

The Power of a “Hot” Haircut:  
Hair, Sexuality, and Self at the Salon

by

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**Committee Member****Abstract**

Hair, as it is fashioned in this research project, is a lens which brings embodiment, if only ephemerally, into a place of expressive focus. This thesis considers, as its subjects of research, women between the ages of 20 and 30 in Victoria, BC, Canada, who purposefully use the hair styling services of a regular stylist to negotiate social anxieties and play with possibilities of identity through the medium of hair. I engage with the concept of embodiment specifically in order to approach current theoretical concerns in anthropology with how commodity culture plays out and is played upon, both materially and ideologically, through the bodies of social actors. Hair is particularly well suited to a theoretical concern with embodiment because it is a biological medium of cultural pliability; it occurs at the interface of a biological entity, upon which it grows, and a cultural being, who styles it.

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## **DEDICATION**

Pour maman et papa.

## **Introduction**

Hair, as it is fashioned in this research project, is a lens which brings embodiment, if only ephemerally, into a place of expressive focus. This thesis considers, as its subjects of research, women between the ages of 20 and 30 in Victoria, BC, Canada, who purposefully use the hair styling services of a regular stylist to negotiate social anxieties and play with possibilities of identity through the medium of hair. In delineating the research population by the criteria of 1) being a woman who 2) seeks out unique hair styles through 3) the purchase of hair services from a regular stylist, certain limitations have been set in place, namely: 1) the analysis focuses on a specific population and cannot claim to be representative of wider patterns amongst people who do not fall into these specific categories (i.e. men, older women, young women who do not seek to have stylistically “different” hair, etc.), and 2) the recruitment methods wherein the majority of participants involved were recruited through “word-of-mouth” through personal contacts of the researcher has meant that the researcher’s relationship to each participant may have affected the kind of information collected from her. In most cases, however, the close nature of the relationships allowed for a detailed understanding of many of the participants’ past experiences with their hair and hair stylists, which helped to draw out certain themes and ideas that may not have been brought to the fore, had these personal connections not existed.

In this thesis, I engage with the concept embodiment specifically in order to approach current theoretical concerns in anthropology with how commodity culture<sup>1</sup> plays out and is played upon, both materially and ideologically, through the bodies of social actors (Martin 1992, Csordas 1994). Hair is particularly well suited to a theoretical concern with embodiment because it is a biological medium of cultural pliability; it occurs at the interface of a biological entity, upon which it grows, and a cultural being, who styles it. In Victoria, as indeed in many places throughout the world (Thompson 1998), the styling of hair by a hair stylist in a hair salon is a widely shared cultural practice that contributes to the creation and maintenance of socially appropriate bodies (Majors 2001, 2004). There is social, historical, political and economic importance in this configuration in the sense that most hair salons<sup>2</sup> function as sites wherein gender, sexuality, age, race and class are negotiated between stylist and client<sup>3</sup>, and are then cut, coloured, set and styled in the hair, in a public setting, via the purchase of a service commodity.

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<sup>1</sup> While the term culture is contentious in anthropology (Abu-Lughod 1991), I nonetheless employ it here because it is a category of identification that participants in this study freely use in discussions about their hair, themselves and others with whom they identify. I am referring to culture here as an emic category, I employ “commodity culture” here to refer to contemporary global capitalism.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note here, a point which will be taken up later, that hair salons have historically been, at least in the West (Kean Moore 2000; Zdatny 2006) and in Asia (Thompson 1998), gender segregated spaces. For most of the twentieth century hair salons were spaces where primarily women went to have their hair done and barbershops were spaces for men to have their hair and beards cut. It is only in the last 20 years or so that men have become clients of hair salons who visit hair stylists (who are largely female) rather than barbers (who are almost exclusively male).

<sup>3</sup> I do not explicitly include society as the larger backdrop against which the stylist-client relationship occurs because I hope that it is understood to be explicit in both the relationship itself, as one actor providing a service to another, and in the public (commercialized) setting in which the relationship occurs. There is much at play in the hair styling business in terms of the salon spaces themselves, which will be taken up in Chapter 4. This study focuses on salon spaces and not on hairstylists who work from home and therefore takes for granted the fact that the public setting necessarily lends a certain degree of legitimacy and social recognition to the actions taken by individuals in that setting. The pictures on the walls, the magazines, the other stylists, the windows, the other clients, and indeed the mirrors that serve to make everyone and everything visible at once all add to a feeling amongst the clients of both anxiety about their own individual hair, and a simultaneous sense of assurance that others are in the same place and that they are all in the right place to come out looking as they should.

Initially, two broad questions were to be addressed in this research: 1) How do discourses of “the natural” employed through modifications of the body, contribute to the creation, maintenance and reconfiguring of socially appropriate forms of expression, and embodiments of these expressions for young women in Victoria who routinely purchase hair services in the search for unique style? And 2) What role do popular images and mass desires play in identity-making and situation of the self in society for women engaging in the transformation of hair through the *purchase* of hair services? Alongside these two broad questions, existed other main points of interest which guided me throughout this project, and emerged as more clearly articulated concerns in the process of accompanying women to their hair salons and speaking with them about their experiences, namely: 1) how do women use their hair as a medium of embodiment to interpret, manipulate and convey their concerns with how they are perceived in the world? 2) How do unique expressions by individuals correlate between a group of women whose hairstyles take on variegated and often highly changeable forms? 3) Is there something in this variability and indeed in the constant search for the cutting edge in style that unites these women rather than sets them apart? 4) How does this search for individualized style relate to the current economic trend towards flexible capital and the new bodies that Emily Martin (1992) has posited will emerge alongside? 5) Are these women’s remarkable hairstyles really unique, or are they an embodied expression, in which these women are caught unaware, of an increasingly commodified mode of being, wherein bodies are compartmentalized in an ongoing search for selfhood that somehow always eludes the woman who wears it? 6) Or are these women somehow more aware of their own objectification in a patriarchal system, which decries beauty as the woman’s

main concern, specifically *because* they invert normative expressions of femininity through the *use* of the tools available to them to do so? 7) Does their *use* of their hair indicate that remarkable salon-style hair is a public symbol (Obeyeskere 1981), and if so what does the public symbol of remarkable, salon-done hair mean in our society? 8) Or is each woman's individualized hairstyle a personal symbol, "intimately related to the individual's deep motivations" (Obeyeskere 1981: 50) which can have significance only psychosomatically? 9) What do the hair salon and the hair stylist have to do with all of this? And finally, 10) How can political economy be used to theorize fashion, and then, how can fashion be theorized beyond profit to include an analysis of the complex desires, which indeed advertisers play upon, that drive women and men<sup>4</sup> not only to consume, but to take pleasure and find meaning in this consumption?

Posing these questions led me into territories of hair which I had not considered prior to commencing this research, as can be seen from the multitude of emergent thoughts which grew out of the initial two questions that guided the formulation of research topics. I have decided to group these considerations into six broad categories in order to give structure to the thesis and to organize the results into theoretically coherent segments. Chapter 1 takes up a concern with the history of hair in anthropological work and the history of the hair industry in the West. It deals specifically with discussions about how hair has been understood and theorized by anthropologists working mainly in non-Western contexts and takes a detailed look at hair fashions and the political economy

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<sup>4</sup> Although men are outside of the scope of this research, I nonetheless include them here because although fashion has traditionally been seen as the woman's pogram, male fashions have always existed alongside, and it could be argued, are gaining increasing importance in the current capital configuration as new markets for male consumption of fashion are being discovered and carved out in both hair and clothing industries.

of the hair industry, beginning in France in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century and then moving over to the early colonization of British Columbia, up to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Chapter 2 will deal with methodology and concepts of personhood as they are understood in this thesis, Chapter 3 will focus specifically on identity in terms of gender, sexuality, age, and class, and how these categories are related to consumption, commodities and embodiment, Chapter 4 will take up a concern with the salon space and the stylist-client relationship, and Chapter 5 will form the conclusion of the thesis.

## Chapter 1: Anthropological and Historical Hair

### Part I The Entwinement of Hair in Anthropological Thought: Women, Men and Symbols

Hair, as Mageo writes, “is one of the classical foci of scholarly musings about the body” (1994: 407). Whether the concern is of the symbolic (Leach 1958, Hallpike 1969, Obeyeskere 1981, Watson 1998), gender (Mageo 1994, Miller 1998, Weitz 2001), historical processes (Hiltebeitel 1998, Nelson 1998), political-economy (Cheng 1998), or some confluence of these theoretical concerns, the human practice of “doing” the hair has been regarded as an epistemological tool through which to expand theoretical discussions about “individually experienced hair, socially symbolic hair, and political hair” (Miller 1998b: 281).

Mageo (1994: 409), in her exploration of hair symbolism in Samoa as it relates to sexual history, delves into what she terms “the *hair* controversy in anthropology” by referring back to Leach’s (1958) *Magical Hair*, in which: “the head represents the penis, and head hair, semen... [while] long hair expresses unrestrained sexuality and removing the hair expresses sexual restraint” (Mageo 1994: 409). She places Leach’s arguments in contrast to Hallpike (1969) and Hershman (1974), who argue against the specificity of the interpretation put forth by Leach but nonetheless retain attachment to the concept of hair as signifying certain, symbolic meanings (social regulation for Hallpike and local ritual meanings for Hershmann). Obeyeskere (1981), in line with Leach concerning the primarily *communicative* nature of public symbols such as hair, stresses that hair may

function as both public symbol and personal symbol, through which deep motivations are articulated. The interplay between hair as both public and private symbol lends fluidity to cultural meaning, as the adaptation by individuals of public symbols to articulate personal meanings necessarily means that the communicative content of public symbols are subject to continuous reinterpretation. In this sense Leach (1958), Hallpike (1969), Hershmann (1974), Obeyeskere (1981) and Mageo (1994), to some extent all consider the particular *form* hair takes as the communicative function. By considering the length of hair, how the hair is bound or unbound, kempt or unkempt, cared for or left to matt, if it is shorn and by whom, and who in relation to the individual bears interest in his or her hair; the particular *formation* of hair has been understood in anthropology as a material and functional representation of underlying social, usually sexual meanings:

Confirming Leach's position on the communicative role of body symbols, the girl's hairdo in pre-Christian times signified a set of cultural assumptions about her sex role. These assumptions were that through her sexuality she would serve the interests of her family, but that she would practise this form of self-restraint in the context of a patterned form of self-advertisement (*fa'alialia*) (Mageo 1994: 417).

This preoccupation with *form* as communicative of social meaning and function, and especially of the gendered or sexually symbolic, is perhaps not surprising when considering that many of these analyses are articulated upon psychological (Freudian) understandings of the formation of the body according to certain developmental stages in which sexuality is repressed and articulated at the level of the symbolic: "the management of hair is a symbol for the control of sexuality and the control of sexuality is a symbol for other forms of social control" (Mageo 1994: 423). This configuration becomes problematic when one considers the following summation by Mageo of what exactly the "hair controversy" in anthropology is:

It is in light of the symbolic body that Leach's argument, rather than Hallpike's, seems the more encompassing. Loose hair signs social freedom; bound or lost hair signs a lack of social freedom; however, *these conditions are represented by the body and by its sexuality*. Probably this is because it is our sensory experience – our bodily experience – that provides our earliest conceptualizations of self and others (Freud [1931] 1962: 13-14; Piaget 1952; Douglas 1973). It is, therefore, constitutive of our earliest memories and these remembered images provide a basis for the part of the mind that fantasizes, the part that Lacan calls the Imaginary (Lacan 1968; 1977). *This basal position in fantasy life gives the body symbolic primacy so that it becomes the metaphor for all others* (Mageo 1994: 423-424, italics mine).

It is made evident in the above passage, as indicated by the italics, that what is at issue in considering how the symbolic has been articulated in prior anthropological understandings of hair, is the articulation of the body as basal, as *prior to*, in essence, as the “natural” state from which experiences become articulated and inscribed, giving rise to the symbolic world. If the body comes to sense and know in a symbolic world where the head is penis and the hair is semen, then what becomes inscribed on the body but this configuration?

This explicit focus in anthropology on hair as it relates to the symbolic is problematic, especially in relation to the position ascribed to the body as the means through which symbols become inscribed. As Rose Weitz states, after Foucault and Butler, “we cannot understand the nature of power, accommodation, and resistance in women's lives without first looking at women's daily bodily disciplines of femininity” (2001: 668). The vast amount of work, largely by feminists, that has gone into theorizing the body in the past decades (see for example: Moore 1994, Schepher-Hughes and Lock 1987) necessitates a reconsideration of hair in relation to the social and the self that does not presuppose the body as *merely* a perceptive biological field, but rather considers it as situated within historical political, economic and cultural processes.

This body, upon which hair is formed, and through which symbolic meanings are

articulated, must therefore be considered through an understanding that the sex-gender system previously held as “natural” wherein gender was theorized as mutable and culturally determined and sex as stable and naturally (biologically) determined, upon which sexuality was based, is no longer so clearly resolute (Lancaster 2003, Moore 1994, Shapiro 2005). The once unproblematic notion of the domain of nature and the natural as beyond the realm of culture; or the material (essential) as the base upon which the discursive (constructivist) ensues, has been problematized. Nature is culturally determined (Ellen, 1996). Biology, no longer the lone doctrine of biomedicine, has come to be seen as shaped by cultural practices and ideologies (Fausto-Sterling 2000, Lancaster 2003, Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1987). While man and woman have for some time been acknowledged to be vacillating politico-economic and historico-cultural entities (identities) across cultures and throughout time, it is now progressively more necessary to recognize that male and female are also categorical contingencies. The sexes, upon which the psychological notion of the subject and self are based, are not natural polarities (opposites) requiring some mediating force between them, so much as they are degrees of difference that cannot be measured along one simple scale<sup>5</sup>. That said, the power inherent in the cultural categories created around the binary sex system of our society cannot simply be denied because the categories are more mutable than previously recognized. Woman and man and female and male carry powerful associations and are

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<sup>5</sup> Shapiro (2005), as well as others (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Lancaster, 2003), point to a range of biological characteristics that can be and have been used by the medical establishment as well as by transsexuals and by the general public as markers of the categories male and female. The most publicly regarded symbol today are the genitals, hence the practice of sex-change operations in the medicalized process of what is called gender reassignment surgery (though Shapiro argues it should be called sexual reassignment surgery since it is not gender that is at question so much as sex). Increasingly, and especially in official sporting competitions, chromosome testing is being used to determine sex, with the possession of an y-chromosome, in any configuration, used to indicate maleness. Shapiro also outlines secondary sex characteristics, which are used as markers for sex such as voice pitch, body hair, and possession of an adam’s apple.

powerful social forces. Shapiro, in the passage below, compares them to Mauss' "total social facts" upon which "all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time— religious, juridical, and moral, which relate to both politics and the family; likewise economic ones, which suppose special forms of production and consumption (Mauss, 1990: 3)":

The culturally structured system of differences we designate by the term "gender" bears some relationship to the biological difference between women and men, but is not reducible to it. In other words, the relationship between sex and gender is at once a motivated and an arbitrary one. It is motivated insofar as gender differences are not directly derivative of natural, biological facts, but rather vary from one culture to another in the way in which they order experience and action. In any society, the meaning of gender is constituted in the context of a variety of domains – political, economic, etc. – that extend beyond what we think of as gender per se, and certainly beyond what we understand by the term "sex" in its various sense. Gender is a classic example of what the sociologist Marcel Mauss called a "total social fact" (Shapiro 2005: 154).

The reason that I draw on Shapiro here is twofold: the first is to highlight the relationship between gender, sex and subjectivity and the second is to outline that gender is, as Shapiro indicates, "constituted in a variety of domains," including sex, race, age and class. In this manner, hair as a practice implicates gender and is a fruitful pursuit for posing questions about the embodiment of "total social facts."

While I focus my analysis of hair towards a consideration of what is embodied in it, following theorization by feminists such as Butler and Grosz, postmodern theorists such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Deleuze and Guattari, and anthropologists concerned with perception, most notably Ingold, I remain cognizant of Theresa Ebert's opposition to a theoretical move towards the body as "privileged zone of inquiry" (1996: 234). Ebert takes issue with embodiment as the primary mode of explicating the human experience, referring to the concern with specific bodies as sites of knowledge as a reactionary move

“to preserve the material and ideological interests of the dominant class through a new rhetoric and new theory” (1996: 234).

I have argued throughout this book that there are no autonomous forms of knowing. All arguments for the autonomy of knowledge of sexuality, race, environment, and so on offered by the new social movements are part of a larger upper-middle-class theory that localizes the globality of knowledge through which social differences are articulated materially and historically, and it does so in order to serve the interests of specific groups. The body has now become the ever-more-specific site of this local (autonomous) knowledge (Ebert 1996: 233-4).

This criticism comes at a time when an increasing number of theorists are taking up a phenomenological concern with the body as site of subjective knowledge and the self as being-in-the-world (the individual as location through which to *know* the social) (Csordas, 1994, Ingold, 2000) and focusing on categories such as sexuality (Vance, 2005) and gender (Butler, 1990), as performative, differentially experienced, malleable and socially constructed. Ebert especially lambastes the fascination with territories of ambiguity in challenging Western binary categories of normative identity. Ebert (1996), alongside Morris (1999), highlight the reactionary aspect of many of these theoretical positions in preserving privileged positions of knowing (specific bodies) and *knowledge* rather than challenging the oppressive forces that favour certain subjectivities over others:

This valorization of the specificity, the concreteness, of bodies informs nearly all feminist theories of the body. One of the main questions, then, for a transformative feminist politics and culture critique is, what is the political effect of these rewritings of knowledge and everyday culture through the specificities of the body? Do they disrupt and transform knowledge practices and relations of exploitation in patriarchal capitalism, or do they reproduce the divisions of labor and subjectivities necessary to patriarchal capitalist oppression, in spite of their subversive agenda (1996: 236)?

Ebert (1996) condemns postmodern feminists for over-conceptualizing the body and claiming that the only way to rescue it from its position in feminist theory as a concept is to render it more specific: as “my body” rather than “the body.” This, she writes, pushes the subject “back again to the bourgeois isolate, the monad so necessary to

capitalist patriarchy: the specific, local, me cut off from any understanding of the operation of the social relations of exploitation” (1996: 242). In addition, Ebert posits that experience does not rescue the body from its position as concept, but rather *that experience must itself be conceptualized in order to be made intelligible*. She writes, “The issue here is not to romantically dismiss concepts but to question how we theorize and use them” (1996: 249).

Thus hair emerges for me at a crucial point, an interstice of body and being, which cannot so simply be disentangled from the political as to render it merely experiential, symbolic, expressive or performative of identities, however fluid or seemingly resistant these categories may be. Rather, through a theoretical engagement with political economy, media, and embodiment, the question becomes for me twofold: 1) how is hair configured as a point of articulation for the self, specifically through a dominant ideology which privileges the (white male) body as a natural category of knowing in a symbolic world wherein the hair of the head might be seen to unconsciously represent semen, and concomitantly (hetero)sexuality (Mageo 1994; Obeyeskere 1981; Hildebeitel 1998; Miller 1998)? And 2) What political and economic forces have shaped the hair industry in Victoria historically, in order to render the “doing” of hair as it is currently practiced, a naturalized category of experience in the performance of embodied acts of consumption regarding categories of identity?

The first question I will return to in my analysis of client interviews in Chapters 2 and 3, and the second question I address now through an engagement with two historical works that deal specifically with the “doing” of hair and changes in the hair industry with

the advent of consumer economies in the West at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Zdatny's (2006) is set in France, and Keane Moore's (2004) is set in British Columbia.

## Part II History of the Hair Salon: Prestige, Style and the Modern Woman

Zdatny, in the preface of *Fashion, Work and Politics in Modern France*, states:

Standing at the confluence of commerce, beauty, and discretionary income, the history of coiffure reflects the enormous changes in French society as it became richer, more urban, more concerned with being clean and well turned out. The story is all the more remarkable since at the end of the nineteenth century, hairdressing was a miserably paid corner of the economy, where men mostly served other men in tiny barbershops. This began to change with the extraordinary expansion of ladies' hairdressing, discernible before 1914 and accelerating thereafter. There was, of course, nothing new about women dressing their hair. What was new was its increasing commercialization and the way it moved steadily down the social scale. The effect was dramatic. The number of hairdressing salons exploded, and young women poured into them as both workers and clients. At the same time, technology and sales – from shampoos and dye-jobs to permanent waves – boosted revenues and helped to ameliorate working conditions. By the end of the 1960s, the weekly visit to the beauty salon had become a national habit. Women now comprised a substantial majority of hairdressers, with a decent standard of living, and the barbershops that had defined the *métier* a hundred years earlier had disappeared almost entirely (2006: xiii).

This passage serves to delineate the changes in the hair industry that turned a relatively non-existent practice, the *commercialized* dressing of female hair, into a “national habit” in the span of roughly one hundred years. This is a gendered, classed, and though not mentioned specifically here, a raced<sup>6</sup> (Majors 2001) history that “allows us to see fashion, not chiefly as art or celebrity, but as social practice. Above all, it points to the *fundamental importance of women's spending habits*, especially those of nonelite young women” (Zdatny 2006: xiv [italics mine]).

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<sup>6</sup> In reference to how hair and identity have been theorized by others, especially African American writers, race is demarcated as an important aspect of what goes on in the hair salon, specifically considering the fact that hair salons are often separated by race. In my own analysis, however, race came out very rarely in the interviews, when it did come up, it did so specifically in reference to “other” races. I take this to be symptomatic of race in the sense that all of my participants identified as white, and as many critical race theorists have pointed out, whiteness is often enacted as a non-category.

The *métier* of *coiffure pour dames* was, according to Zdatny, prior to the emergence of the hairdressing salon in twentieth-century France, an esteemed trade that was practiced only by artisans for the wealthy women of the court. This *métier* was flagrant with the extremes of *décors pour corps* popular amongst the elite in the late eighteenth-century:

The colossal headdresses often became a sort of discourse, where creations like the “Spaniel’s Ears,” the “Drowned Chicken,” “Mad Dog,” and “Sportsman-in-the-Coppice” evoked nature or some historical motif. Currency and excess reached their apex with the legendary hairstyle, the “Belle Poule,” which celebrated the victory of the British warship *Arethusa* with “seas of hair, with model ships, fully rigged and manned with toy sailors.” More architect than hygienist, the eighteenth-century hairdresser constructed his hairdos largely from whatever material came to hand (Zdatny 2006: 2).

Richard Corson writes of the construction of courtly women’s hairstyles during this period in France:

Giving us a closer look at the construction of the coiffure, Redfern, writing of the styles of 1768, reports that ‘the substratum was composed of wool, tow, pads, and wire, over which was drawn the natural or false hair; and on this again were arranged gauze trimmings, ribbons, feathers of enormous size, and of all the colours of the rainbow, artificial flowers, etc., adding 24 to 36 inches to the actual height of the fair wearer. Ropes of pearls, small models of sows, coaches and horses made of blown glass, also added to the grotesque appearance of the pile’ (1971: 333).

With the French Revolution these “excessive<sup>7</sup>” hairstyles disappeared from French high society to be replaced with still intricate yet more moderate styles that

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<sup>7</sup> The use of the word “excessive” here is important, as is the use of the term “grotesque” in the quote preceding this sentence. It is important to consider that this terminology, in describing women’s fashion is one that emerges from a Western (white) patriarchal perspective which continues to relegate women’s concerns with bodily appearance the status of shallow, frivolous, or superficial endeavor. This perspective is evinced in Corson’s historical account depicting hairstyles (mostly of the Western elite) of the last 5000 years through a number of caricatures of eighteenth-century women portraying “ridiculous” women with their “grotesque” hairstyles in all sorts of follies related to their manner of dress. The use of this kind of language necessarily denotes women’s fashion, and the notion of hairstyling itself as an unimportant activity practiced by women who are themselves as frivolous as fashion is deemed to be. In this way the history of fashion and of women’s experiences and embodiments of fashion become detached from the larger social context and are rendered politically and economically inert. Assigning terms such as “grotesque” to women’s hair carries implicit values about the women wearing these styles and displays a masculinist perspective. These views necessarily obscure the power relations and controlling processes (Nader 1997) at work in women’s engagements with their bodies and with each other through discourses of fashion and hairstyling.

remained largely dependant on the use of *postiches*<sup>8</sup>. Meanwhile, hairstyling for women outside of the home emerged as a practice that only the elite could afford; the domain of highly skilled labour by male practitioners of *haute coiffure* (Zdatny 2006). The styles of the nineteenth-century, although more modest than the courtly styles of the preceding century, continued to require styling by a ladies' hairdresser. The difference between the newly rich bourgeois<sup>9</sup> woman and the truly elite took a turn during this period, emerging as a pronouncement of class difference articulated through a newly emergent profession divided along lines of gender and space/place. Those wealthy enough to visit salons stepped out of the domestic sphere to have their hair done outside of the home by male artisans, while the middle-class woman would have continued to have her hair done by a ladies' maid in the privacy of her own *boudoir* (Zdatny 2006: 3).

Thus, as far back as the late eighteenth century, the dressing of female hair and the site of the salon began to carry political implications in terms of both clientele and labour. While male stylists<sup>10</sup> were highly sought after artisans that accorded their

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<sup>8</sup> *Postiches*, hairpieces made from real human hair, serve a prime example of just how intertwined beauty and power, both in terms of historical depiction and in terms of actual practice, have been throughout Western History. Corson's (1971) book, portraying the hairstyles of the past 5000 years, for instance, does not depict the styles of the peasant women who had their hair shorn to provide the raw material for the *postiches* that were required by women of fashion for their hairstyles. Zdatny states, for example, "*Postiche*, at least before the coming of the permanent wave, was a *coiffeur*'s principal source of added value, the item that lifted *coiffeurs pour dames* above their poor barbering cousins. No weapon in a hairdresser's arsenal, thought Emile Long, was more essential to art and profits" (2006: 6). The extreme profitability of these hairpieces for the hairdresser's who used them rested on "an extensive world market in raw hair" (Zdatny 2006: 7). According to Zdatny (2006: 7), this world market resulted in the importing of some 80,000 kilograms of raw hair into Paris every year in the 1880s, mostly from the poorer regions of the surrounding countryside.

<sup>9</sup> Zdatny (2006) seems to use the classification bourgeois to indicate a newly emerging middle-class. He refers to the bourgeois of the eighteenth century as separate from, and in constant emulation of the truly elite. He later refers to mass consumption of hair services and other goods amongst the lower classes in the early twentieth century.

