

A New Materialist inquiry of body work encounters

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Abstract

The literature on body work has mainly focused on workers' experiences in the workplace. As such, there is a lack of attention to studying how body work unfolds through worker-client interactions. In this context, my research explores lived experiences of worker-client bodily interactions during body work service encounters. I argue that studying these interactions is crucial because the sensory experiences generated through different bodily interactions could determine how body work unfolds and are central to the success of service encounters. I followed an affective ethnography—a qualitative, embodied research approach—to study bodily interactions. Using (auto)ethnography, observations, photographs, video recordings, interviews with workers and clients, and document reviews, I produced data about worker-client lived experiences during service encounters across five research sites. Thematic and diffractive analysis methods helped me delve deeply into the data and generate themes.

My analysis exemplified how a web of sensory interrelationships among different bodies contributes to the unfolding of body work. Findings uncover the subtleties of bodily interactions in service encounters, as multiple bodies co-exist, interrelate, are interdependent, and are affective. Although touch is often considered decisive, my findings show that other sensory cues also matter in body work. Further, body work involves the active participation of workers, clients, and more-than-human bodies. These bodies affect each other during encounters. Thus, I conceptualise body work as a co-creation—a collective creation of multiple affective humans and more-than-human bodies. My thesis contributes to the field by advancing the current understanding of what body work involves and who actively participates in it. It also advances knowledge on power in body work, as I claim that power is something materialised through sensory experiences. Thus, power is relational and diffused, unlike current literature, which maintains power as static, possessive, and one-directional. My thesis, therefore, deepens our understanding of the bodies we live and work with during service encounters and encourages us to reflect on how our bodily interactions can make things happen.

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I dedicate this work to the diverse range of body workers, my family’s eldest and youngest helpers: my parents, our son, and my Pooh Bear, Pathum.

Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Vasana Kaushalya
30 September 2024

Chapter 1: Introduction

The opening verse - 'Thesis' seeds'

It was a tiresome day at my office
A much-needed break
got me into Shrina's Salon

I am lying down on the salon bed,
on the soft black waterproof cover.
The bed comforts me.

Shrina adjusts how I keep my hands on the bed:
Her fingertips touch my face.
She cleans my face, and
places two wet sponges on my eyelids;
which, within a few seconds, cool and relax my eyes.

She applies a cream,
and rubs my face, and I sense her touch.
The cotton pad removed the application.
Shrina sets my face for steaming:
the heat makes me a bit uncomfortable;
thus, Shrina adjusts the distance.
She takes the blackheads out:
The stainless-steel blackhead remover touches my cheeks.

Here comes a fruit facial kit:
Shrina makes layers on my face and does the masking.
I enjoy the smell of it.
I sense the touch of her soft fingertips,
'she senses my facial skin', I suppose.
Shrina leaves the face pack on for some time.
I hear a conversation streaming on the TV
I think of my work schedule in the evening at home and tomorrow's work.

Suddenly, I am awakened.
'You had a good nap, I guess,' Shrina says.
'Sorry to interrupt you, but it is time to cleanse,' she continues.
Shrina removes the face pack: slowly, gently, and softly, and
applies another cream on my face:
It covers my cheeks, chin and forehead (and a little bit of my ears).
Her fingertips move rhythmically for five to six minutes.
She then cleans up the pack slowly, gently, and softly.

Her soft fingertips then give my cheeks a massage:
they go round and round;
around my eyes
on my forehead.
I sense her soft fingertips,
She 'senses my facial skin', I suppose.
She finishes the work on my face.
Applying a moisturizer will do that.

She then starts threading my eyebrows:
My two hands support her
To keep the skin around my eyebrow stretched a bit.
Oh! My eyebrows began contracting.
"Don't!", she says.
But they continue contracting, from time to time.

Shrina changes her posture,
adjusting my chair, making her body closer to me,
and asking me to adjust my two hands and fingers.
"Well, my eyebrows troubled you, didn't they?", I ask.

"That's okay", she says, with a smile on her face.
"I get all types:
'simple to hard', 'supportive and difficult bodies to work on", she replies.

"So, how about mine? I ask.
"Well, no, it was not a problem at all", she says.
But I ponder a while:
"Did I really support her?"

**Source: Author – a reflection from my diary record of an appointment at Shrina's salon
(December 2016).**

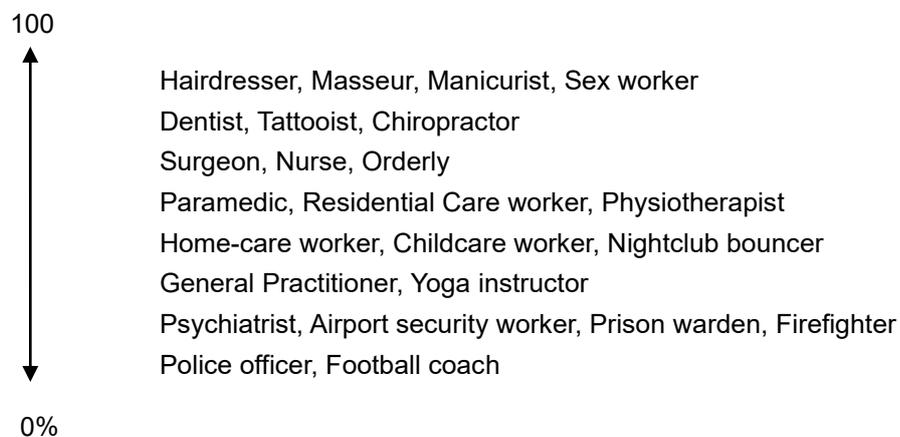
My thesis is about worker-client bodily interactions during body work encounters. My personal experiences at Shrina's salon, one of which is given in the opening lyric, and my subsequent pondering, planted the seeds for my research project. I started wondering how our—mine and Shrina's—physical bodily contact and sensory experiences shape our interactions and, therefore, shape body work encounters, like those taking place in beauty salons. Along with such thinking, my thesis aims to address two questions. The following sections are structured around these questions.

Bringing the senses into body work

Body workers such as Shrina, who work on others' bodies, play an indispensable role in women's and men's daily lives. Their work may include various aspects, such as caring, curing, adorning, pleasing, and disciplining the bodies (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen et al., 2013; Wolkowitz, 2002). As many scholars describe, co-presence, touch, and proximity are fundamental requirements in body work (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen et al., 2013; Cohen, 2011; Wolkowitz, 2002;2006). However, the extent of touch and proximity can differ based on various factors, such as body work occupation, gender, social status, and seniority of workers, as well as cultures (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen, 2011). In addition, how a worker (the one who touches a client's body) and the client (the body being touched) individually define and alter the social meaning of touch will shape the body work in terms of how the work is performed, who performs the work, and the value assigned to it (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018 Cohen, 2011; Anderson, 2000). So, even though I experienced close, extensive touch in receiving the service at Shrina's salon, the amount and how the touching is done varies among different body work occupations or types.

A range of occupations, from sex workers to health care workers, police officers, and sales assistants, can be classified as body work (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Wolkowitz, 2006). Some of these jobs involve almost constant and extensive touch, for example, the work listed at the top of Figure 1.1, p. 17. In contrast, those listed at the base of Figure 1.1 involve relatively limited touch.

Figure 1.1: Touch involved in different body work occupations



Source: Adapted from Cohen, 2011, p. 210.

The core labour of salon workers, like Shrina, aims to beautify and adorn the clients' bodies through aesthetic services such as makeup artistry and hair styling. It also focuses on transforming the body via manicures, pedicures, facials and skin treatments. Thus, salon workers need almost constant physical contact with their clients. In comparison, the level of touch involved in football coaching, psychiatry and yoga is lower than that of salon work. For example, football coaching often involves talking, gesturing, and blowing a whistle from a distance.

My experiences at Shrina's salon and this basic understanding of body work made me think more about the different occupations involving body work in our lives, such as dental care, healthcare and childcare, and sports coaching. It drove me to consider the bodily interactions and sensory experiences we encounter as clients in various body work settings. It then helped me to set out my first research question, which aims at observing worker-client bodily interactions in service encounters, while paying attention to the possible differences in the extent of touch. Accordingly, I arranged my first research question as follows.

Research question 1

How do worker-client bodily interactions occur in different body work service encounters, particularly considering the varying extent of touch involved in each encounter?

It is vital to study worker-client bodily interactions at service encounters since it is through these bodily interactions, such as the use of touch in salon work, that the service encounter unfolds.

A body work encounter has been identified as a dyadic relationship between workers and clients (Sanders, Cohen and Hardy, 2013; Gimlin, 2002), in which workers serve as the vehicle for performing the work (Kang, 2010), while clients' bodies are treated as the immediate sites of labour, or object upon which services are performed (Cohen, 2011; Twigg et al., 2011; Twigg, 2000). Body work entails different amounts of physical labour. Although one could argue that all work involves a mix of physical, mental, and emotional capacities to various degrees, the physical element of body work is more overt (Murphy and O'Meara, 2022; Brook, 2009). Moreover, co-presence, touch and physical closeness make clients and workers experience a distinct relationship in body work. For example, we generally do not allow others to access us with such physical proximity and touch us, except for our mothers, partners and children. Nevertheless,

as in my opening verse, it shows that Shrina is given implicit permission to touch my face extensively to provide the service while keeping a high level of body proximity. Furthermore, the lived experiences of workers and clients are formed and shaped through bodily interactions. These interactions could lead to immediate but different sensory experiences and generate multiple feelings for clients and workers. Thus, the interactions of bodies and sensory experiences are indispensable in body work. In other words, I appreciate that body work does not merely involve cognitive interactions, as widely studied in body work literature, but more expansively involves bodily interactions between workers and clients. In my view, bodily interactions largely determine how body work unfolds in a service encounter. Moreover, such interactions define how workers and clients feel about the service they receive or deliver, and their perception of whether the service encounter is successful. In addition, looking into how body work unfolds in service encounters will also facilitate our comprehension of better ways of organising such work.

