repair/maintenance of hair's materiality: people visit the hair salon to alter or restore their hair one way or another. In Chapter Four, I discussed how the hairdresser's craft was used to still hair's vitalism. And, in the previous chapter, I examined the DIY practices women engage with at home to maintain the vitalism of their hair. I concluded that eventually these practices can become cumbersome and difficult against the growing palimpsest. In this first section of this chapter, I draw upon some of these material motivations for visiting the salon, and the temporalities they encompass. This will then enable me to illustrate how the performance of temporalities through the salon appointment is not solely about maintaining the material of hair.

*I'll notice in the mirror, I'll think "Oh the twinkling, it's time to go to the hairdressers" And that's the most deciding factor.*

(Amber, Focus Group 2)

*I can always tell when mine's growing out because it gets greasy. I'll like wash it and dry it and it will be greasy again. It looks greasy.*

(Lena, Focus Group 1)

*It's due to be cut and I can really tell, it's driving me mad at the moment.... It's all behind my ears tonight. I've got loads of hair here and I've just had to wet it down and put it all behind my ears.*

(Nancy, Focus Group 7)

*For two or three weeks it does exactly what you want it to do. But when it's ready for a cut, like it is now, it just, it doesn't matter what you do it's just...*

(Jennifer, Interview)

All of the above quotes detail instances when participants are no longer happy coping with the materiality of their hair at home, and need a trip to the hair salon. Hair's vitality is exposed through the conjuncture of temporality and materiality. The twinkling of grey hair, greasy roots as a colour grows out, and the annoyance of hair which has grown out of its style, are all material indications that the palimpsest

of hair has exceeded the 'stilling' of its vitalism and must return to the hair salon for some professional maintenance.

### **6.1.2 Temporal patterns**

For some women, they are so in tune with the material qualities of their hair that they ensure they have their next salon appointment booked before the hair begins to become unruly:

*Every five weeks and I'll actually make an appointment in advance. So I'll go to the hairdressers and then make an appointment, cos I can't cope with it when my hair gets too long. I don't like it if the hairdresser is away or anything. It's a crisis if the hairdresser is on holiday.*  
(Rebecca, Focus Group 2)

*I go every six weeks religiously.....once I've had my appointment I book in again.*  
(Lara, Focus Group 2)

For others they wait until it starts to annoy them:

*Yeah I'm the same. Mine is probably about ten weeks. It should be more but it's when my fringe normally gets to, it's quite a long fringe anyway, but it's when it gets too long that I book the appointment, so I don't really think its every eight weeks, it's just whenever I think I need it.....*  
(Carla, Focus Group 2)

*Mine's between every two months and six months. Just whenever it starts annoying me or I feel like it's not going right, I book an appointment.*  
(Margaret, Focus Group 2)

Thus, hair's materiality and how it is experienced corporeally ensure that the temporalities of an individual's maintenance practices remain unique to them. Nevertheless, as I shall go on to discuss, such temporalities are not just about how often a person visits the salon and the material changes in the hair that drive this frequency. Wrapped up in the notion of maintenance, are a whole host of individual, and sometimes collective, motivations for visiting the salon. Such motivations affect not only how often a person visits the salon, but also how they experience time during those visits. In the following section, I illustrate how the weekly shampoo

and set appointment of many elderly women is much more than simply a maintenance appointment.

## **6.2 Weekly Maintenance: Habit, Celebration & Socialness**

### **6.2.1 Mrs B & ‘The Friday Club’**

*I like going out. Like today's the only day I can just flit around on my own, come here, get a taxi back home..... if I wasn't coming here, if I wasn't coming down, I wouldn't come out at all, but I do enjoy my little walk....I don't spend money on anything else, I don't go out, I don't smoke, I don't drink, so this is my little pleasure. It's out of my pension not his!*

(Mrs B, salon client)

Mrs B, is an elderly customer of Kirby's who, as the quote conveys, enjoys her weekly salon appointment with Patricia for a shampoo and set. In her mid-eighties, Mrs B has been having the same weekly appointment for as long as she can remember. The shampoo and set was a popular style in the 1950s, maintained by weekly visits to the hair salon (de Courtais 1973, Trasko 1994, see also *Appendix A*) and it is a habitual practice which has been continued by many older women. Similarly, studies by Anthea Symonds and Caroline Holland (2008) and Frida Kerner Furman (1997), in hair salons frequented mainly by older women (Symonds and Holland in the UK and Kerner Furman in the US), both commented how older women visited the hair salon more often than younger women. Reasons given for this included, being in a routine and staying with their shampoo and set style, a style which requires weekly salon work. However, they also found, and as discussed in Chapter Three, that many older women visited the salon because they could no longer maintain their hair at home.

Interestingly, though, and as *Figure 6.1*, a snapshot of Kirby's appointment figures over two months, illustrates, most of these shampoo and set appointments are close to the weekend, often on a Friday. Participant Heather, the former hairdresser, describes a similar scene on Fridays in the salon which her mother (also a hairdresser) owned:

*My mum was a hairdresser....she moved abroad recently, but for the last 20 years she's had the same clients, at the same time every Friday...They call them 'The Friday Club'...they have their hair done every Friday...ready for the weekend.*

(Heather, Focus Group 8)

'The Friday Club' is not specific to just Kirby's and Heather's mother salon. As both Louise Kapp Howe (1977) and Debra Gimlin (1996) note, in their research in hair salons in America, Friday has historically always been the busiest day of the week. As Heather explains, 'The Friday Club' exists because these women want to get their hair done ready for the weekend. Indeed, Mrs B's habitual shampoo and set appears to originate from a time when she would go out at the weekend, even though these weekend activities seem to have now ceased:

*Parr: Does Mrs B go out on a Friday? Why does she always come on a Friday?*

*Helen: She used to go out but she doesn't anymore.*

*Beth: Yeah cos she used to go out for a meal or the pub or....*

*Patricia: It's cos she's still in that erm sort of....*

*Parr: Routine*

(Salon Focus Group)

Thus, these weekly appointments are not just about maintenance of the shampoo and set, they are also about a clear demarcation between the activities of the week and those of the weekend. This delineation between one part of the week from the other, and the emphasis placed upon Friday, has historical significance.

### **6.2.2 Clock time & Fridays**

The weekly tradition of getting one's hair done ready for the weekend would appear to stem from a bygone era when the working week clearly ended on a Friday, and leisure time began. In 1943 Mass-Observation, a social research organisation which aimed to produce 'a poetry of the people', documenting popular British life and beliefs, published a book titled '*The Pub and the People*' (Harrison 1961, Hinton 2008, Madge 1937, cited in Jeffrey 1978). It was based upon Mass Observation's most famous ethnographic study of 'Worktown', later revealed as Bolton, Lancashire, '*The Pub and the People*' focused solely upon the leisure activities of the

town's people. Alongside chapters on pub locations, interiors and names, one of the main findings of the book was the importance of weekly leisure traditions within the town, and how these traditions were dominated by the factory routine. Mass Observation had found throughout their study that the influence of the factory 'time-clock' affected every aspect of people's lives:

*...the man who works is never wholly free from the restraint of the time-clock. His real leisure begins when the siren or the factory bell announces the end of a day's work, and it ends when the same sound starts another working-day. (M-O A: Worktown 40/C)*

The introduction of the clock into working life powered the relentless routine of the mill, clearly marking out work time from leisure time. Famously discussed by E.P. Thompson (1967), this focus upon 'clock-time', marked the distinction between a pre-industrial, task-oriented society, to an industrial, capitalist one. Thompson dates the introduction of the clock into Britain as early as Elizabethan times. However, it was the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries where the importance of the clock's role grew.

As Thompson (1967 p.69) notes:

*The small instrument which regulated the new rhythms of industrial life was at the same time one of the more urgent of the new needs which industrial capitalism called forth to energise its advance.*

Time became currency which was no longer passed but spent (Thompson 1967). Hence, *'The Pub and the People'* concluded that Friday, pay day for factory workers, was of 'fundamental' importance within the week's trajectory, and 'a constant of interest' because of 'its consequent economic and leisure release for the weekend' (M-O A: Worktown 40/A & 41/A ). Such leisure activities included a number of 'habits', described as 'marking out the weekend' from the rest of the week (Harrison 1943 p.119).

Preparing one's hair for the weekend appears to have been such a habit:

*All the machinists and everybody used to come in on a Friday morning with their hair in rollers and a headscarf on and they used to sit at machines doing their sewing, with their hair in rollers, ready to go out*



*Friday night....Friday night was party night wasn't it. They went out Friday and Saturday (Carolyn, Focus Group 4)*

This description of Fridays in the factory has been recounted to participant, Carolyn, by an older female factory colleague, and has not been witnessed first-hand. Nevertheless, it provides a good insight into how important preparing one's hair for the weekend was for factory women of the 1940s and 50s, and also, interestingly, how the weekend leisure routine could seep into the weekday factory one – leisure time permeating clock time. According to other focus group participants, it wasn't just women in factories who prepared their hair ready for the weekend either, office workers were also known to wear rollers to work. Similarly, several participants discussed how they had been told that their working mothers and grandmothers would visit the hairdresser weekly, on a Friday or Saturday, for a shampoo and set, just as members of 'The Friday Club' still do.

Thus, these Friday rituals preserved by elderly women are not just about the maintenance of their shampoo and set, they are about maintaining a much wider set of traditional habitual practices. Drawing upon the work of Raymond Williams (1977), the style of 'The Friday Club', the shampoo and set, can be deemed archaic, the weaker part of the tradition, which is consciously revived during these Friday appointments, such as Mrs B's. However, the strong sense of the tradition lies in the residual nature of the weekly, habitual practice of getting your hair done ready for the weekend, a practice which was formed in the past, but still operating as an effective element of the present.

### **6.2.3 Collective community practice**

For Mrs B and many members of 'The Friday Club', the preparation for going out at the weekend has now become the outing itself, as their weekend leisure activities have dwindled. As Mrs B's earlier quote emphasizes, her weekly visits to the salon are her 'little pleasure' and without them she 'wouldn't come out at all'. Kirby's owner, Patricia, confirms the social aspect of Mrs B's appointment:

*Do you know why Mrs B comes to us? She can go down the road and get a shampoo and set for £6, but the only reason she comes to us is because she gets asked if she wants a cup of tea, she gets treated nice, and she always gets her coat put on.*

*(Patricia, Salon Focus Group)*

As the studies by Symonds and Holland (2008), and Kerner Furman (1997, 2000) conclude, for many elderly women their weekly salon appointment is something of a social event, an opportunity to meet up with the same group of women each week. Therefore, there is also a collective community element to the weekly maintenance of the shampoo and set appointment. Heather (Focus Group 8), the former hairdresser, corroborates this adding that members of 'The Friday Club' organise Christmas parties for their members and always go out for somebody's birthday. As Caroline Cox and Lee Widdows (2005 p.66) conclude, discussing the popularity of the perm over the last 70 years, going to the salon offers women 'a real sense of community'. This sense of community is fostered by these individual, habitual performances of weekly maintenance, which assemble together to create 'The Friday Club' and with it a specific and mutually interdependent temporal and spatial performance of the salon. Thus, the habitual maintenance of elderly women's hair is not just about restoring their shampoo and set style for another week, but is intertwined with notions of community, celebration and the preservation of traditional appreciations of leisure and work. Nevertheless, as I shall move on to discuss, elderly women are not alone in their habitual weekly appointments.

#### **6.2.4 Katie: a new generation of 'The Friday Club'?**

*I go every other week to get it washed and blown....if I've got something on then I'm there. If I've got a busy weekend then I'm there.*  
(Katie, Focus Group 7)

Katie is in her early thirties, and like many other young and middle-aged women, will visit a salon on a regular basis for a wash and blow. Similarly, Yvonne (Interview participant), a client of Kirby's, told me how she had had her 8.30am, wash and blow, Saturday appointment for the last two years, and Heather (Focus Group 8), the former hairdresser, mentioned how Saturday, in the salon where she worked, was 'wash and blow day' with the last 'five or six slots' being 'the same client in every Saturday'. This trend is confirmed in *Figure 6.1*, which clearly shows the increase in customers for wash and blows (blow waves) around the weekend. Thus, alongside 'The Friday Club' shampoo and sets, is another habitual group, in this case made up of younger women carrying on the tradition of visiting a salon

sometime near or around the weekend to get their hair done, in preparation for the weekend's leisure activities. The difference with these women is, like Katie, they are actually going out.

However, the motivations behind these regular blow wave appointments also seem to differ. As discussed, for the original 'Friday Club' visiting the salon on a Friday is about a social occasion, a celebratory end to the week, just as much as it is about the maintenance of their hair. Yet for this new generation, even though they may visit the salon to prepare their hair for the weekend, the appointment is very much grounded in weekly maintenance:

*I know so many people who do. Twice a week they go. I know loads of people that do, that don't even wash there own hair, ever, ever, ever!*  
(Louise, Focus Group 8)

*I do that with mine. If I go and have it washed and straightened at the hairdressers I do not have to touch it for four days. You've seen me on holiday haven't you? If I have it done before I go on holiday I don't touch it for like four days.*  
(Katie, Focus Group 7)

*My Aunty Trish doesn't. Every Sat morning she has an 8.30 appointment in Anytown, and she has it all done, she has it dressed to perfection, and gunk and hairspray and whatever .....And from leaving on the Sat, you know how perfect it is, she doesn't have to wash her hair because it stays in place.*  
(Kelly, Focus Group 8)

In these instances, having weekly blow wave appointments is more about maintaining the style of the hair so that the customer does not have to, than any social or celebratory aspect. For Kelly's Aunty Trish and the people that Louise knows, hair washing and styling only ever take place in the salon, hence they never have to engage with them at home as DIY practices, as discussed in Chapter Five. For Katie, getting her hair done professionally is beneficial because it means a longer gap before she has to do it herself. Of course, there may be other underlying reasons for such habitual maintenance practices: lack of ability to do one's hair at home, preferring the way the hairdresser does it, or the convenience of having someone else do it, or simply laziness. As Parr (Salon Focus Group) disdainfully remarked about one particular client, Coral, who visits the salon three to four times a week, 'she

can't even be arsed to pick up a pair of straighteners to go over it.' Thus, even though the habitual weekly styling practices of younger salon customers do form part of their preparation for the weekend, they are driven primarily by personal maintenance needs. They are not motivated by the promise of a collective, social encounter with others, as Mrs B and 'The Friday Club' are.