<sup>10</sup> Here it is important to note the difference between a hair stylist and a barber. This differentiation forms one of the central theses of Kean Moore's (2004) history of the hairdressing industry in British Columbia,

clientele prestige, ladies' maids were largely seen as unskilled, underpaid labour, who worked and likely lived within the home of their employer, and for whom the dressing of the hair was only one aspect of their waiting on the woman of the house (Zdatny 2006). This time period affords an interesting consideration in terms of the first emergence of hair as a consumable enterprise for women, and in the delineation of the boundaries of fashion as accessible to a newly leisured middle class. The emergence of changes in women's conceptions of hair and the rise of the hairdressing industry during this time period align with Barnard's statement that

Both Wilson (1985) and Faurschou (1988) locate the beginnings of modernity with the rise of industrial capitalism. Both agree that it is only with the rise of industrial capitalism that fashion comes onto the scene. Berman Supplies a little more detail: he identifies three stages of modernity. The first, he suggests, lasts from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth; in this period, people are just beginning to experience modern life and have little or no sense of themselves as a modern public. The second begins with the 'great revolutionary wave' of the 1790s and lasts until the twentieth century; in this stage, people have a more conscious understanding of the idea that they are living through times of change and modernity. In this stage, the experience of living in a modern world begins to be thought about explicitly. The third consists of the remainder of the twentieth century. In this stage, modernity begins to take in the whole world, and a worldwide culture of modernity is to be found in thought and art (Berman 1988: 37) (Barnard 2002: 159).

For the first time, in the nineteenth century, what we see is not so much a difference of visual form between the elite and a newly emerging class of consumers, but rather distinctions based specifically on consumption through access to professionalized labour and spaces. For while the bourgeois woman may have had at hand a ladies' maid to do her hair in emulation of the form which the elite women wore, this emulation would not yet have put her hair into a category of commodified part. As throughout history and in many cultures (Thompson 1998), hair styling for most women in nineteenth-century

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which I will return to later, and is discussed in detail by Zdatny (2006: 23-52) in terms of the lowly status and wages which continued to plague barbers in France, even as the hair salon for women and the *haute coiffure* practiced by male artisans began to emerge as a more prestigious category of labour.

France, remained a practice of domesticity wherein the dressing of the entire woman would have been carried out by either a family member or a ladies' maid in the home, not at some identifiable place within a public locale. Geared, as the hair salon was toward one specific part of the body, a relationship began to emerge between hair stylist and consumer wherein the consumer could gain an advantage in style, and hence presumably social position over her fashion contemporaries, specifically *because* her hair was done by an expert outside of the home. A relationship had come to light wherein who had done your hair, and *where* you had it done, was beginning to carry an import which previously had been allotted to the wearer of the hair herself and the form in which she had her hair arranged<sup>11</sup>.

During the nineteenth-century and into the twentieth-century, the hair salon and the practice of *coiffures pour dames* continued to expand slowly, with still the majority of practitioners of hair styling being young men working for low wages on haircuts and shaves for men in barbershops. “[F]rom just over 10 percent of hairdressers in 1896, the proportion of coiffeuses crept up to 11.4 percent in 1911” (Zdatny 2006: 48), during this time period a few *écoles* sprouted up around Paris, but apprenticeships in salons and barbershops continued to be the main means by which hairdressers trained for their

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<sup>11</sup> Zdatny (2006) does refer to some well known *coiffeurs* who styled the hair of the ladies at court during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, but these coiffeurs operated under the auspice of artisan, and would have visited the woman in her home to fashion her hair, rather than having the woman come to them within a public salon where presumably consumers could come into contact with one another. During this time, according to Corson (1971), individual women of the court seemed to have much more influence on styles, having their hair done in manners determined by their own tastes rather than those of stylists:

Probably no one person was more influential in determining hair styles during the reign of Louis XV than Madame de Pompadour. ‘A hundred entrancing ways did she arrange her hair – now powdered, now in all its own silken glory, now brushed straight back, ears showing, now in curls on her neck... till the court nearly went mad attempting to imitate her inimitable coiffures’ (Corson 1971: 329).

profession.

The First World War, according to Zdatny, came to alter the face of the hairdressing profession, reflecting shifts in gender relations that accompanied, if not effected, configurations of consumer society in the modern age:

[T]he social changes [the war] set in motion turned the hairdressing profession upside down, pulling large numbers of barbers and their *assistants* out of the salons while bringing in crowds of young women, both as customers and practitioners...for hairdressers, a home front full of women with disposable income and relative autonomy represented a huge new pool of potential consumers (Zdatny 2006: 51).

Having highlighted the historical emergence of the site of the hair salon within industrial capitalism and the beginnings of modernity, and having set the stage for the professionalization of hairdressing for women, beginning in France with *coiffures pour dames* in the late eighteenth-century, I now turn to the specific manner in which this profession became instituted into the landscape of British Columbia in the twentieth-century to give rise to the contemporary hairdressing industry which forms the site of my research. My purpose in tracing the development of the industry from 18<sup>th</sup> century France to 20<sup>th</sup> century British Columbia serves to highlight the continuation of a particularly Western history draped in modernist/capitalist/colonialist ideologies that was brought to British Columbia by white colonizers.

Kean Moore's<sup>12</sup> *'The Bob-Shingle Regime that Rules the Feminine World'*:

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<sup>12</sup> I rely heavily on Kean Moore's history in this thesis to frame the terms for the emergence of the hairdressing industry in British Columbia, and while I acknowledge that I have used only one main source for this information, I am nonetheless grateful to her contribution to this subject as at the time of writing hers was the only history on the hairdressing industry in this province that was available as an academic document. While this may mean that only one perspective is presented on the history of the subject, I believe that the information contained within is important enough to this thesis to include a detailed summary of her findings. Her work and Zdatny's do much to set the stage for the practice of visiting the hair salon as it is undertaken by the participants in this study and, in addition to the work done by Thompson (1998) dealing with the hair salon in Kathmandu, go a long way to delineate experiences shared by many women in consumer societies today.

*Consumerism, Women and Work in 1920s British Columbia:*

tells the story of the rapid expansion and feminization of hair services markets and businesses; examines the public and legislative debates about the importance of consumer services such as hairdressing and its customers; and reveals the persistence of gendered divisions in the early transition to a consumer services society. Using British Columbian newspaper reports, American and Canadian women's and union periodicals, city directories, national censuses, and government reports, the project looks first at the increasing pressure in the 1920s from business owners, advertisers, and magazine editors to adopt new, fashionable hairstyles and the sources of ambivalence among women about the new styles... It concludes that British Columbia, despite its primary resource economic base, remained remarkably in step with international trends, from feminization of services to regulation of those services, of which hairdressing was just a beginning (2004: ii-iii).

Kean Moore's statement that, "[s]ervice industries became strikingly feminized over the course of the twentieth century" has implications in terms of the fact that "service positions were [and continue to be] marked by lower status and pay than those dominated by men in a sex-segregated job market" (2004: 2). This statement is important for three reasons: 1) as outlined by Zdatny (2006), prior to the mass influx of women as consumers of hair services, a standard poverty existed among barbers, whose services were consumed by men of all classes<sup>13</sup>, 2) the emergence of *haute coiffure* for women in France, which aligned with the rise in industrial capitalism, marked a departure from this station in that for the first time professional *coiffeurs* began earning decent wages for doing the hair of *women* of the higher classes, and 3) it was only during the First World War and afterwards that women entered the hairdressing profession as stylists and non-elite women made use of it as modern consuming subjects in both Europe and the colonies, and this is the point at which Kean Moore (2004) takes up her analysis. Her

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<sup>13</sup> This statement deals with the fact that beginning with the emergence of *coiffures pour dames*, experts of the look of the female body in the form of hair, initially mostly men, but later women also, came to earn much more money than dressers of the hair of men (barbers). This, as will be discussed regarding the hair industry in British Columbia, emerged alongside influential factors in the West that tied the female body into notions of consumption so intricately that it soon became a very profitable enterprise. The male body, at least until quite recently, was not accorded this same status and thus barbers, as both Zdatny and Kean Moore point out, could not stand to gain the same kinds of profit. Male consumers, unlike female consumers were neither seen to desire nor *need* products and services of this nature. It seems that consumption related to the body in this early period of mass consumerism took very different forms for men and women, at least in terms of hair.

particular interest in this time period evolves out of a consideration in how “[t]he international [Western] consumer society of the first third of the twentieth century was expanding and changing the activities of everyday life and appearance into more standardized forms in the far-flung reaches of North America” (Kean Moore 2004: 1). Kean Moore’s analysis tracks the changes in the face of colonial British Columbia from a colonized region that was primarily concerned with resource production and export, to one that, by the end of the 1920s, had become incorporated into a modern “international culture of mass consumerism represented in magazines, advertising and film” (2004: 1). This transition required changes in the workforce, which Kean Moore suggests have not always been reflected in “the historiography of consumerism” (2004: 2) of British Columbia. The exclusion of service-oriented labour, primarily dominated by women, from histories of British Columbia, according to Kean Moore, is a result of historians’ prime focus on men’s labour and union organizations. Kean Moore writes,

[c]onsumer, business and gender studies converge in hairdressing, which has recently been the focus of an expanding body of research, especially in the United States where historians have concentrated on the politics of race, gender, images, business and work, and commodification. While racism obviously plays an important role in beautifying activities in North America in the twentieth century, gender issues are equally important. . . . Feminism, hairstyles and consumerism were connected in the first third of the twentieth century. Feminists of various stripes adopted short hair to show their rejection of a definition of femininity centred on domesticity. As women achieved suffrage, increasingly participated in the middle class workforce, and took advantage of opportunities in higher education, and new definitions of marriage *they sought to represent changes in their social roles in their appearance. Short “bobbed” haircuts, blonde or coloured hair, and permanent waving of the hair all signaled engagement with post-World War I challenges to an older femininity that centred on domesticity* (2004: 4 [italics mine]).

While Kean Moore highlights the changes in women’s hair that “challenge an older femininity that centred on domesticity,” these changes are based specifically on women’s access to consumer products and consumer services and their successful incorporation as

a consumer class into “an international culture of mass consumerism represented in magazines, advertising and film” (2004: 1). Tying an emerging feminist movement into power acquired from new-found economic freedom that attaches itself to 1) the emergence from the domestic sphere into the workforce and 2) the transference of this economic puissance into consumerism, and yet *highlighting* the consumerist aspect of new feminine power, raises a difficult question regarding the formation of this new power in the first place. The question concerns why women’s service-oriented and domestic-oriented *work* was continuously devalued and rendered historically invisible while simultaneously their role as *consumers* came to acquire more value, especially in the eyes of magazines and other markers of mass consumerism who marketed advertisements for new consumer goods related to “beauty” primarily to women. Furthermore, a double-edged sword presents itself regarding the valuation of women’s contribution to the social (rather than domestic) sphere in that, at the same time that women’s power as consumers is heralded as more important than their contributions as workers, consumerism itself is rendered irresolute and fickle in the discourses of prestige accorded to economic activities in modernist capitalist society. In this configuration, based on colonialist, modernist and capitalist discourses, we begin to see discrepancies of class, gender, and race (Majors 2001, 2004) in the *practice* of hairdressing, in which the interests, wages and prestige of the servicing class of *coiffeurs* (male hairstylists for women), barbers, and *coiffeuses* (female hairstylists for women), are set apart in relation to the class, gender, and race of *consumers* (Kean Moore 2004), a configuration which, at least to some degree, continues to present day. This occurs in the face of the emergent mass consumerism amongst the middle and lower classes in emulation of the “long-prevalent

consumerism of the upper classes” (Kean Moore 2004: 2). However, as with the caricatures depicting the “grotesque” hair of elite female consumers in the eighteenth-century, the mass consumption of hair services and beauty commodities by non-elite women in the twentieth-century has retained chagrin in both academic and popular discourses:

Characterizations of women’s consumption of commercial beautifying services echoed longstanding stereotypes of voracious, temporary, fickle, inconsequential, irresolute female shoppers, at the same time that women were ardently encouraged to partake of such services. Echoing Frankfurt School concerns about the “dumbing-down” effects of mass culture, some feminists have argued that the beauty industry is a persuasive agent of the oppression of women, distracting women from more important endeavours and encouraging both women and men to conceive of women solely as sexualized bodies<sup>14</sup>. More recently, however, Kathy Peiss proposed that the purchase and use of beauty products and services provided women with a powerful tool of self-definition within the confines of a consumerist society, thus allowing women more agency in their engagement with consumer society (Kean Moore 2004: 2).

While Kean Moore expounds the potential for the purchase and use of beauty products and services to be a “powerful tool in self-definition within the confines of a consumerist society [which allows] women more agency in their engagement with consumer society” (2004: 2), I, in line with Emily Martin (1992) and Theresa Ebert (1999), remain unconvinced as to the nature of this power in considering how women, as consumer subjects, come to embody these contradictions, a concern which I take up throughout this thesis. An example of these contradictions, which began to emerge from the very beginnings of the symbolic change in the conceptualization of the female body as both consumptive enterprise and liberating possibility, comes from within Kean Moore’s thesis in the form of emancipation heralded by the “new” hairstyles that were seen to symbolize “freedom” for women:

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<sup>14</sup> The critiques, which Kean Moore cites here, are in reference to Wolf (1991) and Bordo (2003).

After World War I, many feminists hoped they were on the cusp of a new and better world and wanted to sever their connection with the past. Short hair was one way to do that; dyed and blonde hair, which also became fashionable in the 1920s, was another... Freedom was also symbolized by youth, and suggestions to dye one's white hair made up the majority of hair-related advertising in Canada's national magazines. The short cut and hair colouring also denied respect for older, grey-haired women, who represented an older gender order. According to the *Chatelaine* beauty editor, short hair symbolized women's emancipation and modernity. She wrote: "few women want to go back to hairpins – they refuse to be bound." The new hairstyles seemed to embody the New Woman values of sexual, moral, and economic freedom and independence, and to remove women from the bonds of domesticity symbolized by long hair (Kean Moore 2004: 5-6).

My contention concerning this point is that the claim of freedom in the form of short hair is carried out at the expense of "older women," and is put out by the beauty editor for a national magazine, in which advertisements for beauty products and technologies play a significant part. This gaining of freedom through youth, requiring a separation of younger women from older women who supposedly were the harbingers of domesticity is interesting considering that 1) the society within which both young and old women lived was and continues to be patriarchal, and 2) a devaluation of aging and a valuation of youth as the concomitant symbol of freedom (through "beauty") results not necessarily in a gaining of social power by younger women, but rather in an increase in consumption of beauty products, to retain this supposed power, by older women. This ties directly into the statement later made by Kean Moore that despite controversies surrounding the new hairstyles (some of which heralded them as morally loose and dangerous), "bobbed and processed hair spread rapidly through the new mass consumer culture, and in the process of becoming a worldwide phenomenon its feminist meanings were superseded by images of femininity focused on attractiveness to men" (2004: 7). And furthermore, "[s]imultaneously encouraging women to care for their appearance with consumer items and mocking or dismissing that care as unimportant was a common feature of health and cosmetic attitudes in the 1920s" (Kean Moore 2004: 16), an attitude which was present in

eighteenth century France regarding fashions of the time (Corson 1971), and continues today in widespread attitudes about women and the beauty-industrial complex (Bordo 2003, Wolf 1991).

While Kean Moore (2004) outlines the rise of the female consumer of hair services in British Columbia in the early twentieth century in relation to larger trends in both Europe and especially the United States, her focus rests mainly on the labour aspects of the hairdressing industry from its first appearance in British Columbia's urban landscapes. In the early colonial period in British Columbia, as in France prior to the First World War, the majority of

women's hairdressing and its associated beauty activities can be best characterized as having two components. First, most hairstyling and cutting were done without payment at home, and women made soaps and shampoos from locally procured or purchased ingredients. In instances where special occasion beauty help was required, a local woman might have informally offered hairdressing services in her kitchen for a little extra money... The other component of hairdressing services was the beauty salon in large, cosmopolitan cities, frequented by wealthy women (Kean Moore 2004: 19-20).

The conditions of late nineteenth century British Columbia, in which international fashion trends were just beginning to take hold and be desired by female consumers provided opportunities for female entrepreneurs that had hitherto not existed. Kean Moore states that this was the situation for white working-class women as well as African-American women, in which it was the case that "hairdressing and beauty shops were one of the few businesses not owned by whites, and one of the few places to work outside of domestic service" (2004: 20). One of the main reasons that female hairdressers were successful in this time period is not so much that already existing barbers were not able to procure the new styles for women, but that they were unwilling:

[t]o protect the culture and identity of the barbershop, its operators and its customers, some barbers actively discouraged female customers... Threats to respectability and preservation of [white] male space encouraged a new, [yet still class and race-segregated] women-oriented, women-operated, beauty business space” (Kean Moore 2004: 21-22).

The conditions set in place prior to World War I in British Columbia, as in France, that saw women taking up hairdressing as a profession, literally explode during and after the war. In this new landscape of business, “gender and class differentiation [continue] to be important” (Kean Moore 2004: 24), with up-scale downtown salons servicing elite white women and home-run salons servicing women of the working class. One of the main draws to hairdressing work for women of the lower classes was indeed that, in contrast to some of the other work that was available to them, hairdressing accorded these women prestige by putting them in intimate contact with women customers of the upper and middle classes.

While working class women increasingly entered into the hairdressing profession in British Columbia in the 1920s, they continued to be poorly paid, and while many women owned their own salons and employed largely female staff, and according to Kean Moore

retained a feminist vision of their work providing services to women and employment for young women... [w]ith the expansion of chain stores into British Columbia, the newly emerged local, small business, female leadership in the industry became less prevalent in the larger international consumerist changes happening in North America (2004: 28).

As the hairdressing industry expanded in the province barbers unions began to seek regulation from government to protect their interests. Initially this was undertaken by white barbers to protect their industry from the influx of Chinese and Japanese barbers

whose shops began to appear in white neighborhoods. Legislation for barbers was passed in 1924 and took the form of regulations based on hygiene that delineated white barbershops as clean places that could charge more money for their services and were recognized by the government as legitimate places of business. This legislation included neither Asian barbers nor female hairdressers, and indeed was specifically seen as a way to exclude these workers, thus rendering them “unprofessional, not worthy of status, and irrelevant” (Kean Moore 2004: 31). Thus at a time when hairdressing as an industry was rapidly increasing, this law rendered the cutting of hair by anyone but white male barbers illegal. Hairdressers introduced their own bill on February 8, 1927, called the hairdresser’s bill<sup>15</sup>, a bill that was “modeled on the barber’s legislation and included the regulation of beauty schools, provisions for hygiene and the creation of a mandatory association to monitor the industry (Kean Moore 2004: 33). The barbers union, in reaction to this proposed bill pushed to include hairdressers in the Barber’s Act, and make hairdressers members of the Barber’s Association, but the hairdressers refused this proposal. It would be another two years, however, not until March 13, 1929, that an amended hairdresser’s bill was passed in British Columbia. The hairdresser’s bill instituted the Hairdresser’s Association as the governing body for all hairdressers in British Columbia and proclaimed a trend that would see increasing government control in consumer services in the coming decades. The hairdresser’s bill, as separate from the Barber’s Act, marked an official and legal gender separation in which hairdressing was marked as “a stand-in for consumerism. Its customers and practitioners [were] assumed

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<sup>15</sup> Kean-Moore does not stated the specific name of the *hairdresser’s bill*, as passed in the legislature in her thesis, she uses lower-case letters to refer to the hairdresser’s bill, since supposedly this was not the official title of it, the Barber’s Act, however, was passed under that title in the legislature and is therefore capitalized. I retain this distinction here.

to be female... described as flighty, impermanent and irrelevant... While the definition of barbering emphasized the work being done, the definition of hairdressing emphasized the gender of the consumer” (Kean Moore 2004: 39). The legal ruling for these general attitudes came in the form of a legislative decision that barbers had the right to cut anyone’s hair, while hairdressers could cut only the hair of women and children.

Kean Moore’s history is a history of the hairdressing industry in British Columbia. It is a history whose focus rests mainly on gender, setting out to make visible the lives and experiences of women workers in British Columbia’s hairdressing history. While she briefly makes mentions of some of the legal struggles faced by Asian barbers, she remains strikingly silent on the dressing of Indigenous<sup>16</sup> and non-white hair and the experiences of non-white consumers and workers in the province. This is perhaps fitting specifically because the hairdressing industry was, and continues to be exclusionary, on specifically these terms (Majors 2004). Hairstylists trained in Victoria, B.C., for

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<sup>16</sup> While I do not take up an explicit focus on Indigenous hair or the relationship of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia to the hairdressing industry, I nonetheless wish to make it plain that this is an industry that is rooted in colonialist practices. My purpose in tracing the development of the industry from 18<sup>th</sup> century France to 20<sup>th</sup> century British Columbia was to highlight the continuation of a particularly Western history draped in modernist/capitalist/colonialist ideologies that was brought to British Columbia by white colonizers. The concern with hair in this story is, as mentioned previously, a concern with white hair. There is no mention in Kean Moore’s (2004) history of the relation of Indigenous people to the emergent hair services industry, and while I do not wish to make claims on what labour relations between white hairdressers and barbers might have meant for Indigenous peoples whose lands these colonizers came to occupy, I do know that the dressing of hair (although unlikely carried out, at least initially, as a choice-based consumptive practice in a commercialized salon setting) played a strong symbolic role in colonial endeavors to civilize “savages”:

When children attended residential schools, they were simultaneously racialized as “Indians” and divided within the two-gender, two-sex system. In many first-hand accounts, boys and girls were separated, their dress and hair strictly shaping them into model subjects, turning “savages” into “third-class citizens” under British colonial rule... Within this process, systems of race and gender were mutually articulated, enforcing and creating one another. Individual accounts of residential school students clearly show the gender uniforms as one colonizing tool – boys had their hair cut short, girls wore bobs and bangs, and they were physically separated from one another in the schools, kept in different dorms in order to ingrain distinct gender roles into them (Hunt 2007: 41-42)

example, learn how to dress “white hair”. While they may have some exposure to “Asian hair” in the course of their training, they rarely, if ever learn how to dress and care for “black hair” (personal communication, Lydia, 2007). The manner in which the hairdressing industry was instituted in British Columbia as an industry primarily concerned with the hair and interests of white colonizers remains strikingly intact in present-day Victoria. The Hairdresser’s Association, a regulating government body instituted in 1929, later to become the Cosmetologists’ Association of British Columbia, was only disbanded in 2004. A regulatory body, referred to as the Cosmetology Industry Association of British Columbia (CIABC), now privately controlled, continues to provide guidelines for education and certification for practicing hairdressers (which are now professional rather than legal requirements):

For nearly 75 years the provincial government regulated the industry through the Cosmetologists' Association of British Columbia (CABC). When government regulation ceased in 2004, the industry created a new voluntary association of committed professionals. CIABC successfully replaced CABC, and continues to oversee the development of the training curricula and certification of BC's beauty professionals (17/06/2007: /http://www.ciabc.net/).

This regulatory body, until recently governmentally controlled, was instituted on a legal gender-based segregation that set the guidelines in place for how hairdressing has been practiced in British Columbia for nearly 75 years. While hair salons do not specifically exclude non-white clients, many hairstylists readily admit to having difficulty dealing with “other kinds” of hair, statements that I have heard hairstylists make on several occasions, both within and outside of hair salons in Victoria. In some cases a salon may have an “Asian hair” specialist, or a “black hair” specialist within a salon staff of several stylists. Additionally, the images that line salon walls and the magazines found within the salons I have visited in Victoria rarely show images of women or men of

colour, older women and men or girls and boys. There are images of young white men in the salon and in the magazines, but these make up less than a third of the images in the salon space. The majority of images in the salons I visited for this research (and the many others I ventured into to have a look around in) are of young white women and their hair: specifically the consuming body set out at the institution of the hairdressing profession as an aspect of mass consumer culture in the West beginning in the 1920s.

Both Kean Moore (2004) and Zdatny (2006) point to the importance of the hair services industry in the construction of laboured gender divisions that are reflected in contemporary conditions, which see hairdressing as a profession predominantly undertaken by working class women. In my analysis I depart from highlighting the role of labourers in a consumer services society to look at how the historically situated processes that gave rise to this configuration have become naturalized in the beauty salon as it exists today, and I do so specifically from the consumer's perspective. This approach emerges out of a consideration for how young women, delineated in mass culture as consuming bodies and bodies to be consumed, embody the contradictions inherent in their power as consumers and the power consumption has over their desires and subjectivities in an advanced capitalist society.

## Chapter 2: Reproducing the Image: Methodology, the Mirror and My“self”

*Mildred<sup>17</sup>: And I liked your use of looking through the mirror [with the camera] and my perception of myself, and my perception of myself when you changed the angle to my reflection of myself in the mirror was like I couldn't sense myself in the same way as when the camera was just on me...*

*I think it's a really interesting thing putting it in the salon, that's a really interesting place. Especially taping the visit, and then watching it and watching yourself. Watching yourself and then, you know, watching myself, watching myself, that distance. And I did see, like I guess when we were sitting down to do that interview in the chair when I was getting my hair done, I was thinking of course about what you were presenting, like why you were doing it and I was talking about things that might be relevant, whereas had I not known what you were doing I might not have talked the way I did, right. So there's this idea in your head, right, but then when I watched it again, things I realized that I didn't notice when we were there... I didn't notice how nervous I was until I saw myself look over at the people like in such a serious situation, like I'm joking around with you guys and then all of a sudden I look over [makes a serious face and turns, laughs] and so that clued me into how very nervous I was.*

*Angelique: Someone else said to me that they felt very vulnerable in the hair salon*

*Mildred: Yah, I would relate to that for sure, it's all of the mirrors.*

Having positioned the hair salon as a historically embedded en-gendering practice situated in colonialist practices and modernist capitalist ideologies in the previous chapter, the following chapters serve to explore the postmodern condition of the practice of visiting the hair salon within an economy based on flexible capital accumulation (Martin 1992) in an age where communication and information technologies are increasingly being wound into notions of the self (Poster 2006) as an amalgam of identity/image-based choices (Miller 2000). This chapter deals specifically with

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<sup>17</sup> All of the names, save my own, in this text have been replaced by pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of the participants, stylists and the people discussed in the interviews. The salon names, where they appear, have also been changed.

methodology and research design, the organization of thought and the backdrop against which information was elucidated: through my gaze, through the gazes of the participants, and through the reflections of these gazes in the lens of the camcorder and the multiple mirrors in the salon space. Direct quotes from the participants will be woven through the text in such a way as to expand and play upon the themes that have been drawn out. These quotes are meant to appear more as spoken bits of word and thought than to be dealt with directly in terms of content analysis. It is hoped that this narrative style will allow for a reading of this particular text as both a recording of the participants' voices and a theoretical exploration, which does not subsume, but rather occurs alongside the individual voices.