In exploring service interactions, we must pay attention to the experiences of both clients and workers. For example, in terms of touch, we need to appreciate that it is reversible, i.e., in body work, in one way, the client feels the touch of the worker; and the worker, in the other way, feels the client's skin. This is mostly the same with other sensory cues involved in salon work, such as the smell of the bodies, sight, and auditory impressions. Thus, body work has the ability to generate multiple feelings—for example, pleasantness, unpleasantness, memories and hopes—not only for clients but also for workers. As expressed in my opening lyric, I sensed being touched and felt the softness of Shrina's fingertips; and as a worker, what would Shrina have felt about touching mine or her client's face? And how and what would her body have sensed and felt about my bodily smell, for example, my sweat, my voice tone? How would such sensing and feeling shape her interactions with my body? Shrina told me that she works on simple, complex, supportive, and difficult faces or clients' bodies. This implies how she defines the client's body or her site of labour from what she felt on working on them, generated by seeing the skin as oily or as uncleaned, by touching the skin as oily or rough, or sensing the smell of sweat or body odour. So, how clients and workers feel the touch and other sensory experiences in the interactions appear critical in how bodies act, react, and shape the overall service. Clients and workers may feel the success of body work and the service encounter through bodily interactions. As such, the sensory experiences could have the capacity to influence their decisions on continuation or setting future encounters with a specific worker or client. Moreover, through studying lived experiences of interactions, workers and clients can determine

if and how they could organise future interactions with each other, aiming for more fruitful service encounters. Thus, exploring body work interactions and how bodies get entangled and act and react in their interactions is worth investigating, by gaining access to explore the lived experiences of both workers and clients.

Despite its importance, I was surprised to find scant attempts in the literature to study worker-client bodily interactions and sensory experiences. While there is an occasional emphasis on the importance of studying the (embodied) relations between workers and clients (For example, Payne, Korczynski and Cluley, 2017; Cohen et al., 2013; Wolkowitz, 2002; Eayrs, 1993), the researchers have mainly focused on the body workers' experience at service encounters. For instance, researchers have often investigated workers' understanding of their body image, emotional and aesthetic labour (e.g., Witz, Warhurst and Nickson, 2003; Kang, 2003; Sharma and Black, 2001; Twigg, 2000), working conditions and workers' experience related to tainted dimensions in body work (e.g., Ashforth and Kreiner, 2014; McMurray and Ward, 2014; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) and work identity and work-based social identity-related aspects and role social categories in body work. (e.g., Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Shortt, 2013; Kang, 2010; Simpson, 2009; Gimlin 1996). Meanwhile, some researchers have explored workers' embodied experience with their workmates and workplace objects (e.g., Montgomery et al., 2024; Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007; Gimlin, 1996; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995). Efforts are rarely made to explore bodily relations between workers and clients. As such, the current studies fail to explain how the work unfolds in encounters, and the role of workers' or clients' bodies in service interactions and related experiences. So, notwithstanding the current attention to diverse and important facets in workers' lives related to body work, I argue it is essential to investigate how bodily interactions occur in body work, considering different degrees of touch that could be included in various types of body work.

Bringing multiple bodies into body work

Although current literature defines a body work encounter as a dyadic relationship (Sanders et al., 2013; Gimlin, 2002) of humans, clients and workers, it is my observation that it is not only human bodies that get involved in body work encounters, but also more-than-human bodies and materialities. Borrowing thinking from the New Materialist approach, my use of the term more-than-human refers to things or bodies beyond the human, or to larger ensembles that include the human (Noorani and Brigstocke, 2018). So, more-than-human could consist of, but not be limited to, animals, natural environmental things such as air, rain, temperature, things made by

men and women, like equipment and buildings, and forces like socio-economic and political forces affecting the body worker and their client in each interaction.

I believe bodies—human and more-than-human bodies—are not separate elements or mere backgrounds in our interactions with each other. Firstly, how I grew up in relationship to other bodies in my day-to-day life nourished this line of thinking and beliefs. In particular, I have looked at ecology as a web of relations from childhood. My parents taught me about co-existence with ecological elements in my younger days. In addition, the content of the famous Chief Seattle's letter—despite the critical considerations offered by some scholars (for example, *The Myth of Chief Seattle* by Abruzzi in 2000)—influenced me to develop a sense of the co-existence of all life within me, and such sensing and mindful thinking helped shape my behaviour.

One of our secondary schools' Sinhala Language textbooks included a Sinhala translation of Chief Seattle's letter. A sentence in this letter, "Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it", strongly influenced my viewpoint on ecology. The paragraph in which the sentence was included further mentioned: "This we know: the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself". Soon, such thoughts became instrumental in how I view the ecological issues we encounter in the name of climate change or environmental problems, as well as my life practices.

I believe that at any given moment, our bodies are interconnected with some other bodies, and we live amidst subtle and complex interdependencies. When my body breathes, it takes in and exhales air. It inhales and absorbs many aspects of its surroundings. So, I depend on my surroundings for what and how I breathe in and out. If we think of the sweat I produce, it is connected with and produced through the material construction of my body, where I stand, sit, or walk, the level of humidity, and the materialities. Thus, thinking of corporeal interconnectedness and interdependence has made me not take more-than-human bodies for granted.

Secondly, my involvement in tutoring and seminars on organisational culture in my early academic life led me to read about artefacts, symbolic representation and aesthetic values. My reading of Strati (1992) paved the way for me to think of the meaning of objects beyond their basic affordances and appreciate the aesthetic, symbolic, and political involvements of objects. Later, my reading of theories, such as

Non-representational Theory and New Materialism, shaped how I view things or objects made by men and women that we encounter or use in our daily life. We might label these materials or bodies differently, for example, 'things', 'objects', 'artefacts', 'goods', 'commodities' and 'actants' (Woodward, 2007). However, this labelling mainly attempts to identify what these are, or what they are made of. In other words, such labelling rarely offers insight or invites us to think about what they do in our lives, and what happens when we interact. For example, we mediate, experience, and enact our lives through our bodies. In this way, our bodies connect us to the world. Therefore, this again establishes that my body does not exist on its own. Instead, it is always connected to the world and its environment.

Based on these views, I will build the second research question that my research addresses. Linking back to the opening lyric, in my experience in the case of a facial treatment and eyebrow threading, I sensed being touched by a hair-removing thread, the stainless-steel blackhead remover, Shrina's physical efforts in handling the tools, the cooling sponges, the rubber sheet of the facial bed, cotton towel placed and chair paddings during my service receipt. This bodily touch and being touched occurred through humans and other bodies. Moreover, both Shrina and I could sense the touch and smell of the skin care products, such as facial creams and gels, toners, and sweat of the bodies. We could hear the music and TV programmes as they were aired nearby, and sense the natural air or air conditioning within the salon. So, the sensory experiences generated through such bodily interactions could also make clients and workers act and react or behave in a particular way at an encounter, leading to deciding how work evolves and its outcomes. For example, my fatigue, the evening atmosphere, the postures that my body assumed during the facial, and the touch and energy flows of Shrina and how I, as a client, sensed the bodies in the salon made me sleep for a while during the service encounter. Paying attention to these facets in interactions, I structure my second research question in the following way.

Research question 2

How do multiple bodies¹ participate in worker-client interactions in body work?

Studying the interrelationships of multiple bodies and materialities in encounters is vital because, through such knowledge, we can understand how workers and clients engage with the materialities and how their interaction nurtures (or hinders) service

¹ My use of 'bodies' hereafter denotes both human and more-than-human bodies.

interactions. Such a study will inform a better understanding of how things happen or how events unfold in body work. It will then offer insights into how workers and clients need to treat and take care of different human and more-than-human bodies that inhabit a service encounter.

Outline of research methodology

As set out in my first research question, my study focuses on worker-client interactions in different types of body work encounters. According to the literature, types of body work mainly vary depending on the level of touch (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen, 2011; Wolkowitz, 2002;2006). Salon work or beauty care work involves extensive touch. So, together with salons, I selected yoga, which, per Cohen's (2011) classification, involves less touch work (see Figure 1.1, p.18). Here, I also considered accessibility to the sites and participants as a critical criterion, as accessibility became one of the critical factors that I predicted during my fieldwork due to the unexpected socio-economic and political crisis in Sri Lanka in 2022.

I followed a qualitative approach to explore lived experiences of bodily interactions because these interactions should be investigated as a phenomenon human beings live and experience through becoming-with. I conducted my fieldwork using affective ethnography (Gherardi, 2019)—an embodied research approach (Thanem and Knights, 2019). My fieldwork period started in February 2022 and ended in January 2023, encompassing three salons and two yoga studios. I used snowball and purposive sampling to select my research sites and participants—body workers and clients. The essential data sources of my study included worker-client interactions in salon appointments, physical and online yoga sessions, myself as a client and observer, both clients and workers, physical settings of encounters, official websites and social media platforms, and relevant documents of the selected organisations.

I used my body as a site and 'point of contact' in producing data (Gherardi, 2019; Bispo and Gherardi, 2019). I produced autoethnographic accounts as a client of these sites, including my sensory experiences within interactions in service encounters and subsequent behaviours. I also observed worker-client interactions in in-person and online service encounters. The online observations, however, were not in my initial plan but were an outcome of our—mine, the research site owners' and my participants'—entanglements with socio-political and economic forces and their affective capacities, which I will explain in chapter 3 in detail. During my observations, I maintained a field diary and produced photographs and video recordings of the

research sites, service encounters and worker-client interactions. Moreover, I did in-person and online interviews with both clients and workers doing interviews. I considered how interview encounters are shaped by bodily practices, actions and gestures, and facial expressions and are affected by physical dimensions such as proximity and distance. In addition, I reviewed relevant physical and digital documents of the research sites, as they included data pertinent to my study, for example, written and visual accounts of clients' experiences at service encounters and reviews. In analysing and interpreting data (Bispo and Gherardi, 2019), I used the thematic analysis (textual and visual) method (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2012; 2019; 2020). I also incorporated some elements of diffractive analysis (Hickey-Moody, Palmer, and Sayers, 2016; Mazzei, 2014; St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014;) via a reading of data with theoretical concepts I was already familiar with, my own experiences, memories, and my emotional reactions.

I adhered to research ethics throughout my PhD research journey, such as avoiding plagiarism, and acknowledging the authors properly, as well as fieldwork research ethics, such as maintaining anonymity, confidentiality, and due data protection. I encountered ethical dilemmas as my project evolved in relation to my entanglements in research settings and ethnographic immersion, data analysis, and presenting data. In such situations, with the direction of my supervisors and the use of situational approaches in facing dilemmas, I managed to maintain ethical and moral behaviour. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the elements of my research process; planning, fieldwork, analysing and writing are co-produced by my entanglement with multiple bodies.