### **6.3 Regular Maintenance: A Disguise for 'Time-out'**

#### **6.3.1 Jennifer & Louise**

*Yeah as soon as I've made my appointment I make my next one – eight weeks and it's in about two weeks time and I'm always looking forward to it. I can't wait.*

(Jennifer, Focus Group 2)

*Kelly: But is it something for you to look forward to as well in your diary?*

*Louise: Yes. Cos I get six weeks and then I get four hours of just me...*

(Focus Group 8)

Jennifer and Louise are two young mothers who combine part-time work with bringing up their children. Both of them, like many other women, visit the salon regularly to keep their hair maintained. However, as both of the above quotes illustrate, getting their hair done is not just about maintaining the material of their hair. Like Mrs B, visiting the salon is something they really look forward to.

However, the motivations for their regular appointments are very different to those of Mrs B and 'The Friday Club':

*I think because I've got such a busy life at home and with the kids and I never have like a minute to myself – I'm like it's my time. And I love it! And I love it once the colour has gone on and they give me like a magazine and make me a cuppa and I think "I wish this lasted longer."*

(Jennifer, Focus Group 2)

*My hairdresser thing now, having babies, is an escape. So when I go I want to feel like the kids are wherever they are and they're just fine.*

(Louise, Focus Group 8)

As these quotes illustrate, for Jennifer and Louise, going to the hair salon is not just about getting their hair maintained, it is about 'escaping', a word used frequently throughout the research with female participants with young families. Jennifer (Interview) likened her trips to the salon 'as an escape from the chores of mundane life', highlighting how the salon is a place to get away from the harassment of daily life and the needs of others. Unlike Mrs B and 'The Friday Club', Jennifer and Louise do not go to the salon to meet with other women, or for a social occasion. Similarly, unlike Katie and Denise, they do not go to get ready for the weekend or for the weekly maintenance of their hair. They go to the salon to relax and to escape from the demands their family and work put upon them.

### **6.3.2 Women's time**

The 'dual burden', the 'double burden', the 'second shift', the 'double day', are all phrases used to describe the time pressures that working women with families, such as Jennifer and Louise, face (Bitzman and Wajcman 2000, Jurczyk 1998, Shaw 1998, Hervey & Shaw 1998, Hochschild, 1997). Hochschild's (1997) well known research on female employment in a large American organisation concluded that women are subject to three shifts of work. The first of these is paid work, which, with increasing hours and competition, subsequently limits the time available for the second shift of household duties. This then leads to the need for the creation of a third shift of quality time spent with the family. Similarly, Jenny Shaw (1998 p.392), writing about gender and the pace of life, concludes that it is women's 'pivotal role in the family which produces the frantic pace of their lives'. Using Coser's (1974) term to describe the 'greedy institution' of family, Shaw (p.392) discusses how women with families are expected to be 'all things to all people', not only arranging their own schedules but that of everyone around them as well.

Both Jennifer and Louise identify their positions as mothers as being the key factor in the increasing harriedness of their lives. As Louise indicates, she only feels like this since having babies. According to Jurczyk (1998), writing about time in women's lives, it is the social construction of women as carers which is to blame for women's experiences of such time pressure. Conservative writings from the nineteenth century, such as those of the Victorian social commentator, Catherine Beecher (1841, cited in O'Malley 1992 p.352), urged women not to squander time and that a woman's temporal virtue depended upon her 'obligations to arrange the

hours and pursuits of her family'. Jurczyk (1998 p.299) describes how in contemporary society women are still 'expected to be responsible for the needs of others', be that the needs of children, partners, siblings or parents. They are thus described as 'time-less' or 'time makers', but never 'time users' (Shaw p.394). Women's time is described as cyclical, task-orientated, even 'pre-industrial' in E.P. Thompson's (1967) famous essay, involving the co-ordination of multiple tasks at once (Bitzman and Wajcman 2000, Sullivan 1997). Due to 'moral and normative expectations'(Southerton *et al* 2001 p.7) their time is subject to greater interruptions (Sullivan 1997), and they are much more likely to waste time on unproductive tasks. For Jennifer and Louise, they have very little quality time to themselves, thus their time in the salon is 'time-out' from their role as mother and worker.

### **6.3.3 Time as a commodity**

This idea of 'time-out', 'escapism', 'time away' from one's everyday responsibilities, which the salon offers, is similarly reported in other salon studies. Gimlin (1996 p.518), in her research in a hair salon, narrates how clients refer to their visits to the salon as their 'only time to relax and be pampered'. Black (2002 p.16) describes how the beauty salon 'offers pleasure, escapism, a means of 'coping''. In another study, Sharma and Black (2001 p.918) refer to the beauty salon as offering women 'switch-off time'. Whilst, Roberts (2008 p.444), though not focussing upon salons in her research, also employs the term 'me-time' to convey quality time for oneself. Roberts (2008) argues that the qualitative nature of 'me-time' is indicative of a change in the Tayloristic principle that time equals money, in other words 'clock time'. She claims that 'me-time' can be perceived as having 'value in itself' (2008 p.448), thus eroding the traditional 'work', 'leisure' ('life') boundaries. On the contrary though, Roberts's references to the sorts of activities considered 'me-time' would seem to suggest a more complicated picture, as would my own research from the salon. Roberts's participants listed 'me time' as involving activities such as going to the gym, swimming, cycling, painting fingernails – all activities which at some level require consumption, and money to be spent. Thus, whilst the time used to perform these activities does have 'value in itself', in that people gain pleasure from them, money still has to exchange hands for them to take place. Whether that exchange occurs at the point that the activity takes place (swimming, gym), or is prior to it (cycling, painting fingernails) some form of

spending is required. As Black (2002 p.5) concludes, 'time is the commodity being bought in the salon'. Many of the activities which take place in the salon (both beauty and hair) could be done at home. It is because the salon offers women, like Jennifer and Louise, a portion of clock time where they can be undisturbed that it becomes absorbed with these notions of 'escape' and 'time-out', and something women are very willing to pay for.

#### **6.3.4 Legitimate time**

Furthermore, this time is classed as 'legitimate' time in respect of the opinions of others, due to its disguise as a routine maintenance/grooming appointment. As Jurczyk (1998 p.291) contends, any time women gain outside of the family and employment 'seems to have been appropriated in the face of opposition from all other family members'. Thus, they must 'legitimate' the time they spend away from the role as carer to evade a guilty conscience of not fulfilling their duties. Drawing upon societal expectations surrounding an appropriate feminine appearance, as discussed in Chapter Five, a visit to the hair salon for some 'time-out' can easily be disguised as essential feminine grooming, even if the grooming is the lesser of the two priorities. The salon's institutional setting, seemingly operating within the constraints of clock time and requiring financial remuneration, only acts as a further justification.

The fact that many of the women I spoke to were quite happy to spend longer than actually necessary in the salon, only illustrates this point further:

*You know sometimes when they say "Oh sorry we'll be with you in a few minutes." I'm like "It's fine, take your time. Don't worry." I do I love it. It's like a little relax and a little break, it's lovely.*  
(Jennifer, Focus Group 2)

*[My hairdresser] is dead slow. But I don't care because I've got kids.*  
(Louise, Focus Group 8)

Jennifer and Louise are quite happy to effectively 'waste' time in these circumstances because this time is perceived as 'legitimate' time and the operations of the salon beyond their control. Interestingly, as I shall go on to develop in the following section of this chapter, in contrast, it is this 'wasting' of time in the salon which infuriates some women, particularly those without families. Thus, for Jennifer

and Louise, their regular hair appointments are about maintaining their hair, but more importantly for them they are about having a break from their 'harried and hurried' lives (Southerton *et al* 2001). The perceived maintenance of their hair appointments affords them the opportunity to do this.

## **6.4 The Luxury of Maintenance**

### **6.4.1 Pampering**

In keeping with the idea of salon time as 'time-out' from the pressures of daily life, many participants also spoke of time spent in the salon as 'pampering':

*You see that's part of why I like going to visit a salon. I like going in and feeling a bit pampered.*

(Katie, Focus Group 7)

*Like it's a bit of pamper time and like for me, I don't get any time to myself at all. That's the only thing I do where I can go and not have to worry about anything else for like 2 hours.*

(Verity, Focus Group 1)

This concept of feeling 'looked after', 'special', is part of the appeal for some women in visiting the salon for their regular maintenance appointment. For Verity and Katie, they have families to look after and busy jobs, just as Jennifer and Louise do, and going to the salon is about someone looking after them for a change. Similarly, Sharma and Black (2001, see also Black 2002), studying beauty salons, also found that the term 'pampering' was used a lot within the beauty salon by both staff and clients to describe some of the values placed upon the experience of salon time. As Hilary Radner (1989 p.306), talking about women's make-up routines and the purchasing of make-up products, discusses:

*...women are also buying an activity....The goal is not an exchange of material goods or attributes but the creation of an affectivity of effect. If a woman takes pleasure in making up she receives the product for which she is paid.*



Even though this quote relates to personal make-up activities, it helps to highlight how the experience of buying time as a commodity for oneself from the salon creates the feeling of being pampered. In the case of the salon appointment, there is a material exchange in the form of the maintenance of their hair. However, the experience is much more than simply something material. It is also wrapped up in an array of positive feelings and attributes.

#### **6.4.2 Paying others**

Furthermore, many of the activities which women make appointments for in the salon could be done at home. As I discussed earlier, and also in Chapter Five, washing and styling are practices most women engage in at home. Yet, some, such as Katie and Coral, choose to pay the hairdresser to do them for them. Similarly, DIY colouring, highlighting and, even, perming are now possible with the advent of home kits, as sold in chemists and supermarkets. However, it is the luxury of paying someone else to do these things that adds to their appeal:

*I buy the convenience and the skills of her as the hairdresser to do it.*  
(Kelly, Focus Group 8)

Many of the participants I spoke to described washing and styling their own hair, as something of a 'chore'. Several admitted that if they had the money they would like to join 'The Friday Club' and get it washed and styled every week:

*I'd love to. I know so many people who do. Twice a week they go.*  
(Louise, Focus Group 8)

*If I wasn't a hairdresser though I would go somewhere and have my hair done every week. Washed and straightened. Yeah I would.*  
(Beth, Salon Focus Group)

As these quotes emphasize, the luxury aspect of paying someone to do your hair is accentuated when the practices involved are things you could do at home yourself. It is about having the money and time to be able to do these things. For some, visiting the salon really is a luxury dependent upon whether they have the money or not:

*Yeah I go when I've got spare money. Or I'll ask my mum and dad to buy it for my birthday, if I'm really that short of money.*  
(Lena, Focus Group 1)

*I've cancelled cos I'm broke.*  
(Lisa, Focus Group 2)

Such quotes illuminate how getting your hair done is not just luxurious because of the feelings of pampering it induces, or the fact that you are paying a professional to do something you could do yourself, but also because it is a practice some women often struggle to afford. Thus, when they can afford it, it becomes an extravagance. Hence, wrapped up in the notion of the maintenance of hair, as experience through the salon appointment, are also numerous values surrounding luxury and pampering. However, for some participants, visiting the salon is a 'chore', as I develop in the next section of this chapter.

## **6.5 Pure Maintenance and Time Wasting**

### **6.5.1 Amber and Lisa: wasting time**

For some, a visit to the salon for the maintenance of their hair is entwined with perceptions of boredom and a waste of time:

*Amber: Yeah it's (.2) I just find it like really boring....it's just a whole load of faffing around, sticking highlights in your hair, doing an all over colour and you sit there looking like some kind of idiot with all this stuff in your hair....And so yeah I like the head massage bit but other than that it's just like two – two and half hours where I'd rather be doing something else.*

*Lisa: I'm with Amber. I kind of stopped having highlights because it just took too long. I just couldn't be arsed sitting there for three hours on a Saturday afternoon.*  
(Focus Group 2)

Both Amber and Lisa work full-time and do not have any children. Weekend is the only 'leisure' time they get, and they do not want to 'waste' it stuck in a salon. Ironically, for women such as Amber and Lisa, time is also perceived as a commodity, as it is for the working mothers Jennifer, Katie and Louise. As Dale Southerton (2003 p.12) portrays, discussing how people attempt to 'squeeze time',

'utilizing' one's time is a 'duty to the self' to ensure it is not wasted. However, for Amber and Lisa the commodity of time and the subsequent experience of time-out, is not something they wish to purchase from the salon. Lisa and Amber visit the salon purely for maintenance purposes. In Lisa's case, she has even changed her hair practices and stopped having highlights because she could not cope with sitting in the salon for so long when she could be 'doing something else'.