*Carmen: Just thinking about the film and thinking about watching myself, it was definitely different than how I perceive myself, which is an uncomfortable feeling, really [laughs]. Umm, one thing that I found really interesting, this woman Dierdre, that I told you about recently started working with us, and she's a friend of a friend and I really like her a lot. So many times when I was speaking, so many of my mannerisms, are very similar to Dierdre's, and that was kind of surprising. Yah, so for me just watching myself on film there's definitely a gap between how I think I present myself to the world and looking at it through this lens.*

The research for this thesis took place between October 2006 and January 2007; it took the form of two-part interviews with seven<sup>18</sup> women in the Victoria area who were

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<sup>18</sup> For the initial salon-visit interview there were eight participants, but one of the participants did not participate in the second interview and therefore was not included in the analysis. The reasons surrounding the exclusion of her data were twofold, the first is that she did not fit into the categories defining participants in the sense that she does not routinely have her hair "done" at the hair salon and the second is that she did not live in Victoria at the time of the study, but rather had moved from Victoria to Montreal several months previously. The main reason for including her in the first place was her interest in the project, but during the salon visit it became clear that she had a very different relationship to her hair than did the other participants, namely she felt emotionally tied to her hair in a way which the other participants did not and expressed much anxiety and distress after the cut was done pertaining to the changes that had been made, and for several weeks thereafter. The hairstylist revealed to me that this was a routine occurrence whenever she cut this participant's hair. After the salon interview she did not so much express that she did not want to do a second interview as she avoided it and returned to Montreal before the

between the ages of twenty and thirty<sup>19</sup> at the time of the study. The participants were recruited on the basis of self-identification within the criteria of 1) being a woman, 2) having a regular hair stylist in a salon in Victoria and 3) having “unique” hair. I did not wish to set the parameters with which “unique” was defined, but rather left it up to the participants to decide whether they felt this was something with which they took up a concern through the medium of hair. I acknowledge the arbitrariness of this category and delineate the boundaries only in terms of a visually communicated choice by these women to *use* hair as a means of representing their “individuality”, something which all of the participants indicated to me as an important aspect of having “unique” hair.

*Matilda: Yah, I remember, like the more I started feeling like an individual, I got it cut more and more, and eventually really short. And I know that when I was in grade 9 I had longer hair and I was really shy and I was totally uncomfortable in my body, and I think as I became more comfortable with myself, I guess I started doing different things and I don't know if they just coincided or if one influenced the other, but the more comfortable I felt with myself, the more “individual” I started looking, like I started dressing differently, I guess I started doing different things and I don't know if they just coincided or if one influenced the other and doing my hair, like colouring my hair and getting piercings and stuff.*

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interview could be conducted. This experience highlighted an important aspect of the study group surrounding the notion of desire for change. All of the participants, save the one that was excluded, desired to have changes and sought these changes out. Each and every one expressed an idea of boredom with constancy in hair formations, while the participant with whom a second interview never took place expressed anxiety rather than desire in the face of changing her hair, and unlike the other participants, did not have a relationship of trust with her stylist.

<sup>19</sup> I did not specifically set the age limits for participants, but likely because of the location of the posters and because most of the participants were contacts of friends or my sisters', the participants are all in the same age group as myself. This has meant that the perspectives are those of women within a particular age group, a categorization that emerged as an important theme in the interviews. It is very likely that interviews with older or younger women and girls, many of whom share the practice of attending the hair salon, would have resulted in very different thoughts and opinions; these however, are outside the scope of this research project. In the end, I believe that it was fitting to have interviewed women of this age group specifically because they fit into the marketing category of young white women that forms the bulk of the imagery in the salon space. In this way I was able to think about how the contradictions of consumerism were embodied for these women particularly through the ideas and experiences they expressed in relation to these images, and how they experienced that which does not appear in wider media contexts but is nonetheless reflected through the mirrors in the salon space and in their everyday lives, something which proved important to all of the participants.

*Gwen: Yah, well, it's weird, I guess it kind of ties into what I was saying before, it's like my hair helps me sort of filter people out. Like I'm feminine enough, but I have a mohawk, so that's like, it feels really right to me but like, because that's so weird to everyone else it feels weird to me too sometimes. But it's kind of like if I was doing anything else I would also be lying to myself, so I think it just has a lot to do with being queer and being creative and being different than everyone else and just feeling weird about it, and so it's just kind of like, I'll just have a mohawk and be weird about it, because that's what feels better than pretending you're not, right?*

Recruitment for this project occurred through two methods, the first and by far the most successful was through direct communication with friends and/or relatives and the second was through a poster placed at various locations around Victoria. One of my sisters, Lydia, is a hairstylist in Victoria who at the time of this project worked at a fairly prestigious salon in the downtown core. Four of the participants in this study (as well as myself) call Lydia their regular stylist, two of whom are my friends (Carmen and Mildred), and one who is my sister (Matilda). The fourth participant (Gwen), who is also a client of Lydia's, was introduced to me through Lydia. Two of the participants, both of whom I have been friends with for several years (Felice and Desmonia), go to another stylist, Suzanne, who works out of a salon in a mall and is also an acquaintance. Out of the thirty posters I put up around campus and in various downtown coffee shops and retail outlets only one participant who was not otherwise connected to me contacted me (Estelle); her stylist Trina, works at another prestigious downtown salon.

Data for this thesis were brought together, as mentioned above, in two-part interviews through the use of a widely available commercial handheld camcorder<sup>20</sup>. This recording method was adopted for two main reasons. First and foremost, as a feminist researcher I wished to design my research with as much transparency as possible in order to have my positionings (Moss and Matwychuk 2000) as ethnographic observer be brought into focus alongside the agenda which I was pursuing, especially in presenting these positionings to the participants. Having participants watch themselves as I watched them, allowed them to both look from my point of view, at least visually, and ask questions about my intentions. The first “interview” took place in each participant’s salon, with her regular stylist, at a “regular<sup>21</sup>” salon appointment, and was not conducted as an interview so much as a recording of an event.

My engagement with and recording of the salon appointment as an event evolved out of a methodological interest in Valentine and Matsumo’s (2001) Cultural Performance Analysis Spheres (CPAS): “a process-oriented method... for conducting descriptive analyses of performance-centered cultural events” (Valentine & Matsumo, 2001: 68), which is the second reason I adopted the use of a visual recording tool. I

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<sup>20</sup> Reference is made specifically to the handheld commercial camcorder in order to draw attention to the acquaintance of the participants with this recording device, which is about the size of a larger digital camera, a piece of technology which all of the participants in this study routinely use. Thus, in reference to the footnote below, the participants were familiar with the technology and felt comfortable with its use. In addition, hair salons are spaces in which recording devices such as handheld camcorders and digital cameras are often used, especially during wedding and graduation preparations.

<sup>21</sup> I write “regular” in quotations here to acknowledge the fact that the salon interview is in fact made “irregular” by my presence there recording the event. While I make no claims otherwise, I did attempt to minimize my imposition by “just hanging out,” with the client and stylist, as though I were a friend accompanying the client to the salon, which in many cases I was. The camcorder necessarily separated me from the other people in the salon space and drew attention to my client from other clients and stylists in the salon, but this attention was mostly interest into what was going on and often resulted in dialogue between myself and/or the participants with other clients and stylists. These kinds of interactions between clients and other clients and clients and other stylists are common in hair salons, especially when clients are in the “processing room” waiting for their colour to set.

approached the salon hair appointment as an event by considering it a process that follows specific, culturally contextualized patterns and procedures, not explicitly scripted, but implicitly understood by the performers (i.e. the “natural” occurrences of the hair salon) (Majors, 2001, 2004). While I did not follow the exact prescribed spheres within CPAS, which are delineated below, I nonetheless found the analogies embedded within the method to be useful in recording and analyzing data.

In CPAS, the space (both physical and culturo-temporal) within which an event takes place is divided into roughly six domains of analysis that correspond to one another via embedded yet fluid relationships. These spheres are organized as concentric circles converging on what is called the fusion point, where

the physically present audience, the performative-semiotic text, and the performers are so connected that a seamless moment of union, blending, and merging exists... that point of total presence when those who take part stop their parallel processing of reactions and become part of the flow of the performance (Valentine & Matsumo, 2001: 77).

The fusion point in performance ethnography that deals with more traditional forms of cultural performance such as parades and dances, etc., may be only momentary or transient, during which time the spheres are united in focus. In the context of an unscripted, yet implicitly understood performance, such as the event of a salon haircut, there may never be an exact point of fusion that can be identified, since individual clients and stylists rarely focus on one point simultaneously. Rather, there are multiple performances within the context of the larger performance that is the entire salon space. Thus, the fusion point, as it is described above occurs only within the smaller set of individual client/stylist/ ethnographer interactions, and not so much with the union of all of the spheres simultaneously.

The outermost circle in CPAS, Sphere E, is the observer/ethnographer or ethnography, the binding substance that defines that which is included within the field of study; this sphere is taken up most specifically in the current chapter, but is also present throughout, as indeed the thesis is an ethnographic text; the binding substance which seeks analysis of the hair salon appointment in an academic context.

The next circle, Sphere C, includes the cultural contexts, used here to mean “that unique set of interlocking personal and public stories, rituals, customs, values and beliefs that characterize a specific community” (Valentine & Matsumo, 2001: 73). These contexts were discussed in Chapter 1 as the wider arena within which the performance takes place, such as the historical forces that have shaped how the salon haircut has come to be scripted as it currently is in Victoria. A further aspect of the cultural contexts includes the subjective experiences of the participants, which lead them to make use of the salon as they do, these will be taken up in Chapter 3.

The specific locale is referred to as Sphere I, the in situ or immediate ambiance. Sphere I includes all of the sensory or embodied experiences of the location, which in this case will be the particular salon within which the visit takes place<sup>22</sup>. The next three spheres: Sphere A (Audiences), Sphere PP (Primary Performers), and Sphere P (Performance/Semiotic texts) are contained within the wider circle of the three outermost

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<sup>22</sup> It is important to note here that the in situ location of the performance has at least two components. On the one hand there are the subject-client’s sensory experiences, which are focused on herself since she is the one undergoing bodily manipulation, and on the other hand there are the ethnographer’s sensory experiences, which as much as possible attempt to describe the entirety of the outermost sphere of experience as captured through the use of the camcorder.

spheres, but are connected horizontally within the in-situ location of the performance. Chapter 4 will be organized around these four spheres, and the relationships that occur within and between them. Sphere A includes all audiences, whether present or not at the actual performance. There is variation within this category of how engaged audience members are in the actual performance. Thus, for instance, in the context of a hair salon, other stylists, and passersby are part of the performance of one client's salon visit, even though they may neither be directly involved in, or even paying attention to that client's presence. Sphere PP, in the event of the salon haircut includes the hair stylist and the client, and may include others such as the receptionist, other stylists or assistants, and anyone that interacts directly with the client. Audience members such as the ethnographer may become part of the performance by interacting with the performers (which is the case in this ethnography since the salon data primarily focus on interactions between client, stylist, and ethnographer in the salon space).

The performance sphere, Sphere P, or the semiotic text, is defined as, "what is said or done that is symbolically significant to the participants as ascertained by the members of the group" (Valentine & Matsumo, 2001: 76). Thus, while the interactions between client and stylist, and indeed between ethnographer and subjects, are not "scripted," there are certain understandings by the performers of what these relationships are, and thus of the kinds of conversations and interactions that occur within them. For the purpose of this study, these are the semiotic texts, and help in the definition of what is a "natural", acceptable, or normal relationship between client and stylist, and indeed what is "natural," acceptable, or normal in the articulation of the self as delineated by the

multiple influencing factors present in the salon, such as magazines, photographs, other clients, and stylists.

My interest in CPAS was less with representing social relations as a visual diagram and more with organizing the data into spheres of overlapping relation, using visual data as organizing enterprise and analytical tool as well as recording medium. The analogy of relational spheres proved useful for this, especially in thinking about the salon space, and in drawing out themes of conversation and occurrences, which marked the salon appointment as a shared, although individually undertaken practice for the women in this research project.

The filming of each salon appointment was undertaken in such a way that 1) the focus remained on the client the entire time<sup>23</sup>, and 2) I did not appear directly on camera (unless reflected in the mirror) but was present vocally and participated in conversations: present, but not visually so. This choice was based on a wish on my part to have each participant watch her hair appointment as I watched it, to have her gaze focused towards my own research agenda: to observe herself having her hair “done” and to observe the salon space and her relationship with her stylist removed from the direct space of the

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<sup>23</sup> Initially I wished to film the salon space as well as the client in order to have the client observe the entire salon space through my gaze, which in the context of CPAS would be Sphere I or the in situ context. This proved difficult for two reasons: 1) in the workings of the salon there is much commotion and movement by stylists, assistants, and clients through often tight quarters and my moving about was simply often not possible without disrupting the ongoing flow of the salon, 2) while filming the hair appointments many of the other clients or their stylists asked about what I was doing and expressed concern at being filmed, for this reason I maintained focus on the participant/client I was accompanying, in order not to make other clients/stylists feel uncomfortable or imposed upon. Through the use of the mirrors I was able to get a wider inclusion of other clients and the salon without removing my direct focus on the participant, and this footage did elicit some interesting data in terms of the in situ ambience. Primarily though, the client’s attention was focused on herself and her experiences; so too in viewing the appointment was the participant’s gaze focused on herself, even when other people were present in the video.

salon, i.e. to direct the participants gaze towards the event from the position of an audience member, which in effect the ethnographer also is. Viewing the filmed data, which considered the salon space and the relationships that occur within as overlapping components of a larger “naturalizing” performance in the creation of gendered, sexed, raced, classed and aged bodies, allowed for an organization of the filmed footage into themes<sup>24</sup>. These themes, which are addressed throughout this thesis, and which guided the composition of the questions for the second interview, included: excessiveness and performance in embodiment, the extravagance and luxury of spending over \$100 on one’s hair, communication technologies, relationships with past and present stylists, hair as experienced in terms of “natural”, modifications done on hair, financial implications and cost of hair cut and colour, cost of products, exchange of services, age appropriateness, sexuality and sex, fashion and style, memories of hair and relationships embedded in hair in childhood, hair as symbol of autonomy and individuality, how other people perceive your hair, humour and appropriateness in terms of gender and age categories as expressed through hair, hair and hygiene, hair as a dirty thing which needs washing, hair and beauty, body size, gender roles, attractiveness, hair as tool to filter people (especially sexual partners) out, hair and work, exchange of personal information with stylist, stylist as “counselor” and friend, cross-cultural experiences of haircuts and

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<sup>24</sup> Using CPAS as the primary method for organizing the visual data in the initial salon interview meant that a certain degree of analysis was in place prior to entering the salon space, namely in terms of the spheres that would be considered important sources of data in the first place, and then later, what themes would emerge, according to these spatial relationships through the footage. I acknowledge that this meant that a pre-ordained map of importance was laid upon the event before it actually occurred, which meant that certain themes were highlighted over others, however, I still think the initial analytical spheres proved useful as a way of analyzing data and drawing out themes, some of which had not emerged as important in the initial mapping. That said, ethnographers must delineate questions prior to commencing research, and while this method, perhaps more than others, may restrict the focus of the work more than other methods, I believe it proved useful as a way of thinking about an event which focuses specifically on one or two participants, but in which many other persons, cultural influences, and structures of power play a part.

what it means to have white hair in a primarily non-white place (i.e. Asia and South America), hair and moods: using hair as a tool to change internal moods, to refresh and reinvent oneself, filming as tool, how filming affects memory, hair as art, relationship with stylist as art project in the creation of the self, hair as a tool to express sexuality, especially when not a “straight” hairstyle, hair and makeover TV shows, hair and dating websites, hair and family relationships, people who have emotional capital in your hair, hair products and quality, personal relationships, school, not fitting in, other people with interesting hair, what participants like and dislike, magazines and images in the salon space and how these are used/viewed by the participants.

As I indicated earlier, the chapters in this thesis are organized around a grouping of these themes, as interpreted, discussed and understood by participants viewing their salon appointment, into the spheres of analysis delineated through the CPAS method.

*Estelle: Another thing I was thinking about was the connection to the hair stylist and how like we talked about it right when we went in there about how it's attached to your identity, but it's funny because, well my little theory is that when you go to these trendy places that it's part of your artistic creation of yourself, right, so then when that person starts to know what you're doing, like where you're going with your own self and your identity, like Trina knows a lot about like my music and what kind of stuff I'm doing, so if I were to go to another hairstylist it would be like, "they don't know what to do because they don't know what I'm going through."*

The methods I used for the second interviews, carried out either in the participant's home, or in my own, depending on the wishes of the participant, included 1) watching an edited 30 to 40 minute version of the salon event, and 2) dialogue concerning, firstly the participant's observations and thoughts about the video and her

experiences/ideas concerning the salon appointment and the research process, and secondly a discussion of the themes and questions I had drawn out of the salon video, which I highlighted as clips of conversation during the process of editing. My reason for showing an edited version of the video was twofold: firstly the editing process allowed me to focus on the themes elucidated by the CPAS method and to extract new themes from each visit, along which lines I was able to conduct the second interview less as a flow of direct questions and more as a discussion/dialogue based on a mutually shared viewing/observing experience. This idea follows a concern in visual anthropology with what Pink (2006) terms (after Rose) ‘audiencing:’

Banks insists that the social relations of visual images are key to understanding their meanings – for example, ‘all films, photographs and art works are the product of human action and are entangled to varying degrees in human social relations; they therefore require a wider frame of analysis in their understanding’, which in Banks’ terms means ‘*a reading of the external narrative that goes beyond the visual text itself*’ (2001:12). Although these ideas are quite established in visual and media anthropology, Rose notes that the existing approaches she reviews neglect what she refers to as ‘audiencing’, a term borrowed from Fiske (1994) referring to ‘*the process by which a visual image has its meanings renegotiated, or even rejected, by particular audiences watching in specific circumstances*’ (2001: 5). Rose builds on the work of Moores (1993), Morley (1992) and Ang (1985) to propose that to study audiencing one might consider: 1) ‘*how audiences react to a visual image... to produce a particular understanding of that image*’; and 2) ‘*how different audiences react to the same image ... to demonstrate the complexity of the decoding process*’, using different types of one-to-one and group interviews (2001: 193-7). These would form ‘*ethnographies of audiencing*’ (2001: 197) for which ‘*an ethnographic approach would involve the researcher observing an audience in their home over an extended period of time, and talking with them about their viewing but probably also about many other things*’ (2001: 197-8) (Pink 2006: 30 [italics mine]).

My concern with ‘audiencing’ in this research emerged out of a desire on my part to have each participant emerge from the position of primary performer and be put in the position of audience member: to view the imaged text produced by the ethnographer in the course of the research. This method, I hoped would take up Pink’s points concerning specifically: 1) the process of interpreting, negotiating or rejecting the meanings and

themes I had drawn out of the images in each salon visit, specifically from the point of view of the imaged person at the time of the second interview, and 2) how each participant, as audience member, reacted to a visual image of herself, and in so doing produced a particular understanding of that image and the manner in which it was produced.

My second reason for showing an edited version of the video was that the salon appointments varied in duration from 40 minutes to three hours and it would have been unreasonable to watch three hours of footage and conduct an interview thereafter. I made it clear to each participant that the video was edited and expressed the availability of the full-length version, should anyone desire it, which none of the participants did, although one of the participants asked for a copy of the edited version.

*Estelle: No, which is good, I really thought coming over here actually, I'm like oh god I don't want to watch it, I really don't. I thought I would be and feel way more awkward, so I was happy about that, it's like, no that's pretty much how I see myself. Which is not to say that I'm not awkward, but I pretty much knew my level of awkwardness before watching it [laughs]. And it was fun also, it's weird to hear yourself speak, like I'm glad that I'm articulate. I thought that I was less articulate than I am, I always say apologize for not expressing myself well, but then when I hear myself, I'm like, yah I'm making sense, people can probably understand what I'm saying. So I think that was funny because I don't think I've ever – I actually was going to ask you for a copy of that to put in a vault and watch it when I'm 80.*

The second interviews were also filmed, although in this case the filming method was focused only on the participant and myself in conversation onscreen. The participants did not have occasion to view this footage in the course of the project, but have been offered a copy should they wish to have one, again only one participant expressed a desire to have one. The second series of interviews were filmed for two

reasons, the first was that the camcorder was the recording device available to me at the time and the second was that I wished to place myself in the position of audience member in viewing the visual product of an interview in which I was one of the primary performers. This was especially helpful in detecting comfort, discomfort and enthusiasm in both the participants and myself, and for elucidating my own meanings about the process of viewing these images. The camera, for the second interviews, was placed at a distance from the interviewer and participant and was outside of the main focus of the conversation. I used this footage as a tool for collecting information from the participants about the themes outlined above, that emerged in the course of their salon visit, as well as their ideas concerning the experience of watching the salon visit from the position of audience member.

Watching myself in the role of researcher allowed me a great deal of reflexivity, becoming aware at times of my own discomfort, of whether or not my questions were constructive or leading. This position allowed me to consider in detail some of the observations made by the participants in watching themselves on video. In viewing these videos a conceptual distinction was drawn, both by me and by the participants between the bodily experienced self, which I term here my“self” and the notion of a bodied individual, who is recognizable upon viewing as me, but also as a sort of “other” person, for which I use the term myself.

The reason I distinguish here between myself and my“self” specifically has to do with notions of personhood, embodiment, and belonging. In viewing the video and

watching myself there is as though a union of the self seamlessly belonging to the body within which the self is seen to dwell; a person as perceived by others. Interestingly, in watching the video myself as a person emerges much more prominently than it ever can in moments of being, in which I am constantly monitoring my “self” as a mind enacting a body. This point on simultaneously recognizing and being surprised by myself in viewing is something I will return to in the next chapter, as it is something which (most) participants expressed with surprise when viewing themselves on video in the salon setting, a sentiment which I had occasion to perceive and sense through the viewing of my own imaged body-person enacting the role of researcher.

This kind of recognition is the same sentiment that Estelle expresses in the preceding quote regarding her articulateness and Felice expresses in the quote following when she recognizes herself but also observes a sincerity, which she would not normally experience in her “self”. Felice is sincere because she is a person engaging with another person. She can reflect upon herself in watching the video, and in reflecting experiences the gap, which Carmen refers to above in her perception of herself as she thinks she is: my “self,” and what she actually sees: myself.

These gaps emerge in the process of viewing myself, because in watching an embodied actor, whom I know to be me, and who I experientially remember being, the dualistic framework of the mind monitoring the body is not a contemporaneous internal presence. Rather one views a person, whom one recognizes as my “self”, simultaneously remembering the thoughts of the minded body and yet viewing an engaged person within

whom the thoughts are not externally perceivable. Thus myself is abstracted in the distancing, a simultaneous other/self in which the image I have of my embodied self and the image I perceive enacting her/me, slip off of one another in the representational medium. This dualism is important, because as much as dualistic frameworks of self/other, mind/body are recognized by the participants, and in academic discourse, to be epistemological constructions, it seems that in terms of embodiment, at least in this setting, the minded self, my“self” (as consumer) emerges as a monitoring process: an anxiety, over the work of/on the embodied self, myself.

*Felice: It's so funny watching yourself on camera.*

*Angelique: How come?*

*Felice: I don't know, it seems like I'm actually kind of genuine. Sometimes it seems like I'm just faking it or I feel like I should be more awkward on camera, but I'm like "oh yah, actually that's how I act all the time."*

This notion of personhood observed and expressed through viewing my“self” in the context of the hair salon through changes in the material medium of hair bears resemblance to the notion of the person as expressed through the archaeologies of personhood articulated by Wilke and Howlett Hayes in regards to material artifacts from the recent past:

Archaeologies of personhood in particular seem to be best suited for realizing the potential of engendered and feminist archaeologies. Personhood is a way of conceptualizing past actors as the sum of their ascribed and achieved social positions, and provides an important alternative to the western notion of the "individual" as an autonomous and independently motivated actor (Gillespie, 2000; Meskell, 1999; Meskell and Joyce, 2003). Cross-culturally, we know that what defines a human as a person varies widely from culture to culture, and the cultural responsibilities and obligations of personhood shift through an actor's lifecourse (Fowler, 2004). Personhood is an embodied experience, and therefore gender remains a central concept to understand personhood. Unlike research that focuses strictly on gender, taking a personhood perspective encourages archaeologists to recognize finer grains of social difference and

experiences among past actors. Because personhood is constructed through discursive social relationships, using this approach it becomes more difficult to exclude certain subject positions from analytical consideration.... [T]his issue [personhood] can be approached materially through artifacts, architecture, and landscape. An understanding of how materiality is used to construct, manipulate, negotiate, and transform gendered embodiment in the recent past can provide new avenues of consideration for scholars working in other time periods, whether they have access to texts or not (Wilke and Howlett Hayes 2006: 254).

While Wilke and Howlett Hayes refer here to personhood as it can be understood materially through past actors, this notion can also be applied to current actors, in order not to rely on the Western (modern, capitalist) notion of the individual autonomous actor, but to recognize this embodied self as a socially embedded person subject to each society's categories of personhood. These parleys of personhood are explored frequently by the participants in this study in terms of their negotiations and understandings of contradictions and ambivalences in categories of identity, especially in relationship to sexuality, age, gender and class. Viewing identities, and indeed individuality, through the lens of personhood allows for a richer discussion of the discursiveness of these categories and simultaneously necessitates a consideration of the embodied nature of the person who enacts and articulates the social roles given meaning through her body.