Thesis organisation

My thesis addresses how worker-client bodily interactions occur in body work service encounters; and how multiple bodies participate in these interactions. This chapter presented how I set up the two research questions, while discussing their significance. It also briefly explained my methodological choices in addressing my research questions. A literature review follows this chapter. In my review, I first pay attention to encounters. I then review how existing studies have established knowledge of body work, and show that the current body work scholarship is primarily centred around workers' experiences. The scholars have not studied how the work occurs in encounters, and they have explicitly relegated the client and other bodies to the background. In light of the gaps in the existing literature, I argue the importance of understanding how work unfolds through bodily interactions in encounters, with

appropriate justifications. I also highlight that paying attention to workers, clients, and more-than-human bodies in service interactions is crucial in such a study.

Chapter 3 presents my choices about the research methodology and the rationale behind such decisions. It first offers how my ontological and epistemological stance was informed by New Materialism and the methodological choices I made in exploring embodied interactions in body work encounters. The chapter then presents the research design, and how I conduct my fieldwork using an affective research style—a qualitative embodied research approach. Then, it introduces the context in which I conducted the research, emphasising how my study, more specifically the fieldwork, evolved with the entanglement of human and more-than-human bodies, with the intensities of post-COVID-19 and crisis 2022 in my home country, Sri Lanka. After that, I provide a detailed explanation of the sources of my data production and the techniques I used for producing data. Then, it explains my use of data analysis methods in analysing and interpreting data and the outcomes of my data analysis. Finally, I discuss research ethics and my reflections on my becoming-with this thesis.

In chapter 4, I invite readers to walk with me in my research sites: two yoga studios and three salons, which I named Divine Yoga, Serene Yoga, Urban Escape, Scissors N Razors, and Pinky Grace. I explain the location, the owners, workers and clientele of the sites, and how things are arranged in the service encounters. I describe these with the support of my autoethnographic accounts, observations, photographs and video stills, and data produced from interviews with site owners. I expect this chapter will enable readers to imagine the body work settings I chose for my study and get actively connected with the sensory experiences I have described.

Next, in chapter 5, I present the data analysis and findings of my study. My analysis shows how bodily interactions occur through sensory interactions with multiple bodies during encounters. I present my analysis and findings under four sub-sections: worker-client interactions, client-client interactions, client-more-than-human interactions, and worker-client-more-than-human interactions. These sub-sections present how bodies are interconnected and interdependent within interactions. Also, the sections demonstrate how the flows of affect created through bodily interactions enable or restrain the bodies' capacity to desire what bodies do or can do in body work service encounters.

In chapter 6, I develop my thesis that body work is a co-creation of multiple affective bodies. I discuss my findings along with the implications. At the same time, I will relate my discussion to the existing literature. In so doing, I present how my thesis contributes to the field in two ways. Current literature maintains that body work involves a dyadic relationship where workers work on clients' bodies—the passive objects of labour. My thesis claims that body work is collective work, where workers, clients and a range of more-than-human bodies actively participate during encounters. These bodies affect each other in what they do and configure how body work takes place. It also invites us to identify that service encounters are emergent and unpredictable, showing that it is challenging to conduct organised encounters. Thus, my conceptualisation extends the prevalent understanding of body work and provides an inclusive definition of the work. Furthermore, my thesis offers a fresh perspective on power in body work. While the current body work literature often views power from a 'power-over' perspective, implying it as static, possessive, and one-directional, my thesis proposes a more nuanced understanding. I present power in body work as relational, diffused, and something that is materialised through sensory experiences. It again brings to light what bodies can do in interactions.

Chapter 7 brings my project to a close. It first gives a short account of the overall study, including my research questions and the methodology. Then, it outlines the key findings and explains how the findings address my two research questions. Following that, I present a brief account of how my research advances current knowledge of body work. The reflections on my thesis helped me identify limitations and suggest directions for future research. Accordingly, the chapter includes a section on these limitations and future research paths, concluding with a postscript.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

I start this review by focusing on how encounters are identified in the literature. Encounters are widely understood as a dyadic interaction of opposite parties. Some argue that encounters are organised meetings of historically coded or pre-existing social categories. However, adopting the relational view, I discuss how encounters become unpredictable. I talk about how encounters make differences through interactions and their transformative capacities. I then start reviewing the literature on body work. First, I discuss how body work is currently being conceptualised, while providing an idea of how the term is being used interchangeably in the literature. I exemplify the essential dimensions that current studies offer in deciding what work comes under the term body work. Then, I discuss how social and cultural meanings of touch and social categorisations like gender, race, sexual stereotyping, class, and professional status play an influential role in organising the context in which body work is performed.

Based on my review, I claim that body work literature is mainly centred around workers' experiences at work. Most of these studies highlight the importance of the context within which service encounters take place. There is a noticeable lack of studies about how the work unfolds, the sensory experiences at work and the role of the workers' and clients' bodies in service interactions. Against this background, I present the possible reasons for such a lack of research. Although more-than-human bodies inhabit encounters, the researchers have neglected the possible worker-client interactions with these bodies and related sensory experiences in service encounters. This is not to say there has been no research on objects or other non-human bodies in literature. Some scholars have looked into the aesthetic and cultural experiences of objects and spatial aspects of service encounters and defined objects as symbols of culture, identity, or power. In other words, the co-existence and possible contributions of more-than-human bodies in bodily interactions have not been incorporated within the existing body work research agenda. Thus, by reviewing the work of Bennett, Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, I claim it is essential to acknowledge the presence of multiple bodies in an encounter, and investigate what they do in their bodily interactions as the work unfolds in service encounters.

Encounters

An encounter is typically defined as a meeting. It can take physical or online forms: involving face-to-face or eye-to-eye, a visual economy of recognition, or 'skin-to-skin' involving an economy of touch (Ahmed, 2000; 2004). The etymology of the term 'encounter' links with French, and the meaning of encounter as a noun refers to "a meeting face to face; a meeting (of adversaries or opposing forces) in conflict; hence, a battle, skirmish, duel, etc." (*Online Oxford English dictionary*, 2024) or a "particular kind of meeting or experience with another person or a meeting between hostile factions or persons: a sudden often violent clash" (*Online Merriam-Webster dictionary*, 2024). These definitions indicate that the encounter involves a dyadic interaction between opposite parties. Body work literature also shows that scholars consider service encounters a dyadic relationship between workers and clients (Sanders et al., 2013; Gimlin, 2002), where clients and workers have distinct objectives within this commercialised work in their market economy. Examples of such objectives may include receipt of the "best" possible service, improving body image or health from a client's side and rendering the best service, or achieving profit-generating encounters from the workers' or employers' side.

In one way, an encounter can be seen as 'organised'; in another, it is viewed as 'unpredictable' (Bygnes and Strømsø, 2022; Wilson, 2017, 2020; Bennett, 2001). Encounters can be treated as 'organised' when they evolve as scripted events tied to the particular social arena within which the encounters are associated. Encounters are thus shaped in important ways by the existing norms, discourses, roles and hierarchies that govern these arenas (Bygnes and Stromso, 2022; Christiansen, Galal and Hvenegaard-Lassen, 2017; Wilson, 2017). Contrary to this view, some scholars argue that encounters are not static and cannot be organised. Thus, they are unpredictable. According to Ahmed (2000), encounters continually reshape our identities as subjects intersect and influence one another. They can reinforce prejudices and stereotypes, but they also hold the potential to challenge these preconceptions and create opportunities for change and transformation (Leitner, 2012). Therefore, encounters are not predictable; they are premised on the unknown, and prevent us from fully controlling the encounter or predicting its outcome (Wilson, 2017, p. 49). So, these arguments suggest that although the etymology of encounter demonstrates that they are any form of meeting, contact or interaction of historically coded opposites, they are not simply about meeting differences.

Encounters are more than a meeting of historically coded or pre-existent categories of social identity, like race, ethnicity, gender and colonial taxonomies (Ahmed, 2000). Instead, an encounter is a distinctive event of relations where differences are created or discovered during interactions (Wilson, 2017). Thus, we are constituted in and by our encounters with others (Haraway, 2008). As encounters are tied in with unpredictability, they also have transformative potential (Wilson, 2017; Bennett, 2001). Wilson and Darling (2016, p.11) mention that encounters “are points of unanticipated exposure to difference situated within personal and collective histories as well as imagined [or expected] future”. Encounters, therefore, involve formations of bodies, spaces, and time and embodied interactions that involve mood, sensing, and feelings (Wilson, 2017). This invites us to think of the experiences of the interactions within encounters, sensory experiences, and feelings.

An encounter involves two features: surprise (and conflicts) (Ahmed, 2000) and time-space (Wilson, 2017; Lefebvre, 1991; Merleau-Ponty, 1968). It is about learning to be open to the unknown and that which can never be known, about learning to be affected by the surprise of encounters with others (Ahmed, 2014). Encounters can be mundane. Also, encounters can involve surprise and conflicts due to their inevitable content of similarities and differences, and processes of inclusion and exclusion that constitute the boundaries of bodies or communities. These conflicts and differences can shape our understanding of the lived experience of power and how it registers in momentary and fragmentary ways (Wilson, 2017). Furthermore, encounters are temporal and spatial because they involve at least two subjects approaching each other (Lefebvre, 1991; Wilson, 2017). For example, Lefebvre (1991) declares that “the form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity” (p.101). Thus, each encounter involves connectedness between the subjects. Moreover, through repetition over time, encounters change the boundaries of familiarity. In this way, the understanding of encounters links with Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of the social body, a body opening up and intertwining with the world (other bodies and materialities).

Thus, encounters are not only about the coming together of different bodies, but are also about making differences through the interactions. Identifying encounters in this way may lead one to think of multiple avenues for investigations. For example, Wilson (2017) proposes that future researchers pay attention to how encounters are sensed and says such studies can take debates about the meaning of encounters in new directions. The above review, done with an emphasis on the relational view of encounters and the discussion on unpredictability, the ability to make differences, and,

more notably, the transformative capacity, provided me with a rich platform to inquire about interactions in body work encounters.

My review of encounters in this section helped me expand my knowledge, and suggested that I look at how encounters get formed and evolve, in general, and their social space. I find it useful for my research, as I aim to study bodily interactions and sensory experiences of social space in body work encounters and the participation of bodies involved as service interactions evolve. It led me to think more deeply about the possibilities of bodily interactions and outcomes, such as the dimensions of power in body work service encounters.

From the following section onwards, I will review the literature on body work. Current research on body work encounters and related dimensions has evolved, based on various academic and practical importance and scholarly attractions in different phases. Nevertheless, before discussing these aspects of interactions in detail, I will first look at how the concept of body work has evolved in the field.