Appointments at the salon are a necessity, a maintenance activity Lisa and Amber feel they must undertake, even if they are just 'a whole load of faffing around'. Thus, the personal value placed upon the maintenance appointment and how that time is experienced for these working women, is very different to the values afforded it by the working mothers. This is possibly because working women without children do not have to 'legitimate' their time to anyone, as Lisa notes, speaking about Jennifer:

*I guess with Jennifer it's timeout for her, she gets to read a magazine in peace, whereas I don't have that, as I don't have kids.*  
(Lisa, Interview)

As Lisa discusses, her time is her own, she is used to being in control of it and doing with it what she pleases, whereas for Jennifer her time is rarely her own, yet visiting the salon is means of gaining some control.

### **6.5.2 Control**

Southerton (2003 p.12) describes time as a resource requiring 'personal control', if this control is relaxed then time can be wasted. For the working mothers, they control the harassment and 'harriedness' that time brings, through time-out in the salon. However, for working women without families, autonomy over their own time and schedules is something they are accustomed to, as are many young people (Southerton *et al* 2001). In many cases, for these women, time experienced in the salon is a nuisance. As Amber highlights, using the example of when the salon is running behind schedule:

*I find it really boring because they're, even though it's one of my friends, they never run on time so you've always got (.2) they're always ten minutes late.... (Amber, Focus Group 2)*

Whilst, Jennifer and Louise enjoy the extra 'time-out' when their hairdresser is running late, Amber finds it frustrating. This is because of the women's different interpretations of time as a commodity, and what constitutes valuable ways to spend time. Significantly, Amber and Lisa are probably more likely to experience the salon running behind than Jennifer and Louise, simply because the only time they can visit is on a Saturday when salons are busiest. Jennifer illustrates this well, talking about the difference between her previous pre-family Saturday appointment, compared to her post-family Thursday one:

*Before I had the boys and I was working full time I always used to go on a Saturday morning....Like on a Saturday morning it can be a bit busy and a bit frantic, but not Thursday morning, it's all dead nice and chilled. They don't rush you or anything, cos sometimes on a Saturday you can feel a bit rushed, but I've never felt like stressed or rushed or anything like that.*

(Jennifer, Interview)

### **6.5.3 Hot and cold spots and time bubbles**

Amber's annoyance at her hairdresser running late is due to the feeling that her maintenance appointment with the salon is 'eating' into her own time. Southerton *et al* (2001 p.10), refer to periods such as this as 'unanticipated holes of inactivity'. Jurczyk (1998 p.294) calls them 'time bubbles'. These pockets of seemingly 'lost' time may exacerbate the feeling of being harried as tasks planned for subsequent periods of time become threatened. Using what he terms 'hot and cold spots', Southerton (2003 p.19) identifies ways in which people attempt to control time so that they can get tasks done in specific blocks of time (hot spots), subsequently then allowing them periods of rest and relaxation (cold spots). However, as Southerton discusses, the boundaries between hot and cold spots are fluid, and what is originally deemed a cold spot can quickly transform into a hot spot when external factors come into play. This concept can be used to discuss Amber's frustrations at being kept waiting. Visiting the salon is an activity she wants to get done within a specified length of clock time, allowing her to then spend the rest of her day doing what she wishes. Thus, going to the salon is the hot spot, and the activities preceding cold. Yet, when Amber is kept waiting by the hairdresser the hot spot starts to encroach on the cold spot and Amber's relaxation time is threatened, hence her frustration. Therefore, what this is fundamentally about is the struggle to co-ordinate personal

temporal rhythms with the institutional ones of the salon, through the hair maintenance appointment.

#### **6.5.4 Mobile maintenance: a way of controlling time**

As the following quote from Kirby's stylist Parr explains, running behind on a Saturday is part of the course and something the hairdressers are used to:

*I've got to the stage now where if I'm running behind, there's nothing you can do. Panicing about it's not going to help, just do what you can do if someone can't help you.*

(Parr, Salon Focus Group)

Nonetheless, in Amber's view, what is a routine part of the institutional rhythms of the salon is effectively breaking the 'temporal normative conventions' which she personally works towards (Southerton 2003 p.17). Thus, Amber's personal temporal network does not map on to that of the salon, and a conflict situation arises, hence her frustration.

However, some participants appear to have found a solution to offset the 'time-wasting' they believe occurs with their salon appointment:

*When you have a mobile hairdresser, if they were 10-15 minutes late starting, you'd probably just unload the dishwasher, or cut the potatoes up, whereas if you're going in the salon and she's behind, you've got to sit there haven't you and wait. Erm so you can be 15 minutes before you even start having your hair done.*

(Carolyn Interview)

*I have mine done at home, my friend comes and does it at home. So (.2) I find that easier for me, just cos I find it's easier for me to say "Yeah I'm off, can you fit me in whatever time during the day, and she comes to me. (Vanessa, Focus Group 7)*

Having your hair done at home means time is not 'wasted'. If her hairdresser is late, Carolyn will simply use the time to get on with another task. For Vanessa, it means she has greater flexibility in arranging her appointment so it suits her. By having a mobile hairdresser, Carolyn and Vanessa have greater control over temporal arrangements. They are not bothered about the social side of the salon, or using it as an opportunity to 'escape' for a while and feel pampered. Having a mobile

hairdresser is about convenience. The boundaries between tasks can be eroded and blurred, meaning that their time is perceived to be used more efficiently (Southerton & Tomlinson 2005). As the hairdresser only has to focus upon them during her visit, she is not bound to the rhythms of the salon, dealing with other customers, answering the phone and helping other members of staff. Similarly, due to the absence of the mirror and the gaze of others, having a mobile hairdresser ensures the benefits of having a unique relationship with your hairdresser, without experiencing any of the potential anxiety of visiting the salon or encountering any of the juniors' script work.

The values ascribed to the maintenance appointments of Amber and Lisa, and Carolyn and Vanessa are in sharp contrast to those of Jennifer and Louise or Mrs B and 'The Friday Club'. For the former (Amber, Lisa, Carolyn and Vanessa), it is about controlling the time spent, whereas for the latter (Jennifer, Louise, Mrs B and 'The Friday Club') there is an element of letting time run away and enjoying the moment. Thus, the choreographies of people's lives are illuminated through their approach to the hair appointment; with lifestyle, and often life stage, dictating the maintenance of hair. Interestingly, and especially in the case of the mobile hairdresser, the choreographies of the hairdresser's life are also illuminated through their choice of hairdressing role. As I have already discussed in Chapter Three, few hairdressers, other than those who own salons, are past the age of 40. According to Habia (2008), only 18.5% of the hairdressing population is aged over 45, and only 28% are part-time. This once again highlights the difficulties in getting salon work after a certain age and in turn emphasizes that there are issues with finding part-time salon work and flexible arrangements for working mothers. Therefore, mobile hairdressing, even though it only accounts for 5% of the hairdressing industry (Habia 2007), does offer the ageing hairdresser, and those with family commitments, an alternative source of employment. In addition, being a mobile hairdresser ensures freedom from the prescribed forms of labour at work within the salon, particularly the competitive aspects of aesthetic labour and the pressures to be young and fashionable. Leaving behind these various experiences of time in the salon and the subsequent values hair maintenance becomes ascribed with, I now turn to explore how maintenance practices can be ruptured by seasonality and the influence of the calendar.

## 6.6 Ruptures to Maintenance: Seasonality, Festivities & Payday

### 6.6.1 Christmas

As *Figure 6.2* shows, there is marked increase in the number of customers for appointments of all types leading up to 25<sup>th</sup> December, Christmas Day. Correspondingly, all of the female participants I spoke to (and some of the male participants) made an effort to get their hair done for Christmas:

*I try to get it done for Christmas but it's (.2) it's normally a few weeks before Christmas but just so (.3) I don't know why because my family see me all the time. I think you just think at Christmas you have to look nice.*  
(Carla, Focus Group 2)

*I try and time it so it is. I mean I wouldn't have an extra cut because I'm getting my hair cut so frequently, or just maybe go a week later then, but I will time it for Christmas, so it fits in with going out over Christmas time and stuff.*  
(Rebecca, Focus Group 3)

*I'd usually have it done at least you know probably a couple of weeks before Christmas.*  
(Ava, Focus Group 4)

Timing one's hair for Christmas often involves disrupting its usual routine. As Rebecca, who normally books her appointments every five weeks, notes, she would maybe leave it a week longer so she could time it with Christmas. This would be in spite of it then annoying her because it was getting too long. As Rebecca goes on to explain, she is willing to do this then her hair is ready for 'going out over Christmas time.' Similarly, Carla makes reference to it needing to 'look nice' because of the occasion. Thus, in many ways the aim of getting your hair done in time for Christmas is similar to the original aim of 'The Friday Club', and that of Katherine and the weekly blow wave customers. It is about looking nice for any ensuing 'going out' activities. Yet, in these instances the biography of hair conflicts with the temporalities of the calendar.

Interestingly, returning to Mass Observation, they also made similar parallels between weekend 'going out' activities and those of Christmas and Easter:

*Saturday night is what is left in our culture of the old orgy, the recurring unrepression. It is a small weekly edition of the major Easter, Christmas, New Year and Whitsun orgies, the great religious festivals, pre-Christian and taken over by Christianity, key points in the cycle of the Industrial Year today, days that to the majority of worktowners no longer have anymore conscious religious significance than does Sunday, but are days of release from the factory routine.*

(Harrisson 1943 p.122)

Referring specifically to Christmas as a 'potlatch of spending', Mass Observation highlighted the significance of the event in people's lives back in the 1930s and 40s, describing it as a bigger version of the all important weekend leisure time (M-O A: Worktown 27/E). Fascinatingly, it appears that the same still applies in contemporary society. People will go out of their way to visit the salon and disrupt their usual routine. As *Figure 6.3* shows, the number of 'other' styles increases during this time, such as hair ups and curling, illustrating how people also spend more than normal getting their hair done for Christmas. What is also of importance is the collectivity of this practice. Even though people do not deliberately visit the salon together, as 'The Friday Club' members do, the motivation behind their appointment is the same. People prepare for Christmas by booking a hair appointment in November and December, even if their actual hair practices are individual. In the salon, during months of October and November, staff can regularly be overheard asking clients if they would like to book in for Christmas. Hence, customers are forced to fit into the appointment book, despite their own temporal practices and the materiality of their hair. The salon is geared around these seasonal events, as *Figures 6.4, 6.5* and *6.6* showing various window displays and salon decoration throughout the year illustrate. Thus, Christmas becomes normalised, as does the salon Christmas appointment. However, as Mass Observation concluded, and the participant quotes would seem to suggest, any religious significance of such occasions is of secondary, if any, importance.

### **6.6.2 Holidays**

As with Christmas, holidays are another moment where the usual temporality of hair maintenance appointments is ruptured:



*What I'm going to do this time, cos I'm going away in four weeks. So I'm having it done the week before I go and I'm haven't it cut and coloured ready to go. It'll be down here and I won't be able to see!*

(Vanessa, Focus Group7)

*I don't have mine coloured, but if I was going on holiday and Diana had only cut it say five weeks before, I'd make her come and do it again. Just so that it looks alright, but it doesn't look alright anyway because it goes like a frizzy mess!*

(Samantha, Focus Group 8)

For Vanessa and Samantha, as for many other participants, they will put up with not 'being able to see' for a bit to get it done just in time, or paying the hairdresser again shortly after they have just had it done because, like Christmas, they want it to look okay for their holidays. However, unlike Christmas, people's holidays do not necessarily coincide. Therefore, though many participants expressed that they would get their hair done especially for their holidays, they would not all be attending the salon at the same time. Correspondingly, even though the salon appointment book is definitely busier over the Summer months, there is not the concentrated uplift in custom as there is around Christmas time. *Figure 6.7* illustrates this with a comparison of February's appointments compared to July's.

### **6.6.3 Payday**

Significantly though, there is a concentrated uplift of salon appointments at the end of every month. As *Figure 6.1* shows, with the weekends closest to the end of month highlighted in blue, more people make appointments at the salon during this time than other weekends. Reflecting once again upon the habitual activities of Mrs B and 'The Friday Club', it would seem that such an increase is related to the end of the month now being the period when most people get paid. Indicatively, 'weekend' styles such as blow waves increase during this time suggesting that, as historically been the case, pay day enables more leisure activities, and, therefore, more women get their hair done. The timing of these practices so close to payday, would suggest that for some getting one's hair done is considered an 'essential' item. So 'essential'

that it might be the first thing that gets paid for out of the monthly pay check, before any mortgage, car or loan payments are made. Similarly, as the quote from Mrs B highlighted at the start of section 6.2, getting her hair done is her treat, and she pays for it out of her weekly pension. Thus, as with Christmas, such habitual practices appear to live on and can be understood as collective practices.