*Desmonia: I would say I'm a pretty strong woman, I think I can come across as really intimidating or overpowering at times, and I also have no idea when I'm doing those things. It's afterwards, when I've thought about it, you know, how I might be coming across to someone as being more confident than I am, like I think I exude more confidence than I actually feel. I don't know if that has anything to do with hair, like just being bold enough, you know? I get comments like, "oh I wish I had enough guts to do that". I'm like, it's not really gutsy, like I don't feel like it's brave to do it, I feel like it's just – [pause] self-indulgent, but fun, like, you know what I mean?*

## Chapter 3 Woman Embodied: Consumable Identities and the Creation of the Self

### Part I: Hair as Body and Object

*Estelle: Like from looking at when I came in to when I left, there's a difference, but to me it felt like a way bigger difference than there really physically was. Like you know, some highlights and some cuts and I felt like a new person. And then I was thinking about that it was a really big deal that I cut off all my hair. Like I'm used to it by now, but talking about it and listening to that and having gone from the long straight, like you too, you know, having gone from that to this, like again maybe to some people short hair doesn't mean a whole lot, on me is how a lot of people know me is with short hair, but to me it's like a transformation from a before to an after. Like the before meant something so the after means something too, it means a lot more personally than it does to other people I guess, because totally what you were saying, the before and after thing, I hadn't really thought about that. But I think that has a big huge, has lots to do with it, and why we keep doing it, and why we spend so much money on it because there's that, like I've gone from here to here and you can see it because I've physically changed myself. But um, and I was just thinking, I'm kind of thinking about it, as I'm growing it out again it feels really weird, it feels like a big step to me too, but it's not really, it's just growing hair out, but it feels like I've made a decision to do something, to transform or to go towards another place, and sort of reinvent. That was another thing I was thinking about was reinvention, because I read something the other day about "when you're bored, reinvent yourself." And I think that's one of the things haircutting does for people that are more flexible with the concept of identity, I guess. It's like you really can do a lot with hair and clothes and stuff like that, so I think it's fun too, I don't know, just that idea of reinvention, I find it fascinating. And then I have tons of stuff about, by the way, I'm happy that I wasn't totally like, "oh my god who's that person?"*

One of the participants in this study, Estelle, returned again and again to the idea of creation and reinvention when talking about her hair. For Estelle, who as she puts it, is “flexible with the concept of identity,” her hair provides an engaging site wherein she can put her desires for personal change into articulation through the physical surface of her body, and in doing so can effect changes in her “self.” While these changes are experienced as communicative both internally (her perceptions of herself), and externally (how she is socially perceived), Estelle recognizes in viewing the “before and after” of

these changes that the transformation is much more subtle as an externally perceivable image than it is as an embodied experience. This is an important point concerning how the self is articulated through the body, in the sense that there is a multiplicity at play in which the “self” exists simultaneously as both an internally<sup>25</sup> and externally defined enterprise; a notion which bears relation to the relationship posited by Obeyeskere (1981) between public and personal symbols as articulated through the hair:

The matted hair of Leach’s hypothetical pseudoascetic is a symptom, not a symbol. So is the matted hair of nonascetic beggars in Sri Lanka and India: they are simply dirty locks matted together through neglect. A symptom is a somatic manifestation of a psychic or physical malady. In my ascetics symptom is replaced by symbol. The symbol is generated primarily out of the unconscious; once generated, it exists on the public level as a cultural symbol. Through it the ascetics convey a public message: fear, revulsion... *Socially the matted locks act as a marker to set aside their bearer as a special and redoubtable being...* All symbols are cultural and public; but a cultural symbol may exist on many levels – the personal and the social. It can communicate different messages, emotional and cognitive (Obeyeskere 1981: 37 [italics mine]).

The communicative value of matted hair is, I have noted, not as important for ascetics as its personal meaning. Rather, it could best be explained in personal-experiential terms. I shall label the class of symbols to which matted hair belongs “personal symbols” – that is, cultural symbols whose primary significance and meaning lie in the personal life and experience of individuals. And individuals are also cultural beings or persons. There are only a few symbols that have exclusive personal meaning: hair has considerable social (interpersonal) meaning also, though it is vague and undifferentiated. *Some symbols have both personal and interpersonal meaning, such as dress styles, where personal symbols are individually used and manipulated.* Indeed, the looseness and ambiguity of such symbols are critical, since they facilitate manipulation (Obeyeskere 1981: 44-45 [italics mine]).

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<sup>25</sup> I recognize that making the distinction between internal and external necessarily indicates a dichotomy that mirrors the self/other distinction, wherein the self is seen to reside inside the body and the externally perceivable person is understood as “other”. It is more for a lack of other terminology that I rely on the words internal and external. What I mean when I say internal bears some relation to the Western notion of the “self,” or the “I,” but what I mean to suggest by this usage is specifically that while this concept is discussed as an unproblematic enterprise, i.e. “I am within myself, which resides in my body,” that experientially, the self is not embodied as such. Rather, there exist multiple contradictions wherein the relationship of the internal “self” to the body within which it is seen to dwell, is experienced in disruptions, gaps and schisms so that one is always attempting to make this fit but never quite achieving it, or rather achieving it only momentarily in instances of recognition that are always yet fleeting. The exploration of the concepts of internal/external echoes a call by Judith Butler, explored later in this chapter, for re-examining modernist categories in the light of shifting understandings about the de-naturalization of dualistic categories that have long dominated Western thought.

There are two main points I wish to draw from Obeyeskere's undertaking to work through the meaning of matted hair as symbol. The first concerns the statement that, "[s]ocially the matted locks act as a marker to set aside their bearer as a special and redoubtable being." This occurs for Obeyeskere's ascetics specifically because of the *a priori* existence of a category of identity to which the symbol of the matted hair corresponds in Hindu society: namely, that of Hindu ascetic. Obeyeskere contrasts the existence of this category as a cultural symbol to what he terms "Leach's European pseudo ascetics" (1981: 34) whose matted hair he categorizes as symptom, not symbol, because, he says, there is no category of "cultural heritage" which leads to this form, but rather it develops out of somatic or physical malady.

My concern is not to decipher the meaning of "unique salon styled hair," as Obeyeskere sets out to do with the matted hair of the ascetics, but rather to situate this practice and its multiple forms within a larger political economy based on consumption as the means through which to support, create and reinvent the Western individual as a legitimate gendered person; and in this sense to suggest that consumption, in whatever form it takes, is itself *the* public symbol. I draw on Obeyeskere's findings in order to illustrate the communicative nature of hair as public symbol, and to situate the "cultural heritage" of "individual style" within a modern system of prestige that gave rise to the fashion and beauty industries, the hair salon and the practice of hair styling for women as it exists in contemporary Canadian society. The weight here, in relation to one of Estelle's points about her hair regarding, "the difference between what you mean by your hair and what other people read into it or don't read into it," sits not so much with the

particularities of meaning, what Obeyeskere would term personal symbols, but with the fact that meaning exists and is identifiable by others; that “well coifed,” professionally styled hair that frequently changes styles, is a form of consumption, and therefore a public symbol that sets its bearer apart as a special (in some senses redoubtable) being within the gendered context of her existence as a person in this society: she is a *fashionable* (consuming) *woman*.

The second point I wish to take up from Obeyeskere’s *Magical Hair*, concerns the configuration that “some symbols have both personal and interpersonal meaning, such as dress styles, where personal symbols are individually used and manipulated” (1981: 45), which ties into the former point but concerns specifically the *use and manipulation* of symbols. This aspect relates to what Estelle refers to as “flexible identities,” a concept which on the one hand might be heralded as an erasure of dualistic models through the notion of shades of difference rather than either/ors (Fausto-Sterling 2000), and on the other bears striking resemblance to Emily Martin’s “late capitalist bodies learning flexible responses in rapidly collapsing time and space, bodies which nonetheless contain (contradictorily) increasingly sharp and terrible internal divisions” (1992: 134). While I do not mean to suggest that the use and manipulation of personal symbols necessarily means an entanglement in the flexibility that Martin (1992) refers to, I believe that this configuration wherein personal symbols such as dress and hair styles are used and manipulated by “individuals” in their constitution of the “self” in late capitalist society is inextricably bound to consumption, which, as *the* public symbol, overrides, incorporates,

and indeed creates the context of “choice” within which individual uses are rendered possible.

I have suggested that consumption of hair services is the public symbol that provides cultural meaning, in relation to which the particular choices women make regarding style might be considered personal symbols imbued with meanings that are not necessarily communicable in the stylistic form hair takes. I now turn to these personal meanings in order to inform the argument that young women, delineated in flexible capitalism as consuming bodies and bodies to be consumed, embody the contradictions inherent in their power as consumers and the power consumption has over their desires and subjectivities in an advanced capitalist society. For this argument, I look to recent theories on consumption and the exchange of objects (Egan 2006; Curtis 2004; Miller 2001), and indeed at how hair, which has been experientially defined by the participants in this study as both body and object, or as *embodied object*, is particularly potent in these negotiations:

*Angelique: Can you talk about some of the ways hair might be related to sexuality?*

*Carmen: Umm, I think the easiest thing to tackle in that, like in terms of women, I think hair plays a pretty big role in letting people know your sexual preference. And it's, umm, yah Jaime and I were just talking about this, like I used to dress and look a lot more like a lesbian, and umm, that's a real unconscious shift in my look and how I dress. Like I don't know what process I'm going through, maybe, yah, maybe ten years ago, I much more wanted to let people know I was a feminist. I'm not exactly sure, and maybe now I feel less, well there's like a cycle, for me there was a cycle of feminism that goes through rebelling, you know, so the stuff about my mom, like her wanting me to wear skirts and me wearing jeans was a way to assert my autonomy or something. But then, after a while, realizing that when you're rebelling you're still kind of being controlled, and you're not actually choosing [laughs]. Like shaving my legs was the same thing, like I'll go for a year without shaving my legs and then I will shave my legs, so I don't have*

*like a good political perspective on whether women should or shouldn't shave their legs and what it means for like the liberty of women on the planet, like I just don't have an idea, but I just know that now I genuinely choose to do it whereas when I was 21 if I wasn't shaving my legs, that too wasn't a genuine choice. So I don't know, perhaps that's true with my, in terms of how I'm choosing to wear my hair and my sexuality... I don't know, my sexuality hasn't actually changed, but it's like identity...[trails off].*

*Angelique: And do you think, I mean, it's pretty – we see advertisements about it all the time, and I think one of the connections that is made is between sexiness and hair, and in a lot of the readings that I've done, it's that way in other cultures as well, and I'm just wondering if sometimes your hair was sexy or made you feel more sexual or if that was something that was even a connection for you?*

*Carmen: I mean I really have never had the hair in magazines that's supposed to be sexy, but it's not the same as saying that there aren't some days or some haircuts where I think it's sexy. Like I've definitely gone into Lydia and I've said, you know, "make it look sexy and hot," but it's not like runway model wispy or something, right. Maybe part of it again has to do with identity, with like weeding out, you know, like if it's a haircut that's blue and it feels sexy, I'm selecting what guys I want to think that my hair is sexy. You know, like I want to weed out, like hockey players, say [laughs].*

*Angelique: Right, but you feel your hair is a tool to be able to do that?*

*Carmen: Definitely, yah I think so.*

Carmen identifies several key points in relation to how the choices she makes for her hair, both head and body hair, are experienced as simultaneously able to effect changes in her life, i.e. in terms of the men she can attract, and not significant in the larger scale of her feminist goal for the "liberty of women on the planet." Carmen is uncertain of the role of her body in her goals as a feminist and activist. She feels ambiguous now; having once felt that choosing not to shave her legs was a rebellious act that would help to break down larger structures of control in which she learned that *a woman shaves her legs*. Now, however she feels as though placing herself in opposition to this naturalized act by not doing it, is not effective as a choice within a larger structure of desired freedom, she

can shave or not shave and it is much the same thing. Whereas once she was certain that setting her body apart from the normative model of womanhood by not shaving was a meaningful act, she now does not have a good political take on whether or not it truly is. Carmen again is ambiguous about the changes in her hairstyles and how her sexuality is perceived accordingly. She says that her sexuality, meaning heterosexuality, has not changed, but that when she wanted people to know she was a feminist she chose to wear her hair in a style that people identified as a lesbian style, and that she felt in aligning herself, through her hair, with lesbian woman, her feminism would be more apparent. Carmen has a good understanding of how to use her hair as a communicative medium, especially in the area of sexuality. While she no longer wears her hair in a style that might identify her as a lesbian, she still sets her heterosexuality apart from the normative model of female sexuality through her hair by having sexy hair that is not “runway model wispy,” a particular look that fashion models, the supposed emblems of white female sexuality, are known for. There is a contradiction at play here for Carmen in the way she experiences her body as a communicative medium for both her feminist ideals and her heterosexuality. While the hair of the leg has fallen out of consideration as a site through which to proclaim her resistance to normative models of femininity, she still seeks, through the hair on her head, to both be sexy and attractive to certain kinds of men, and to not be sexy or attractive to others, such as hockey players, who she assumes desire a model of female sexuality; the model that is prominent in the media through runway models that does not align with her feminist ideals. Thus, while Carmen has come to consider that her hair may not be a potent site through which to effect global inequalities of power, she understands quite complexly that it very much can effect how she is

sexually perceived, and can be used as a conduit for her sexual desires. These desires, interestingly enough, play into a different stylistic category than those regarded as normative, but are used in the same manner or mode: as an objectified form through which to attract heterosexual male desire. As a feminist Carmen would claim that the styles she chooses for her hair would attract men that are sensitive to feminist ideals – or at least men interested in the processes behind a style which attempts to display its wearer's creative personality rather than the current styles displayed by the runway models of the day – the process, whereby the female body, in this case the hair, is imbued with the power to attract male sexual desire, is remarkably similar in its manner of objectification, no matter which form the hair takes. While Carmen seeks to overcome structures of inequality which have bequeathed women the status of object of men's subjective desiring force, she has come to acquire her subjectivity in a society which is so heavily imbued with images of women's objectified bodies and body parts, that her attempts to invert these meanings through her body feel contradictory and uncertain. On the one hand she desires to be desired in the manner she learned to desire, through "being sexy," in which the hair emerges as a useful tool, and on the other hand she is aware that the choices she makes for her hair occur within a system where she is still being controlled no matter which choice she makes.

Hair is not the only site at which such contradictions emerge. The point Carmen makes above is important because while she is working within a "cultural heritage" (Obeyeskere 1981: 34) of oppressive structures, which delineate certain prescribed norms for women's bodies, she attempts, through processes of resistance to invert some of these

meanings. Thus while outwardly, as I note above, whether the hairstyle is “normative<sup>26</sup>” or not, it operates within a structure of male desire. Inwardly, however, the processes may be quite different. Carmen among others in this study seeks to communicate, in Estelle’s terms, “flexible identity” through her hair. Carmen does not simply accept the passivity of object but rather seeks to imbue the objectification of her hair with her own understandings of the forms her desire takes. This is not unimportant in terms of how desire is understood by theorists concerned with consumption, as will be discussed below (i.e. Curtis 1999; Miller 2001; Egan 2006). It is worth quoting sociologist R. Danielle Egan at length, who in *Dancing for Dollars and Paying for Love*, writes:

Consumer objects, for sociologists inspired by the work of Karl Marx, are commonly thought of as inanimate artifacts, imbued with use value, and exchanged in discrete economic transactions (Marx 1971). Meaning is inscribed onto objects via cultural norms, infusing economic transactions with moral and cultural estimations which in turn impact which artifacts fall into acceptable sites of economic exchange...

A foundational premise in these models is the one way relationship between the consumer and the object he or she consumes...

Exploring the commodification of emotion and eroticism illuminates the messy, contradictory, and paradoxical facets of consumption. In so doing, consumption and the interactions therein are reconceptualized as dynamic and dialectical processes where a consumer may engage in a process of emotional attachment – and thus *emotional consumption* (Egan 2006: 125-126).

The passage above serves to illustrate the complex transactions that occur at sites of consumption and exchange, wherein what is being consumed are not simply inanimate objects exchanged in a system where value is defined strictly by use, but rather *dynamic and evocative* consumer objects that might accept or reject the consumer’s desires<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> The normativity I refer to here in terms of hairstyles is specifically “blonde hair with blonde streaks,” which almost all of the participants named as the hairstyle for “most women” right now. However, I also articulate further on that while these women perceive this particular style as normative, and set themselves apart from this style, the flexibility of form their hair takes is also normative in practice although the particular styles they display may not be commonplace.

<sup>27</sup> While it may seem that I am here making a distinction between commodities as either 1) imbued with emotionality, or 2) inanimate, this is not my aim. There have been several anthropological explorations of supposedly inanimate objects imbued with emotionality and human characteristics (i.e. Mauss (1990) and Weiner (1985 and 1994)), and while some have referred specifically to sacred objects in “pre-capitalist”

Hair, at the interstice of body and wearable material, is situated at one such ambivalent location. While hair itself is not a thinking feeling being, as are Egan's exotic dancers, it is, as discussed previously in reference to Obeyeskere, imbued with much emotionality and meaning for its growing wearer. For Egan,

[e]motional consumption is the other side of emotional labor... Emotional consumption involves an affective relation that emerges *within* social interaction. Owning an object and consuming emotional and erotic labor differ significantly in that you can own an object but you cannot own the person providing the service. Concomitantly, emotion, desire, and fantasy, inherently ephemeral and transitory, fade fast after an exchange is terminated and are thus impossible to capture, much less "own" (2006: 126).

My concern in this study is more with the emotional consumption of the client than with the emotional labour provided by her hairstylist (for a discussion of emotional labour and hairstylists see Shumka 2006). I delve into the concept of emotionality in consumption to highlight that in the realm of hair services this consumption occurs on at least three interrelated levels: body, object, and labour. I will touch on the labour of hair stylists somewhat in Chapter 4 in the analysis of the salon space and the relationships that occur therein. My main concern here, however, is to address the distinction I have made between the body as biological organism, and the object as signified abstraction; a premise which ushers in a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of these concepts in recent anthropological and feminist works.

This discussion necessitates a review of what is meant by identity and categories of identity which are seen to reside in the body and through which the body (especially

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societies, there have also been convincing claims by anthropologists such as Carrier (1990), Curtis (2004), Helgason and Pálsson (1997), Hermman (1997), and Miller (2001), that supposedly inanimate commodities in capitalist societies might also warrant such consideration, especially from the perspective of consumers.

the female body) has been theorized; namely: gender, sex, sexuality and race<sup>28</sup>. Having reviewed these concepts I will then return to the distinction between body and object to suggest that in the case of the hair especially, at least for women who routinely consume hair services, this distinction is often blurred. That indeed, in the construction of the (post)modern feminine self the body is in many cases experienced as an *embodied object*: a scenario in which the hair, which can not simply be “owned”, plays an especially decisive role. It bears fruitful within this equation to explore how “flexible identities,” associated here with the category of personal symbols<sup>29</sup> are given meaning in relation to the public symbol of consumption. Through an exploration of how gender, sexuality, age and whiteness act as strands woven into the hair in its role as communicative medium, an elucidation of the dramas deemed vital to the embodiment of hair in this society are found amid the stylized locks.

## Part II Body

This section deals explicitly with the body as concept, delving into the contingent conceptualizations of sex, gender, and sexuality in recent anthropological, queer and feminist works. A sifting through of these concepts, and how they have informed the current project, is a necessary precursor to a discussion of embodiment. Attempting to

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<sup>28</sup> Although I do not deal with race specifically as a separate topic, it is nonetheless woven through the discussions on sexuality and gender. As I stated in Chapter 1, race was a silent topic in this research largely because of the white identity, left unstated by all of the participants, with which these women identify.

<sup>29</sup> While it may seem crude here to equate identity with personal symbols, I do so because of the way in which the women in this study refer to identity as something which is part and parcel of the self, which may be acquired from outside of the self in relation to cultural categories such as woman, white, young, etc., but is experienced as somewhat of a schism in relation to these categories, as personalized by each woman’s experiences and understandings of what it means to be a young, white woman, amongst other things. Several times identity is brought up by the participants, and often it is left as a question, an indefinable: as “my identity;” parts of which may be known to other people, but parts of which are meaningful only within each participant’s personal habitat of being.

approach embodiment without first discussing the body would simply reinforce a dualistic mode that has long considered the body and the mind as two separate arenas of work: one the doctrine of philosophical thought, and the other the doctrine of biology. In order to understand personhood and selfhood, and indeed the relationships between embodied persons, it is first necessary to ask how women's bodies – subject to powerful controlling processes (Nader 1994), and indeed perceptive vehicles through which desires, pleasures, anxieties and relationships are expressed and communicated (Lancaster 2003)– become embodied under flexible capitalism.

## **Part IIa Sex**

Judith Butler, in a much quoted essay entitled *The End of Sexual Difference?*, addresses the feminist literature concerned with sex, gender and sexuality by posing the question: if, theoretically, sexual difference no longer exists, what does this mean? She writes,

I do not ask the question about the end of sexual difference in order to make a plea for that end... For many, I think, the structuring of sexual difference is not one that one can wish away or argue against, or even make claims about in any reasonable way. It is more like a necessary background to the possibility of thinking, of language, of being a body in the world... As a question, it remains unsettled and unresolved, that which is not yet or not ever formulated in terms of an assertion (2001: 417).

Butler, unlike other theorists such as Fausto-Sterling (2000), does not make a claim *for* the end of sexual difference, but rather asks feminists to “think about the question that sexual difference poses, or the question that sexual difference *is*” (2001: 417). She does not propose abandoning categories of modernity (such as male and female, subject and object, inner and outer, etc.) simply because they no longer carry the same meanings they once did, nor does she propose settling the question once and for all. Rather, she suggests that the ambiguities surrounding concepts once rooted in firm

theoretical ground are precisely the territory that warrants theoretical attention. Butler recognizes that many theorists wish to do away entirely with concepts of modernity, such as binary sex and gender distinctions, because these concepts have been theorized mostly by white men and are premised on the exclusion of certain groups (i.e. women and people of colour) from the analytical agenda. She suggests, however, that the project of de-colonizing or re-appropriating once taken-for-granted concepts should be seen as transformational, an initializing process that could free these terms from modern/colonial constraints. It is according to this call that I take up a concern in this project specifically at the interstice of personal (inner) and public (outer) meanings articulated through the material reality of symbolically rich hair. One of the most interesting things that came out in the course of this research was a correlation in stylistic terms in the genre of style the participants had been wearing and were currently wearing. All of the participants, at the time of the study, expressed a move from having had shorter hair for some time (usually in their early 20s) to being in the process of growing out their hair more recently (usually in their mid to late 20s) – except for Gwen who wore a mohawk and was happy with this style. I mentioned this trend to each participant, and each separately made a connection between long hair, femininity and sexiness. Here is Mildred's reflection on the process:

*Mildred: Yes, I think there's sex built into that for sure, but more personal, like I feel sexier with long hair, because I think a short haircut feels a bit more boyish or tomboyish. Maybe for a woman, like, I don't know the long hair is more traditional and soft and sexy. I think short cuts are sexy too, but on the whole, as a trend that might be why we're going back to the longer hair.*

Gwen is the youngest of the participants, having just turned 20; she had longer hair, worn in dreadlocks, up until one year ago. The next youngest participant, Matilda, was 25 at the time of the study and had worn short hair until this year. Interestingly

enough, I have since learned from Lydia that Gwen is now growing her hair long. I am tempted from this to make a connection, as all of the participants but Gwen do, about how sexuality is at play for these participants in the equation of longer hair in adolescence to shorter hair in early adulthood, and then back to longer hair thereafter<sup>30</sup>. Each woman phrases her understanding of how hair length is related to femininity and sexuality differently, but both Felice and Carmen relate shorter hair to a rejection of feminine norms and ideals prevalent in popular culture in favour of an embrace of feminist ideals in their early 20s. They each associate a move towards longer hair in their later 20s with an increased comfort in their own feminism as able to embrace “femininity” rather than be in opposition to it. Desmonia phrases it as a change in younger sexuality to a more mature sexuality that doesn’t need to be so obviously displayed by shorter clothes and with shorter styles – a sexuality that moves from the surface of the body to “within.” This crude configuration of: longer hair + youth= unconscious conformity to gender norms and heterosexual female sexuality, to shorter hair + early adulthood= resistance to gender norms and imposed feminine sexuality and then finally, longer hair + sexual maturity= conscious choice to embrace “femininity” and adapt it to personalized sexuality leads into grounds of theoretical ambiguity regarding gender, sexuality and embodiment.

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<sup>30</sup> As I mentioned previously, because my study group includes only women between the ages of 20 and 30, I cannot address some of the trends in hair that occur as women age, although I will make mention of the fact that at least two of the participants referred to “older women” cutting their hair short as it starts to grey, or how “some older women” seem to “give up” on their hair, no longer pursuing different styles, but always wearing it in the same style, a prospect which is deemed “boring” by the participants.

One of the difficulties in theorizing gender, sex, sexuality and the body, according to Butler, is that the relationships between these concepts are so entwined that often they do not function as separate concepts at all:

the debates concerning the theoretical priority of sexual difference to gender, of gender to sexuality, of sexuality to gender, are all cross-cut by another kind of problem, a problem that sexual difference poses, namely the permanent difficulty of determining where the biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end (2001: 426).

In anthropology “where the biological, the psychic, the discursive and the social begin and end” (Butler, 2001: 426) are a set of issues that have earnestly been taken up by theorists concerned with the body and embodiment. In order to discuss the ways in which gender, sex and sexuality are embodied, I first discuss how gender and sexuality have been theorized outside of approaches that deal specifically with embodiment.

### **Part IIb Gender**

Early feminists spent a great deal of theoretical time separating gender from sex (Rubin, 1984). In the early analysis sex remained the biological, or “natural”, basis of differentiation between male and female. Man and woman were termed culturally constructed categories of gender, variable across cultures and across time, and therefore subject to change (Moore, 1994b, Ortner, 1974). However, as the category of sex has been progressively denaturalized by feminists such as Butler and Fausto-Sterling, it has come to be accepted that sexual difference (while existing in relation to biological processes and possibilities) is also culturally constructed. If sex and gender are both culturally constructed, queer theorists have asked: what is the usefulness of gender as a concept (Butler, 2001)? If boundaries and lived realities are shifting and constantly in flux and gender and sex are both culturally determined, why is gender still largely

conceptualized as two categories which are binary and opposed to one another (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2000)? What does gender, based as it is on a binary culturally constructed sex system, have to do with sexuality? With desire? What does it mean to be gendered? To be outside of gender, or ungendered? Is it even possible, in a society that bases its first question in the life of a person on a distinct differentiation in the conflated categories of sex and gender, to imagine a person as ungendered? These questions are important when considering how gender, sex and sexuality are conceptualized by the participants in this study, namely because while theoretically sex and gender have been denaturalized in academic thought, in the realm of popular discourse they still operate as potent forces. Sexuality, on the other hand, is expressed with more variability. Of the seven women in this study, Gwen identified herself as gay but also bisexual, Estelle as bisexual, Desomnia as “open to love in whatever healthy form it wants to present itself in my life,” Matilda and Felice both claim that they are “not lesbian,” Carmen described herself as aligned with lesbian/queer politics, but heterosexual, and Mildred did not identify her sexuality directly, but is currently in a heterosexual relationship. All seven of the participants identified resolutely as women<sup>31</sup> and expressed a desire to be perceived as feminine. Reference to biological sex in relation to the categories of sexuality and gender came up only once in the study. This occurred in my second interview with Estelle, in which she claims that watching the video made her aware of her face as “androgynous” looking, meaning not resolutely male or female, although she observed

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<sup>31</sup> I acknowledge that part of my recruitment criteria necessitate this identification, since my call for participants asked for “women” in the Victoria area who visit a regular hair stylist. Throughout the course of the study, however, it became apparent that while various versions of femininity were understood to be at play for the participants, they often referred to a “femininity” that was embodied within, a natural expression of their female sex. Sex was simply not a question for most of them, and in this way gender and sex, except perhaps in some ways for Estelle (described above) and for Gwen (in the ways described below), femaleness and womanhood were naturally correlated with the body while sexuality was perceived and experienced as more “cultural,” as enacted through the body, but not bound to it.

immediately after that she knows she is still feminine enough. She immediately describes this androgyny as acceptable to her because of her bisexuality, and in so doing equates her ambiguous sexual characteristics with her non-normative sexuality. Her femininity secures her gender as a woman while her biological facial structure (sex), in combination with her short haircut, serve to make her sexuality a question for others; thus for Estelle, the naturalized category is gender, while sex and sexuality are more “flexible.” She never makes reference to any kind of masculinity in relation to herself, and often distances herself from masculinity by referring to her efforts, as a woman, to play up her femininity in “dressing up” for her performances as a singer, while she perceives the men she plays with as being lazy about dressing up specifically because of their masculinity.