Body work as paid work on others' bodies

The term 'body work' has been used interchangeably in the current literature. In my research, I use the term 'body work' to refer to paid work on other bodies. Identifying body work as paid work on others' bodies differs from other meanings of 'body work' used in literature. For example, it differs from physical and cultural work done by an individual on the self (Gimlin, 2007; Shilling, 2005;2007), or non-paid work done on other bodies, for instance, work such as massaging or cleaning performed on our family members' bodies as an expression of love and care, or cultural rituals and habits.

Despite the similarities and variations in their definitions, the literature reviews by Gimlin (2007) and Lawrence et al. (2023) help identify the scope of different usage of the term 'body work' by scholars. Gimlin (2007) categorises the usage of the body work concept into four forms: (a) body/appearance work, (b) body work/labour, (c) body/emotion management, and (d) body-making through work (See Figure, 2.1). In contrast, Lawrence et al. (2023) work offers an understanding of how previous studies in Management can be classified as different types of organisational body work. They categorise body work into three forms: (1) personal body work, (2) interpersonal organisational body work, and (3) systemic organisational body work (See Figure 2.2). I find that Gimlin's (2007) and Wolkowitz's (2002; 2006) work have been influential for

them, particularly in classifying work under interpersonal body work. However, due to the scope of my research and word limitations, I refrain from explaining the two classifications in detail. I believe the illustrations in Figures 2.1 (p.32) and 2.2 (p.33) help a reader effectively identify the basic differences between these categorisations.

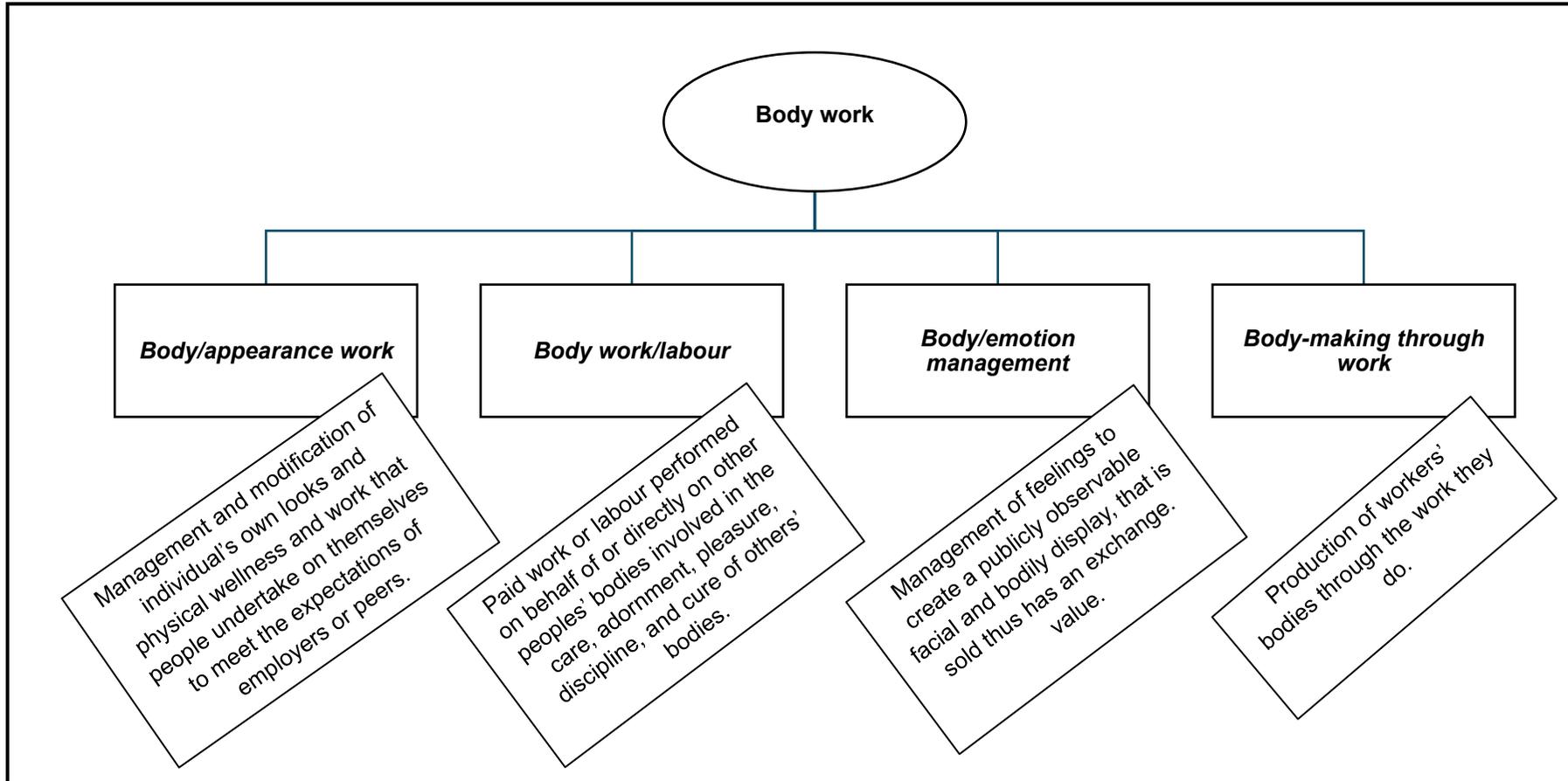
Twigg (2000), Wolkowitz (2002; 2006), Kang (2003; 2010) and Cohen (2011) have contributed together to weave what service work counts as paid body work and what work it involves. These scholars have considered different aspects or criteria in using the term 'body work' in their studies. For example, body work has been defined considering (1) who gets involved in it—whether it is an individual working on his/her own body, or an individual working on another's body, (2) whether the work is done for payment or not, (3) what type of work it involves, and (4) individual and organisational level involvement in performing body work.

Twigg (2000) defines body work as paid work done on the bodies of others within which clients' bodies are the objects of the worker's labour. Wolkowitz (2002) expands it as "paid work involved in the care, adornment, pleasure, discipline and cure of others' bodies" (Wolkowitz, 2002, p. 497), while emphasising what type of work it involves or what a worker intends to do on other bodies. However, in her work on service interactions in Korean immigrant women-owned nail salons, Kang (2003;2010) brings to our attention two terms: body work and body labour. This differentiation involves Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour and related scholarship.

Informed by Hochschild's work, Kang draws distinctions among body work, body labour, and physical labour. Kang uses 'body work' to refer to commercial and non-commercial efforts directed at maintaining or improving a body's health and/or appearance that includes caring for one's own or another's body, whether this work is paid or unpaid. In contrast, she introduces the concept of 'body labour'² to indicate the provision of body-related services and the management of both feelings and bodies accompanying it. Her use of the term 'body labour' also focuses on the exchange value of services performed on the body for a wage or other forms of compensation.

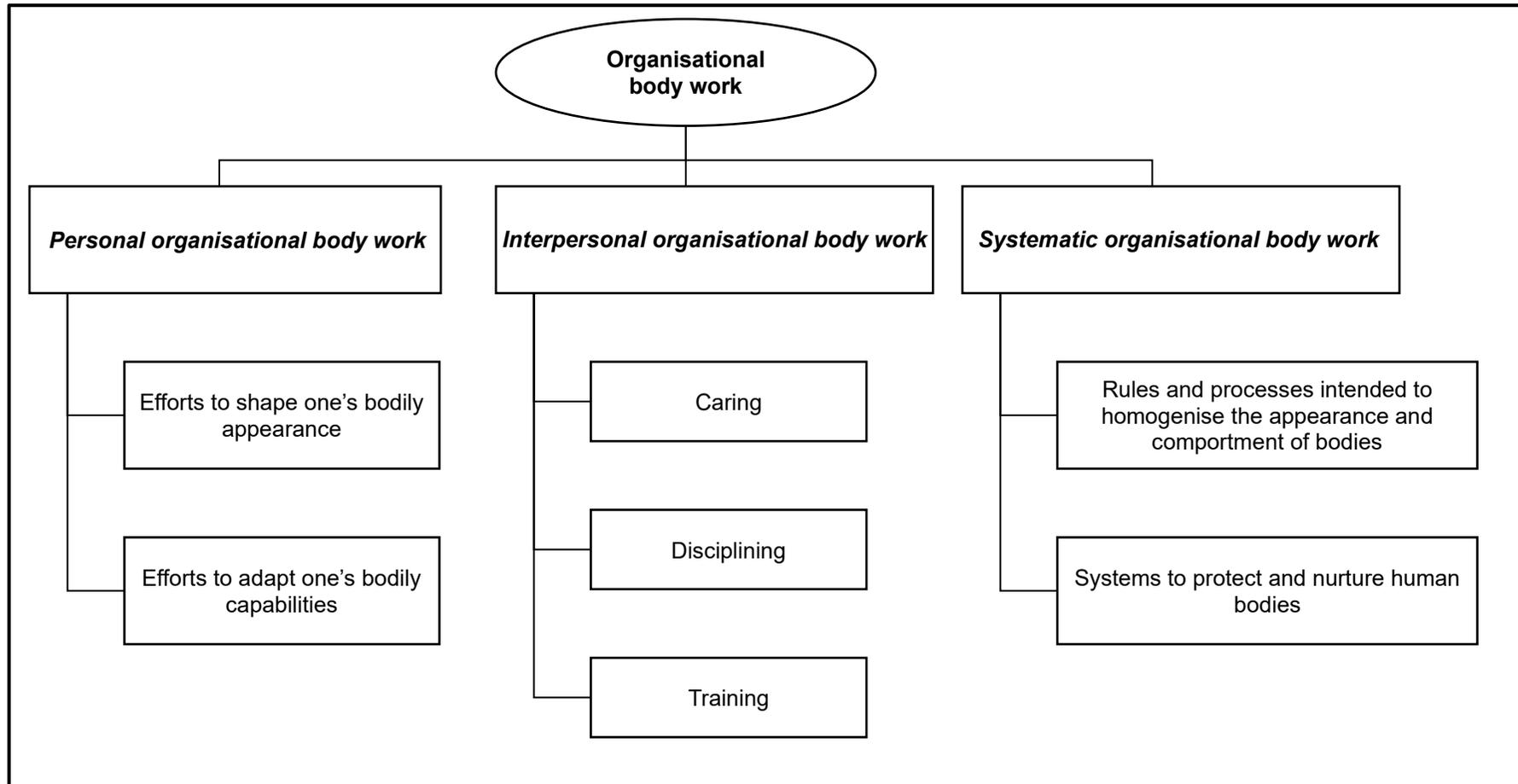
² Kang (2010) spells 'body labor' instead of 'body labour'.