As this section has illustrated, maintenance routines surrounding an individual's hair, are subject to ruptures by various temporal influences. With regards to both Christmas and holidays, the materiality of hair and its maintenance routine has become secondary to the temporality imposed by the calendar. In terms of payday, this enables hair maintenance practices to take place, even if those practices are more about splashing out on the luxury of getting your hair done for the weekend, as opposed to paying for its regular cut or colour. However, what this section also highlights is how such ruptures have a collective element. Most women get their hair done for Christmas; many will get it done for their holiday; and the uplift in salon appointments at the end of the month is indicative of the number of women who get their hair done especially because they have just been paid. Likewise, such ruptures once again highlight the various values attached to the maintenance of hair. Hair is done for parties and celebratory events. All of which emphasize celebration, going out and leisure. Nonetheless, during the time I spent in Kirby's, I came across women who got their hair done especially because they were going to a funeral or even giving birth! Therefore, as well as being in many ways collective, ruptures to usual routines can also be very personal.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

Drawing upon an appreciation of time, as brought into being through experience and lively performance (Gregson & Rose 2000), this chapter has illuminated how the maintenance of hair, as exposed by the varying temporalities of salon appointments, is not just about hair's practical restoration. As I have portrayed, all appointments be they for a weekly shampoo and set, a five-weekly cut, or an eight-week colour, involve maintenance. Yet, it is the other values ascribed to such maintenance appointments which are key to understanding the temporalities at work within the salon and the hair appointment's importance in women's lives. Whilst the material motivations of hair - greasy roots, hair in your eyes, 'twinkling' grey - prompt a

return to the salon, other motivations, desires and struggles are revealed by the temporality of the maintenance appointment. Yet, I contend, such temporalities are not necessarily about the frequency of a woman's visits to the salon. In many cases, they are more about how they experience time in the salon.

Mrs B offers an excellent example of both frequency and unique experience. With her weekly visits to Kirby's for a shampoo and set, she preserves a habitual leisure practice of many decades, therefore, highlighting the historical significance of the delineation between work time and weekend leisure. However, her weekly visits are also constructed around a collective and communal experience of time in the salon. In contrast, Katie's weekly visit is just about getting her hair done for the weekend and she has no interest in socialising in the salon. This illustrates how some practices which may appear collective are in fact propelled by very different motivations. For others, such as Jennifer and Louise, time in the salon is an 'escape'. It is a commodity to be bought, legitimising the regular hair appointment and the resulting time away from the stresses of daily life. Linked to 'escapism' are the notions of 'luxury' and pampering which some imbue the regular salon maintenance appointment with. In juxtaposition, others, such as Amber and Lisa, construed the salon appointment as a 'waste of time', and something to be endured. For some, the only way around this perceived loss of time is to employ a mobile hairdresser, rather than visit a salon. Yet, rupturing all of these individual motivations and temporalities, are normative practices surrounding seasonal events such as Christmas and holidays. Such occasions push women to break their usual maintenance routines to ensure their hair is ready for the event. This highlights how individual motivations are underpinned by wider collective frameworks. Therefore, this chapter has illustrated how hair maintenance practices are bound up within the complex choreographies of people's lives, constructed by temporal rhythms, value systems, normative expectations, desires, struggles and motivations.

However, I also contend that this chapter makes significant contributions to debates on both time and maintenance. With regards the latter, it highlights how maintenance practices should not just be appreciated as forms of repair and restoration. As I have illustrated throughout this chapter, whilst maintenance is vital to controlling the palimpsest of hair, it has often acted as a disguise for other motivations and needs. Despite maintenance literatures' focus upon non-human objects, I believe that by integrating understandings about 'why' people are

performing maintenance activities, along with 'how', that more coherent engagements with objects and their associated practices can be made.

Nevertheless, it is within the field of temporal studies that I feel this chapter can make the most contributions. Most studies into temporality have focused exclusively upon people's struggles to control time (Jurczyk 1998, Southerton 2003, Southerton & Tomlinson 2003, Sullivan 1997). Notions such as 'time squeeze' and 'harried and hurried' all indicate the perceived categorising and control of time. However, this chapter has taken a different approach. Firstly, it has taken a particular situation and space to study time. Rather than looking at the perceptions of different groups of people and their overall control of time, it has started with one temporal occurrence - the hair maintenance appointment and worked out from there to illuminate different values. Secondly, rather than concentrating upon how people attempt to control this specific time, it has focused upon their experiences of it and the values they place upon it. As I have illuminated, the material of hair has its own temporality, and rather it is the control and containment of this materiality which gives rise to temporal experience. Some women feel they must visit the salon weekly to still hair's vitalism, whereas others visit less often. Thus, the salon operates as a normative space where individual experiences of time are woven together with collective expectations and the temporality of the palimpsest.

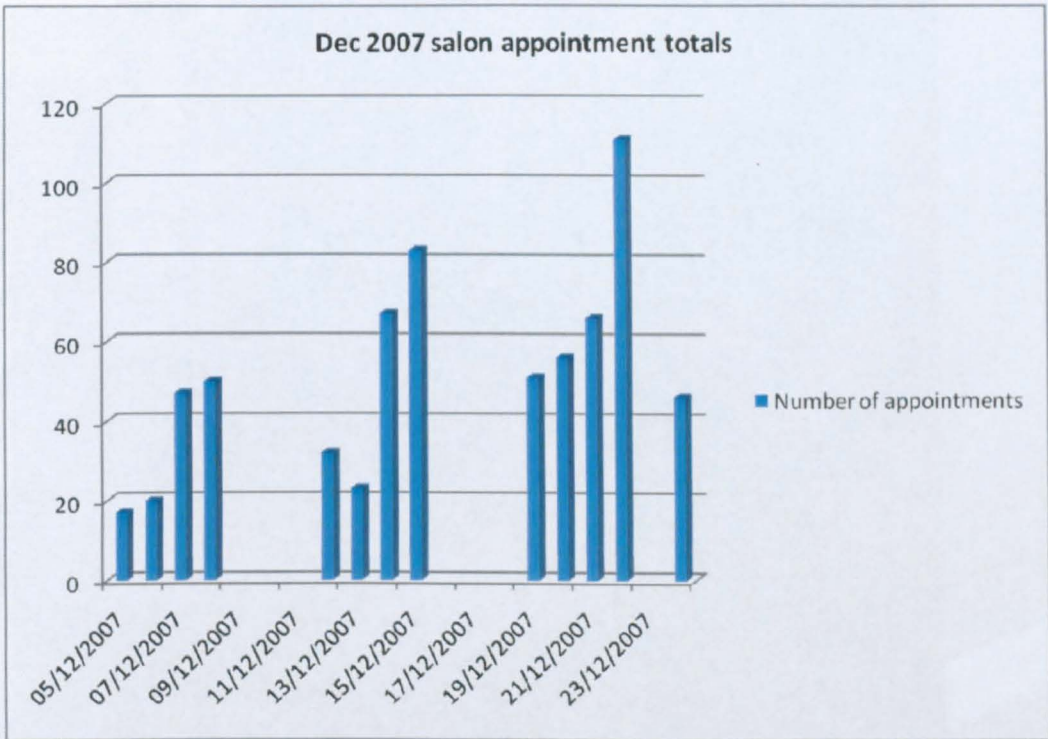


Day	Style	Dry cuts			Cut & blows			Blow waves			Colouring			Roots only			Full Foils			Half Foils			Shampoo set		
		W	M	C	W	M	C	W	M	C	W	M	C	W	M	C	W	M	C	W	M	C	W	M	C
Fri	30/05/2008	4	1	1	13	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Sat	31/05/2008	3	2	1	17	0	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Weds	04/06/2008	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	05/06/2008	2	2	3	10	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Fri	06/06/2008	4	0	1	15	0	0	7	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	0
Sat	07/06/2008	1	2	0	20	0	0	17	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Weds	11/06/2008	4	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	12/06/2008	6	0	0	9	0	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fri	13/06/2008	2	1	0	11	0	0	9	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Sat	14/06/2008	4	0	0	17	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	6	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Weds	18/06/2008	1	0	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	19/06/2008	8	2	2	8	0	0	9	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fri	20/06/2008	5	0	0	10	0	0	11	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Sat	21/06/2008	8	5	2	17	0	0	21	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Weds	25/06/2008	2	0	1	5	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	26/06/2008	4	2	0	14	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Fri	27/06/2008	3	2	0	13	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sat	28/06/2008	5	1	0	13	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Weds	02/07/2008	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	03/07/2008	0	2	0	10	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Fri	04/07/2008	5	2	0	19	0	0	14	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Sat	05/07/2008	2	1	6	22	0	0	22	0	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Weds	09/07/2008	2	2	1	3	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	10/07/2008	0	0	2	12	1	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Fri	11/07/2008	0	1	2	20	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Sat	12/07/2008	1	2	1	19	0	0	12	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	8	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Weds	16/07/2008	3	0	0	7	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	17/07/2008	5	1	4	15	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fri	18/07/2008	0	1	0	20	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
Sat	19/07/2008	1	3	1	18	0	0	14	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Weds	23/07/2008	0	0	1	2	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Thurs	24/07/2008	1	2	4	16	0	0	5	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Fri	25/07/2008	1	0	1	20	0	0	12	0	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
Sat	26/07/2008	1	1	1	19	0	0	21	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	0

Figure 6.1 - Snapshot from the salon appointment diary over June & July 2008

Date	Dry cuts	Cut & Blow	Blow wave	Colouring	Roots only	Full foils	Half foils	Col & foils	Perms	Hair up	Curling	Straightening	Totals
05/12/2007	1	6	5	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
06/12/2007	1	6	4	1	1	3	0	0	1	2	1	0	4
07/12/2007	7	16	12	0	1	3	1	2	2	2	1	0	5
08/12/2007	4	15	12	1	1	3	3	1	0	6	4	0	10
12/12/2007	0	13	4	3	2	5	1	0	0	0	1	3	4
13/12/2007	3	6	7	1	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	23
14/12/2007	10	20	13	2	2	5	3	2	1	4	3	2	10
15/12/2007	6	22	16	5	4	8	4	3	0	6	5	4	15
19/12/2007	4	15	8	4	3	7	4	2	1	1	0	2	4
20/12/2007	5	20	10	3	2	7	3	1	0	2	1	2	5
21/12/2007	5	26	10	10	0	4	0	3	0	1	2	5	8
22/12/2007	11	29	19	7	6	10	5	2	0	9	6	7	22
24/12/2007	4	12	17	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	4	6	12

**Figure 6.3 - December 2007 salon appointment figures by appointment type**



**Figure 6.2 - Bar chart showing December salon appointment totals**



**Figure 6.4 – Photographs of Christmas window display and salon decoration**





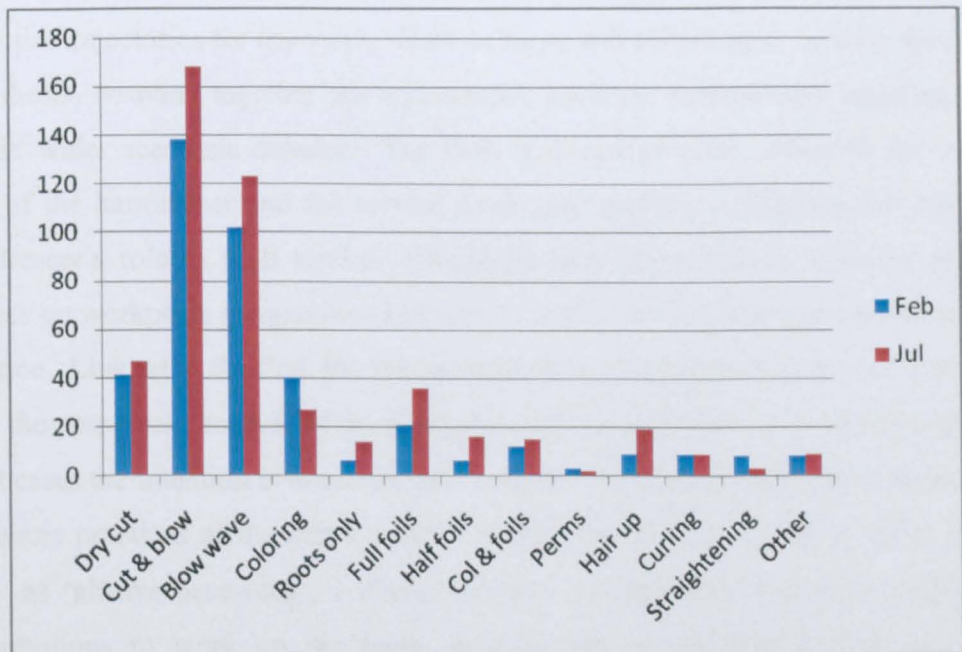
**Figure 6.4 (cont.) – Photographs of Christmas window display and salon decoration**



**Figure 6.5 - Photograph of Valentine's window display**



**Figure 6.6 – Photograph of Easter window display**



**Figure 6.7 - Bar chart comparing February 2008 to July 2008 appointments**

## Conclusions

### 7. Introduction

The preceding chapters demonstrate the everyday importance of hair practices and the centrality of the hairdresser in many women's lives. Using practice as a lens through which to explore hair, this thesis has illuminated the complexities of hair as a substance and the craft skills of the hairdresser in their quest to control it. As we have seen, whilst common to us all, hair has a vitalism unique to each of us, as displayed by the palimpsest of hair. We attempt to govern it using the craft of the hairdresser, home DIY maintenance practices and a plethora of objects and tools. Yet, we are forever battling with the temporalities of our body, always in a state of 'becoming' (Shilling 1993), not to mention the complex choreographies of our lives. In the constant quest to gain control, we encounter the hairdresser, a figure mocked and denigrated within society. Such encounters may, on the surface, appear like any other service encounter - scripted and artificial. However, as the many participant accounts have illustrated, a woman's hairdresser can be a key figure in her life, offering enduring unique relationships, based on friendship, trust and care.