Gwen on the other hand, while never referring to sex, denaturalizes the relationship between sexuality and gender in some ways by referring to herself as “gay,” and comparing herself to gay men. She is resolutely female and resolutely feminine, but is also comfortable with being perceived as masculine, albeit a masculinity that she associates with “gayness.” In this way she refers to her sexuality as “not straight,” and to her haircut as a powerful tool in “getting” women, but also ambiguous enough to still be feminine enough to attract certain men. Gwen never identifies with the term lesbian, a point which I did not notice until going through her transcripts; while she does not explain this to me directly, I take it to be a purposeful distancing on her part from what she understands the sexuality-gender association of lesbianism to be. Partly I think this is because she wishes to inhabit a masculine positioning in her sexual desire for other women, and in this way be able to embody the active position of desiring subject, which

has not traditionally been available for heterosexual women. In her relationships with men, however, she refers to her haircut as “feminine enough,” and a “weeding out” tool to attract only certain kinds of men; a passive positioning in relation to the way she “gets women” with the same cut.

To illustrate the analytical confusion that surrounds the category of gender, I make reference to Marcia Ian’s (1995) *How do you Wear your Body? Bodybuilding and the Sublimity of Drag*, in which Ian describes the body-builder’s body as masculine, *whether* male or female and thus reinforces at once binaries of both gender and sex. Gender in this equation is malleable. Its categorical qualities are able to shift between sexed bodies while sex remains stable as the male or female body upon which gender is imposed.

Many feminists, anthropologists and other cultural theorists have sought in the last few decades to deconstruct the dominant Western<sup>32</sup> dualisms of nature/culture, body/mind, man/woman, emotion/reason, male/female, and self/other, among others (Csordas, 1994; Haraway, 1991; Hirsch, 1995; Ingold, 2000; Moore, 1994; Thapan, 1997). Most of these theorists conceptualize subjects as actors who negotiate multiple subject positions in interaction with other actors. These interacting subjectivities are understood to be embedded in particular cultural, economic and ecological contexts. Identity is not, as structuralist accounts indicate, the result of hierarchical binary oppositions “naturally” inherent in the self acquired through “normal” processes of

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<sup>32</sup> The term Western, while acknowledged to be ambiguous and somewhat problematic, is nonetheless used in this paper to refer to dominant, white, European and North American patriarchal discourses that continue to occupy center-stage in politics, economics, academia and popular-culture.

development (Turner, 1994). Thapan, for example writes, “All humans are embodied creatures and not mere Cartesian minds that happen to be located in some biological matter” (1997:1). Ian, however, drawing on queer theory, suggests that all binarisms may not be so easily thrown off, as for instance when the subject experiences him/herself as a male “trapped in” a female body. *The notion of inside as different from outside* is one that queer theory cannot so easily abandon when dealing with the real lived experiences of sexual and gender minorities living in a white heterodominant patriarchal society. Ian contends that queer theory has not abandoned binarism to the extent that more traditional disciplines have, offering that “having spent centuries conceiving of ourselves... as defined by dualist categories like “identity” and “subject,” it seems unreasonable to expect all binarism to disappear just because we have begun to tell ourselves we had better theorize ourselves out of it” (1995: 77). Felice describes the binary of mind and body acutely in talking about her experience of being in a body whose size has changed “considerably in the last year”:

*Angelique: So I’m going to put this question out there and we’ll see how it goes because I’m not sure, sometimes it’s hard to develop a question for the idea you want to get at. So, how do you experience being in your body?*

*Felice: Umm, well, I find it really fascinating because I’ve changed my size considerably in the last year and I find it really interesting. I’m still really surprised at what my body looks like visually from outside myself, umm, and when I used to feel chubby I could look and verify that in a mirror, but now I feel chubby and I’ll look at myself and be like, “that’s a lie, like you can’t just lie like that.” And then it’s interesting in the shop now for the same reason because like I’ll try something on and I’ll wear it and then someone will come in who I think is tiny and they’ll put the same thing on and it will be tight on them, and I’ll be like, “what? How can I be smaller than her, she’s so small?” And I don’t really like put that together, so I haven’t balanced that, being in my body at this size quite yet, like it doesn’t really make sense to me. But I also feel like being in my body is like being really strong, which I’m stoked on, and uhh, it’s more of a place to display my personality through my clothes.*

Charlotte Suthrell (2004), in *Unzipping Gender: Sex, Cross-Dressing and Culture*, investigates gender through clothing. She does so by looking at the clothing practices of transvestites: individuals engaged in “the act of putting on the clothes of the opposite biological sex” (2004: 3). Suthrell locates her object of study in what she calls the “central space” on the continuum of binary gender categories. While Suthrell focuses on men using and wearing women’s clothing and accessories to achieve ideals of femininity, Ian (1995) considers women masculinizing their bodies through weight lifting. The theoretical project of approaching binary gender categories through the space between the two polarities on the gender continuum is significant. Both Ian and Suthrell endeavor to uncover normative patterns by examining non-normative agents attempting to negotiate these patterns through the use of culturally rich symbolic material. Suthrell points to the intentionality of the actors engaged in boundary-crossing as a particularly potent site for uncovering taken-for-granted societal structures.

Suthrell (2004), in her study of transvestites, Shapiro (2005), in her study of transsexuals, and Ian (1995), in her study of female weightlifters all locate their discussions of gender, sex and sexuality in the interstitial spaces on the binary sex/gender divide. Nonetheless, Shapiro (2005) and Suthrell (2004) both articulate that the agents involved in crossing gender and sex boundaries (which excludes female weightlifters in most cases) are not attempting to define new categories of sexed/gendered personhood, but rather, are attempting to make the transition from one to the other. Rarely (if ever, at

least according to Suthrell and Shapiro) do *trans* individuals seek to remain between male and female or man and woman or to push the boundaries of what these categories entail<sup>33</sup>.

While these researchers approach gender from positions that lie outside normative gender categories, what emerges as a significant point in terms of how individuals actually experience these positions is not that there are territories beyond man and woman (which there obviously are even if they are not named as such), but that woman and man are particularly potent signifiers and that individuals tend to identify with one or the other, with the named rather than with the ambiguous. The point is that man and woman in the West, at the same time as they exclude other gender possibilities, are variable categories, and the criteria for belonging to either/or seem to be somewhat malleable. It is this malleability of gender identity that is most often called to the forefront of analysis in studies of gender performativity, an issue that theorists such as Morris (1995) and Ebert (1996) have claimed leaves gender analysis lacking.

Rosalind Morris (1995) criticizes anthropologists for approaching gender and performativity so frequently from seemingly ambiguous gender positions. Morris, reviewing much of the recent anthropological work on gender that has sprung up since Butler (1990), takes issue with the question of intentionality and consciousness in the use of non-normative gender practices to explain normative gender. For Morris, the aspects of gender that are brought out in these analyses are representational or idealized forms of

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<sup>33</sup> These analyses are based on Western society and do not include drag queens and cross-dressers who do so for the purpose of performance. In addition, although groups such as Brazilian Travestis (Klein 2002) and Indian Hijras (Suthrell 2004) are mentioned as cross-cultural examples of alternate gender categories, an analogous positioning is not available according to Western traditions.

masculinity and femininity that leave questions of race and class largely unaddressed, and the question of gender detached from other possible categories of identification. While Morris criticizes a reliance on non-normative gender to explain normative gender, stating that “when habitual acts are brought into consciousness and objectified, they are transformed; [and] practice becomes representation” (1999:583), theorists such as Butler (1990) and Miller (2001), would argue (contra Morris) that habitual acts are always brought into consciousness and objectified in dialectical relation to “idealized” categories, whether the agents are described as normative or not, and (in line with Morris) that a discussion of the political economy of these idealizations is necessary. An engagement with the literature on commodification (addressed below), in response to the question Morris asks regarding “what happens when such performances are commodified,” is perhaps best answered by Katherine Frank (2002) and R. Danielle Egan (2006), who both look at how the objectification of normative male desire takes commodified form in the performances of female erotic dancers performing normative female heterosexuality. While gender is one aspect of these performances, it is not the only one, and it does not seem that an overt focus on the performativity of gender necessarily means an exclusion of other categories of identification. In the case of the women in this study, who routinely purchase the hair services of a professional stylist in the search for creative expression and social engagement through these expressions, objectification is an important aspect of how gender, sexuality, age and race are understood and experienced in the conceptualization of an embodied self, a point which is raised briefly here, but will be discussed in detail further on.

*Felice: Well, it's like, having short hair kind of reminded me of like the millennium thing where it was like all of a sudden we imagined that in 2000*

*everyone would be like wearing paper suits and you know, like being G.I Jane<sup>34</sup> or whatever, and it's like "okay we've got to be ready for anything, we're going to have short hair!" Like you don't think about it, but it's totally in fashion. It's like the media, everyone's like paranoid about giant wars and like whatever happens when that 2000 hit. And then there was all this other stuff and it totally depends on the media for sure, and like what's happening in the world in general. I don't know how it relates to terrorist attacks, and the States being so fear-mongering, but maybe – okay, I just thought of something – it could have to do with you know, all the soldiers coming back and the rise of pin-up and like burlesque and stuff where it was like the war maybe, because now it's like femininity is totally played up where it's like, "oh the poor soldiers they had to have something to look to."*

In this passage for instance, Felice relates the expression of femininity through hair to wider global trends that have to do with the media, male desire, and the political and economic relations between the US and the Middle East that have propelled the current *War on Terrorism*. Felice equates fashion, and her undertaking of fashion trends in the performance of her femininity with wider trends related to globalization, the popularization of feminist ideals in the media (i.e. the strong and equal woman) and male desire and need for women in the current state of affairs. While she does not state it explicitly, the femininity she speaks of is white, aged and classed, it harkens back to the original pin-up girl: the invariable face and constantly transforming hair and accoutrement of the young, white, middle-class woman that has stood for consumer society since the emergence of mass consumption and advertising (see Chapter 1). And

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<sup>34</sup> *G.I. Jane* is a 1997 action movie directed by Ridley Scott that tells the story of the first woman to undergo Special Forces training in the US military. It is premised on the successful completion of masculine-standard training guidelines, which one woman challenges, in the face of hostility and sexualization by her male peers and superiors, and eventually succeeds in overcoming in order to enter the man's world of combat. The success of this still-feminine woman in entering into a man's world leads to a renewed respect for her abilities while maintaining a focus on the masculine sexual desire with which she is still imbued, albeit a new kind of desire for a physically and socially powerful woman. This is ascertained in the film by false accusations that Lieutenant Jordan O'Neil, *G.I. Jane*, played by Demi Moore, is a lesbian. In the end she is able to refute this claims and still be a heterosexual white woman desired by white men who is nonetheless powerful and "equal."

while the roles of this idealized femininity may have changed over the last hundred years, *G.I. Jane* being a recent incarnation, the manner in which young, white, middle-class women come to understand and articulate selfhood in relation to this ideal remains much the same.

Morris (1999), arguing that trans individuals often seek to uphold rather than challenge definitions of what constitutes femininity and masculinity, cautions against considering a proliferation of gendered forms as necessarily resistant of hegemonic norms. She argues rightly I think, along with Ebert (1996), that theorists focusing on gender as performance have largely ignored issues of class, politics and coercion in the analysis. I take up these points of critique in my research, wishing to discover how the culturally rich symbolic material of gender normativity, infused as it is with issues of class, politics and coercion, is lived and negotiated by so-called normative agents, i.e., young white women whose bodies appear in everyday accounts of femininity.

*Matilda: Yah, and that makes other people feel, like I guess the media makes most women feel like they should be thinner, and I guess hair is related to that because so many women feel like they want to have, even the experience with Mary, being so obsessed with your hair and being so, like angry that her hair was changed when nobody knew, like I didn't even, in my head I couldn't even remember what it was like before she got it cut and that it seemed the same to me. So I guess hair is that way too, that women I assume would want to make it look a certain way so that they would look a certain way, which I mean I guess I do want my hair to look a certain way too, maybe I'm just starting to think about stereotypes and like "long hair is beautiful and feminine."*

### **Part IIc Sexuality and Desire... realizing oneself by want**

The fact that all cultures have ways of making sense of, or giving meaning to, bodies and embodied practices, including physiological processes and bodily fluids and substances, means that all cultures have a discourse of 'Sex'. In each case, this discourse stands in a relationship of partial dependency and partial autonomy with other discourses, including, very often, what anthropologists have referred to as the discourse of gender... One

example from Western societies of such a gendered discourse is that of nature and culture...the discourse of gender is itself shot through with ideas about what is natural and what is cultural (Moore, 1994a: 819).

*Angelique: Can you talk about some of the ways that hair might be related to sexuality, or do you see it as related to sexuality?*

*Mildred: Yeah sure, sure. Especially when you look at guy cuts. Because if you consider guys who, it was just that whole metrosexual<sup>35</sup> thing that got started. When I got back from Japan there was this whole thing about the metrosexual male, so I think sexuality is a big part of that. But for me, it doesn't make me feel more like a woman, it makes me feel more myself. Or a version of myself I'd like to portray. I guess when I look at a guy and he's got long curly hair, and I can tell that he's styled it or something, it tells me something about his personality sexually. It tells me something about how that person is not afraid to be perceived in any way, that's just their style. But I guess in terms of what you said about a lot of girls growing their hair longer, I think there's definitely a very feminine aspect to that. Because models always keep their hair long. They don't go really with the trends, unless it's like editorial fashion, then they give them wigs that are really blunt, or whatever is in season. So I think it's a very feminine thing, the longer hair. Being able to push it off your shoulders, being able to do more things? I don't know what it is. It's more feminine.*

Significantly in the passage above Mildred states that her hair does not make her feel more like a woman, but more like herself. She then goes on, however, to describe how the longer hair is “more feminine,” the kind of hair that models have. So while Mildred is avowing a personalized version of femininity in relation to her expression of sexuality, she nonetheless does so in relation to a sort of naturalized discourse about femininity; the one that is prevalent in popular discourse. She also talks about men with stylized hair, and how she perceives that metrosexual men, that is heterosexual men who adopt an interest in fashion and style (interests long seen as either feminine or homosexual) display a sort of sexuality that is apparent to her upon perceiving them, one that she later

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<sup>35</sup> According to an article on wikipedia.org, as of June 23, 2007:

Metrosexual is a word describing men who have a strong concern for their aesthetic appearance, and spend a substantial amount of time and money on their images and lifestyles. Though the term has undergone a transformation from its original meaning (a heterosexual man who appeared or acted as if he were homosexual or bisexual), current trends have seen the metrosexual label placed upon male embracing of practices usually perceived to be feminine, rather than those specifically associated with stereotypically effeminate homosexuals (wikipedia.org: 23/06/2007).

admits not being attracted to, as she (along with the other women in this study) prefer men who take some, but not too much interest in their appearance and thus display more traditional masculinity.

Carol Vance writes of anthropology's affiliation with the study of sexuality: "[a]nthropology as a field has been far from courageous or even adequate in its investigation of sexuality. Rather, the discipline often appears to share the prevailing cultural view that sexuality is not an entirely legitimate area of study" (2005: 15). Thus, while theorists such as Butler (2001) and Hostetler & Herdt (1998) may call queer theory to task for failing to take into account: 1) gender (in the case of Butler), 2) for subsuming individual gay and lesbian experiences in wider categories of sexuality resulting in "subjectively impoverished persons" (Hostetler & Herdt, 1998: 259), 3) for focusing too strictly on symbolic and cultural realities to the exclusion of structural and material realities, and 4) in developing forms of political agency that may be seen as solely "parodic and performative" (Hostetler & Herdt, 1998: 253), queer theory nonetheless has brought the question of sexuality to the forefront of study, where it has since been taken up by disciplines such as anthropology.

Hostetler & Herdt (1998), concerned with the project of theorizing sexuality, echo Butler's claim regarding the study of sexual difference. Namely, that existing terms and methods of thinking about sexuality be rethought rather than abandoned. They criticize queer theory for being solely reactionary, for deconstructing without moving forward and for always being at hand to break down theoretical categories without seeing the potential

for re-theorizing at the site of uncertainty. They propose, in the wake of the destabilization of categories of sexuality, the retention of sexual taxonomies, considered as *sexual lifeways*. Thus, rather than think of “sexual identity” or identities as points through which to define selfhood,

Sexual lifeways are [understood as] culturally constituted developmental pathways, embedded within social and symbolic systems, that provide rich and meaningful contexts for the realization of full personhood in a society. These lifeways are conventionalized in the sense that they provide customary means and ends for individual development according to the locally situated theory of “human nature”... Similarly, the concept of “lifeway” enables an understanding both of the life possibilities opened up, as well as those foreclosed by a given sexual lifeway... Thus, we can begin to chart the points of resistances as well as conformity in the space between deeply socialized desires – both normative and nonnormative – and the cultural scripts for their expression (Hostetler & Herdt, 1998: 251).

*Gwen: If you cut your hair, people think you're gay, so it worked out quite nicely. And then, it's good because I'm not totally gay, I'm bisexual, but the men that I want to be attracted to me are going to be attracted to this haircut, they're not going to be attracted to some long, fuckin' you know, hair. Or they would be, but they don't care, they like my mohawk, so it's sort of a way of filtering people out, really, I think. You know?*

*Desmonia: Not uncomfortable – I guess, I guess I was uncomfortable. It was just surprising for me to see a woman who is supposed to be a professional coming to work with beads and a tank top and these camouflage pants and heels. I just thought, it seems like, I don't know if a step back would be the right term, but women in Insurance, like it's still very much an “old boys club.” And to be taken seriously, to be taken as a professional, like in the Commercial Department, still the majority of the people there are men, with women as assistants. So to me, I just thought, you know, if someone is coming in to see you, or if already there is in the industry, stigma attached to being a woman and being able to be a professional and being able to have a higher paying job in the industry, then to show up to work in an outfit that you should wear to the bar, it just seemed undermining to the professionalism of the woman. Because she is really knowledgeable, she's really good at her job, and she is a professional woman. So, it's bad to judge people based on their looks, but the fact of the matter is that we do.*

By allowing room for the exploration of normative and non-normative desires and possibilities, and exploring points of resistance and accommodation within them,

Hostetler & Herdt's sexual lifeways permit an exploration of subjectivity that queer theory, focusing strictly on resistance, does not. Selfhood is never seen as austere defined by a sexual identity that must be upheld at all costs in vigilance against imposing norms, but rather, *identity is recognized as being comprised of multiple societal factors operating at the levels of the discursive, the psychic and the material*. Desire and sexual practice are recognized as variable throughout the life of an individual. They are understood in relation to the constraints of the developmental pathways allowed by the social system and the actual experiences, be they repressive or empowering, of those pathways by individual persons. Subjectivity and agency are thus seen, not as purely constituted or constitutive, but as persistently in tension between norms and actual desires. There is no final achieved identity, but rather a flux of processes that one identifies through at any given instant. Hostetler & Herdt suggest furthermore,

that the phenomenon typically glossed as “sexual identity” includes a narrative of origins (an ontology), a fantasy of an ultimate purpose and future fulfillment (a teleology), and a theory of and/or plan for moral action in the world (deontology)... we contend that all three of these dimensions are important to the formation and sustenance of meaningful human life patterns – a claim long supported by the cross-cultural record (1998: 264).

The subject of sexuality is difficult, if not impossible to address without addressing desire. Sexuality indicates sexual practice, which in turn is related to, but not entirely given over by sexual desire. The ontology of sexual identity indicated above is akin to what Henrietta Moore terms a society's discourse of Sex. This discourse, in turn, cannot be separated from sex and gender, as a societies' discourse of Sex, or its sexual ontology, determines the developmental pathways of desire that determine who can and should have sex with whom. This is a point which Foucault (1980) articulated assiduously in his *History of Sexuality*.

*Angelique: I think it's interesting, because in doing this a lot of the things to me that have come up are about age appropriateness, like for instance, in the video when the other stylist and her client are talking about "prostitots" and "hoelettes" like you know, what would you picture?*

*Matilda: I would picture like say a 12 or 13 year old girl, maybe even a little older, and I would picture like blonde hair with streaks and her wearing say a miniskirt and lots of makeup.*

*Angelique: And why do you think that would be inappropriate?*

*Matilda: Because I guess I don't want those girls to be, like I don't want them to be being sexy because I don't think, because thinking about me when I was 13 and I wasn't sexual, well I mean I was becoming a woman and what not, but I don't know [trails off].*

*Angelique: Do you feel like they don't understand what they're doing?*

*Matilda: Yes, I do, like they're not ready. They're not ready to be seen that way and they shouldn't be seen that way and when they're doing that I guess, yah I guess they'll be seen more that way. And I actually read an article about that recently, about things that they put on t-shirts, like this mother was talking about how she went to the mall and she felt pressured to buy these things because on TV she saw, like in TV shows they were wearing stuff like that, like t-shirts that said "jailbait" and stuff like that. And that just seems like, why would you wear that, you know. If you are jailbait why would you be wearing a t-shirt that says "jailbait" to entice people who would be into that?*

One cannot discuss sexuality and desire in Western society without discussing advanced capitalism. Desire is part of the capitalist project. Enterprises use desire, and especially sexual desire as the main avenue for selling not only products, but notions of personhood. In the West the female body, and increasingly the male body, are employed by mainstream advertisers as (hetero)sexualized images to promote identification with certain kinds of goods and activities which together implicate lifestyle. The most clearly obvious of these associations are hair commercials wherein young women who are almost always scantily clad wave their "shiny, beautiful, sexy" hair about, often in the direct gaze of a male onlooker, both of whom appear ready for sexual encounter. Any and all of the beautiful (young, white, heterosexual) people in these advertisements are enjoying the 'good life' in which a young woman is made more sexy by purchasing a particular brand of shampoo which will make her hair shiny and alluring for the man who

sexually desires her, thus fulfilling both of their fantasies. These advertisements, appearing on television, in magazines prominently displayed in grocery store line-ups, on city buses and on billboards, and increasingly on the internet<sup>36</sup>, are one of the main forms through which normative ideas about the person are distributed and maintained in Canada. Since the majority of media outlets are owned and controlled by a small segment of elites, it is not difficult to make the claim that certain kinds of ideas about persons are promulgated by these outlets to the exclusion of others. Thus, advertising and the media operate ideologically within all three dimensions of sexual identity discussed above: 1) an ontological schema of origins: the heterosexual couple; 2) a teleology of fantasy or desire: the young beautiful white woman; and 3) a deontology of moral action: male=man and female=woman, man desires woman/ woman is object of desire, man and woman have sex and society is reproduced. This is the normative sex/gender/ heterosexual desire schema of Western society, and one that has been largely upheld by (what have become mainstream) theories of sexuality put forth by the psychoanalytics of Freud and Lacan (Lancaster 2003).

### **Part IId Embodiment**

The kind of body to which we have been accustomed in scholarly and popular thought alike is typically assumed to be a fixed, material entity subject to the empirical rules of biological science, existing prior to the mutability and flux of cultural change and diversity and characterized by unchangeable inner necessities. The new body that has begun to be identified can no longer be considered as a brute fact of nature. In the wake of Foucault (1979, 1980), a chorus of critical statements has arisen to the effect that the body is “an entirely problematic notion” (Vernant 1989: 20), that “the body has a history” in that it behaves in new ways at particular historical moments (Bynum 1989: 171), and that the body should be understood not as a constant amidst flux but as an epitome of that flux (A. Frank 1991: 40) (Csordas, 1994: 1-2).

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<sup>36</sup> See for example, [clairiol.com](http://clairiol.com), [aussie.com](http://aussie.com), [aveda.com](http://aveda.com), [paulmitchell.com](http://paulmitchell.com), or simply perform a search for “hair advertisements” in any search engine to be barraged with any number of these images.

The passages above, alongside the preceding discussions, implicate the human body as the primary site through which to explore new possibilities of theoretical inquiry concerning human experience and desire. This “body” is not taken in isolation as a bounded unit composed of inner and outer worlds, nor as a biological aggregate upon which culture plays out, but as a material being that is continuously engaged in processes of *embodiment* (Broch-Due & Rudie, 1993; Csordas, 1994; Farnell, 1999). These processes, as they operate on and through embodied beings-in-the-world, are understood as points of tension and contention wherein longstanding debates about society (including political and economic forces) and the individual, culture and biology, and space and place can fruitfully be explored (Csordas, 1994; Curtis, 2004; Descola & Palsson, 1996; Haraway, 1991; Ingold, 2000; Lash, 1991; Lock, 1993; Moss & Dyck, 2002; Thapan, 1997; Turner, 1994).

*Mildred: Also when you go in and you're not feeling great, because I usually let it go to a stage where if I'd just gotten it trimmed two weeks ago I wouldn't feel down about it, but I'm likely at a stage where I hate my hair. And so you look in the mirror and she asks, "what do you want to do with it?" And I'm just like "get it off me, I don't want this anymore!" So I feel when I go in, like I'm at a place where I'm uncomfortable with myself and when I leave I'm at a place where I can feel comfortable with myself again. So I find, and that's really interesting, that's where the vulnerability comes in. You can tell when someone has had their hair cut, they look refreshed. You can tell when someone has just walked out of the salon right, because it's a whole body thing [straightens up and smiles] – but definitely, moving from getting the \$35-\$40 haircuts to the \$90 cut and colour, that was a huge leap for me.*

*Angelique: And how did you make that decision?*

*Mildred: Well, part of it was that I felt it was better for my hair, but probably mostly too that if you pay more for something that somehow makes it worth more.*

Csordas (1994), in his introductory chapter to *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, defines the body as the experiential ground of culture, and calls for a phenomenological view of the person as a being-in-the-world.

According to this approach, personhood cannot be understood without a consideration of the relational landscapes of actions within which persons as bodied selves exist.