Figure 2.1: Categorisation of body work by Gimlin (2007)



Source: The author created the diagram based on her reading of Gimlin (2007). In other words, Gimlin's journal article (2007) does not include this diagram.

Figure 2.2: Categorisation of organisational body work by Lawrence et al. (2023)



Source: The author created the diagram based on her reading of Lawrence et al. (2023). In other words, the journal article does not include this diagram

Moreover, Kang emphasises that it involves physical labour, i.e., work enacted by the body as the tool or form of labour. Accordingly, Kang defines body labour as “commercialised exchanges in which service workers attend to the physical comfort and appearance of the customers, through direct contact with the body (such as touching, massaging, and manicuring) and by attending to the feelings involved with these practices” (2010, p.20). She highlights that body labour requires that service workers manage their own feelings regarding the corporeality of their work while instilling their work with a sense of caring for their customers. Therefore, Kang’s use of body labour incorporates both emotional and embodied dimensions of body work.

Similarly, Cohen (2011, p.193) defines body work as ‘all work on the body of another, reserving ‘body labour’ for body work that is sold for a wage or commodified (italics in original). Sanders et al. (2013) also follow Kang (2010), and employ the term ‘body labour’ to discuss forms of paid activity that focus on the body in the waged labour market. Nevertheless, the very recent literature shows there is extensive use of the term body work, instead of body labour to refer to paid body work (For example, Montgomery et al., 2024; Cohen, 2019; Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen et al., 2013; Twigg et al., 2011).

Body work encounters and interactions

In body work encounters, workers’ interactions with clients’ bodies take many forms. It could be medical, therapeutic, pleasurable, aesthetic, erotic, hygienic, or symbolic (Twigg, 2000). In performing their work, workers assess, diagnose, handle, treat, manipulate, monitor, care, repair, please, aestheticise, train or control the bodies of the clients (Cohen, 2019; Cohen et al., 2013; Twigg et al., 2011). The contact with the client’s body, its cavities or its products needs touch and intimacy, or direct skin-to-skin contact with clients (Twigg, 2000), which may produce different points of tension between workers and clients. The interactions also require workers to perform emotional and aesthetic labour across body work encounters (Mears, 2014; Sanders et al., 2013; Kang, 2010; Nickson and Korczynski, 2009). Thus, there is a potential to create an affective and aesthetic atmosphere’(Nickson and Korczynski, 2009; Anderson, 2009; Linstead and Hopfl, 2000) in body work encounters.

Due to the type of work involved, and above-mentioned requirements and features, co-presence, touch and proximity are integral to interactions in encounters (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Twigg, 2000). However, the extent and frequency of touch required vary across these different types of body work (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen,

2011). This is the same with proximity. To understand this extent and frequency of touch and proximity, if not the physical distance between worker and client, we need to look at how body work scholars have considered occupations that count as, or are involved with, body work. For example, Wolkowitz (2006) lists many jobs ranging from sex work to health care workers to sales assistants as coming under body work occupations. Furthermore, the recent work of Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) offers five categories of occupations which include body work, namely: (1) care or remedial work on the body, which includes health and care workers; (2) aesthetic services focused on physically transforming the body, such as hairdressing, tattooing or beauty work, and (3) work focused on the provision of bodily pleasure, from massage to sex work, (4) the work that requires workers to exert physical control over others' bodies, to maintain order, and (5) occupations involved in teaching others bodily deportment or movement insofar as this requires touching or (re)positioning others' bodies. This categorisation allows one to consider the nature of work involved in paid work and decide if it comes under body work.

Analysing the work involved and the level of touch and proximity needs in the above-listed occupations shows how they vary. So, all body workers do not spend all their time performing touch work during an encounter—for example, salespeople whose jobs involve measuring or touching customers as a matter of course. The work of hospital ward cleaners deals with body fluids and waste and is organised around and about human bodies. But the work does not usually require frequent or intimate interpersonal touch. The occupations, such as police, discipline the bodies of others. However, the control they impose usually takes place at arm's length. Therefore, the proportion of total labour time spent engaged in body work varies depending on the nature of work, requiring some jobs to engage almost constant touch, whereas some do not (Cohen, 2011).

Having said that, Cohen (2011) also claims that even though some workers are listed in the same category, the amount of body work performed could vary depending on the culture and work environment, which includes status and seniority. Body work is also gendered and racialised (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Kang, 2010). The meaning of touch in body work depends on and is shaped by gendered, racial and sexual stereotyping of the people touching and being touched or the workers and clients (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Kang, 2013; Anderson, 2000). For example, the recent study of Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) incorporates gendered meanings of touch in everyday life. It proposes that the recruitment of workers to body work occupations

must consider the cultural connotations of touch. They emphasise how the physical touch and body work are rooted in the material, cultural and organisational constraints that induce particular gendered performances. Accordingly, they suggest that the organisation of body work, too, requires workers and their employers to consider the deep-seated social expectations about the meaning of touch (amongst recipients, workers and the public or society) and think of managing these effectively.

In their study, Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) categorize feminine and masculine meanings of touch. According to them, feminine touch is servile, responsive, deferent and caring, whereas male touch is controlling, expert, competent, and predatory. These gendered meanings of touch shape how consumers, workers, and managers understand different body work interactions. For instance, a woman's touch is expected to be and is experienced as caring, responsive and even deferent, whereas a man's touch may be perceived as assertive or predatory. This influences the perceptions of jobs; for example, women are in care jobs such as nursing or a profession involving of deference or servility (manicuring, hairdressing). Where men are employed, the interaction is widely understood as control over others' bodies (bouncer, correctional officer) or dispassionate or competent expertise (doctor). Moreover, there could be more caution in employing men in some jobs because the male body is seen to carry sexually predatory or aggressive impulses, and both employers and customers may actively seek women workers, to deflect anxiety about intimate touch, with men proscribed from, for instance, toileting children in daycare. Men, in contrast, may be preferred for jobs where a control function is explicit, such as mental health nursing. Therefore, according to Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018), body work represents an extreme example of what Ashcraft (2013) calls the 'symbolic alignment' between conventional assumptions about gender and particular occupations.

Ashcraft (2013) argues that collective occupational identities are associated with the social identities of their practitioners— actual and/or figurative. Such alignment makes occupations appear suited for specific people and inappropriate to others (Ashcraft, 2013, p. 8). So, according to Ashcraft, the social meaning of gendered bodies is that they actively construct jobs, labour processes, and wages and reproduce or refigure the status of occupations. This includes both the race and gender profile of the people who do the job and the 'figurative bodies' which are 'discursively and emblematically' (Ashcraft, 2013, p. 9) deployed. However, as Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) suggest, in

the case of body work, cultural meanings of touch developed outside of the workplace have constrained the options for symbolic gender realignment

In addition, they suggest that because body work involves touch, the gender alignment of this work is more troublesome than the alignment between women and service sector work more generally. Therefore, in body work, the social meaning conveyed by the bodies of workers (for example, workers' gender, race, sexuality, and age) operates in conjunction with cultural assumptions about the bodies of clients. For instance, gendered constructions of the ideal worker would differ depending on whether the client is or is imagined to be nude, needy, vulnerable, or at risk. This indicates that clients' bodies symbolically shape expectations about inter-corporeality (Tanaka, 2015; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) or the reciprocity of one's body and that of another. This context also invites us to consider how social categories relate to body work and power in body work interactions.

Social categories and power in body work

Current body work literature includes a wide range of studies focusing on social and work identities, such as gender, class, race, and social and professional status of body workers, and how such identities relate to power. Power has predominantly been identified as a relation between people, and is expressed in simple symbolic notation (Dahl, 1957). According to Haugaard (2012, p.34), power covers a cluster of concepts, including power to, power with and power over. However, literature on power includes two essentially contrasting views of power: (1) power as domination, primarily characterised as power over, and (2) power as empowerment, frequently theorised as power to (Haugaard, 2012).

Current body work studies have examined power in the worker-client dyad from the 'power as domination' or 'power over' view. Weber (1948) and Dahl (1957) are the best-known proponents of power as domination. For example, Dahl (1957) claims that power constitutes the ability of A to prevail over B by making B do something B would not otherwise have done. According to Dahl, as a property of power relation, there exists a time lag, however slight, from the actions of the actor who is said to exert power to the respondent's responses. Further, there must be some "connection" or an opportunity for a connection between the individuals, and if there is not, then one needs to proceed no further (Dahl, 1957, p. 204).

Body work literature provides evidence of workers' experience of power. For example, the studies show how workers' domination or submissiveness perpetuates in their interactions with workmates and clients through their work and social identities. Moreover, the current studies imply the use of French and Raven's (1959) work in their studies. For example, the studies show how body workers exercise expert power over their clients and legitimate power over their workers and clients in line with their position in the organisation or the hierarchy. For example, Twigg (2000) explains how professional status shapes body work interactions. Twigg points out, 'there is a recurrent dematerialising tendency' within body work 'whereby professional status is marked by distance from the body' (Twigg, 2000, p. 391). For example, doctors perform relatively little direct body work, and where they do, it is primarily confined to the high-status activity of diagnosis, or is mediated by high-tech machines. When body work is undertaken by high-status and high-ranked workers, the body work is typically accompanied by distancing techniques, such as the wearing of uniforms or plastic gloves. Alternatively, these high-status workers will allocate less tasteful tasks to those further down the status hierarchy, like physiotherapists or nurses. Nursing, too, offers many of these situations. Nursing is organised hierarchically so that, as staff progress, they move away from the basic body work of bedpans and sponge baths towards high-tech, skilled interventions, progressing from dirty work on bodies to clean work on machines.

Kang's (2003) study offers racial, and class inequalities experienced by women in nail salons. She explores variation in the performance of body labour caused by the intersection of the gendered processes of beauty service work with the racialised and class-specific service expectations of diverse customers. She examines distinct service provision patterns shaped by racial and class inequalities between workers and clients. As findings, she shows that these patterns demonstrate that a caring, attentive style of emotional display is dominant in workplaces governed by white, middle-class "feeling rules", but that different racial and class locations call forth other forms of gendered emotional management that focus on displaying respect, reciprocity, fairness, competence, and efficiency (Kang, 2013, p.820).