In this final chapter, I wish to draw this thesis to a close by offering three potential trajectories for my work. Each of these will reflect upon the key themes of this thesis, weaving together the arguments I have put forward and situating them within wider academic debates. The first, 'Labours of care', concerns the unique role of the hairdresser and the service work they perform. Aligning this with the hairdresser's role as craft worker, I highlight how these debates enhance not just studies on workplace geographies and service work, but also new approaches to craft practice. Linking to the first, the second trajectory, 'Bodies becoming', reflects upon how the perpetual demands of the palimpsest of hair are met by the collaborative (in most cases the intention is to collaborate!) efforts of the craft worker hairdresser, and the home practices of the hair's wearer. Enhancing Shilling's (1993) notion of the body as 'always becoming', I illuminate how studying hair can make significant contributions to work on the body, practice theory and also studies into DIY production and consumption. The third trajectory, 'choreographies of practice', builds upon the latter two by drawing together how the efforts which go into maintaining a person's hair, and the continual project of the body, are profoundly revealing of the complex choreographies of women's everyday lives. I advocate that

this exposure of the intricacies of women's lives through hair practices makes hair a topic worthy of feminist debate. The chapter ends by insisting on the need for further research on hair and its everyday centrality within people's lives.

## **7.1 Labours of Care**

This first trajectory concentrates upon what I have termed 'Labours of care' and focuses upon the work of the hairdresser. Split into two parts, it begins by reflecting upon the conclusions drawn in Chapter Three regarding the service work relationship between hairdresser and client. It demonstrates how these conclusions can enhance debates on workplace geographies and service work. Woven into the first labour of care, the second focuses upon Chapter Four's discussions regarding hairdressing as a form of craft practice. It conveys how understandings of craft practice can also develop service work studies, alongside adding to debates on craft and practice.

### **7.1.1 Genuine labour**

In Chapter Three, I explored the various forms of labour the hairdresser engages in within the salon. Introducing the popular stereotypes of the hairdresser, I have illustrated how the role of the hairdresser is often seen as a form of 'women's work.' In turn, this 'women's work' is constructed around certain gendered performances which are perceived as requiring skills which women have just by virtue of being women. Like many service work sites staffed predominantly by women, the concepts of emotional labour, aesthetic labour and bodywork can readily be applied to the hair salon and its staff. The scripted nature of the conversations juniors have with customers is illustrative of Hochschild's (1983) emotionally managed performances. The pressure on staff to look young and fashionable pertains to a form of aesthetic labour, whereby staff embody company values through their appearance and demeanour. Whilst, the extended caregiving activities of salon staff links closely to discussions on bodywork and the feminised role of caring. However, as I argued in Chapter Three, the labour of the hairdresser cannot be restricted to the specificities of these labour concepts. Instead it challenges and enhances them.

In contrast to the scripted, almost robotic performances associated with service work, I have highlighted how the labour of the hairdresser is bound by a triad of trust, care and friendship. Customers visit their hairdresser repeatedly –some every week, some every month, others every few months. These repetitive visits can create

unique relationships between client and hairdresser. Over time, these can result in friendships which extend the spatial boundaries of the salon and that of the client-hairdresser service exchange. Hairdressers visit their clients at home, they attend their parties, weddings and funerals. They become a champion in the battle to maintain the 'coherent self' (Mol & Law 2004 p.56), working upon the identity of the individual and their unique substance of hair. However, this relationship is not a normalised relationship. Whilst new customers do receive personalised treatment because of the distinct material of hair, not all customers have this bond with their hairdresser. Being unable to access other forms of relationships which can occur between hairdresser and client is a limitation to this thesis. Had I researched several salons, rather than just one, I may have come across these varying relationships and been able to speak at length about those on the periphery of the unique relationship. Nevertheless, my research has revealed that whilst scripted conversations and emotionally managed performances are part of the salon workplace performance, they are entwined with a very different form of labour. A labour which weaves together nuanced and genuine emotion work, specific forms of aesthetic labour and a body work concerned with working upon individual identities. This is the first labour of care. A labour conducted by the hairdresser but interwoven with the relationships they form with their clients.

In turn, such appreciations of labour can make valuable contributions to the way service work studies and workplace geographies are approached and understood. As it advocates, not all service jobs can be understood as standardising every aspect of service and product (Leidner 1993). Instead, it calls for a much more open approach to workplace studies and the distinctiveness of service roles. Such roles are not always so tightly bounded by scripted performances or standardised products. Likewise, they are not always constrained by space – some service roles extend the spatial boundaries of their employment, such as the mobile hairdresser. The services and products they offer are not always the same everywhere. Rather, they may be locally and culturally contingent, dependent upon the skills of staff and the tastes of their customers.

### **7.1.2 The co-corporeal labour of production**

The second labour of care builds upon the first and involves the hairdresser's craft of hair. In Chapter Four, I argued that the hairdresser is a modern day artisan and the

hair salon a contemporary space of craft practice. Through years of dedication and repetition, performing the same practices hundreds of times a day, the skills of the hairdresser are honed to a refined craft (Sennett 2008). Techniques become innate abilities, proximal knowledges which form part of the hairdresser's corporeality. Tools handled everyday are so familiar that they become prosthetics of one's own body, binding hairdresser body-to tool-to customer body. Through moments in hair's production, the conjuncture between hairdresser, tool and hair becomes apparent; for the most part operating seamlessly together, until one or other protests. Thus, this labour of care operates in the realm of co-corporeal production. In this sense, the bodywork of the hairdresser, as discussed in Chapter Three, cannot be regarded simplistically as working upon the bodies of others. This is about *crafting* the bodies of others, using the innate corporealities of one's own body to transform the corporealities of another.

This appreciation of the hairdresser's work as craft enhances a number of fields. Firstly, it adds to debates on service work and workplace geographies. The concept of craft highlights the skills and expertise required to perform the hairdressing role: thus once again displacing the notion of service work as standardised work with standardised products. Moreover, it adds to debates on bodywork by illuminating how the practices of bodywork are not just about one body working upon the body of another, but can involve co-corporealities and prosthetic like tools. Whilst not all forms of body work can be considered crafts, this appreciation of bodywork as more than just 'working' on the bodies of others is relevant to several service professions. For example, roles such as beauticians, personal fitness trainers, doctors – jobs whereby bodies are worked upon using repetitive practices and incorporating specific tools. Interestingly, several of these roles also involve forms of aesthetic labour, whereby the worker's body and appearance figure centrally in the work they perform (the fitness instructor being a key example of this). Secondly, the hairdresser as craft worker can make significant contributions to new and emerging studies on craft practice. Most obviously, this study highlights how craft is not just a practice performed on non-human objects, but can and is done to the bodies of others. Similarly, it dispels romantic notions that craft only occurs in cottage-type industries with the typical artisan craftsperson and their apprentice (Dormer 1997, Greenhalgh 2002). The hair salon is contemporary space of consumption, with the average UK salon employing 13 members of staff. Yet, each and every hairdresser

still engages in the craft of hair. Thirdly, appreciating hairdressing as craft practice, opens up further spaces through which practices can be studied. These may involve other workplaces, such as the gym or the beauty studio, or they may consider individuals' daily crafting of their own bodies.

## **7.2 Bodies 'becoming'**

Extending the notion of the labours of care, through this second trajectory I focus upon the labour of the client. Entitled 'bodies becoming', this section evaluates hair's position at the boundaries of the body and the client's efforts to stabilise these boundaries and perpetually restore the labour of the hairdresser. In doing so, it highlights the contributions this study can make to work on the body and studies into DIY practices.

### **7.2.1 The DIY body project**

In Chapter Four, I focused upon the palimpsest of hair and its position at what Kwint (1999 p.9) calls 'the dead margins of the body'. Completely unique to each of us, the term palimpsest captures hair's layered biography and its changing nature. Quasi-object/quasi-subject, hair is regularly described as 'having a life of its own', despite its physical attachment to the body. Growing, going grey, getting greasy are a few of the many indicators of hair's perpetual vitality. The boundaries of the body are never stable, but are always in a state of 'becoming' (Shilling 1993). Whilst, Chapter Four discussed the hairdresser's efforts to control hair, Chapter Five turned to the labour of the client at home. Introducing what I termed the DIY hair project, I argued that women's home hair care routines form part of a wider DIY project upon the body. However, unlike the usual time bound DIY project, such projects upon the body are ongoing and lifelong. Through various repetitive home practices, such as washing to remove grease, straightening to remove curl and frizz, and home colouring to cover roots, the person at home attempts to continually still the vitalism of their hair and stabilise the 'coherent self' (Mol & Law 2004 p.56). As I have illustrated, DIY hair routines are highly personalised, being driven by the unique and individual material of the palimpsest. Practices, objects and tools are interwoven with individual values, anxieties and competences, all the while being affected by

collective frameworks and expectations. This has implications both for work on the body and also approaches to DIY practices.

### **7.2.2 Potential ‘becomings’**

Firstly, as I have emphasized in both Chapters One and Two, hair is a neglected subject, despite its position at the boundaries of the body. Work on the body has never engaged with hair. Nor have bodily geographies, despite their claims to focus upon the ‘geography closest in’ (Rich 1986 p.212). Hair’s position at the boundaries of the body has never been called into question, neither has its distinctiveness as a substance unique to each of us. Similarly, appreciations of the maintenance of the body, have never encompassed the continual work done to hair and the practices and tools hair care routines entail. Therefore, this thesis is a first in that it addresses hair’s relevance to the body. In so doing, it opens up a new position for hair within work on the body and bodily geographies, hopefully encouraging further study.

Secondly, appreciating hair’s position as part of a wider DIY body project can shore up new understandings of DIY practices. DIY practice-based accounts tend to focus upon bounded projects, with the emphasis upon the end product. They follow a linear trajectory starting with raw materials, moving through practices and processes, and ending with a finished result. However, as this thesis has illuminated, the DIY hair project involves habitual practices. It is continual, involving varying temporalities of multiple practices, substances and tools. Understanding DIY in this way, illuminates that varying temporalities may be at work within the linear DIY project. In other words, ongoing forms of DIY may run alongside the typical bounded project, such as ‘touching up’ paintwork, or replacing missing screws.

Thirdly, the fusion of the DIY project with the body as a project also enables new approaches. For a start, the body can be incorporated into the interdisciplinary space of practice. So far, practice-based accounts have had limited engagement with the body as a site of practice (exceptions include Shove & Pantzar 2005 study on the practices of Nordic walking). Therefore, this account opens up debates on practice, as not just being about people engaging in practices, but people engaging in practices upon their own bodies, as well as those of others. In turn, applying a practice-based focus to the body can transform bodily studies. Rather than exploring the socially constructed body, as so many studies have done, a practice-based account would illuminate the material substance(s) as well as capacities of the body, and the tools



and practices used to enhance and control it. Such an approach could develop new understandings of embodied experience and bodily capacities, enhancing bodily geographies and other disciplines' studies of the body.

### **7.3 Choreographies of Practice**

Throughout this thesis, practice has operated as the lens through which hair and the hairdresser have been studied. It has been at the core of my work and the claims it has made. Therefore, in this final trajectory, I draw together this practice-based account. Weaving together the first two trajectories, I signify how this study's focus on the practices of hair offers much more than just a thesis on hair. Rather, it is revealing of the complex choreographies of the lives of the women I have studied, and their desires, struggles and motivations. Thus, I argue that it is the centrality of hair care practices within women's lives that ensures that hair is a topic for feminist debate.

#### **7.3.1 Routines, rhythms and values**

Women's desires and struggles to control the vitality of their hair have been at the heart of this research. By focusing upon the hair care practices women engage in to still this vitalism, this thesis has exposed some of the intricacies of women's lives. As already discussed, in Chapter Five I focused upon the hair practices women perform at home. Whilst these practices concentrated upon what was being done to hair, they also highlighted the routines women adhere to and the values bound up in these rhythms. For example, the temporalities of hair washing expose normative values of cleanliness. The anxieties surrounding straightening hair highlight societal pressures to conform to particular mainstream hair fashions. Similarly, the relationships people develop with objects through practice are illuminating of the values placed on artefacts and their transient nature.

Similarly, in Chapter Six, I explored how women's hair maintenance practices are bound up with various temporal rhythms. Whilst it is hair's vitality getting out of control which seemingly pushes women back to the hair salon, there are other temporalities and motivations operating alongside. For example, Mrs B, who in keeping with Chapter Three and the labour of care between the hairdresser and client, regards her weekly visit to the hair salon as a social occasion. The hair salon

staff are her friends, as are the other customers she sees there each week. For others, their salon appointments act as an opportunity to escape the time pressures of their busy lives. In these instances, the hair salon is regarded as a place of refuge, somewhere to retreat to for some 'time out'. Whilst for some, the hair salon and the regular maintenance appointment create time pressures within their lives. Getting your hair done is an annoyance, a 'waste of time' they could do without as they struggle to combine the norms of acceptable appearance with full-time jobs and lives. Thus, whilst the main intention of this thesis has been to study hair and hair practices, in doing so it has also revealed the complex choreographies of women's lives. On the surface, hair practices appear mundane, everyday and nothing special, yet they are bound up with value systems, normative expectations, temporal rhythms, desires, struggles and motivations.

### **7.3.2 Collective choreographies**

In many ways this study's appreciation of hair practices and the intricacies of people's lives it exposes, conflicts with the collective nature of most practice-based accounts. As I discussed in the conclusion of Chapter Five, whilst practice theory advocates that there is no possession of the individual hidden deep inside (Reckwitz 2002), this thesis has focused upon and given voice to personal experiences and emotions as exposed through practice. Yet, despite this apparent conflict, I contend that both the collective and the individual can be entwined through practice.