Embodiment as a paradigm seeks to unite the Cartesian categories of mind and body, claiming that human actions are not performed merely by bodies, but by “mindful bodies” (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). A concern with embodiment brings to the surface questions of intentionality and consciousness in bodily action (Farnell, 1999), *viewing persons not merely as recipients of cultural norms and values, but as thinking, feeling agents acting in the societal landscape*. The question of *biology or culture?* is one that comes to the forefront of the anthropological agenda when the body emerges as a theoretical site. The human being is recognized as a subject that is most fruitfully understood as at once a biological and cultural being, one in whom culture is given over as an aspect of biology and biology as shaped and experienced through culture:

It is not a question of whether to choose between the absolute and the relative – the gravity of the body or the weightlessness of the idea – but of how to situate the absolute within the relative, and the relative vis-à-vis the absolute... In human affairs, the one thing is always entwined with the other. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, the human being is not “a psyche joined to an organism but a movement to and fro of existence”: an entwining of “corporeal form” and “personal acts”.

But biology and culture are not entwined just any old way. Precisely what is unique about human action is its capacity for turning contingency into necessity, for transforming the relatively absolute into the absolutely relative, for taking up biological givens in the light of social aims (Lancaster 2003: 207).

*Gwen: ...you know, like there's people who are trying to be creative with their hair, there's people who don't give a shit, there's people who care but it just looks horrible [laughs] you know what I mean. Right, like it's funny, I watch people's clothes and makeover TV is always on, always on, so it's the same thing, I just love it.*

*Angelique: What do you love about it?*

*Gwen: Umm, just like the difference subtle things can make. I actually have a couple of problems with makeover TV because they try to make people into things that they're not necessarily, but they end up looking like twenty times better. So you know, it's like, there's a lot of people out there who have good style, who can be individual and still look put together and there's some people who have to go to makeover TV and be made-over by stylists...*

*Angelique: Okay, what about on makeover TV, do you think sometimes that, like you said, sometimes they make someone over and it's not them?*

*Gwen: Yah, it's kind of like sometimes, and I don't want to call people "ethnic" but you know, people who aren't like white preppy, you know, bred like that.*

*They put them in those clothes and it's kind of like, "why a white polo shirt when she was perfectly comfortable the way she was before?" So I think that's kind of just a flaw of reality TV in general, it's just not going to pay attention to things that are actually important... Some of them are a bit hipper, like more fashion forward, and some of them are just like, "lets put you in clothes appropriate to your life," like some are like, put you in this horrid makeup. This one woman, I'm just like, "who hired you?" Like don't do the base and then cake it on! Oh my god, it's horrible, horrible, it's terrible. Anyway, that's funny too, to see when things go wrong. Like why did you? Or like, they straighten curly hair all the time cause they don't want to deal with the curl. So it's just like, funny watching that kind of thing.*

Lancaster writes in recourse to the relationship between the physical body as perceptive field and the cultural self as constructed mode that, "[n]eural structures are not the "sources" or "causes" of meaning," but rather that "[t]hey are the grounds on which meanings take root." For Lancaster, "meaning is not "in" the neural structures, but in the open-ended interaction between perceptive bodies and a universe of signs "(Lancaster 2003: 220).

*Carmen: Something just popped into my head. I was walking, I walk through St. Ann's Academy every day, right, anyways, this squirrel ran by really quickly, and I thought to myself how it was just a rodent with nice hair [laughs]. Like I was thinking, cause you know how rats' hair is all kind of greasy, but like squirrel hair is soft and fluffy, and I was like, "if you had different hair, like people would hate you." And they're all over the city [laughs].*

### Part III Consumerism and Relationships

In approaching the hair salon as a site of fieldwork and the consumers of hair services as a study group, I was profoundly guided by Daniel Miller's *The Dialectics of Shopping* (2001), an ethnography and philosophical work about shoppers in a North London

district. Miller relies primarily on Hegelian philosophy, and most particularly Hegel's concept of dialectics, by which he takes to mean:

the term "dialectic" stands for the centrality of contradiction in the processes involved in shopping... [which] comes to be understood as a constant attempt to at least gain a respite from these tensions, which are never, ultimately, resolvable. In the area of political economy, however, where actual shoppers are divested of power, this tension is shown to be increasingly oppressive and dangerous (2001: 3).

Miller's work has been especially pertinent to this study in regards to his approach to kinship relations and how shopping is used by family members to mediate relationships with partners, children, and other kin such as pets based on a dialectic between what he calls: "a distinction between real and "real" [which] would correspond to the difference between what we confront in shopping as it happens to be in the world, and the ideal of "real" shopping" (2001: 179). He states that, "a great deal of shopping consists of one person envisaging a situation in which the act of shopping would resolve a tension between some normative model and what the actual person one is shopping for appears to want," (Miller 2001:22) and that in this manner shopping can be seen to highlight "the way relationships in question are posed between a series of normative models and the particular relationship of concern" (Miller 2001: 23).

The correspondence of these findings to the approach undertaken in this research occurs at the level of the "self," which Miller posits as itself a form of kin relationship in contemporary times, one that is subject to the same kind of dialectical processes as other kin relations between a "real" self and the self that is actually experienced or known at any given moment. This insight is reflected quite often in my research with women purchasing hair services in the sense that they are at the moment engaging in "shopping" for a hairstyle that should very much display what they term "my personality," or "my

identity,” or “my mood.” In this way each client is envisaging a “real” self<sup>37</sup> that will come to the surface in the style, chosen in consultation with a trusted stylist who “really” knows her. This style will then communicate her uniqueness to others, some aspect of her “real” self which, as many of the participants articulated to me in the course of watching themselves having their hair done, is more important to them than it is to others, a realization that is often disappointing to them. This “real” self, argues Miller, emerges at the level of what Nader (1994) would call “controlling processes”:

the example of such normative models that has flourished as a discourse in recent years is the literature on the self and the proper nature of the self. That is to say that we are constantly offered models in the media, in conversation, and in moral and other debates about how we should or could relate to the self. These discussions are not especially different from the way we encounter discourses about the other key kin relationships such as those that dwell upon how a mother, child, partner, or sibling should be (Miller 2001: 41-42).

Miller describes a particular shopping expedition with a woman shopping for shoes to fit a new role she would be undertaking in the coming months as a graduate student. In this case, the woman was seeking out something that would befit the role of student and at the same time express something of her “self,” her own particular style which she described as feminine and more sexy or dressy than would befit the role of student. Here, Miller writes of the shoe, that it “is not just a commodity that intervenes in the relationship between person and discourse,” but rather that the shoe “reveals itself equally as discourse... as the commercial semiotic difference that feeds into the imagination of different possibilities for the self that were raised by the very idea of shopping for shoes” (2001: 44).

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<sup>37</sup> This “real” self, is the same notion that I expressed earlier in terms of my “self,” in which my “self” is the idealized or imagined version and myself is that which is actually experienced. Here the “real” self, in line with Miller’s findings that the self functions as a kin relationship, is used to express the same idea as my “self.”

The final point I wish to raise in regards to Miller's study of North London shoppers regards specifically the concept of hair as an *embodied object* that I raised at the beginning of this chapter. Miller does not concern himself much with the body as theoretical sight of inquiry; in fact he makes a purposeful departure from phenomenological approaches that privilege bodily perception (2001: 107-110). He believes (in line with Ebert (1996) and Morris (1999)) that the privileging of perception often leads to an exclusion of ideology and the processes through which certain perceptions become recognized as meaningful. Miller does not wish to do away with phenomenological approaches in anthropology, but rather wishes to highlight the processes within perceptive fields that are subject to dialectical mediation. He believes that in certain instances phenomenological understandings are more pertinent than others, but that in the case of North London shoppers, processes of objectification and the contestation and contradictions of the experience of these objectifications emerge as more important than sensory understandings of shopping landscapes. I will address this conclusion of Miller's in two different ways, but interestingly, the claim I will make is that at the level of the body, a theorization more akin to Miller's dialectics is at play for purchasers of hair services, whereas in terms of the space and place of the hair salon, a phenomenological concern with perception might be envisioned as an important aspect of the experience. I address the body now, and return to space and place in Chapter 4.

*Objectification*, according to Miller, is always at play in relation to the meaningfulness of love relationships, both between persons and other persons, and between a person and his/her "self." At the forefront of these relationships lies a

condition wherein, “*what makes a relationship meaningful, as opposed to merely having meaning, is almost always a process of objectification*” (Miller 2001: 53). According to Miller, our desire is to make others desire us through the love that we put into the act of shopping. He suggests, however, that this formation of love through the mediated act of shopping results in “a dialectical tension between specificity in the form of the actual person one is shopping for and universality in the form of the discourse about the category of kin to which they belong” (Miller 2001: 53). This form of love relationship to others through the process of objectification, suggests Miller, is mirrored in the relationship of the individual to his or her self, which is increasingly being “subsumed as a relationship” in its own right (Miller 2001: 55).

It is here, in the grounds of the individual’s relationship to her self, that I take up my analysis of hair and the body. When I refer to hair as an *embodied object*, it is through a recognition that the hair is at once complexly entwined in discourses of possibility *and* a real experienced part of the body; subject to both ideology and perception. It is in the arena of the discourse of hair as “the commercial semiotic difference that feeds into the imagination of different possibilities for the self” (Miller 2001: 44), that objectification is most readily at play; in the relationships that the hair plays out, most notably, but not exclusively a woman’s relationship to her self. Take for instance this description by Carmen of a salon visit she had with another stylist before she met Lydia. She talks about the range of possibilities and her choices within them, and while the stylist understands the concept of possibility within the context of choice in one manner, the client views this very differently based on her understanding of her “real” self. In the end, though she has the right combination of colours, the formation is

wrong, giving her a look which does not suit her “real” self, but which she is nonetheless bodily portraying. This lack of fit between the understanding she has of what the haircut she is wearing means, and the fact that it is not meaningful *for her* lead her to believe that the stylist does not understand her, and that others will not understand who she “really” is if they see her hair this way:

*Carmen: Well the first visit was, umm, I wanted pink and blonde hair, so I went in and asked for bright pink and blonde streaks, or something like that, and they said that they couldn't do the pink, or they made an appointment with me even though they didn't have those colours, and so when I met the stylist she told me that they didn't have those colours, and I was really like, what? I see people with those colours all the time, what are you talking about? And umm, so she said that I could buy stuff at Shopper's Drugmart and bring it back and she would put it on. And I thought that was really kind of lame. So for some reason I decided to get my hair done there anyways, and I thought that I could get some kind of dramatic blonde, just chunky blonde, maybe something like what you have, and so yah, anyway she gave me these really terrible blonde, like streaky highlights, like say like Jennifer Aniston<sup>38</sup> maybe [laughs]. Does that give you an idea of the look? Yah, and I wanted something more unique, so it just felt like really a complete waste of time and money. She didn't understand me at all, so, yah.*

In this case, Miller's configuration that the dialectical contradictions are more important than the sensual experience is correct, but this is specifically because of the unfit. If, in the instance described below, the fit is realized and the “real” self is shown through the hair, then the hair becomes embodied, it functions as both objectified relationship of the “real” self and a material expression of at least one of the forms this self may take at a given time, it fits and in fitting becomes part of the “real” self; imbued with qualities of the person/body that wears it. Consider these two reflections by Felice on different styles

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<sup>38</sup> Jennifer Aniston is a celebrity that starred in one of the most popular television sitcoms of the 1990s, *Friends*. She has also starred in many movies and often appears in celebrity gossip magazines in relationships to her marriage and recent divorce to Brad Pitt, another superstar celebrity. Jennifer Aniston, more than any other celebrity over the past five years, has consistently appeared as a model for touting the new looks for hair, both in hair magazines themselves and in celebrity or women's magazines (personal communication: Lydia). Her hair has become a symbol for normative white female hair; something which the participants in this study attempt to set themselves apart from.

her hairstylist friend, Suzanne, has given her over the years, one in a period when Felice and Suzanne's friendship was less stable when Suzanne first began as a hairstyling student and had not yet come out as a lesbian, and the next one more recently, since Suzanne and Felice have reestablished close bonds and Suzanne now "knows" Felice's hair better:

*Felice 1: Yah, it's funny. That part is hilarious, like the beginning part cutting my hair because she hadn't quite figured out, well everyone else had maybe figured it out that she was a lesbian, but she hadn't quite gotten there, and so every time she cut my hair I'd get like a totally, like really obviously stereotypical lesbian haircut. And it made me feel really uncomfortable because I'd come out of there being like, "I don't feel like a lesbian, but I look like one, I don't feel like one." And so I'd be super, not just hating it but awkward as well, because I'd be putting this thing out to the world visually, but not being that person.*

*Felice 2: I know that it's a feature people recognize me by, I think like. And umm, I was actually thinking, I just got it coloured like after that appointment after I just got my extensions in and I was walking down the street and I was like "wow, I have hair!" And I was thinking about like walking around and just being this hair piece, it was really funny and then I walked by the Douglas Hotel and there was people sitting on the corner and they were like, "whoa that girl's got wicked hair." And I was like, "what's going on?" But had totally personified that into the world. So now that it's longer and fuller I feel like it's more noticeable because I feel like I kind of project it out there, like "I've got hair!" But I think people recognize me by it, it's like a feature that they recognize, having big black hair.*

These two separate haircuts were experienced completely differently by Felice; in the first place she talks about a disconnect between her "real" self and her self that is being portrayed to the world, and in this sense her hair is not embodied, but rather is experienced as particularly dis-embodied. Her hair is materially there, attached to her body and communicating something according to the societal discourse of women's hair (in this case homosexual women's hair), but this materially real hair is not "real" because it is not of her "self." It is on herself, but is not of her "self." In this sense the dialectics of hair come to the forefront of experience, wherein the objectified ideal and the object do

not correspond. However, in the second passage, Felice becomes a hair piece, she sees her hair as a stand-in for herself, and in this sense her hair, still a communicative medium, is embodied: she has put her “real” self into it, and in turn perceives that others can read this, she feels like her hair and her hair feels like her. So in this sense, Daniel Miller is right to say that dialectical contradictions are more important than embodied perceptions in consumptive acts when the consumption is experienced as a contradiction; but when consumption in shopping for the self is “realized” as an ideal, what emerges as important is the particularly unique feeling of embodiment one experiences in relation to the object, indeed that fusion wherein the desire for the “real” self and the materially perceived reality of it coalesce.

While embodiment may emerge as a poignant factor in the arena of what processes become articulated into perception, and therefore experienced holistically by mindful bodies, there are important forces at work in those arenas in which objectification does not result in identification. Miller addresses the precarious milieu of consumption in his chapter on *The Dialectics of Political Economy* in order to highlight how at the level of political economy, power eludes the individual shopper; he states that, “*the focus needs to be on the invidious consequences of these projected discourses upon those who become potential objectifications by which discourse is given meaning*” (2001: 110).

This leads me, in regards to the women who purchase hair services and who use and manipulate these services in their efforts to realize both their relationships to others and to their various selves, to form two conclusions, one through a theoretical

engagement with embodiment, and another through a theoretical engagement with political economy. The first point is that there are times when hair is embodied, when it is experienced as such and the desires of each woman for herself as a bodied person coalesce with the images and understandings she has of what she should be like, or how she imagines herself to be, when she is “hot,” beautiful, “sexy,” or comfortable, when she feels great about herself and projects this out to the world. And these moments are important for a woman to be in the world as a consuming body in a capitalist society. As she dwells within a landscape of commodities in which her body is simultaneously lived in, with and through, these moments of recognition, of being-in-the-world, are empowering<sup>39</sup> and powerful, moments in which a collusion of objectification of the “real” subjective experience of the self are simultaneously understood and experienced. The second point is a more daunting and difficult one to make; it runs like a thick impenetrable bog through these moments of clear recognition, because while these embodied moments exist, they are fleeting. They are fleeting because they occur within the wider discourse of the project of (post)modern capitalist selfhood, a project in which the feminine self must always be worked on through the constant consumption of goods and indeed of her own objectified body, in which the self always yet eludes, and in which

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<sup>39</sup> I write em-powering rather than empowering to connote that the type of power which is acquired and used in consumption occurs within a larger structure of power that determines the larger boundaries of choice within which individual power occurs. Thus one is not simply empowered in the sense that this term is often used in popular discourse, but rather one experiences and is able to use certain kinds of power, in this case for women their power as consumers to help define and communicate their various understandings of femininity, sexuality and selfhood, but this occurs within a system which privileges consumption and indeed has long worked to simultaneously value and denigrate women as consumers above other social roles they may undertake. This understanding of power is akin to Eric Wolf’s (1990) delineation of power according to: 1) power as an attribute of the person, 2) power in interpersonal relationships, 3) power within organizational contexts, and 4) and structural power. Within this system of understanding of power, each individual woman as a consumer might become em-powered within the first two, and possibly the third mode of power, but cannot effect the structural power of capitalism, which indeed effects the structure within which all of the other modes may occur.

moments of dialectical contradiction emerge more often than moments of embodied being. What are the *invidious consequences* of such objectification? Do the meeting points of these objectifications of the body with the idealizations of the “real” self indicate power that has the potential to make a woman feel as though she is, after Miller (2001) and in line with Hegel, “at home in the world” and indeed as a bodied person in that world? Or does she always somehow remain an outsider seeking to unite a minded self with an objectified body, and in so doing experience her “self” in alienation, not at all at home in her body, and yet always seeking to embody herself through the acquisition of objectified ideals? I close this chapter with these thoughts – questions that remain contradictorily at play in my thinking about hair, embodiment and consumption – questions which each woman, in having her hair done at a hair salon, experiences as contradictions within her own self through the theatre of hair and the various stories entangled therein.

## Chapter 4: Salons and Stylists: Spaces and Selves

The declaration made in the previous chapter that at the level of the body a theorization more akin to Miller's dialectics is at play for purchasers of hair services, whereas in terms of the space and place of the hair salon, a phenomenological concern with perception might be envisioned as an important aspect of the experience, leads me firstly into a theoretical unfolding of the theorization of space and place through phenomenological<sup>40</sup> perspectives in anthropology, and finally to the particular space and place of the hair salon and its inhabitants.

My concern with a phenomenological approach to space and place emerges out of an interest in how embodied selves defined by dialectical processes of identification, in which the relationship of the self to the body is mediated by the consumption of hair services, might experientially come to know the places within which this mediation occurs. What do these actors perceive in the landscape of the hair salon? How are sensual understandings of the particularities of place (i.e. each salon) experienced alongside meaningful acts of self-definition? Or in other words, what is the relationship of a "flexible body" to a particular hair salon? Do particularities, in experiential terms, emerge as poignant, or is it more apt to speak of *the hair salon* as a generalized space – one defined by political, economic, and indeed judicial forces (as I have done in Chapter

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<sup>40</sup> Phenomenological approaches in anthropology are mostly based on the works of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger considered phenomenology a philosophical approach to make manifest what is hidden in ordinary, everyday experience. He attempted to describe what he called the structure of everydayness, or being-in-the-world, which he found to be an interconnected system of equipment, social roles, and purposes (Heidegger 1962). Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a French phenomenologist, stressed the role of the active, involved body in all human knowledge, thus generalizing Heidegger's insights to include the analysis of perception (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

One)? The ushering in of this discussion has to do with an exploration of the notion of consumer power and how individual actors might interact with consumer spaces. A concern with landscape is taken up in order to consider how the statement put forth by Ingold that, “forms are generated and sustained in and through the processual unfolding of a total field of relations that cuts across the emergent interface between organism and environment... a movement of *incorporation* rather than inscription, not a transcribing of form onto material but a movement wherein forms themselves are generated” (2000: 193), might apply in relation to how salon spaces are lived and experienced by the consuming bodies that inhabit them. Ingold’s reference to the relationship between organism and environment as one of incorporation heralds in a call to consider how the organism or embodied person who lives within an environment where the hair salon is a remarkable feature in her landscape of inhabitation, might incorporate particular features of this place into her being and whether, as Ingold assumes, she might indeed be involved in the generation of these features by her inhabitation of them.

Is it truly possible to consider individual consumers of hair services as both constitutive of and constituted by hair salons, and in so doing to consider consuming women – whose subjectivities are defined by experiences which have rendered them, alongside landscapes as objects to be perceived and worked upon – as powerful agents in constructing the social field of consumption? Or is an engagement with phenomenological perception incompatible with a theoretical exploration of consumer spaces? I have already posited that the answer to the first question is no, and though the

project may seem ineffectual, I attempt in this chapter to explore how current anthropologies of landscape might be articulated in relation to the hair salon.

### **Part I Space and Place in Anthropology**

*Estelle: Just the fact that I make a conscious choice to be really comfortable in my body, I always have, and there is a confidence that is true and real about myself that I think is unique in a lot of ways, but I get so pissed off that I find these voices in myself that are still, you know, I've suffered from bulimia, I have, some days I feel like I just want to jump out of my skin and I think that, like I get so pissed about it, like how can I possibly be feeling so, like understanding it so much, understanding that it's all bullshit and also be feeling this...it's so hypocritical that I can be so comfortable in my body, and like whoa, sexuality, totally comfortable with it, you know what I mean, and that's true, true, true, and then I have these, weeks at a time sometimes where I realize how much I've picked myself apart and how much I've been having to fight with that whole voice that whole time that's been picking me apart. And it's like, "what the hell? Like why?" How can I possibly understand something so well on a certain level and yet still have it be so internalized and have it be so deep? So, so deep, you know.*

Anthropological perspectives on space and place put specific emphasis on processes of human engagement with landscape. Where they differ is in how closely their examinations rest on questions of power, the specific views they take on *how* landscapes come to have meaning, and the degree of primacy process is given over form. For the purposes of this thesis I consider landscape both as the totality of each hair salon in its relation to other hair salons and to the entire landscape of the city of Victoria, and indeed each hair salon as a specific component within this wider context (after Ingold). In this sense both the totality of each component's relation with each and every other (Ingold 2000: 191) and each salon as one of these components can be understood through an engagement with an anthropological approach to landscape posited on the relationship of space to place. This relationship is understood through the configuration that “[g]eographical experience begins in places, reaches out to others through spaces, and

creates landscapes or regions for human existence” (Tilley 1994: 15), and that space “provides a situational context for places, but derives its meaning from particular places” (Tilley 1994: 15).

Anthropologists such as Bender (1993), Gupta and Ferguson (1994) and Humphrey (2001) highlight the role of national and hegemonic powers in determining the way landscapes are both understood and experienced by people living and moving through them. It is through an engagement with this theoretical approach that I undertook the project of historicizing hair salons in Victoria, so that political and economic forces might be seen as important aspects of determining: 1) where hair salons are located – through municipal bylaws, 2) who is authorized to work in them – through provincial legislation and 3) who is targeted as the consumer/user population – through advertising, education and media. Gupta and Ferguson’s approach emphasizes notions of imagination and the meanings landscapes come to have for the inhabitants. Their approach uses forms or built environments (monuments, national boundaries, geographically inscribed features such as mountains, maps, etc.) to enter into discussions of processes of formation of imagination and memory in the context of the political and economic realities; processes that sometimes rest outside of the meanings inhabitants’ draw *from* particular landscapes. Humphrey (2001) and Gupta and Ferguson (1997) place emphasis on how the ‘same’ geographical landscape can be experienced differentially by different populations and individuals inhabiting these ‘territories.’ I draw attention to this approach specifically so that it may be understood that hair salons are such places; experienced differentially by the individual women in this study, and indeed

by different inhabitants of the city of Victoria. There are some people, for instance, who for various reasons would never be granted access to even walk into these salons, let alone have their hair cut there; the foremost criteria to access is money, but there are other criteria that center around the concept of cleanliness (i.e. people with head lice are not permitted to have their hair cut in salons, and stylists may refuse to touch someone's hair if they perceive it to be "too" dirty). There are also behaviors that are considered inappropriate in hair salons, and though the boundaries are not firm and stylists may "put up" with a certain degree of harassment, they may refuse service to people who they feel are disrespectful, especially in terms of verbal or sexual aggressiveness. While most of the participants in this study feel relatively "at home" in the hair salon, at least one of the participants, Mildred, expressed a certain degree of anxiety about not belonging in a prestigious hair salon. She described herself as a "poser," as one who does not really belong because she doesn't really have enough money to be in there as often as she likes, and as often as she assumes other clients are, but she knows how to appear to belong and so in this sense she poses as a client of a prestigious hair salon. Additionally, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, the hair salon in Victoria is a colonial space, replete with the racist and sexist underpinnings of colonialism. There are rarely any advertisements or images in hair salons and in hair magazines that depict people of colour, men, elderly people, and not one that I ever observed that depicted Indigenous people in the contemporary setting of the hair salon. There are a lot of people missing from the visual representations salons display, even though these people make use of the hair salon as clients, they do not appear to be constitutive of the salon space in any immediately visual way<sup>41</sup>. And yet

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<sup>41</sup> One of the key points relating to this is that while, especially older women (older meaning older than the women visually represented in the salon), are not visually present in the material on the walls, the economic

salons appear, and are taken by most of the participants, to be “naturalized” settings, simply, places where hair is done. Many of the women in this study, for example, made mention of childhood experiences of visiting the hair salon for the first time and the pride of “choosing” their own haircut in this “grown-up” space:

*Angelique: Do you remember what you felt about your hair when you were little or do you have any memories associated with your hair from when you were small?*

*Matilda: I do, I remember mom not letting me have it long anymore because I wouldn't let her brush it, and getting huge mats underneath because I'd only brush the top, and then getting it cut short.*

*Angelique: And did you want it cut short?*

*Matilda: Eventually I did, like I remember the first haircut<sup>42</sup> I ever got, that mushroom cut, that picture we saw, like I remember I totally wanted that, like I picked it out of a book and I was like, “I want this.”*

*Angelique: Right, so you got to go to the hairstylists and pick out your own cut?*

*Matilda: Out of a book, yah.*

*Angelique: And do you remember how that made you feel?*

*Matilda: Really proud and happy, and I think that I, that definitely carries over to those books, like I was talking about how I enjoy looking at the books with all the haircuts in them, and I don't often get ideas for myself, but I'll look and be like, “oh wow that haircut.” Yah, and that definitely stems from those books that I looked at, at the hair salon in the Sparwood mall, and my first haircut, that mushroom cut.*

In Chapter 3 I discussed how perception might come into play as an important aspect of experiencing the hair salon in a way that was not at the fore in experiences of the body. It was an interest in Ingold's dwelling perspective which led me to wonder

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puissance which these women carry, presumably because of more secure finances in later middle-age, means that in a certain sense, as consumers they have more power to influence the salon space than might younger women, who although visually present, do not necessarily have any secure financial foothold to purchase hair services as often as they would like, a point which several of my participants expressed.