Gimlin's (2002) study on plastic surgery and hairstyling offers another distinct image of the power relationship between the seller and buyer of beauty. Her findings assert that plastic surgeons (as an occupation mostly represented by men) have a higher social status (associated with gender, education, and professional position) than most patients. She shows that cosmetic surgeons wield far greater influence over the

clientele, who are usually women. In addition, Gimlin (2002) shows that the cosmetic surgeon not only operates on patients but also has the power to deny them procedures for which the surgeon believes them to be psychologically or physically unfit. It says that independent of a client's desire for or ability to afford cosmetic surgery, a surgeon could ultimately decide if the client "deserves" the procedure.

However, Gimlin's (2002) findings show beauticians have lower social status than their clients, and this disparity privileges the clients' class-based understandings of beauty and hair. Because customers assume that hairdressers fail to share their middle-class understandings of beauty, they reject both stylists' advice about appearance and their claims of expertise in contemporary notions of beauty. In contrast, in their study about hairdressing and stripping, Sanders et al. (2013, p.8) reveal that in both instances, the customer adopts a relatively passive approach even in their seated position, allowing (female) workers to exercise control over another's body. So, it can be concluded that the dynamics of social categories decide subordination and domination within body work, which empowers or constrains workers in relation to the clients.

In addition, the current studies show how social categories influence meaning-making attached to the bodies, or how the workers' and clients' bodies are being recognized by themselves and by each other in service encounters and how it relates to power dynamics. The studies support that workers' bodies are active as they serve as the vehicle for performing the work (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Kang, 2010). Meanwhile, clients' bodies are considered the immediate sites of labour or passive objects upon which services are performed (Cohen, 2011; Twigg, 2000).

For example, among healthcare workers, the biomedical conception of the body as a purely physical object divided into distinct symptoms and parts is prevalent. Thus, clients are mostly treated as passive objects by their health status and/or (social or physical) vulnerability (Korczynski, 2013). Some studies reveal that workers define interaction with their clients or patients as 'bed and body work' rather than as relations with living, breathing human beings (Foner, 1994) or define the patients' bodies as adequately presentable 'lounge standard' bodies (Lee-Trewick, 1997). This situation could be linked to what Grosz (1994) says about the body. She says, as an heir of Cartesianism thinking, the body is primarily regarded as an object for the natural sciences, such as biology and medicine. This understanding places the body's sensations, activities, and processes in 'lower order' natural phenomena. However, Lawler (1991) suggest that clients' or patients' bodies in nursing must be considered

active by conceptualising them as 'lived bodies'. Through such conceptualisation, Lawler suggests that the 'lived body' is expected to foster positive meanings based on the warm and caring relationship between a health care worker, such as a nurse and the patient. Nevertheless, the recent study by Molina-Mula and Gallo-Estrada (2020) too, shows an absence of the patient's autonomy in the nurse-patient relationship. The findings show that nurses prefer a submissive patient who assumes care without discussion, and respects the nurse's work. Moreover, how nurses label an excellent relationship with a patient is conditioned by the patient's submissive role.

In addition, research on beauty care work reveals that beauticians tend to see the clients' bodies as 'deficit' bodies, seeking the help of the workers to restore qualities, such as self-love, confidence and help the bodies to fulfil what they lack or enhance in terms of beauty or youthfulness (Gimlin, 2002; Black and Sharma, 2001). As Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) mention, the clients or recipients of many kinds of body work, insofar as they are recognised at all, are assigned low status. This includes the non-productive, ageing, 'leaky' bodies of care recipients; the desperate or unattractive clients with no alternative but to pay for sex; and the drunken, out-of-control or otherwise disenfranchised members of the public who require involuntary restraint. Further, they state that the low status of the bodies involved in work reduces the desire of workers to dwell on or call attention to the body-to-body touch required in their work (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018, p.11).

To sum up, the above discussion shows how many body work researchers have developed discussions on the social meaning of touch, and how social categories and identities are reflected, re-established, or intersect in service encounters, power dilemmas, and inequalities at work. The studies imply that scholars have considered bodies as containers of pre-set social identities. Another critical observation from this review is that most studies focus on the worker.

Body work studies as a worker-centered scholarship

Body work literature includes studies in a range of areas through which researchers have added to the current knowledge, including what I discussed earlier on touch, social categories, and power in service encounters. Nevertheless, the studies are predominantly centred around the workers' experience, for example, workers' experiences of emotional and aesthetic labour, taint work, how society, work and workplace determine and shape workers' identities, and how discourses, structures, and rules regulate workers (see Table 2.1, p. 41). Therefore, I argue that although body

work encounters have been widely accepted as a dyadic organisation of client and worker, much of this scholarship around body work encounters is done on understanding workers' service delivery experiences. Table 2.1 (p.41) presents more detailed evidence on this.

Table 2.1: A summary of previous areas of focus found in body work literature

Researchers	The study focus
Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Shortt, 2012; Kang, 2010, 2013; Simpson, 2009; Sanders; 2005; Black and Sharma, 2001; Gimlin 1996	Work identities, construction of femininity, touch and intersectionality in terms of gender, race and class
Eayrs, 1993; Bertoia, 1985	Building client-hairdresser trust, workers' interaction strategies and customer typification practices of stylists in developing a loyal clientele,
McMurray and Ward, 2014; Cohen, 2010; Holmes, 2010; Warhurst and Nickson 2009, Dyer, McDowell, and Batnitzky, 2008; Kang, 2003; Sharma and Black, 2001; Twigg, 2000	Emotional labour and emotion management of body workers
Mears, 2014; Anderson, 2009; Nickson and Korczynski, 2009; Warhurst and Nickson, 2009; Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Witz, Warhurst and Nickson, 2003; Hancock and Tyler, 2000; Linstead and Hopfl, 2000	Aesthetic bodies and aesthetic labour, affective and aesthetic atmosphere at service work
Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen, 2011; Simpson, 2009; Warhurst and Nickson 2009; Oerton, 2004	Oganising body work, sexualisation and desexualisation of work
McMurray and Ward, 2014; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2014; Bolton, 2005,	Workers' experience of dirty work
Korczynski and Evans, 2013; Oerton, 2004	Power and politics; dignity within service work interactions
Wolkowitz and Warhurst, 2010; Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007	Workers' embodied practices, embodying labour
Payne, Korczynski and Cluley, 2017; Shortt, 2013	Role of sounds and music in the service encounters and experience of employees
Harness, Jamie and McMurray, 2021; Holmes, 2018	Practices, temporality and relationality
Montgomery, Docherty, Humphreys, McCulloch, Pattison and Sturdy, 2024	Co-constitution of place, practices and relations

Source: Author based on her literature review

Absent presence of physicality and bodily interactions in body work research

The review I presented in the previous sections shows that body work scholarship has been driven by a tendency to study the worker's experiences and not necessarily the work; also explicitly relegating the role played by the client to the background. Moreover, some research highlights the importance of the context within which body work encounters occur (for example, Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen, 2011). I agree that such knowledge is important and helps organise body work.

Meanwhile, the necessity of studying bodily interactions has been proposed occasionally in body work literature. For instance, Wolkowitz (2002; 2006), Cohen et al. (2013), and Payne et al. (2017) recommend studying both workers' and clients' experiences in service interactions as future research. Payne et al. (2017) highlight the potential importance of investigating the role of customers, clients and patients as embodied willful subjects. Cohen et al. (2013) and Cohen (2011) presume that clients' bodily vulnerability, variability, and unpredictability may affect the organisation of the work and workers' relation to the labour process. So, they have seen the potential of considering worker-client interactions while paying attention to the sensory nature of this relationship. My review brings to the front that these essential areas that need in-depth studies are still being unnoticed by researchers. Particularly, I presented that scholars have not shown much interest in studying: 1) the work involved in body work encounters and how work unfolds, 2) the role of the worker's or client's body in making the body work happen or how these physical interactions happen within encounters, and 3) the influences of sensory experiences of clients and workers in interactions. As such, there is a noticeable ignorance about worker-client bodily relations and what bodies and materialities do in encounters.

In this context, I present three reasons for the absence of research on bodily interactions in literature, with the support of existing arguments. Firstly, I agree with what Wolkowitz (2002; 2006) highlights regarding the reasons for the negligence of embodied work relations in literature. She attributes the negligence in recognising and researching the bodies involved in body work and embodiment to the high priority given to the 'emotional labour'. My review, too, revealed that there had been high attention given to emotional and aesthetic labour among existing scholars (see Table 2.1). Wolkowitz (2002; 2006) argues that this priority is caused by the vast popularity of the Cartesian mind-body dualism, in which emotions are easily located in the mind, and the body is identified with mindlessness or mechanical activity (2002, p. 499). Similarly, Hassard, Holliday, and Willmott (2000), Hindmarsh and Pilnick (2007) and Beyes et al.

(2022) also argue that the wide embracement of Cartesian dualism causes a lack of attention to bodies, embodiment and sensing.

Body and embodiment

The definition of the human body is frequently debated and questioned. Body is understood as a material, fleshy, and corporeal object made up of organs, bones, and skin, but also as a social, cultural, and discursive construction that comes into social existence through relations of power and language (Bonner-Thompson and Hopkins, 2017). Grosz (1994) identifies the body as a conceptual blind spot in Western philosophical thought. This is due to the standard view of the human subject as a being made up of two dichotomously opposed characteristics: mind and body, thought and extension, reason and passion, psychology and biology. This dichotomous thinking imposes hierarchy and ranks the two polarised terms so that one becomes the privileged term, and the other is a comparatively suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart; and such thinking has been well established through Descartes's dualism or separation of the soul from nature. Dualism is the assumption that there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances, mind and body, each of which inhabits its own self-contained sphere, and the two have incompatible characteristics (Grosz, 1994). Descartes distinguished two kinds of substances: a thinking substance, and an extended substance (i.e., mind from body). He linked the mind/body opposition to the foundations of knowledge itself, which places the mind in a position of hierarchical superiority over and above nature, including the natural body. Thus, it is argued that this dualism is responsible for the modern forms of elevation of consciousness—the modern version of Descartes' notion of the soul—above corporeality (Grosz, 1994).

Despite the predominant view of the body as an object, some scholars critique, reject and offer alternative views on the human body. For example, Merleau-Ponty claims that it is through the body that we relate to other people and the world about us (1962). He rejects the Cartesian mind/body dualism, and stresses that the body is a subject that both thinks and perceives. Merleau-Ponty states: "The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them" (1962, p.94). He points out that one is conscious of the world through the medium of [his/her] body (p. 95). For example, Merleau-Ponty (1962) claims that no human experience is external to the corporeality of the lived body. Accordingly, the

body is integral to our perceptions and understanding of human experience. It connects us to the world and offers us a way to understand ourselves and others.