As I have illustrated throughout the thesis, the palimpsest of hair is unique to each of us. It has its own vitality and with it its own temporalities. As I explored in Chapter Five, it may take a week for one person's hair to get greasy and need washing, whereas for another it may take a day. Similarly, in Chapter Six, I highlighted the differences in the material maintenance of hair, with some women visiting the salon to get their hair cut every five weeks, whereas others may leave it several months. Thus, the temporalities of hair are individual because of the individuality of the palimpsest. However, as I have also illuminated in both Chapters Five and Six, these temporalities are also driven by collective practices. In Chapter Five, I discussed the collective anxieties surrounding the practices of colouring roots or the pressures to conform to a homogenised straightened style. Whilst in Chapter Six, I highlighted how collective practices of getting hair done for occasions, such as Christmas or holidays, rupture individual routines and

temporalities. Therefore, individual temporal rhythms are underpinned by normalised, collective practices. Normative anxieties surrounding these individual rhythms and the vitality of the palimpsest push women to conform to collective hair care activities. This interweaving of the individual with the collective is important for practice-based accounts because it illuminates that whilst practices are normative they are articulated through the individual.

## **7.4 The Labour Process**

### **7.4.1 A skilled profession**

Throughout, this thesis has been concerned with the labour process of hair. It is this labour which binds each chapter together, uniting the paid work of the hairdresser with the unpaid work of the client, and the salon with the home. Chapter Three discussed the various labours of the hairdresser and the relationships this labour gives rise to through paid work with hair. Continuing with the paid labour of the hairdresser, Chapter Four illuminated the moments involved in hair's production within the salon. As a pair, these two chapters highlight the skills required of the hairdresser in conducting the labour process of hair. Not only does this involve what I have referred to as craftwork on the part of the hairdresser, but also a variety of personal and relationship building skills which cannot simply be taught as part of the hairdressing performance.

Such skills contrast poignantly with earlier and somewhat renowned theories on the deskilling of the labour force. In the 1970s, Harry Braverman (1974) argued that both manual and non-manual forms of work were being deskilled. He contended that the ongoing and increasing application of Tayloristic principles in business were removing any autonomy, creativity or skill of the worker, to the point where there was a complete divorce between mental and manual labour. Such deskilling, Braverman maintained, was not only extending to office and other service work (Wood 1989), but was having a negative impact on the number of craftworkers. What is more, as feminist writers have argued, Braverman's theory of a deskilled workforce is often related to the increased feminisation of labour during 1970s (Walby 1989). In other words, as jobs required less skills so they became more available to female workers.

This thesis completely refutes such arguments. As I have shown, the skills of the hairdresser are a form of craftwork. Chapter Four, in particular, illuminates the skills of the hairdresser as a synthesis of mental and manual labour: a 'body-centred performance' (Wacquant 1995 p.509) whereby the craftworker 'can feel fully and think deeply what they are doing' (Sennett 2008 p.20). Thus, in hairdressing the mental is fundamentally connected to the manual. Furthermore, as I also argued in Chapter Four, hairdressing embodies a form of creativity which cannot be controlled or managed by another. Whilst skills can be taught and certain practices and methods perfected, there will always be a uniqueness to the hairdresser's skills which neither management nor client can completely control. Partly, such unmanageability of the hairdresser's skills is due to the unique palimpsest of hair. However, as Chapter Four discusses, it is also due to hairdresser's personal use of tools, ensuring that practices such as cutting are like a form of handwriting (Heather Focus Group 8) – completely distinct to the person who performs the practice. Even the more prescribed-like skills of the junior, such as hair washing, require some thought about the needs of the client and the type of hair being dealt with. Thus, hairdressing is not a deskilled form of work.

Such arguments simultaneously refute the claim that the feminisation of the workforce is equated with the deskilling of the labour process. As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, hairdressing is a feminised form of labour. As a profession it is denigrated and trivialised because of this gendering, and is deemed to require few skills. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis it is a form of highly skilled feminised labour, not only requiring the craft skills discussed in Chapter Four and above, but also the plethora of personal skills illuminated in Chapter Three. Furthermore, whilst Braverman contends that Taylorism ensures that craftwork declines, if recent statistics about the popularity of hairdressing as one of the most iconic professions are to be believed (Henley 2004) then hairdressing as a craft is on the rise. This argument can be extended further when one takes into account the many popular contemporary professions Sennett (2008) perceives as types of craftwork, such as doctors, musicians, architects. Thus, hairdressing is a skilled and growing form of predominantly feminised labour, engaging with craft practices which unite mental and manual skills. It therefore refutes Braverman's deskilling theories and rejects Tayloristic principles of management.

#### **7.4.2 Uniting salon with home**

Whilst, Chapters Three and Four dealt with the skilled and paid involvement of the hairdresser within the labour process of hair, Chapters Five and part of Six focused upon the unskilled, unpaid work of the customer doing their hair at home. Had this thesis been purely an ethnographic study of the hair salon and its customers, then it would have been appropriate for me to observe customers conducting hair practices at home. However, aside from the methodological implications of doing this, as I have already advocated, this thesis is about the labour process of hair. Therefore, its main focus has been upon how the labour conducted by the hairdresser is continued and maintained at home by the customer. As Chapter Five illuminates, the DIY hair practices that customers engage in at home demonstrate the influence of the hairdresser and the salon upon the home. The term 'hairdressers in the head' has been used to illustrate how the salon and the hairdresser extend into the home through hair practices and tools. Customers feel compelled to maintain the hairdresser's labour stored within their hair, and failing to do so sufficiently can result in feelings of guilt, anxiety and inadequacy. Chapter Six moves on to discuss the situations where hair becomes too much for the customer and their DIY practices and they must once again return to the skilled hairdresser. Thus, the skilled, paid work of the hairdresser in the salon is bound inextricably together with the unskilled, unpaid work of the customer at home.

Interestingly, the work performed by the customer at home also conflicts with labour process debates that centre upon Tayloristic principles. In such debates the focus is only ever upon production, never consumption. Yet, the position of the customer working upon their hair at home concerns both production and consumption, as they simultaneously consume the hairdresser's labour, whilst also trying to reproduce it. Therefore, not only does this thesis add to debates on the geographies of labour and the deskilling of the labour process, it also contributes to research agendas on the labours of production and consumption, paid and unpaid forms of labour.

#### **7.5 From Roots to End**

As I opened the thesis, everyone has a story to tell about their hair. Whilst distinctly unique to each of us, hair's everyday ubiquity binds people together. It is a substance everyone can relate to. It is this shared status which has meant hair has

remained on the margins of feminist debates on the politics of the body. Yet, whilst the material of hair may not define women from men, as the thesis has illuminated, women's hair care revolves around a plethora of normalised and collective hair care practices. These practices are bound up with anxieties, societal expectations and value systems around women's hair, alongside individual motivations, desires and temporalities. Thus, a messy politics of the body is created, but a politics of the body which nonetheless includes hair.

The everyday ubiquity of hair and the routine nature of hair care practices also ensure that hair is part of the politics of the everyday. Hair appears to be an inconsequential taken for granted bodily substance, and those that concern themselves with it deemed frivolous, feminine and trivial. Such popular assumptions have no doubt ensured that hair has remained a neglected and overlooked subject within academic research. Yet, such stereotypes are exactly that - clichés unjustifiably fixed upon hair and those that work upon it. As the thesis has shown, hair matters and it is its everyday, mundane qualities which make it matter. Hair is a site of everyday negotiation and contestation, engrained within the choreographies of daily life. In reclaiming hair as an important object of scholarly enquiry, the thesis insists on the need for further study.

Given the opportunity for further research, I believe a study on men's hair practices and role of the barber, would make an interesting comparable study to my own. Likewise, there are opportunities to research children's hair, and the transgression from a child's hair being a parent's responsibility to becoming their own. Moreover, there is definitely a need for research on ethnicity and hair practices, especially considering the very clear demarcations between 'black hair' and 'white hair' practices. With regards the salon as a workplace, further study could investigate the role of the junior, and their journey from apprentice to master craftsman. Similarly, at the other end of the spectrum, a study into the ageing hairdresser and their career paths could be conducted. This could involve researching the very different field of the mobile hairdresser, briefly touched upon in this thesis. However, whilst my intention throughout this thesis has been to illustrate the importance of hair, it has also been to show how studying a substance such as hair from a practice-based approach can open up new positions for academic enquiry.

# Appendices





## ***Appendix A - History of Hairdressing & Hair Practices***

### **Introduction**

As fashion and costume historian Georgine De Courtais (1973 p.ii) wrote in the 1970s:

*Women now wear their hair in anyway they choose, long or short, straight or curly, in a ponytail or bun, carefully set or in casual disarray.*

In this appendix section, I explore how women's hairdressing reached this stage, whereby women can seemingly choose from a plethora of styles, colours and techniques for their hair. As I have already discussed, women's hair has for so long been relegated to the arena of frivolous, feminine pastimes. Yet, as the section will convey, hair has always been, and very much still is, the site where glamour and politics converge. Prior to the 1920s, social restrictions upon women's lives and their use of 'public' space dictated how women should wear their hair, meaning that it could only be dealt with in the 'private' sphere of the home. Following women's post war emancipation, a new breed of social expectations emerged with women's hair playing a key political role. Constantly perpetuated by the ever changing spheres of fashion, film and celebrity, and cloaked in a tantalizing disguise of choice and freedom offered by the burgeoning hair and fashion industries, hair, glamour and politics are intricately plaited together in history.

Beginning with the history of the hair salon, I will start by discussing the role of the barber and his paradoxical positioning between denigrated untouchable and sacred miracle worker. From this, I will move on to explore the rise of the women's hair salon, and with it the emancipation of women, epitomised by the 1920s 'bob' cut. The cutting of women's hair not only transformed women's lives, it also revolutionised hair fashions and the role of the hair salon (Cox 1999). Providing a brief overview of fashions in women's hair since the 1920s, and focusing particularly upon the practices most pertinent to Kirby's, I will illustrate how new techniques, styles and products have kept women returning to the salon for the latest hair fashions; making it the pivotal place to achieving modern, feminine ideals.

## **Hair Salon History**

The many incantations of Christopher Bond's original 1973 play, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, have illuminated the multi-faceted role of the barber in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Minor surgical procedures, including blood-letting to restore humoral balance<sup>1</sup>, boil and wart lancing, abscess draining and teeth pulling, had all been performed by the barber since medieval times (Stevenson 2001, Trasko 1994). A papal edict in 1215 had forbidden physicians, most of whom were clergy, from having any contact with blood or bodily fluids for fear of contaminating their religious bodies; hence such 'dirty' tasks fell to the barber (Bagwell 2005). In England, 1540, Henry VIII overturned this marked separation when he signed a single guild charter forming the United Company of Barbers and Surgeons, what was to be the forerunner to the Royal College of Surgeons (Schmidt 2006). Heralded for their medical efforts on the one hand, whilst denigrated for their dealings with the impure on the other, the role of the barber throughout history and across the globe has been paradoxically caught between miracle-worker and 'Untouchable' (see also Brubaker 1979). Similarly, so has the role of the hairdresser.

The history of women's hairdressing is very different to that of the barber and his male clients, although often the paradoxical conclusions drawn about them are especially alike. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, women's hair was dressed, not cut, in the 'private' space of the home and normally at the hands of another woman (De Courtais 1973, Smith 2008). De Courtais (1973), writing from the field of historical costume and fashion, notes the popularity of the hairdresser or friseur, as they were often referred to, in Georgian England. Visiting rich upper class women at home, the friseur would dress women's hair in high elaborate styles which would be worn for weeks, sometimes months. Such styles accentuated much more than gender alone, reflecting a woman's social status and confirming her economic abilities to afford highly skilled, hired help (Cox, 1999, Trasko 1994). Working class women were left to dress their own hair, often opting for a simple bun.

The mid-nineteenth century saw a sea change in women's hairdressing, as the rise of the department store provided a 'newly sanctioned space' for female hair salons

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<sup>1</sup> Medical understanding, based upon Galenic physiology, dictated that the body was made up of 4 humors –blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile which must exist in dynamic balance for the body to function properly. Blood letting was thought to restore this balance if one was unwell (see Lupton 1998)

(Smith 2008 p.56). The first salon recorded was at Whiteleys, in Westbourne Grove, London, in 1876 (Durbin 1984 cited in Smith 2008). Before the creation of such 'temples of commodity capitalism', as described by Walter Benjamin in his life's work on the shopping arcades of nineteenth century Paris, (1927-1940, cited in Buck-Morss 1991 p.83) the only figures associated with the public street were 'gentlemen' and 'loose women' (Gunn 1999 p.119). Thus, the department store became the pinnacle of not only female consumption, but also female escapism; a 'public' space for women. Ironically, as Émile Zola's (1883 [2001]), *Au Bonheur des dames*, discusses, such spaces were never wholly female spaces of consumption, but were regularly occupied by the Flaneur, a male figure who used the department store to engage in his own form of consumption – voyeurism of the female shoppers (see also Crang 1998, Featherstone 1991, Valentine 2001). What is more, such spaces were only open to certain women, those with enough money and status to shop there. Working class women were excluded, and therefore continued to follow fashions through other means and dress their own hair at home (Hosgood 1999). Nevertheless, the advent of the department store facilitated the birth of the hair salon and with it came new forms of consumption, particularly that of fashioning the self. Hair care became a new service available for public purchase.