<sup>42</sup> What is interesting about this memory of Matilda's about her “first haircut” is that it was not the first time she had her hair cut. Our mother routinely cut our hair as children, and there are several photographs of Matilda with haircuts that had been cut prior to the mushroom cut she describes here. Matilda, however, does not remember these cuts, for her, the first cut was the one that she picked out of a magazine in the salon. In this way, this “first cut” legitimized her as “in control” of her own image, and indeed simultaneously, as socially legitimate in her appearance because 1) she chose her haircut out of a magazine, which meant that other people had this cut, and that it was fashionable at the time, 2) her hair was cut by a professional, and 3) her hair was cut in the salon space: the socially ascribed place for “real” hair cuts to happen.

about how perception might come into play in the landscape of the hair salon as *one aspect* of dwelling in the larger landscape of a (post)modern urban setting in an age of flexible capitalism. Through an engagement with the phenomenological concept of dwelling, I wished to consider the question of whether the salon space could be considered constitutive of its inhabitants, as well as constituted by them. Ingold, for instance, takes a more radical approach to process than the other theorists referred to above. He urges a questioning not only of the dichotomies of internal/external as related to landscape, but also and especially, of form over process in Western society. Ingold argues that “a place in the landscape is not ‘cut out’ from the whole, either on the plane of ideas or on that of material substance. Rather, each place embodies the whole at a particular nexus within it, and in this respect is different from every other... no feature of the landscape is, of itself, a boundary” (2000: 192). It is here that Ingold fundamentally differs from, for instance Humphrey, who takes Hirsch’s (1995) definition of landscape as “the meanings imputed *by* local people to their cultural and physical surroundings” (Humphrey 2001: 55) [emphasis mine]. Ingold does not believe that individuals impute meaning into their landscape in the forms they build, nor that previously existing forms have meanings inherent in them.

In order to expound my thinking about Ingold in relation to the politically and economically charged landscape (the total field) of which the hair salon forms but one component, I turn to Humphrey’s (2001) work in Inner Mongolia. Humphrey sees “two dominant kinds of landscape conception” (2001: 55): one Chinese or ‘chiefly’ and one Mongolian or ‘shamanic’. What is different about Humphrey’s engagement with this explication from Ingold’s relational model is that Humphrey *separates* the Chinese and

Mongolian landscapes according to forms. For Ingold there can be no separation, the Chinese and Mongols exist in a “processual unfolding of a total field of relations” (2001: 93) with their environment, one which in effect they are both equally a part of, as much as the mountains, the walls, and the cairns.

It would seem that Ingold sees no *difference* between these landscapes. They are both part of the same system and cannot be separated according to the specific meanings held in each form by the people who worship there. To suggest that the differing meanings are sufficient grounds for separating the landscape into two separate but related worlds is to value form over process; in essence to create a dichotomy between ‘he who builds a specific form’ (imbue-er of meaning) on the one hand, and ‘he who lives where form is built’ (for whom meaning is imbued by the form according to a set of principles that is distinct from those of the builder) on the other. One could pose the question; do the Mongols and the Chinese see each other as inhabiting different worlds? This question, however, has two answers, one drawn from a perspective which considers the geographical landscape and the people who inhabit it as a “total field of relations,” and another which emerges from a perspective which considers the inhabitants’ perceptions rather than the *incorporation* of the total field. From the vantage of a “total field of relations,” one might ask, having been in contact in the same ‘territory’ for centuries, is it not naïve to assume that one’s world exists without the other? But, from the level of political economy, one might ask, do not certain inhabitants come to *incorporate* certain features of the landscape to the exclusion of others and thus be constituted in relation to different forms?

My application of this distinction to the hair salon rests on the age-old anthropological debate concerning the relationship of the general to the particular. I have, in line with Ingold, suggested that the hair salon, as part of the capitalist project, is constitutive of the subjective experiences of women in Victoria, specifically at the level that they relate the notion of selfhood to being in a body through the purchase of hair services. Each hair salon does exist in a “total field of relations” to other hair salons, to the conceptualization of modern cities, and to the international world of fashion and media. But more importantly, these processes, in their constitution of those that dwell within, generate *forms and* “bodies which nonetheless contain (contradictorily) increasingly sharp and terrible divisions...[that] take importantly different forms among different people and groups” (Martin 1992: 134).

I wanted to see these women as beings dwelling in the world, and though they are, though they sometimes experience themselves as such, and in a wider web of consideration, see themselves as relational to all that is and is not of them, they experience their bodies, as I outlined in Chapter 3, *and* the spaces they inhabit, through schisms of relation that they often feel *are* imposed, with which they would rather not identify and yet, in moments of particular objectification, always return to:

*Matilda: Maybe I don't feel super aware of my body all the time, and I have like before, I have thought about my body a lot more since I was pregnant and have given birth, and maybe I sort of took my body for granted before and I didn't really, but I did. No I do, I think about it all the time, about my body in general and about body image in, because I really like my body and I like my hair and I like, I'm not very good at articulating.*

*Angelique: That's okay, it's a hard thing to talk about.*

*Matilda: It is, because, and I get really frustrated because I like my body and I usually think I look great, or for myself, I really like the size I am and who I am but then there's always those twinges of things that have been ingrained in me that thin is beautiful and I guess that affects me once in a while when I look and when I think about it and I think I should be thinner sometimes then it always makes me angry, and then, like I end up talking myself out of it because I think it's stupid that thinness has been portrayed as beauty, because really most of those people who are super thin aren't healthy. And I guess my pregnancy made me realize that because I was really healthy throughout my whole pregnancy and I never had thought of myself as healthy, I never thought I was unhealthy, but yah.*

Thus, in conceptualizing the hair salon space, as much as I wished to draw directly from Ingold, I could not help but feel a misfit with his dwelling perspective. I am drawn to conclude rather, in line with Humphrey (2001) that political economy creates differential meanings within “territories.” Hair salons are regulated spaces that are designed to reproduce certain kinds of bodies. They are not constructed to make women feel “at home in the world,” but rather specifically to reflect women’s images back to them, to make them confront themselves in the same mirrors where they simultaneously observe images of young white women coiffed in the current styles of the day and other clients practicing the same processes of physical manipulation in order to fit into their societal roles. In seeing themselves thus, the purchasers of hair services are confronted with both the legitimizing fact of their participation in this practice and the anxiety of a possible misfit in the transformation: will their self be revealed through their hair or masked by it? Will others see what they see? Do they look as they should look? The stylist is the mediator and indeed purveyor of these anxieties, she is an expert who can help the growing wearer negotiate the possibilities of representation for herself *in light of the age, gender, and race appropriate fashions of the day.*

In seeking to employ a phenomenological perspective to the space and place of the hair salon through an understanding of political economy, I drew on Tilley, who posits that:

the landscape is an anonymous sculptural form always already fashioned by human agency, never completed, and constantly being added to, and the relationship between people and it is a constant dialectic and process of structuration: the landscape is both medium *for* and outcome *of* action and previous histories of action. **Landscapes are experienced in practice, in life activities** (1994: 23) [emphasis mine].

Tilley's emphasis on people's relationship to the landscape as in constant dialectic fits well with Miller's (2001) conceptualization of consumers as always engaged in dialectical processes in consumptive acts that permeate almost all aspect of their being in the world.

I have suggested that the women in this study conceptualize and perceptually experience the world they inhabit through bodies that might be understood as embodied objects, it does not mean that they cannot conceptualize the existence of other possibilities, indeed most of them feel compelled to believe that there must be other ways of being in their bodies. And in this sense they do dwell as beings-in-the-world; albeit a world which specifically supports at the same time that it seems to break down the dualities of Western thought and the modern dis-embodied objectified female self. If these bodies are, as Martin (1992) posits, increasingly "flexible," then so too are the landscapes they inhabit. In order to expand a discussion concerning the question of particular places through the issue of flexibility in the next section, I employ Gupta and Ferguson's method of *rethinking difference through connection* (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997: 33).

## **Part II: Salon Spaces: *Ice*, *Bouffant*, and *Bella Stella* as Places**

Having summed the theoretical foundations of my approach to the project of generalizing the space and place of hair salons, I now undertake to describe the particularities of each of the salons I visited in this research according to the meanings expounded from the participants' discourses about them – and in so doing to hearken to the perception of these forms in the landscape.

Three separate salons were visited during the course of this research. Two of the salons are independent salons located in the fashionable downtown shopping district: *Ice*, where Lydia worked at the time of the study, and *Bouffant*, where Trina works. The third salon, *Bella Stella*, where Suzanne works, is located in the largest shopping mall in Victoria; a middle-class shopping mall a little way from the downtown core. The three salons catered somewhat to different clientele, and while I am making assumptions based on observations alone in the case of the salons where Trina and Suzanne work, I have heard a great deal about *Ice*, through Lydia, who is my sister. The stylists did not form part of the actual study group and I therefore did not have access to their thoughts and opinions outside of the salon interview. Since this interview was conducted more as a “hanging out” at the salon appointment than as an interview per se, I did not really have the occasion to pose a lot of questions directly to the stylists. Lydia, however, routinely talks to me about the salons that she has worked in over the years, three of which are located in downtown Victoria, as well as other salons around town where her friends and other stylists she knows have worked. While I acknowledge that her opinions are those

of just one stylist, I nonetheless find them invaluable for giving me insights into salons in Victoria and the hairdressing industry in general.

There are currently three hundred and twenty-one hair salons listed in the Greater Victoria telephone directory serving a population of 361, 744 inhabitants (BC STATS, Service BC, BC Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services). Of the three hundred and twenty-one salons listed, only four of these are listed as barber shops catering specifically to men. I visited only three of the three hundred and twenty-one salons in Victoria, two of which would be characterized as high-end and one of which would be characterized as mid-range. These three salons are in no way representative of the make-up of salons in the city, since, as I describe below, they all mainly service women between the ages of 18 to 55. There are a number of salons in the city that market themselves directly to older clientele that are not represented at all in these three salons. While I was not able to visit all of the salons in the city within the context of this research project, I was interested to characterize and provide descriptions of some of the kinds of salons one can find in Victoria. In order to achieve this aim I took two approaches: 1) I looked around in other salons that did not form part of my study group in order to gather descriptive data<sup>43</sup>, and 2) I asked the participants in this study, as well as the stylists (especially Lydia), about the different kinds of hair salons one could find in Victoria and who the clients of these salons might be. Almost all of the clients broke salons up into three categories: 1) lower-

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<sup>43</sup> While officially only three salons formed the context of my study, and it is these salons for which I have the most detailed data, I did look around in a number of other salons in the city throughout the course of this study. It was not possible to visit all of the salons in the city, but I did attempt to look at salons located in a range of neighborhoods (Oak Bay, Burnside Gorge, Downtown, James Bay, Gordon Head, Hillside/Quadra, and Esquimalt). In total I looked at just under 30 salons, and while I admit that there may be some kinds of salons which are not represented here, I believe this descriptive data, alongside the client and stylists opinions of the salon make-up of the city serve to situate the three salons that form the nexus of this study within a wider context of the types of hair salons that can be found in Victoria.

end, 2) mid-range, and 3) higher-end. Some did make differentiations based on age and gender, such as: 1) mall salons for teenagers, 2) “old lady” salons, and 3) barber shops for older men and young boys.

I did not collect specific data on the demographic make-up of each of the three salon’s clientele, but I did ask a few questions about what kind of people visited each salon most frequently, information which I will provide when describing each salon in more detail. At this point I want simply to state that, according to the stylists, women comprised at least 67-80% of the clientele in all three of the salons in this study, and that the majority of the female consumers at these particular salons were between the ages of twenty and fifty-five. Had I visited different salons, for example, “old lady” salons, the age makeup of the clientele would have been quite different. A closer look at other hair-services providers that do not work directly out of salons, but either travel to client’s residences, hospitals, hotels, etc., or work from their own homes might give a different picture in terms of age distribution (i.e. more older or younger clients), although I suspect gender distribution would be about the same. This is not to say that men do not have their hair cut in Victoria, but either they are having it cut by friends or family or in different kinds of salons than the ones in this study – and, according to Lydia, when men do go to the salon, they rarely purchase anything but a cut.

In the telephone directory hair salons are cross-listed in the same category as beauty salons, salons that provide esthetic services as well as hair services. None of the three salons included in this research project provide esthetic services, although *Ice* used

to carry a range of cosmetic products, which the hair stylists were expected to sell to their clients. While it is difficult to break down the salons in this city into an exact typology, there are rough guidelines that guide hair-services consumers in their search for style. The three main guiding principles described to me by the participants regarding the different kinds of salons were (roughly in order of importance): 1) price, 2) word-of-mouth or friend/relative/regular stylist works there, and 3) location, although for at least two of the clients location was as important as word-of-mouth. A fourth contingency that clients mentioned was ambiance, but this was much less important than the other factors in determining whether or not they would go to a particular salon. Ambiance was usually raised in terms of whether or not clients felt comfortable in a particular salon over other salons they had been in, and whether they perceived that they “fit in” with the rest of the clientele. Mildred, as I pointed out above, raised notions of feeling like an imposter in *Ice* because she was quite cognizant of the fact that she could not really afford to be in there as often as she would like while she perceived that other clients could afford it and were therefore more legitimate than her in that space. In terms of price of salons, participants divided salons along a continuum based on the configuration of socioeconomic status, as it is understood in North America, that is lower-middle-upper. While I am tempted to use the word class in this configuration, it does not exactly correspond to socioeconomic status as it applies to the participants in this study. I make this distinction because, while at least four of the participants come from what would be considered working-class backgrounds, these working-class backgrounds really relate more in some ways to rural upbringings and “blue collar” work since at least two of the other participants families are also working class, but in more urban “white collar”

occupations. Only one of the participants described her family as “wealthy”. Concomitantly, all of the participants in the study have at least some level of post-secondary education, three of whom are currently pursuing Masters degrees, which places the participants themselves in the educated middle class, if not economically, at least ideologically. Thus I return to how these “middle class” women understand the panorama of salon choices in the small urban centre in which they reside according to low status to high prestige ranking. The descriptions of the different kinds of salons are based solely on my observations, although I was guided to these observations by the participants’ opinions as to what salons in each category look like and where they can be found.

Lower-end salons range in price from \$10 to about \$20 for a women’s cut to as low as \$8 for men’s cuts and often provide colour and perm services for around \$30 to \$40. These salons tend to be located outside of the downtown core or near other stores which could be described as catering to lower or working-class shoppers; country-wide chain salons, such as *Magic Cuts*, would fall into this bracket as well. The pictures on the walls of these salons often look old and faded, portraying hairstyles that might have been popular ten or fifteen years ago but are no longer in style. Often these pictures are portraits of young white women’s faces with a particular focus on the hair and the name of a product company printed boldly across the poster. There are usually a few pictures of men as well as women in these salons, equally out-of-date and with the same boldly emblazoned branding. None of the participants in this study used this kind of salon, although Matilda did talk about a particularly bad haircut she had received the one time

she visited a chain salon, which she said was not surprising considering that it was “only \$12.” The clients in this study tended to consider these kinds of salons more “convenience” salons than anything else, they did not perceive the clients of these salons as being interested in fashion and thought mostly men, older people, and younger children brought by their parents, would use these salons.

The next category of salon on the ranking from low to high-end is the hair school salon. These were not discussed much by the clients in this study, but did come up in conversation with both Matilda and Felice, who talked about going to these school salons when their current stylist was in hair school. One of the hair school salons in Victoria, the one where Lydia went to school, is attached to a higher end salon downtown, which gives it a bit of a higher status than the other hair schools in town. The clientele of this particular school salon tend to be people who cannot necessarily afford to go to the professional salon, but want to make use of the specialty products with which the salon is associated. Lydia said that many of her clients when she was at hair school were students themselves. The salon school where Suzanne went to school also had a lot of student clientele, but because of its location outside of downtown and near a major shopping mall, there were also a lot of elderly women who made use of this school salon.

The next step up from the school salons are mall salons, such as *Bella Stella* where Suzanne works. Often these salons will be semi-independent with two or three salons of the same or similar name owned by a local individual in various shopping malls around the city. Cuts and colours at these salons are a little more expensive, starting at

around \$20 for a cut and \$35 to \$100 for colour. There is some stigma for stylists working in mall salons as they tend to have less control over their working environments and make less money than those working in higher-end shops, although mall salons are a good place to start out right after hair school in order to build up a clientele, since there are a lot of walk-in clients from mall shopping traffic. People tend to go to these salons because of the lower cost and location more than for the individual stylists working there, since according to Felice there is a lot of turnover in the salon staff at these kinds of places.

The atmosphere in *Bella Stella* is similar to the atmosphere in the shopping mall. It has wood-grain laminate flooring and stainless steel detailing on the individual stations, there are two huge wall-size photographs in the salon, one of which is of a young woman with long brown wavy hair. The second poster shows a man standing behind a woman looking down at her hair, both the man and the woman have shiny hair styled in current fashionable styles. These posters look like they are of professional models promoting the salon products whose hair was not styled at this particular salon but rather by professional stylists who work for the company being promoted even though the name is not clearly visible on the poster. At the time of the study there were no other pictures on the walls. There are several magazines stored in the centre of the salon on a tall counter that roughly splits the salon in half lengthwise. These magazines fall into the categories of popular women's and men's magazines, celebrity gossip, and hair magazines. The reception area is open directly onto the mall and separated from the salon by two half walls so that you can see into the salon from the mall, but do not get a clear picture of the whole space.

The reception area is lined on both sides with various hair products that cover up much of the wall space. Clients waiting for their appointments mill about looking at the products since there is no real waiting area in this salon. Both Felice and Desmonia do go to *Bella Stella* specifically because of Suzanne, but they both claim that this is because they know her personally, although Desmonia used to work in the mall where *Bella Stella* is located, which is how she found out that Suzanne was there. In fact, during Felice's salon visit, Felice brought up other salons that she thought Suzanne should work at and urged Suzanne to make a move to an independent salon. When I asked her about this in the second interview, she said it was because she thought Suzanne would make more money and be happier at another salon. When I urged her to explain further she admitted that she personally felt uncomfortable in the mall and found the salon space uninteresting because of its location in the mall. Felice claimed that she would never go to this salon if Suzanne were not working there partly because she perceived the staff there to be unhappy and the mall to be a place where people and teenagers with conventional style would go to have their hair done. Desmonia on the other hand feels more comfortable in *Bella Stella*, she enjoys the amicable relationship she has with the staff there, many of whom used to buy insurance from her when she worked in the mall. She perceived the working relationships between the stylists there as friendly and helpful and thought Suzanne was happy there. Apart from the fact that Desmonia used to work in the mall herself and is now happy not working there, one of the reasons I think that she is happier at *Bella Stella* than Felice is that she pays quite a lot of money to have her hair done there, while Felice has her hair done for free by Suzanne (which I will return to later). Desmonia routinely spends around \$140 for a cut and colour at *Bella Stella*, which she

finds expensive, but less expensive than the one time she had her hair done at *Ice* by Lydia. Apart from liking *Bella Stella* because it is less expensive than *Ice*, Desmonia named the products used there and Suzanne specifically as the reasons she has stayed there for two years.

Both *Ice* and *Bouffant* belong to the type of salon that is accorded the most prestige by young middle-class consumers in Victoria. Haircuts generally range from \$35 to \$60 at these salons, and colours anywhere from \$50 to \$250, although there is some variation within this based on individual client-stylist relationships (as will be discussed below). Both of these salons are independently owned and located in the downtown shopping district; they make a point to market themselves in local publications and venues that attract high fashion<sup>44</sup> conscious shoppers and routinely participate in fashion shows that showcase locally made clothing and other independent downtown shops. The posters in these salons, and other salons like them, consist of fashion shots of clients of the salon who have had their hair done by stylists at the salon. While most of these images are of young white women, there are a few of young white men as well. *Ice* encourages the stylists that work there to do fashion shoots with volunteer models at least once a year so that they can use these images as promotional material to attract clientele. In this way both of these salons really do show images that the women in the study can relate to, since it is conceivable that one or two of their friends, or even themselves, might appear on the walls of the salon. Matilda and I, for instance, have both been models for Lydia in at least one of these kinds of fashion shoots. The emphasis in these

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<sup>44</sup> As opposed to popular fashion such as can be seen in larger chain stores and at the mall.

salons has to do with the kind of image that they supply to their clients as fashion-forward and “cool.” Mildred talks about how she perceives *Ice* as cool and feels self-conscious going in there. This coolness is a kind of prestige that accords these salons status as fashionable spaces where the stylists that work there are encouraged to be creative and “cutting-edge”, on the verge of the next breakthrough in fashion in Victoria. At least four of the participants talked about how they perceived their stylist to be an artist, something which is important to them in trying to achieve new styles that are suited to their personalities. Both of these salons stock, in addition to the regular women’s and men’s magazines and hair magazines, more obscure fashion magazines out of London, Paris and New York that display the latest editorial fashions and trends. While most of these fashions are way beyond anything that appears on the streets or even in the shops in Victoria, having these kinds of magazines in the salon helps to identify the salon as “in” places where novelty and current fashion might both be created and experienced, or as Mildred put it, populated by stylists and clientele that “take risks” with their appearances.

The main difference between *Ice* and *Bouffant* has to do with the fact that *Bouffant* is also home to a small tattoo shop. Since tattooing is very popular amongst the twenty to thirty year-old crowd in Victoria, the combination of the tattoo shop and salon helps to secure a somewhat younger and “hipper” clientele than the more professionally-oriented and slightly older clientele that uses *Ice*. According to Lydia, the majority of women who routinely visit *Ice* are between the ages of 30-55, with fewer younger clients, except on Tuesdays when the salon has a special discounted rate for university students. As far as I could tell the prices were about the same at the two salons, although the

atmosphere was quite different. Both of the salons sell an exclusive brand of product, *Bumble and Bumble*, which can only be purchased at a few salons in Victoria. It is a very expensive product and many of the clients made mention of it in the interview (500ml bottles of shampoo cost about 36\$ before tax, compared to larger sized bottles of “professional” shampoo, about 1L, that can be purchased for \$16 at other salons and “drug store” shampoo that can be found on any grocery or drug store shelf for about \$6). A few of the participants expressed a desire to use these products but felt that they were too expensive, while at least three of the participants admitted to loving this brand of product and felt it was much better than anything else they had used. One client, Estelle, said that while she did use the products that Trina sold, she bought them in the United States because they were much less expensive there, although she felt a bit guilty about this for not supporting Trina.

*Angelique: Do you buy products for your hair?*

*Gwen: Yes, I love Bumble and Bumble. I tried other stuff but it sucks. I like Bumble and Bumble, but it's so expensive. My mom's like [shaking her fist], "you spend so much money!" And I'm like, "but my hair, it looks so good." [laughs].*

*Ice* is what is called a “concept salon” in the hairdressing industry. While they are independent, they have an exclusive contract with *Bumble and Bumble*, which means that they can only sell and use this kind of product at their salon. This model is based on the *Aveda* model of salons, which are all independently owned but operated under the *Aveda* brand. The owner of *Ice* was as an instructor at the *Aveda Institute* in Victoria before opening her own shop about ten years ago; she converted her salon to a concept-model about four years ago, but with a different “concept” than the one offered by *Aveda*; i.e. a different brand of products. Because *Ice* is a concept-salon, it is very much organized

around the selling and promotion of products, which the owners make a great deal of profit on. There is a lot of pressure on stylists to sell these products, and the salon is organized in such a way that clients must walk past the product shelves on their way in and out of the salon. Stylists are expected to show their clients the products they have used on their hair and to encourage their clients to buy them. In reward for selling products they receive a commission and prizes are awarded each month to the stylist who sells the most product. There is a lot of pressure to sell, and stylists who do not sell can be punished in such ways as receiving less desirable shifts, being refused promotion, and even losing their jobs; many stylists find this extremely difficult<sup>45</sup>. *Ice* is the largest of the three salons I visited and is located in an older brick heritage building with very high ceilings and original hardwood floor. There are at least four separate rooms in *Ice*, the first of which is the reception/product area which houses a large tropical fish tank, a red leather couch and coffee table covered in magazines, the reception desk and a wall of products; clients must walk through this space on their way in and out of the salon. There is an upstairs area that overlooks the reception area where shampoos are done for clients having their hair cut. The interior of the cutting and styling room is rectangular in shape

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<sup>45</sup> Lydia was fired from *Ice* shortly after the conclusion of the research portion of my thesis, a salon that she had worked in full time for almost 2 years. The owners of this particular salon fired four of their senior stylists without advance notice in an effort to “change the image” of the salon. The reason Lydia was given for her dismissal was that she did not “retail enough,” that is, she did not sell enough product to her clients, even though she was steadily busy and her clients were very satisfied with her work. This act by the management to simply dismiss four long-time stylists at once is typical of the hairdressing industry in which individual stylists often have very little power to determine their working conditions, unless they move around from salon to salon, which many of them do. Lydia has since started working at a salon I will call *Garage*, where she feels much more secure in her work and valued by her employers. All four of the stylists fired from *Ice* found work at *Garage*, which was happy to take experienced stylists with loyal clientele. Lydia told me that many of the regular clients she had at *Ice* followed her to her new location, and that even though some of them liked the other salon space, which was bigger and a little more up-scale, they value Lydia’s work and their relationships with her and so they are happy to be at her new salon. Many of her clients have expressed a great deal of disappointment in *Ice* for having fired Lydia under the circumstances that they did since clients, more than anything, express not liking it when their stylist tries to sell them products. Lydia enjoys her new salon because they do not have the same emphasis on selling products, and indeed stock fewer products in the salon for sale.

and has exposed brick wall and matching artisan cut-steel mirrors lining facing walls as well as extensive lighting made to look like natural light. The mirrors are one of the most prominent features of this particular salon, a feature which Mildred was very cognizant of. There is a separate room in the back of the cutting floor for colour processing that does not have any mirrors in it so that clients do not have to see themselves with foils and plastic caps on their heads. Clients are often left sitting in this room with other clients to “process” while their stylist cuts another client’s hair. This colouring room is one of the features that the participants enjoy about *Ice*, since it feels quieter and more contained than the open floor area and they often get to overhear and participate in interesting conversations in the colour room with other clients and stylists:

*Matilda: Maybe it’s kind of, I haven’t gone to a lot of salons so I don’t really know the difference, but although, like even at places like Aveda, at the school, you don’t get that really because the stalls are pretty separate. So yah, I guess the back room does make it more of a [place to talk to other clients and stylists and to listen to their conversations]. Because yah, generally there are more conversations, like any time I’ve gotten my hair done there, generally that’s the area where you have conversations with other people, because you’re sitting there waiting, yah.*

Part of the *Ice* servicing of their clients includes a head and scalp massage before cuts and hand massages while clients are in the colour processing area waiting for their hair colour to set in. These services are provided free of charge with a cut and often take between 5 to 10 minutes to perform. Lydia has expressed relief that these services are not required at the new salon where she works, *Garage*, since she often felt that providing these services within limited time slots would make her feel pressed for time.