Merleau-Ponty (1968) shifts his focus from embodied consciousness to a notion of intercorporeal Being (p.143) – *flesh*. For him, flesh is not matter, is not mind, and is not substance. Instead, it is an “element”; it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire. The flesh is, in this sense, an “element” of Being (p.139). As such, he emphasises that we must not think of the flesh starting from substances, from body and spirit, but we must think of it as an element, as the concrete symbol of a general manner of Being (p.147). Therefore, “the flesh is the body inasmuch as it is the visible seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch— the sensitive sensible: inasmuch as in it is accomplished an equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing” (p. iv).

Like Merleau-Ponty, Lefebvre (1991) also offers a radical critique of Cartesianism. Lefebvre considers the role of the body in exploring social space, and claims that human embodiment is fundamental to understanding the social production of space. Introducing the triad of social space (‘perceived space’, ‘conceived space’ and ‘lived space’), he argues that *(Social) space is a (social) product* (original emphasis) (Lefebvre, 1991, p.26). He shows that space is a tool of thought and action, a means of control, domination and power. Inspired by the notion of flesh and intercorporeal Being, Dale and Latham (2015) contend that Merleau-Ponty’s work allows us to recognise that our embodiment depends on human bodies and non-human others. Their study recognises the ethical implications of the entanglement of embodiment and non-human materialities, by drawing upon fieldwork in a large UK-based not-for-profit organisation supporting disabled people. They argue that humans are not self-producing, self-contained, and bound; but co-constituted within dynamic entanglement processes. They assert that human embodiment senses the world, and it is not separate or separable from the world: “human embodiment is sensible and sentient, it sees and is seen, touches and is touched. It is this very ‘reversibility’ of embodiment that constitutes its relationship in-and-of-the-world” (p.169).

Given this understanding of embodiment, I will revisit the discussion on the lack of research on bodily interactions in literature. As the second reason, I claim that the scholarly overfocus on social categorisations, identities, and intersectionality in body work has also led to a neglect examining which bodies are involved in interactions, and their roles within those interactions. As discussed in one of the earlier sections, the researchers have mainly studied body work on an occupational level that centres

around work and social identities. Such research connects with the social identity theory/ies. Those studies have focused on how workers' membership of a collective or a group provides individual experiences in service encounters or his/her presence in society as a worker. Moreover, scholars have focused their research on understanding how undesirable tasks threaten workers' identity, and how workers seek to respond by discursively enhancing their self-image (Wolkowitz, 2007), often utilising their membership of occupational cultures when formulating coping strategies (Galazka and Wallace, 2023). This research agenda accordingly takes bodies as static containers of pre-set social identities. As such, the lived experiences of workers and clients, sensory experiences that emerge through interactions, such as touch, and human bodies' active and receptive ability, have gone unnoticed.

Finally, I claim this absence is also caused by the lack of recognition given to the notion of 'paid'. I noticed the term 'body work' has not been popular until recently. In other words, the researchers have seldom used the term 'body work', although they have studied the work that comes under paid body work. This is quite evident in management research. For example, the work listed in Table 2 and published in Management and Organisational Studies journals (Payne et al., 2017; McMurray and Ward, 2014; Shortt, 2012; Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Hancock and Tyler, 2000) do not refer to the work they study as a type of body work. Instead, most studies have referred to the work as 'service work', 'interactive service' or 'intimate work' in referring to or describing the work, while labelling it with occupation titles (for example, hairdressing). However, research and publications in journals on Sociology, for example, Sociology of Health & Illness journal, and in sports sciences (for example Brice and Thorpe, 2024; Montgomery et al., 2024; Cohen, 2019; Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen et al., 2013; Twigg et al., 2011) show a gradual increase in the use of the term 'body work' in the studies done on different types of body work and related dimensions. I claim that the lack of recognition of the notion and lack of attention given to what it predominantly involves—co-presence, physicality, and touch, according to the existing definition—has caused ignorance of many worthy areas of research in body work. If attention had been given to the critical facets of body work, the researchers would have identified more exciting and important areas of investigation, such as how body work unfolds in encounters, bodily interactions and resulting sensory experiences.

Therefore, I argue that it is necessary to study how body work unfolds in encounters by looking into the lived experiences of both workers and clients. Through such a study,

we can understand how workers and clients sense each other, and how bodies get mutually involved, in forming and shaping service experience in the unfolding of body work. Different body work types involve varied levels and frequency of touch. However, I view body work as two-way interactions where 'social presence' is essential. In other words, "the degree of salience of the other person in the [bodily] interactions and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships" (Short, Williams and Christie, 1976, p. 65). Both workers' and clients' bodies and interactions are critical in these relationships to make the relationship effective. Our sensations and feelings shape our bodies' actions, reactions or movements towards and away from objects and each other. So, this requires us to pay attention to embodiment and embodied experience at the forefront of analysis, and highlights the materiality and active relations between bodies and their surroundings. Such relations define how workers and clients define the service they receive or deliver. For example, whether a service encounter is successful or not. Further, looking into how body work unfolds in service encounters will facilitate workers and employers in comprehending embodied relations and thinking of better ways of configuring work. However, as exemplified, I did not find studies on workers' and clients' lived experiences with touch and sensory cues and how they act, respond, support, or resist their interactions. So, along with its importance and the gaps identified in the literature, I claim it is essential to study how body work unfolds within encounters and how bodily interactions contribute to making things happen in service encounters.

More-than-human—another set of 'neglected bodies' in body work research

In the above section, my focus was on relations between human bodies. However, that is not all. Clients and workers not only encounter human bodies but also encounter a range of more-than-human bodies in body work service settings. In other words, although scholars predominantly view encounters as a worker-client dyad (Sanders et al., 2013; Gimlin, 2007), if we view encounters as social spaces (Lefebvre, 1991), they are not only about workers and clients but also include and are inhabited by a series of things, objects and other than human bodies, which I refer to as more-than-human bodies. The notion of more-than-human recognises that humans exist within a complex network of interactions involving humans and various non-human performers such as technology, animals, and the environment. It may include but is not limited to, objects and things, such as wind, water, stones, weather, animals other than human, artificial and digital devices (Giaccardi, Redström, and Nicenboim, 2024). The use of the term more-than-human challenges the idea of materials as resources in favour of the notion of materials as agents. It opens the possibility of co-existence of human and

more-than-human, if not collaboration, and links with the idea that the bodies are so entangled (Ingold, 2018; Haraway, 2008; Barad, 2007). However, current body work studies have not considered the materiality of these bodies, which inhabit a service encounter and their entanglement with workers and clients. In other words, less attention has been given to the connectedness and agentic qualities of the material bodies, humans, and others.

I found a limited amount of research that has examined sensory experiences and the interactions between humans and other bodies and objects. For example, Chugh and Hancock (2009) focus on material environments within which service labour occurs, and the aesthetics of such service encounters. Their study about hairdressing highlights the relationship between the architectural and spatial design of the salons, and the aesthetic labour of the employees, in shaping and situating embodied perceptions and performances of service work. However, their emphasis is on aestheticisation processes that emerge from, among other things, those networks of architecture and design, non-human artefacts, and embodiment and aesthetic labour that constitute the servicescapes of the salons.

In addition, Shortt (2013) explores the role that sounds play in the everyday lives of hairdressers and why such sounds are meaningful to them. The narratives shed light on how employees use sound to escape work - creating sound walls, and gaining respite from the emotional labour they experience. The study deepens our understanding of how workers cope with emotional labour. Also, it adds insight into hairdressers' creative use of their auditory environment in order to tune out from work, which deepens our understanding of how lived experiences of space are sensually lived, and in which sound has a vital role to play. She asks researchers to continue to broaden this sensory horizon, and to recognise that sound is a fundamental part of how we know and understand work. More specifically, she proposes to study what sounds are meaningful to other workers who engage in intimate/body/emotional work, such as beauty therapists, osteopaths or nurses. For example, how might these workers use their auditory environment to escape everyday interactions and likewise?

Even though Chugh and Hancock (2009) and Shortt (2013) have explored sensory and aesthetic experiences, they have not paid attention to the co-existence of the workers' and clients' bodies and more-than-human bodies, and how they get involved with work and contribute to work and service experience. Meanwhile, recent research

in nursing and healthcare, which includes various body work occupations, indicates a tendency to explore how equipment and tools are linked to the materialities of care and the importance of such understanding for enhanced service delivery.

To give examples, Buse, Martin, and Nettleton (2018) introduce the notion of 'materialities of care' to examine 'practices of care' as they unfold in a range of formal and informal settings and in relational ways, whereby embodied, routine and often unnoticed actions of caring are constituted through and between the relations between bodies, objects and spaces (p.245). Buse et al. (2018) argue that by observing and acknowledging the fleeting moments of care and choreographed routines that order bodies and materials, we can comprehend the interconnectedness of multiple bodies, including more-than-human bodies that inhabit the encounters. These encompass the physical environment and available resources, the tools and technologies used to provide care, and the social and emotional components of caring for patients and their families. This approach can be connected with how Pink et al. (2014) address the importance of 'taken for granted' or 'quiet' materialities, including hand gel, gloves, soap, wipes, carpets and shoes, as part of the ongoing negotiation of safety, contact and touch by health care workers, and where Maller (2015) emphasises the importance of going beyond 'obvious health technologies' to explore more mundane aspects of materiality, such as the built environment – including car parks, pathways, roads and buildings – as part of infrastructures in health.

Similarly, Caronia and Mortari (2015) draw on ethnographic research in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and focus on the constitutive role of space and artefacts, such as the glass walls of the ICU, in delineating the moral order of a specific context. Their findings offer how the interior architecture and some ordinary objects (e.g. the glove box and the alcoholic dispenser, the monitors and the handwritten clinical record) delineate the range of the "right things to do", and participate in telling which philosophy of medicine is at play in this ICU. Moreover, Brownlie and Spandler (2018) focus on how everyday or mundane materialities actively mediate health and care practices. As they explore specific materialities, such as shared spaces and everyday objects, they offer evidence of how the objects enable care. This emphasises material's relational and emotional possibilities, and invites us to rethink materialities beyond conduits or as merely a backdrop.