With Marcel Grateau's invention of the 'Marcel Wave' in 1884, a technique to temporarily curl hair using heated tongs, the popularity of the hair salon as a 'public' space grew and grew (Smith 2008, De Courtais 1973). However, women's hair was still only being 'dressed' not cut. The cutting of women's hair really began in the 1920s, following the Suffragette Movement's success at gaining voting rights for women over 30 years of age. As De Courtais (1973) discusses, this gain, coupled with the end of the First World War, was reflected through the advent of much more liberated fashions, including shorter skirts, more revealing clothes, and, in particular, shorter hair. For so long women's lives had been constrained by convention, 'cutting one's hair short defied the social order' (Trasko 1994 p.110) The 'bob' cut was born with droves of women turning to barbers, the only people really skilled to cut hair, to lop away their tresses (Cox 1999, Smith 2008, Stevenson 2001). Despite initial reluctance from the barbering trade, many of whom sided with conservative, patriarchal society that the cropping of women's hair marked a crisis in femininity, gradually they began to appreciate the potential financial gain from cutting women's hair (Stevenson 2001, Cox 1999). It is estimated that in one week in 1924, 3,500

women were 'bobbed' in New York (Simon 2000, cited in Cox 2005 p.49). According to Karen Stevenson (2001), writing about the gendered self, the bob was instrumental in the transformation of traditional male barber shops into predominantly female hair salons. Some accounts on the subject (see Cox 1999, Henley 2008) discuss how early male stylists would adopt an effeminate manner and often a fake French accent to put their female clients at ease. Many barbers also adopted a cubicle system for the privacy of female clients (Smith 2008).

As Hollywood glamour infiltrated the lives of ordinary women through films and magazines, making the salon experience 'integral to the attainment of a sophisticated, glamorous, feminine identity' (Smith 2008 p.58), so new technologies and materials impacted upon salon design and techniques. The space of the salon was thrust into a juxtaposition of feminine aesthetic meets rationalized science, as modern, clinically decorated salons, powered by 'clean and healthy' electricity, offered women the latest products and innovations in their strive for feminine beauty ideals (Smith 2008 p.62). This juxtaposition was still present in the 1960s, when salon design became much more open, and, as I shall later go on to reflect, is still evident in contemporary hair salons (Smith 2008).

By the 1970s and 1980s the space of the hair salon had become doubly gendered. Not only had female customers appropriated the male barber shop as a space of their own, but hairdressing had become a predominantly female profession, with women stylists replacing the male barber as the key figure in the styling and cutting of women's hair. In contemporary society, this still reigns true with recent hairdressing industry statistics estimating that 90% of the hairdressing workforce is female (Habia 2008). Unlike many other roles which over the twentieth century were portrayed as ideal for women, such as the secretary (see Pringle 1988), the nurse (see Twigg 2000a, Witz 1995) or the shop worker or waitress (see Kapp Howe 1977), resulting in the much maligned gendered division of labour, the hairdresser was unique in that it was a traditionally male role taken over by women (see also, more generally, Gregson & Lowe 1994, Griffin 1985, Gubrium 2007, McDowell & Pringle 1992). This is not just a case of women dealing with women's hair though; recent statistics show that barbering is also a female dominated profession in the United Kingdom (Habia 2007). However, it would appear that matters are returning full circle as the number of male hairdressers increased by 12% between 2005 and

2007 (Habia 2007). It is of course also worth mentioning that those at the top of the hairdressing profession, Nicky Clarke, Daniel Galvin Jnr, Trevor Sorbie, Lee Stafford, to name but a few, are all male. Hence, despite female domination of the industry, the most coveted positions are still out of reach for the majority of the workforce and a stark gendered division of labour is very much in place. Of further interest are recent moves by the independent hair salon sector, which accounts for 97% of the hairdressing industry (Mintel 2008), to diversify traditionally female/male only salons into unisex outlets (Habia 2007). Thus, in another twist and turn throughout the hair salon's colourful history, what was once an all male space, which then changed to being predominantly female, is now becoming mixed once again!

With each of these twists and turns in the hair salon's history what has remained constant is the tie that women have to it. Ironically what began as a move away from the patriarchal social order, steeped in conventions from the Victorian era, was quickly replaced with a new set of feminine ideals (Stevenson 2001). Women appropriated the traditional male barber shop as a space of their own; a public space for the cutting of women's hair, a radical practice which had never been done before, but this move came with a new set of female conventions and markers of femininity. No longer were women constrained to the private arena of the home and the equally restrictive practices of having long hair, but in their place were new fashions to adhere to and a new space where they could be achieved. The 'bob' made women's hair a political charged substance, an arena of contestation. Yet despite hair's assertive position as a political and social statement, it has always been subject to normative expectations. As I shall now move on to illustrate, hair fashions have been diverse and plentiful, yet they have always been accompanied by political and social implications for the lives of women and their ever-remaining bond to feminine ideals.

## **Hair and Fashion**

### **Short and curly: the advent of the perm**

Following the 1920s 'bob' and the even shorter 'Eton crop,' the 1930s saw a change from the sleek, wet look to curlier, softer styles. Perming intensified as a popular hair salon procedure, and apparently initiated the introduction of women into the

hairstyling profession (Trasko 1994). Marcel Grateau's temporary wave was surpassed by Charles Nestle's 1909 innovation of the permanent wave (hence the term 'perm') (Cox 1999, Cox & Widdows 2005). This was an arduous and lengthy process, whereby the hair was wound up on rods, which made up part of a heated asbestos contraption hanging from the ceiling, covered in chemicals and baked. This broke down the sulphur bonds which give hair its structure, and forced them to reform round the rods. Applying a neutraliser ensured that the new curly form stayed in place (Cox 1999, Cox & Widdows 2005). Short, curly styles aided by salon perming techniques and continually promoted by Hollywood icons such as Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow and Gloria Swanson, continued right through to the 1960s, despite the economic hardship of the 1940s. During wartime, women resorted to alternative temporary waving methods to curl their hair, such as ragging and pipe cleaners, or covering their hair with a turban (Cox & Widdows 2005). During the 1940s, cold perming techniques were invented which mirrored the purely chemical perming techniques available in salons today (Galvin & Galvin 1985) and in the 1950s the home perm went on sale (Cox & Widdows 2005). These short, 'intensely feminine' styles reflected a 'complete rejection of the 1920s androgyne' for more than forty years and with them brought a new set of feminine ideals (Cox & Widdows 2005 p.63).

Though the female hair salon was borne out of a desire to discard the impracticalities of long hair, and its ensuing social and political connotations, perming ensured that it remained a space where feminine beauty ideals were only achieved through arduous dedication. Permed hair was regularly set, normally once a week, in rollers to produce the short, soft feminine style. Thus, the weekly visit to the salon became part of a woman's beauty routine (De Courtais 1973, Trasko 1994). As Stevenson (2001 p.144) concludes:

*Modern femininity could be signified by the daring move to short hair, but the trappings of stylishness (the sticky setting lotions, the sprays, sleeping in uncomfortable hair rollers and so on) were retained in order to offset the perceived harshness and potentially threatening masculinity of the look.*

Thus, the fashion of the perm not only determined women's regular dependence upon the hair salon, it also bound them to yet another set of ongoing, laborious beauty practices.

### **Big and bouffant**

As the popularity of the short, curly styles of the 1930s and 40s began to wane, the 1950s saw an emphasis on 'big' hair and bouffant styles. Gone were the subtle, soft feminine styles and in their place were big, bold, backcombed beehives. Interestingly, most of these creations required the use of the now well established technique of setting. This involved winding wet hair around huge rollers and drying it under a hood dryer, to give hair a voluminous appearance. Vigorous back-combing and lashings of industrial strength hairspray followed to hold it in place (Trasko 1994). Such styles mimicked the high-elaborate styles of the Victorian and early Edwardian period, however the techniques, synthetic substances and spaces which aided their creation were vastly different. However, like the styles of the Victorian and Edwardian era, women would regularly go for weeks without washing or combing their hair, instead cautiously covering it with a hair net when they went to sleep (Cox 1999, Jones 1990, Trasko 1994). Such styles also kept women 'more dependent than ever on the salon ritual' and its encompassing and expanding range of products and techniques (Trasko 1994 p.125).

### **Straight and sleek**

According to Dylan Jones (1990 p.41), writing about fashions in hair in the twentieth century, the straight hair which epitomised hair fashions of the 1960s was 'a reaction against the back-combing of the late fifties' and the 'big hair' look. Once again imbued with political undertones, the way a person wore their hair in the 1960s was much more than just a fashion statement. From Mary Quant's sleek, asymmetric cut to the long, unkempt styles of both men and women of the era, your hair said a lot about your lifestyle and political views (Trasko 1994, Cox 1999). This era of 'freedom' from the constraints of capitalist consumption, also marked a downturn in the hair salon profession. With recent inventions such as the hand-held hairdryer and innovations in shampoos, women no longer felt the need for the regular visit to what became known as the 'sausage machine hair salon' (Cox 1999 p.197). In response salons attempted to lure customers back by diversifying their operations and offering

beauty treatments, tanning facilities and even astrological readings (Cox 1997). Some of these additional extras (particularly beauty treatments and tanning) have remained and can often be found in contemporary salons, such as Kirby's, and, I contend, serve to accentuate the list of beauty ideals that women must adhere to. Nevertheless, despite the loose, natural look being the fashionable mode of the day, many women did indulge in one 'unnatural' hair practice – straightening.

Hair straightening in its latest form, using ceramic hair straighteners, is a practice which is key to Kirby's and thus also to this thesis, therefore I will focus in detail upon it. It is also a practice which has a profound political and racial history. Ironically, it would seem that throughout history it has been the tools used to curl hair, which have also been used to straighten it. The first curling irons were thought to exist in the ancient Assyrian culture as early as 1500 B.C. Whether they were also used to straighten hair is unknown, but similar implements have also been attributed to Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome (Trasko 1994). Marcel Grateau's, temporary wave technique, using heated rods, was also admired for its abilities to straighten hair, as well as curl it (Hair Goddess 2009). And, today's ceramic straighteners, or styling irons as they are often referred to, are almost as well known for their abilities to curl hair, as well as straighten it. Such temporary straightening techniques have relied upon heat to break down the hydrogen bonds formed in the cortex of hair which cause it to bend and curl. Once hair becomes moist again the curl or wave returns. Similarly, techniques to perm hair using chemicals which break down hair's sulphur bonds thus changing its structure, can be reversed to also straighten hair (Galvin & Galvin 1985, Browne 1989).

Prior to the current trend in hair straightening, which I discuss in Chapter Five of the thesis, the 1960s saw a sea change in hair straightening and the racial and political groups which engaged with the practice. Black hair, in particular, had been subject to intense scrutiny and experimentation in attempts to make it straight, and thus assimilate it into white, hegemonic society. All hair varies greatly in its colour, texture, elasticity, thickness and structure and is individual at a biological and genetic level (Cheang 2008). However, general classifications are assigned to hair because of varying structural characteristics between racial groups (Browne 1989, Kelly 2007). According to Afro hair stylist, Ginger Browne (1989 p.5), Afro hair is 'crinkly in appearance', due to curved follicles producing over short curls, and the uneven distribution of keratin during hair growth. This differs from Asian hair



which is generally straight in structure, and Caucasian which is straight to wavy (Galvin & Galvin 1985).

Efforts to straighten the curly structure of Afro hair during the nineteenth century included heated combs, flat irons, metal plates and, more dangerously, permanent chemical relaxants such as sodium hydroxide and ammonium thioglycolate, both of which can cause burns (Cox 1999). However, from the 1960s the tide was turning, straightened hair began to be understood as a symbol of a white civilising process and black beauty ideals were promoted in their place (Cox 1999). Thus, the Afro became popular as the style of the liberated black woman, celebrating black as opposed to white beauty ideals (Cox 1999). Interestingly, as historian, Robin Kelly (2007), discusses, celebration of Afro styles had occurred much earlier, being worn in high couture fashion circles in American cities, as a symbol of feminised chic. Ironically, though whilst black women were leaving their hair curly and wavy, many white women were going to great lengths to ensure theirs was straight.

Many hair history studies discuss the bizarre methods women would undertake to get their hair straight in the 1960s, from going to the hairdresser to get it wrapped (Cox 1999), to rolling it on orange juice cans (Trasko 1994), to the more widespread practice of placing the hair between two sheets of brown paper and ironing it using a clothing iron (Jones 1990, Trasko 1994, Cox 1999). Due to the inadequacies and potential expense of straightening tools available for purchase, even in the early 1990s, when straight hair became popular once again, ironing hair was still a key method of straightening. Such precarious measures often resulted in scorch marks and damage to hair, meaning it had to be cut (Jones 1990).

The practices of straightening hair continued throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, ensuring that the hair salon never completely recovered from the substantial loss of its weekly shampoo and set following. The 60s saw an upheaval in the hair salon's role, with a focus more towards maintaining and caring for hair, rather than styling (Cox 1999). Thus, the weekly shampoo and set was replaced by a regular good cut and condition. Even with the return of the perm and big hair in the 1980s, tools such as Carmen™ rollers, curling tongs, hot brushes and hairdryers with diffusers ensured that such looks could be achieved at home, provided the permed base was in place. In the 1990s, with the return to straightening and the advent of the ceramic hair straightener, such DIY technologies continued, as I explore in

Chapter Five. However, even though the influence of the salon may appear to have waned, due to the perceived end of certain hair fashions, as I shall discuss a little later, many of these styles are still thriving in salons such as Kirby's.