*Bouffant* has a different feel to it than *Ice* in the sense that it is less about a feeling of light than one of colour, with lime green walls and yellow vintage lamps. *Bouffant* is also in an older building with brick walls, high ceilings and hardwood floor, but it has a vintage aesthetic that harkens back to the 1950s and 1960s, rather than the more modern aesthetic at *Ice*. At *Bouffant*, stylists are allowed to have photographs of friends and family, or little personal items at their individual stations, something that was not allowed at the other two salons. This gives more of a homey-feel to each station since each stylist's personality is somewhat displayed by her decorative choices. At the salon, Estelle commented on a few of the pictures at Trina's station, which gave rise to personal topics of conversation. *Bouffant* is about half the size of *Ice*, the entire salon is contained in one room with the reception area directly overlooking the rest of the salon, and the colour station located against one wall in the middle of the salon. There is a separate room at the back half of the salon, which is taken up by the tattoo shop, but there are windows between the tattoo shop and the salon so that there is still a sense of connection between them. The stylists and reception staff working there almost all have tattoos, and many of the clients do as well. While *Bouffant* sells the same line of product as *Ice*, it is not clear whether they are a concept salon or not (and I did not have the occasion to ask Trina). Estelle said that Trina had never "pushed" product on her and that she felt the products were much more discrete there than at *Ice*, where she used to be a client (although not of Lydia's).

### Part III Stylists

While all of the participants in this study routinely make use of the services of a regular stylist in a salon in Victoria, two of the participants, Matilda and Felice, do not pay for these services; rather, they pay a small fee associated with the direct cost of the colour to the salon. These kinds of arrangements are not particularly uncommon for people who have close friends or relatives who are stylists (Lydia is Matilda's sister and Suzanne is Felice's best friend). Salons usually allow their stylists to cut and colour a certain number of clients' hair at no cost, they ask only that these "no charge"<sup>46</sup> clients pay the cost of the colour to the salon (usually between \$10-\$20). Different salons have different policies regarding "no charge" clients; at *Ice*, for instance, Lydia could book these clients in during regular working hours as long as it was during times that were not busy. Because there are not a great deal of "walk-in" clients at *Ice*, this allowed Lydia to be "busy doing hair" while not compromising appointments for paying customers. *Bella Stella*, unlike *Ice*, allows their stylists to do "no charge" clients only outside of the stylist's regular working hours, since the mall location of the salon means that there are a number of "walk-in" clients throughout the day for whom appointments must remain open. While "no charge" clients may not seem to benefit the salon in any way, they help to ensure that stylists have a way of doing the hair of close relations at work instead of at home, which close friends and family often expect, since they were often used for practice during stylists' schooling years. Additionally, "no charges" often advertise a great deal by word-of-mouth for their friends and relatives who are stylists and for the

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<sup>46</sup> While stylists are allowed to have "no-charge" clients, they must do so within reason. Lydia's current salon, for instance, allows stylists to have four "no-charge" clients, although they will make exceptions if some of her "no-charges" are not in very regularly. Stylists who have booked in "no-charges" and receive a call to schedule in a paying client may be expected to bump the "no-charge" client to another slot or another day.

salons they work at, which provides benefit to the salon. Below both Matilda and Felice describe how they view having usually high-cost services performed on them for free by their stylist:

*Angelique: And would you go into the salon if Lydia wasn't there?*

*Matilda: No, I don't think I could bring myself to pay so much for what it is, because I spent so many years doing my own hair, doing my own cuts, doing my own colour, and I enjoyed it, and I think that it worked really well, and I liked my haircuts all the time. I mean, in no way were they as nice, like they don't grow out nicely like Lydia's haircuts always grow out nicely and she can do much more elaborate colours and things than I can do to myself. But I always liked cutting my own hair, and it's cheap.*

*Angelique: So if she wasn't around you'd probably go back to doing it yourself?*

*Matilda: Yah, I think I would. Not that she's not worth what she asks for, but yah, I don't think I'd want to pay somebody else to do that, especially for how often I like to change my hair and colour and things like that, yah I don't think I would go and pay somebody else to do it. And I have this feeling always like that it won't be as good as what Lydia does, because I think she's really good.*

*Angelique: So why do you have your hair done by Suzanne?*

*Felice: Well initially it was because she was the only hairdresser I knew, but I wanted to support her, and at first I totally hated it, for like the first year every time I'd get a haircut I was like, "oh my god I hate my hair." But then now I just go to her and it's easy. For I while I didn't get my hair done, it was like every six months when she was dating that terrible ex she had, but now that we're really good friends again I like to go to her.*

*Angelique: So did you see other stylists during that time?*

*Felice: No, I just did it myself.*

*Angelique: And then you just went out of loyalty at first?*

*Felice: Yah.*

*Angelique: And do you pay for it or does she do it for free?*

*Felice: I pay for the colour, the product cost, and then I usually tip her or bring her a gift or something. It's kind of getting uneven, like before I used to sew for her a lot so we would kind of trade, but she doesn't really require anything of me so I have to kind of figure that out in the next little bit with her because she does it now really regularly.*

*Angelique: And so do you think that if Suzanne wasn't around you would continue to go to a salon now?*

*Felice: No because I cut it by myself for a long time.*

*Angelique: So you think you would go back to dyeing and cutting it yourself?*

*Felice: Yah, I would just do it myself.*

*Angelique: Even though you say you like the salon colour better?*

*Felice: Yah, it probably wouldn't be black because black is really hard to upkeep, it fades really fast out of my roots so I end up doing it like every 4 weeks.*

*Angelique: Why would you not want to go to someone else?*

*Felice: I probably just wouldn't think about it, and I'm cheap [laughs].*

*Angelique: Right, so part of the reason that you go to Suzanne is because you don't have to pay for it?*

*Felice: Yah. I used to cut my hair myself and it was so fun, it's so fun to cut it yourself.*

Both Matilda and Felice consider a stylist optional for two reasons; the first is that both of them cut and coloured their own hair in the past and felt happy with the results, and the second is that they cut and coloured their own hair before their stylist became a stylist and therefore never routinely made use of a stylist until they could receive these services for free. This sentiment contrasts sharply with sentiments expressed by the other clients below that they *need* to have their hair done by a stylist. While Matilda admits that she thinks Lydia's cuts and colours are better than the ones she can give herself, she cannot conceptualize spending the amount of money that Lydia charges on her hair, even though she thinks Lydia deserves this amount because she is very good. Matilda, being Lydia's sister, is aware of the fact that even though Lydia may charge \$180 for a cut and colour that she may only receive half of that amount, while the other half goes to the salon<sup>47</sup>. While Matilda feels that Lydia's work is valuable, she cannot personally afford to pay this kind of money for her hair, since she is in a low-income service job (although at the time of this interview she was on maternity leave, which made her income even lower). In this sense, Lydia offers Matilda, a lower income consumer, services that are usually purchased by middle to higher income consumers. Matilda, having the consumer-sensibilities of the middle class, prefers to do her hair herself than to have it done at lower-end salons, because she has had more success simulating higher fashion colours

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<sup>47</sup> Most hairstylists who do not own their own salon do not make a great deal of money, and would be considered lower-income.

and cuts through her own efforts than when she has attempted to buy them at lower cost salons. For Lydia, who usually does the hair of higher income persons than herself, doing Matilda's hair is a way of both spending time with Matilda on a one-to-one basis since they both have young children, and also a way to ensure that the people she spends time with "look good," something which brings her pride. In exchange for these services, Matilda has modeled for Lydia, and often promotes Lydia's services on the street when people comment on her unique hair.

Felice, unlike Matilda, does not necessarily think that Suzanne does an exceptionally better job on her hair than she can do herself. Part of the reason Suzanne does Felice's hair for free is that Felice has been loyal to Suzanne, allowing Suzanne to practice on her when she was first learning to do hair. For Felice it is the professional colouring products, which consumers cannot buy unless they are registered hair stylists, which she likes more than the actual cuts that Suzanne has given her over the years, although she says that the cuts are now getting better. She also sees this as a way to spend time with Suzanne, although she admits that it is not ideal since Suzanne is often distracted when she is at the salon.

Thus for both Felice and Matilda, though they enjoy the services of their regular stylist, they do it from a slightly different perspective than the other participants because they do not pay for these services, but only the small fees associated with the product costs<sup>48</sup>. In this way they are able to wear professionally salon-styled hair, and thus think

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<sup>48</sup> The product costs I refer to here are the same I described above, that is, the actual cost to the salon, without mark-up, of the colouring product used on the client's hair. These product costs do not include the

about and participate in the practice of visiting the hair salon, but they do not see this practice as essential to their constitution of their personalized appearance. While I state that there is a difference in how they conceptualize their stylist from the other participants (especially for Felice), I would argue that the underlying principles in how they perceive their hair and their “look” in dialectical relation to their “real” self, is the same as for the other women.

Mildred, Estelle, Gwen, Carmen, and Desmonia all expressed feelings of trust in the work their stylist does. While each conceptualizes her relationship to her stylist slightly differently, they all feel a strong connection to their current stylist and express anxiety at the thought of having to find someone new. This strong connection is premised mainly on the work of the current stylist, which each participant describes as a sort of visual translation of her own individual personality into a unique hair style. All of the clients had recourse to one or two prior “bad” or disappointing experiences with other stylists before finding the one they are with now. They all express that it is very important, considering both the financial and emotional costs associated with hair, that their hairstylist create hairstyles that are expressive of the unique personality and intentions of the wearer. The ability to give clients unique yet fashionable styles is imperative to a stylist being “good”, and all of these clients stated that it is difficult to find a “good” stylist, although they felt that in going to a “good” salon, one would have a greater chance of doing so. While these women in effect “do” their own hair all of the time in their day-to-day practice of preparing themselves to go out in the world, when

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shampooing and conditioning or styling products used by the stylist on the client, since these costs are minute considering the volume of cleaning and styling products used in salons.

they talk about not being able to “do” their own hair, they refer specifically to the cuts and colours which the stylist does for them. Matilda and Felice simply take this idea one step further; they conceive that if they can style their hair on a day-to-day basis, that the cutting and dyeing is simply another component of this. The majority of the participants, however, felt uncomfortable about the idea of effecting (semi)permanent changes themselves on their hair in the form of cuts or colours (although they may have done so in the past with mixed or poor results). Participants did not really talk about how they styled their hair on a day-to-day basis, but all of them articulated that they wanted a cut that would look good without a lot of styling effort on their part.

I will conclude this chapter with a series of comments by the five participants who have come to know their current stylist through the practice of having their hair done at the hair salon. In considering these testimonies more closely, and in accordance with Carmen’s statement, “actually it’s Lydia that makes me comfortable in that salon space,” I return again to the statement I made in Chapter 3 that at the level of the body a theorization more akin to Miller’s dialectics is at play for purchasers of hair services, whereas in terms of the space and place of the hair salon, a phenomenological concern with perception might be envisioned as an important aspect of the experience. The perceptions highlighted by the participants in all three of the specific places in which this research was undertaken were essentially the same: they centered primarily on the visual transformation of the hair by a qualified, caring, knowledgeable professional who they felt comfortable with, both in exchanges of personal information and in the tactile closeness of her hands in their hair and on their faces and shoulders. While sound came

into play in terms of the blow-dryers, the music played in the salon space, and the voices of other people in the salon, the only comment I heard about these sounds were a reference to how loud and busy salons are, which partly adds to the allure of being in frequented, and therefore reputable places. The participants never mentioned the sensorial perception of smell in salons, not because salons do not go to great lengths to have pleasant smelling products to use on and sell to participants, but more because this aspect was not as important as the visual result of the changes the products could produce on the hair. In essence, visual perception is at the fore of experience in the hair salon, and while a few of the participants mentioned enjoying having someone “pamper” them, the more pertinent aspect was a sentiment of trust in relation to the stylist and the role she would play in helping “realize” the image that would most aptly portray their self. The perceptual experience of the hair salon, according to the manner in which these women described it, centered around two main but interrelated aspects: 1) the visual physical change in their hair which could result in feelings of empowerment and wellness, in achieving the embodied ideal described in Chapter 3, and 2) the relationship with the stylist; her assurances and suggestions, and her work to “really” know the client’s personality and be able to mold the client’s hair into a communicative representation of her unique personhood according to an astute understanding of current trends and fashion. To return to the statement about phenomenological perceptions in the salon space, I would argue that they differ quite vastly between consumers and stylists and that the consumers of hair services are not as aware of the space of the salon as I originally assumed. More prominently, I conclude, it is the people they are aware of: those present in the salon, those represented in the images that permeate the salon space, and those they

relate with on a day-to-day basis who often have much to say about the current ‘look’ these women are wearing. The care of women’s hair in Victoria today rests on a relationship that developed between women and their hair in eighteenth century France, and one that was brought over to British Columbia with the emergence of mass consumerism after WWI, namely, that the hair, in order to be properly styled according to the fashions of the day, requires the work of a paid professional. While some women may learn to cut and colour their own hair, as Matilda and Felice have done in the past, they do so in relation to the work of these paid professionals, and with conceptions that while they may be able to approximate the looks they want, they can not do so with great precision, either because of lack of professional products or professional training. Regardless of whether or not they “do” their hair themselves, they do so in relation to the hair that is being “done” by professional stylists.

*Mildred: It’s like you can choose your own clothing, and purchase it on your own, often you don’t even want to be bothered when you are. Like I don’t want anyone bothering me when I’m trying to buy something unless I really need their help. But when it comes to hair, you can’t do your own hair so you’re trusting it to someone else who is going to present you to the world, in a way, right. They are in control of that image. Whereas for the rest of it, you control what you wear and the way that you take care of yourself, whether you brush your teeth or not [laughs], those things are your choice. So I think that’s interesting, even more than this exchange, it’s not even an exchange, right, you’re paying someone money to go at something that you want to be yours, but really it’s in their hands. It’s the only thing that’s really in someone else’s hands when it comes to how you present yourself to the world, so yah, it should be important.... I think that I am always nervous in that environment for sure. And when I started to go to salons, even now I am still uncomfortable in that environment... I always find that interesting, what other people around me are doing, but I still feel like it’s private. And I guess that’s why I like going back to Lydia, because I’m comfortable with her. Because I would feel uncomfortable walking into any salon in Vancouver; I don’t know these people and they don’t know me, they don’t understand my personality, they wouldn’t understand what “Vintage Mildred” means, which is like my comfortable place in an uncomfortable environment. So I can talk with Lydia, well, she knows me, she knows what I will and won’t do with my hair and she understands me*

*Angelique: So you said you have your idea of what balance is like, is it hard for you having a stylist, do you feel like it is hard to negotiate that with somebody else?*

*Gwen: Hmm, it has been in the past, Lydia is like really good. She's really good, she's great. But sometimes, like, I mean, I guess a mohawk is pretty easy, like if I had a more complicated idea in my mind, like I think the important thing is having a good stylist whose an artist themselves, and really cares, right, instead of someone who doesn't know what they're doing and doesn't understand mohawks and doesn't understand me wanting, like "okay, so she's a pretty girl, but she wants a mohawk," so lets make it what she wants instead of something else, right.*

*Estelle: Another thing that I was thinking about was the connection to the hair stylist and how, like we talked about it right when we went in there about how it's attached to your identity, but it's funny because, well my little theory is that when you go into these trendy places that it's part of your artistic creation of yourself, right, so then when that person starts to know what you're doing, like where you're going with your own self and your identity, like Trina knows a lot about like my music and what kind of stuff I'm doing, so if I were to go to another hairstylist it would be like they don't know what to do because they don't know what I'm going through. Whereas she sort of knows where I'm at and what's happening, so it's part of that before/after thing, like if you don't know the before, how is the after going to be affected? So when you go to a new hairstylist it's kind of like starting all over again with the, "this is who I am, this is who I want to be, this is [trails off]" you know. Because I was going to go, I really needed a haircut when I was in Boise, really bad, and I was like, "I can't go in to someone else they don't know me, they don't know what I'm trying to do with myself." But I wouldn't say, like I don't have the best friend kind of relationship with her, like I think she's a really cool chick, I really think she's great and smart, but I don't connect with her on that level, like "I want to be best friends with this person," but I do talk about, like this last one I was telling her about the wedding I'm going to and how my friend has an eating disorder, you know, like I was talking about things like that and she was telling me about going camping and stuff, so we talk about other stuff but mostly it's kind of an artistic thing.*

*Desmonia: It's just like, it's a pampering thing, like going in and talking with Suzanne. Like I love chatting with Suzanne and just, I like to be noticed, like I think that I probably am pretty vain [smiles], and like I love it when people tell me they love my hair, and I like shocking people.*

*Angelique: What do you like about going to Suzanne?*

*Desmonia: Umm, she's really personable. We can talk about a lot of different things. Her laugh is great. And just the atmosphere there, like the women working there seem to really enjoy working with each other... and [Suzanne] just does such great work with colour, like that just seems to be really strong for her.*

*Angelique: Do you feel comfortable in that salon space?*

*Carmen: Oh yah, completely comfortable.*

*Angelique: And how did you start going to Lydia?*

*Carmen: Yah, well actually it's Lydia that makes me feel comfortable in that salon space though. I went there before I went to Lydia and I vowed never to go back again. Yah I had a really bad experience there the first time I went there. So the first time I went back was with Lydia for her job interview... Yah so, that was kind of, I don't know, it's like we took a risk together or something... I liked the haircut that she gave me and I liked her a lot so it was really easy to go back there.*

*Angelique: So do you feel like Lydia does what you want with your hair?*

*Carmen: Yah I do, yah, I think I'd like her to have more creative license, like she's chosen this hairstyle and she's chosen a few of the cuts, umm I think she can choose whatever she wants to do.*

*Carmen: Yah, I don't know, it's kind of funny, it's like, umm, I don't know [laughs], it's like going to the counselor or something like that [laughs]. Lydia knows your secrets, you know.*

## Conclusion

*Estelle: Oh and then when I was talking about the music thing being a way of validation and seeking attention and sort of making a spectacle of ourselves, hair is like that too, it's like a way of being like, "look I'm not like everybody else," you know. And it sounds really childish, but I think it really is that, I think it is a lot about that, like "look at me," you know "I stick out from everybody else," and it's actually quite funny. I don't know, I think it's hilarious, like it's a very childish thing in a lot of ways to do fun things with our hair because it's a way of calling attention to ourselves, which we all need, that's a human need I think is to feel validated, that you're alive and part of something. So I think it's a way of just exaggerating or speeding that process up, you know, making yourself stand out I guess... Forcing people to look at you, we sort of talked about that. Oh and then that some things we do are very subtle differences but they make such a difference in how we feel about ourselves, like hair-wise some things we do, like the highlight thing is so subtle, but it's not in our head, so that was what I got.*

In this thesis I have attempted to delineate the multiple forces at play for women between the ages of 20 and 30 in Victoria, BC, Canada, who purposefully use the hair styling services of a regular stylist to negotiate social anxieties and play with possibilities of identity through the medium of hair. I have shown, through an investigation of historical accounts of the practice of doing women's hair in commercialized settings, beginning in France in the eighteenth century, and then moving over to colonial British Columbia in the early twentieth century, that in Victoria, the styling of hair by a hair stylist in a hair salon is a widely shared cultural practice that contributes to the creation and maintenance of the socially appropriate gendered, sexed, raced, aged, and sexualized bodies of young white women. Through an engagement with theories of embodiment and consumerism in Chapter Three, these bodies were revealed to be in constant negotiation through dialectic processes of objectification: forever at play between embodied perceptual fields and problematically-embodied conceptual selves.

Through a methodological approach with CPAS delineated in Chapter two, which situated: 1) the practice of the hair salon appointment as a cultural event, 2) the client of the appointment as the primary performer in this event, and 3) the ethnographer as one of the audience members, I was able to gather spatially informed data which facilitated the arguments about the space and place of the hair salon in Chapter four.

In line with the emergent normativity of “flexible” bodies delineated by Emily Martin a decade and a half ago, I suggested that the particular places these bodies inhabit are also experienced as flexible. In order to give further thought to the concept of flexibility in regards to *the* hair salon, I took up Gupta and Ferguson’s approach of “rethinking difference *through* connection” (1997: 33), to consider each particular salon within the wider context of *the* hair salon. Through this approach I was able to suggest that although the practice of visiting the hair salon in Victoria is a widely shared cultural practice, that 1) who can visit which salon, 2) where each salon is located, 3) which stylists work there, and 4) what kinds of visual objects permeate the space, are important factors in considering the hierarchical connections between these places. Furthermore, I articulated the differences between clients who purchase hair services and those who receive them without pay because of social connections, and suggested that for those who pay, the service of the stylist is understood as essential in their search for “great hair,” while for the two women who didn’t pay, these services were optional both because they felt they could render close approximations themselves and because they used the services of a stylist *only* because they could receive them for free. In this manner the clients’ relationships to their stylist emerged in two different lights: the first based on

strong feelings of trust, connection, and a belief by each client that the stylist “really” knows her and is therefore able to give her fashionably unique styles suited specifically to her total being. This being includes the outward configuration of features that make up the surface of her body and the “real” self that lies beneath, the true personality of the person. In tacitly understanding each client’s desires for her “self,” it is believed that a “good” stylist will be able to articulate a connection between the physical features and the psychic intentions and therefore aid in the client’s desire to successfully achieve the dialectical merging of the “real” self with the experiential self, at least momentarily. For the two women who had prior intimate connections to their stylist outside of the context of the stylist-client relationship, this process was experienced slightly differently, and with a little less conviction. Since both of these women knew their stylist in another relation and prioritized this relationship, as a long-time friend in one case and a sister in the other case, and since they would not “pay so much money” to have their hair done because they each articulated a belief that they could do it themselves, it was not as easy to make claims about the stylist-client relationship, since this was not the relationship that was prioritized between them. Simultaneously, it was not as easy to make claims about the “purchase of hair services,” for these two women although, in the end, I believe that similar forces of objectification were at play, regardless of whether or not money actually exchanged hands between the stylist and the client, particularly because both of these women articulated similar experiences to the other women in terms of knowing themselves and displaying their personalities through their hair. I return briefly to one of Mildred’s comments, in the close of Chapter 4:

*It’s like you can choose your own clothing, and purchase it on your own, often you don’t even want to be bothered when you are. Like I don’t want anyone*

*bothering me when I'm trying to buy something unless I really need their help. But when it comes to hair, you can't do your own hair so you're trusting it to someone else who is going to present you to the world, in a way, right. They are in control of that image.*

I wish to draw two main points from this statement: the first is that the hair is conceptualized differently than other parts of the body, which you can dress yourself, and the second relates to the fact that while here Mildred says that you cannot “do” your own hair, that in fact women “do” their own hair all the time, much more frequently than they have it done by their stylist. Each participant described her morning routine to me, a large part of which focused on the “doing” of her own hair. It was specifically when a participant felt that she could no longer “do” her hair well that she decided it was time to go into the stylist. Thus what emerges is a relation to hair that is premised on the work of a paid professional to articulate the “real” self when that self disappears behind locks that will no longer respond positively to the intentions of the woman who wears them. In this way hair is always at the forefront of the articulation of the body according to current trends in fashion. Because it is attached to the body, women feel that although it may be styled according to the fashions of the day, it can be imbued with the power to visually communicate a wide array of the embodied persons’ desires, intentions and unique aspects of her personality. Unlike clothing, it cannot be taken off, and while it may be “done” by someone else, it is made by them, it is a part of the wearer’s body, and in this way serves as an interface for bodily care, self expression, and social relationships; hair, for these women, is imbued with meaningfulness both personally and publicly in several aspects of their being: gender, sexuality, age, race, and indeed the unique attributes of selfhood which each individual in the society is seen to possess. The hair of the head is a

way of attempting to negotiate the interstitial space between my“self” as imagined ideal and myself as interactive field.

Future work in this area would benefit from having a wider array of participants and a wider array of salons. Using salons as a recruitment base, rather than approaching clients directly would increase the diversity of participants and could provide more insights in how age, gender, and race, specifically, are differentially experienced in these spaces. While having a group of participants that were similar in certain ways allowed for generalizations that I might not have been able to make otherwise, including the voices of older women, women who do not identify as white, and men who make use of a regular stylist could lead to more in-depth understandings of how these processes are experienced differently by different groups of people, and would address some of the limitations of the findings discussed in the introduction. The recent emergence of images in the media of men who are well-coifed and fashionable would be interesting to look at in relation to the use of hair services by men. While there have been studies done on African American women (Majors 2001, 2004) and their use of hair salons in negotiating the racialized beauty ideals of young white women, it would be interesting to see how other women and men in Victoria, especially Asian men and women, experience and relate to their hair, especially since in the last few years a few Asian hair salons have opened up in downtown Victoria.

Further research would also warrant spending more time in each individual salon and including stylists in the analysis, especially in regards to the data discussed in

Chapter 4 regarding the space and place of the hair salon. Following Shumka's (2006) findings regarding the emotional labour of stylists in hair salons, an approach that considers embodiment and perception in the salon space should consider further how stylists embody their labour, in relation to how consumers embody their consumption.

In conclusion, I return to two questions that I posed in the introductory chapter to this thesis, namely: 1) are these women's remarkable hairstyles really unique, or are they an embodied expression, in which these women are caught unaware, of an increasingly commodified mode of being, wherein bodies are compartmentalized in an ongoing search for selfhood that somehow always eludes the woman who wears it? 2) Or are these women somehow more aware of their own objectification in a patriarchal system, which decries beauty as the woman's main concern, specifically *because* they invert normative expressions of femininity through the *use* of the tools available to them to do so? I hope that the testimonies of the women that dot this theoretical work like amusingly cut pieces upon a crudely stitched patchwork quilt reveal that there are no simple answers to these questions, that indeed the most straightforward responses are those given by the participants. As Estelle states above, hair is both "*a way of validation and seeking attention and sort of making a spectacle of ourselves*" and "*that some things we do are very subtle differences but they make such a difference in how we feel about ourselves, like hair-wise some things we do, like the highlight thing is so subtle, but it's not in our head.*" And, as Gwen astutely declares "*you know, like there's people who are trying to be creative with their hair, there's people who don't give a shit, there's people who care but it just looks horrible [laughs] you know what I mean. Right, like it's funny, I watch*

*people's clothes and makeover TV is always on, always on, so it's the same thing."*

However, in considering the political economy of the greater project of capitalist selfhood, it is important to remain cognizant within these individual expressions, of the forces that shape them and to remain aware of processes that privilege certain subjectivities over others. Why, we might ask, must anxiety always be at play in the search for selfhood? Why must the embodiment of femininity be experienced as a schism of being – one fraught with the inadequacies of the particularities of each female's form? How can we, as embodied beings find a 'home' in this landscape of inhabitance, a home where the practice of being moves beyond an array of choices for the self – so that the schisms of recognition grow more sparse and the moments of perceptual recognition of the self more present?

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