### **All the colours of the rainbow**

One practice which has kept women returning to the salon regularly is hair colouring. As Cox discusses (1999 p.154), 'attitudes to the practices of dyeing and bleaching changed dramatically in the twentieth century'. For centuries women have attempted to artificially change their hair colour through various means. The Ancient Greeks used pollen to lighten their hair (De Courtais 1973). During the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) women of the court attempted to mimic the Queen's red locks using honey. Throughout the Stuart reign (1603-1714) black hair was the most desirable, with women encouraged by the 1694 Ladies Dictionary to use 'a mixture of bark of oak root, green husks of walnuts, the deepest and oldest red wine and oil of myrtle' to achieve the desired affect (cited in De Courtais 1973 p.70). Other substances have included potash and lethal lead derivatives (De Courtais 1973, Trasko 1994).

Up until the 1930s, the dyes used in salons were natural extracts such as henna and camomile, however in 1909 French pharmacist, Eugene Schueller launched the first range of chemical hair dyes known as 'para' dyes or phenyldiamines, which when mixed with peroxide and ammonia would oxidise and become locked in the hair shaft, thus changing hair's colour (Herbatint 2007). Schueller's dyes were to be the forerunning to the now multi-national company L'Oreal. However, these dyes, like some of their predecessors, were unstable and dangerous, and even at the hands of the 'expert' hairdresser often resulted in violent allergic reactions (Cox 1999, Trasko 1994). In 1933, *The Pharmacy and Poison Act* was passed in Britain making warnings on packages and a skin test a legal requirement in all salons.

The colour of the 1930s though was peroxide blonde. As modelled by the Hollywood icon Jean Harlow, and epitomised in the 1931 film pertinently titled *Platinum Blonde* (Cox & Widdows 2005, Trasko 1994). The allure of blonde hair has been a subject of much discussion amongst sociologists and historians. Folklore and mythology studies author, Marina Warner, devotes the title and a significant chapter of her book (1995) *From the Beast to the Blonde: on Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* to the recurrent 'blondeness of the fairy tale' (p.xxi), whereby hair is likened

to light, chastity and femininity. Similarly, other studies discuss blonde hair as a treasured spoil of war during Roman times (Bartman 2001), or the mystique of the blonde sex symbol and the adage of the 'dumb blonde' within twentieth century western society (Firth 1973, Synnott 1987). The white blondeness of the 1930s was achieved by stripping out the natural pigmentation of the hair using hydrogen peroxide, and then adding a toner to give the desired hue (Trasko 1994). It subsequently earned the name 'bottle blonde.' Opinions differ amongst academics as to the extent to which women succumbed to the peroxide blonde look during the 1930s. Some argue that such a display of American wealth and glamour was unattainable in austere 1930s and 40s Britain (see Stacey 1994), whilst others discuss the many cheaper home remedies women turned to in attempt to bleach their hair (Trasko 1994). What they all agree on is that until the 1950s a woman's efforts to dye her hair must be kept a secret, or she risked being labelled as 'a bit 'fast', lower class' and sporting 'an artificial disguise' (Cox 1999 p.161). Looking 'natural' and authentic was praised, whilst any sign of fakeness or tampering with 'nature' was deemed poor breeding and unrespectable. Harlow's death, at just 26 years old, was wrongly attributed to hair bleaching, only serving to accentuate such societal anxieties surrounding the frivolity and danger of messing with 'nature'.

Nevertheless, by the 1950s such hair secrets were revealed, without the fear of humiliation, and bleaching celebrated a second wave of popularity. Once again women were presented with Hollywood film stars modelling glamorous blonde coiffeurs – Marilyn Monroe, Veronica Lake, Grace Kelly to name but a few. Not to mention the launch of that legendary artificial icon of idealistic femininity, the Barbie doll (Cox 1999). Dyeing hair became respectable and with the production of safer semi-permanent dyes, more and more women visited the salon to change their hair colour. Colouring of hair continued throughout the 1960s, and even during the 'flower power' era of the 1970s, despite cultural opposition to everything artificial. However, it was the 1980s when hair colouring was really taken to its extremes, with the era of the punk.

Set in opposition to the streaked tresses of the Californian blonde, the punk look aggressively opposed the traditional ideals of soft feminine beauty and glamour which had for so long been in place. With sharp cuts, such as the 'Mohawk' and the 'Mohican', and shocking, vivid colours, the punk was a symbol of rebellion against the current political and cultural conventions of eighties Britain. Undeniably linked

to the social upheaval the 1920s 'bob' cut caused, and the stylised fetish of subculture, the punk look was adopted by both women and men as a sign of resistance to mainstream popular culture. Although many such styles and colours were probably attempted at home, the difficulty of some of them still meant a trip to the hair salon, especially considering to achieve pillar box red, bright green or aubergine purple would have required firstly stripping the hair of its natural pigmentation using peroxide, not a straight forward task. Thus, even the counter culture of punk demanded a trip to the 'mainstream' female hair salon.

From the punk era of the 1980s, the popularity of colouring the hair has continued ever since, even if the gaudy unnatural shades have been replaced with more 'natural' colours. Blonde highlighting, in particular, has remained incredibly popular and is one of the most prevalent salon procedures in Kirby's. This is probably because of the 'natural' effect it gives, producing a multi-tonal effect on the hair, rather than an all over block colour (Galvin & Galvin 1985). Lighter colours, and in some instances slightly darker colours, called low-lights, are applied to small sections of hair and wrapped in tin foil to prevent the colours affecting the rest of hair whilst it takes. Interestingly, there has been media speculation that in the 2000s there has been a backlash towards the 'blondes have more fun' cliché with many celebrities, such as Jennifer Aniston, Sarah Jessica Parker and Britney Spears, dyeing their highlighted hair brown. Celebrity hairstylist, Nicky Clarke, commented in 2004 that 'there is a trend towards going darker' (cited in Aidin 2004). With highlighting being one of the most lucrative aspects of hairdressing, and one newspaper article speculating that one top London salon was getting through 200 miles of tin foil every year, such fashion trends are bound to have an impact (Aidin 2004). However, the advent of colouring of women's hair and its subsequent acceptability, some may argue, necessity, as a feminine cultural practice has ensured that the void left by the loss of the salon's weekly shampoo and set appointment has been filled. Colouring hair, especially bleaching and highlighting, ensures that women remain bound to the salon through the required maintenance practices to keep 'ugly', unfeminine roots at bay.

## **Appendix B – Profiles of Kirby's staff**

### **Patricia**

Role: *Salon owner*

Age: *40+*

Hours: *Full-time*

Specialities: *Setting & perming, cutting free-hand (to the horror of the others who have been trained differently!)*

Details: *Has owned the salon for 13 years, 10 years in current building. Married with two grown up children. Also, qualified to perform waxing and ear piercing.*

### **Linney**

Role: *Assistant Manager*

Age: *28*

Hours: *Full-time*

Specialities: *Hair ups*

Length of time at Kirby's: *7-8 years*

Details: *Has a partner who she lives with. Also, trained in many beauty therapies including waxing, massage, spray tans and make up application.*

### **Parr**

Role: *Stylist*

Age: *28*

Hours: *Full-time*

Specialities: *Colouring and highlighting, but also perms*

Length of time at Kirby's: *6-7 years*

Details: *Openly gay, single. Has a wide range of very loyal clients. Generally regarded as 'third in command' after Linney.*

### **Beth**

Role: *Stylist*

Age: *22*

Hours: *Full-time*

Specialities: *Straightening*

Length of time at Kirby's: *5 years*

Details: *Started at the salon as a junior and worked her way up. Also qualified to perform waxing treatments, ear piercing and spray tans. Went on maternity leave towards the end of my time at Kirby's, but did come back.*

### **Nina**

Role: *Stylist*

Age: *23*

Hours: *Full-time*

Specialities: *Hair ups, curling*

Length of time at Kirby's: *5 years*

Details: *Went on maternity leave towards the end of my time at Kirby's, but did come back. Would dress the windows with their seasonal displays. Regarded as the most creative out of the staff.*

**Alana**

Role: *Stylist*

Age: *25*

Hours: *Worked mobile 3 days a week and then in Kirby's Thurs, Fri & Sat to cover busy days.*

Specialities: *General*

Length of time at Kirby's: *Approximately 6 months whilst I was there, but had worked there before for two years.*

Details: *Employed part way through my time at Kirby's left after 6 months.*

**Tina**

Role: *Stylist*

Age: *22*

Hours: *Full-time*

Specialities: *Cutting*

Length of time at Kirby's: *Approximately 6 months whilst I was there, but was eventually sacked because of her time-keeping.*

Details: *Had worked previously at an upmarket salon and at first found it difficult to adjust to Kirby's ways of doing things.*

**Sophie**

Role: *Stylist*

Age: *25*

Hours: *Full-time*

Specialities: *General*

Length of time at Kirby's: *4-5 years*

Details: *Been off on maternity leave twice over the past 5 years. Was generally disliked by the others and criticised for her hairdressing skills and 'seeing off' clients. Eventually left to become a carer in a home for the elderly.*

**Clare**

Role: *Stylist*

Age: *22*

Hours: *Part-time (Fridays & Saturdays)*

Specialities: *General, also qualified in ear piercing*

Length of time at Kirby's: *4-5 years had progressed from junior to stylist*

Details: *Been off on maternity leave and had come back part-time.*

**Gill**

Role: *Head Saturday Junior*

Age: *40+*

Hours: *Saturdays only*

Specialities: *Trained masseuse, also trained in some beauty therapies such as waxing.*

Length of time at Kirby's: *Over 8 years*

Details: *Friend of Patricia's, mother of Sacha. Calls herself 'the oldest Saturday girl in the world'. Works at another salon during the week.*

**Sacha**

Role: *Saturday Junior*

**Age:** 19

**Hours:** *Saturdays only*

**Specialities:** *Trained masseuse, also trained in some beauty therapies such as waxing.*

**Length of time at Kirby's:** *5 years*

**Details:** *Daughter of Gill. Has worked there as a 'Saturday girl' since being 14. Doing a full-time college course in midwifery.*

### **Genna**

**Role:** *Junior*

**Age:** 17

**Hours:** *Full-time*

**Specialities:** *Showing potential for hair ups*

**Length of time at Kirby's:** *3 months*

**Details:** *Employed as part of the Hairdressing NVQ modern apprenticeship scheme meaning she worked full-time with one day release to attend college. Was employed throughout my time at Kirby's but eventually left because she had had enough. Now works in a local clothing shop.*

### **Amelie**

**Role:** *Junior*

**Age:** 16

**Hours:** *Full-time*

**Specialities:** *General*

**Length of time at Kirby's:** *3 months*

**Details:** *Employed as part of the Hairdressing NVQ modern apprenticeship scheme meaning she worked full-time with one day release to attend college. Was employed until December 2007 but was then sacked because of her attitude and poor time-keeping.*

### **Zara**

**Role:** *Nail Technician*

**Age:** 25

**Hours:** *Not employed by salon but rented a chair off Patricia, generally worked Thursday, Friday & Saturday or when required.*

**Specialities:** *Acrylic nails, nail art, manicures & pedicures.*

**Length of time at Kirby's:** *12 months*

**Details:** *Had worked at Kirby's previously, but had left due to some dispute with other members of staff.*

**Appendix C – Profile of Participants**

**Number of participants:** 45  
(including those interviewed in salon)

**Male:** 13

**Female:** 32

**Ages of participants:**

< 18	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	> 75
	5	13	12	9	3	2	1

**Ethnicity:**

White British: 45

**Social class:**

I	II	IIIN	IIIM	IV	V
8	13	12	8	4	0

**Hair length of female participants:**

Long	Mid-length	Bobbed	Short
8	10	6	8

**Hair length of male participants:**

Bald	Shaved (close crop)	Short, back & sides	Length on top
2	1	9	1

**Colouring amongst female participants:**

Never coloured/highlighted hair	Coloured/highlighted in past	Colour/highlight regularly
0	32	27



**Frequency of hair salon visits by female participants:**

<b>1 per wk or more</b>	<b>Every 1-5 wks</b>	<b>6-10 wks</b>	<b>10-15 wks</b>	<b>More</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
2	0	15	12	2	1

**Frequency of hair salon visits by male participants:**

<b>Every 1-5 wks</b>	<b>6-10 wks</b>	<b>10-15 wks</b>	<b>More</b>	<b>Don't visit a salon</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
0	3	3	1	4	2

### ***Appendix D - ghd™ Profile***

ghd™, or Good Hair Day, as the acronym stands for, are the leading manufacturer of hair straighteners. Established in Leeds, United Kingdom, in 2001, they are now a multinational company selling straightening products all over the world, and boasting a turnover of £115 million (ghd™ 2009). Awarded 'Superbrand' status in 2008, their provocative advertising campaigns are aimed at young women and focus upon an 'urban angel' theme (Mintel 2008). The brand is kept alive by frequent product improvements and through the creation of seasonal, 'one-off' promotional packages complete with irons in quirky colours, travel cases, matching purses and a range of ghd™ styling products. According to Kirby's staff they are something of a collector's item. ghd™s are primarily sold through salons by trained ghd™ stylists. In Kirby's, Patricia, Parr and Linney have all received and regularly attend ghd™ training sessions. However, ghd™ irons and products are also available to purchase over the internet. The number of counterfeits on the market is so high that the ghd™ website has a page devoted solely to determining if your irons are the real thing.

For further information please visit the ghd™ website:

<http://www.ghdhair.com/>

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