The recent work of Montgomery et al. (2024) serves as another illustrative example. Through their study, they examine the experiences of staff working in critical care

during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK in 2020. They provide an empirical and theoretical elaboration of how place, body work and care are mutually co-constitutive. They argue that the ICU does not exist independently of the constant embodied work of care and place-making, constituting critical care as a total system of relations. At the same time, they claim research into body work has given scant attention to how those both providing and receiving care are situated in particular places, and highlight there is a dearth of empirical and theoretical elaboration of how place, body work and care are mutually co-constitutive (Montgomery et al., 2024).

So, given that previous research has mentioned different senses and the role of more than human matter, I claim that it would be useful to study this further. I view it is essential to study the multisensory experiences of human and other bodies, such as objects and things, in understanding embodied interactions at a spatial-temporal arrangement of body work encounters. I view that these multiple bodies are not mundane, but contribute to deciding how body work unfolds and its outcomes. Thus, these bodies cannot be treated as taken for granted. For example, we encounter a series of objects in every moment of our daily lives. Right now, I am in an encounter with my chair and table, the laptop face and keyboard, the fan and its wind, electricity, the well-opened window, and my footstool. I go and have a break, drink a cup of water or my tea or coffee, look at the greenery around my garden, and return to my table to restart my writing work. From the moment we wake up to the moment we go to sleep, while we are asleep, we encounter a series of objects within our spatial-temporal arrangements. Thus, objects are routinely, mundanely, part of everyday existence (Woodward, 2007). As Coole and Frost (2010, p.1) state:

[Our] everyday lives are surrounded by, immersed in, matter. We are composed of matter. We experience its restlessness and intransigence even as we reconfigure and consume it. At every turn, we encounter physical objects fashioned by human design and endure natural forces whose imperatives structure our daily routines for survival. Our existence depends from one moment to the next on myriad micro-organisms and diverse higher species, on our own hazily understood bodily and cellular reactions and on pitiless cosmic motions, on the material artefacts and natural stuff that populate our environment, as well as on socioeconomic structures that produce and reproduce the conditions of our everyday lives.

Similarly, in salons and yoga studios, we encounter a series of objects and bodies. Moreover, yoga and salon work involve aesthetic experience (Korpelainen, 2019; Chugh and Hancock, 2009). It is not only the workers but also objects, processes, and practices involved in these services that involve the beautification and disciplining of the body's interior and exterior in different ways. As Lefebvre (1991) writes, the form

of social space covers encounter, assembly, and simultaneity. Moreover, it assembles “everything that there is *in space*, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, through their co-operation or their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols” (p.101, italics in original). Therefore, our embodiment depends on human and more-than-human bodies and objects and how we sense matter and materialities. When the human body comes into being through relationships with other bodies (human and more-than-human bodies), it involves sensing one’s embodiment with the materialities of bodies and objects. I view that these bodily interactions and resulting sensory experiences thus impact and influence how body work unfolds. It includes multiple senses, as the social space (Lefebvre, 1991) is shaped by various visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory cues. Thus, to understand the experience of embodied interactions, it is critical to explore the human body’s sensory experiences of being in the world and the self (Carter et al., 2022).

More-than-human and sensory experiences in body work settings

The owners and/or managers of beauty care service salons or yoga studios usually build the architecture emphasising the sensory and aesthetic nature, with their own design or with the help of the architects and designers. So, architects, through their organisational relations and practices, shape the spaces within which we spend much of our everyday lives (Dale and Burrell, 2008, p.31). As Gagliardi (1999) underscores, the physical setting can influence the behaviour of the actors, since the first thing it does is to limit and structure their sensory experience. A specific setting allows us to do some things but not others—i.e., it sets us clear physical bounds—and gives rise to some specific sensations and not others. In addition, Schultz (1992) and Willmott (1993) emphasise how the management of culture uses methods that seduce employees into conformity. As Dale and Burrell (2008) claim, the interwoven nature of organisation, space, and architecture profoundly affects our everyday lives. They say that we may rarely notice this since the built environment becomes a taken-for-granted part of our daily experiences (p.4).

The sight/visual is considered the most powerful sense in the hierarchy of the human senses. When it comes to architectural practice, it has also been identified that the eye/sight dominates it, and the visual artefacts are recognised as the most fundamental of all senses. However, amidst the broader attention towards visual artefacts, Spence (2020) states there is growing attention among architects and designers to consider the other senses, namely sound, touch (including proprioception,

kinesthesia, and the vestibular sense), smell, and on rare occasions, even taste in their work. For example, background music and its rhythm can influence behaviour in a specific encounter or physical/digital setting. Let it be a service encounter, a gathering at home, a factory floor, or an entertainment event such as a musical show, a film (e.g., background music used in movies or songs used in Indian movies), or a very personal meeting of individuals, ordered or disordered sounds could affect behaviour. Also, according to Dale and Burrell (2008), what we hear plays a significant role in our 'organisation' (For example, the monastic bells calling monks to prayer or the bells used in Victorian houses to call the servants from below stairs or ringing of bells in present-day schools). Managers also can use music to increase company performance (DeNora, 2000, as cited in Styhre, 2013, p.35). Music may also be linked to power and control and viewed as a management tool (Shortt, 2013). As Korczynski's (2007) work suggests, the workers can use music as resistance. Payne et al. (2017) study workers' perceptions of the role of music in service interactions while advancing new theoretical perspectives on music in service interactions. In this research, the researchers have investigated the role of music, specifically whether music mainly alienates workers from customers or provides a bridge to meaningful social interaction and the related influential factors. They have also attempted to discover the conditions and mechanisms that music supports positive customer relations. Having stated these, I find that more attention is needed to be paid to sounds (music and/or noise) produced during the service delivery of salon and yoga, for example, voices or music used in practices along with the sounds that surroundings make.

If we look into beauty care and yoga, the workers use different genres of music - 'ordered sounds' (Schafer, 1977; Shepherd, 1991 as cited in Shortt, 2013, p.345) to create a supportive environment during service delivery. The use of music and the type of music may depend on the gender of the workers and the clients, religion, personal interests or values of the worker, or, in yoga, the school/tradition the trainers follow. For example, in the 1990s, when I was young, I remember experiencing reggae and popular cassette music being played at the barber shops for men in the suburban area of Sri Lanka where I lived. However, playing music at salons for women was not very popular. In contrast, nowadays, a wide use of relaxing music, such as Sri Lanka and Indian classical music, Western popular music, and TV channels, can be observed in both types of salons. At yoga studios, yoga trainers chant in various voice modulations and use instrumental yoga music, which features either Western, Indian, or ethnic instruments, or a mix of these can be expected to be experienced. Also, some yoga wellness centres are in natural rejuvenating surroundings, such as forests, lakes, and

nearby beaches. As a result, the practitioners could use natural or audio-recorded rhythms in their service delivery as appropriate.

Olfactory experience and taste are two other areas under research in body work studies and Management and Organisation Studies. Waskul and Vannini (2008, p.68) emphasise that odour is “a subtle but significant component of the culturally normative and aesthetic rituals of expressive and impressive everyday life.” Yoga studios and salons use different fragrances/odours in their service settings. Salons in Sri Lanka quite often use the fragrance of fresh flowers, artificial perfumes, organic incense sticks, and *sambrani*³ incense. At the same time, yoga studios usually use unique smells created through natural essential oils, such as rose oil, lavender, frankincense, sandalwood, peppermint, lemon and orange, or a blend of unique fragrances based on the traditions they follow. However, in these service settings, one can sense personal body odour, such as sweat that is “under control or “not under control”, the smell of used materials, or the smell of liquid wastes (for example, chemicals used (shampoo, ingredients of hair dye). Waskul and Vannini (2008) differentiate smell and odour. As they put it, “smell is an *act* (verb); it is something that people *do*.

In contrast, odour is a *state* (noun), an olfactory *condition*. Odor is also a sign...” (p. 58, original emphasis). The levels of intensity of smell are highly subjective. Moreover, people can identify different forms of smell and have strong feelings about it, for example, whether the smell is attractive or repulsive. Also, the smell can be used for manipulation by individuals (for instance, body odour management techniques aimed at managing impressions) and organisations (Waskul and Vannini, 2008; Baxter and Ritchie, 2013).

So, followed by Coole and Frost (2010), I claim we must not take objects and other more-than-human bodies and materiality in yoga studios and salons as taken-for-granted and ubiquitous or unimportant, while thinking humans are the ones who control and direct objects, electing to use them on their own terms. These thoughts and views lead me to discuss Bennett’s work (2010) on vibrant matter and thing-power. Bennett offers contradicting views on the traditional understanding that agency is solely associated with individual or collective human capabilities. However, before discussing Bennett’s work, Foucault’s work (1977) is essential here, as Foucault is

³ *benzoin resin - the resin of a tree that is dried and powdered or available in blocks*

influential in offering us new insights into the power of techniques and objects. Furthermore, some scholars, for example, Lemke (2021) and Olssen (1996; 2022), have located Foucault as a materialist, or incorporated Foucault's work as a part of the New Materialist approach.

Power of things/bodies and what bodies can do

In understanding power relations, Foucault (1977;1980) was interested in the mechanisms of prison surveillance, school discipline, systems for administering and controlling populations and promoting norms about bodily conduct. Foucault's identification of objects, such as the guillotine, uniform, timetable, school writing desk, or the panopticon, are essential material tools that exercise power. Through such explanations of objects, Foucault offers that social power and control are exercised and established through human and non-human bodies. Foucault also argues that power is not essentially something that institutions possess, and use oppressively against individuals and groups. Instead, power is ubiquitous. Moreover, Foucault emphasises that power is not just a hostile, coercive or repressive thing that forces us to do things against our wishes, but can also be a necessary, productive and positive force.

Foucault's views are different from how power is usually understood. Common or popular thoughts identify power as exercised by individuals, groups, or institutions that involve some kind of direction or control of the actions of others. In line with this thinking, power is viewed as something possessed by someone ("the powerful") while exercised over someone else ("the powerless") (Christensen, 2024). Here, power is considered a (potentially) repressive force ascribed to a person, a culture, a state, or a society, highlighting the idea of power over others, which I discussed in an earlier section on service interactions in body work. However, Foucault argues that we must cease describing the effects of power in negative terms, as power produces reality and domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). Foucault differentiates between two different models of power, namely the juridical and the disciplinary (Foucault, 1977;1980). The juridical model is characterised by the following: (1) power is possessed, (2) power flows from a central source from the top to the bottom, and (3) when power is exercised, it is primarily repressive. In contrast, the disciplinary model is characterised by (1) power is exercised rather than possessed, that is, it consists of action upon actions, (2) power is analysed as something that can descend from the bottom and move upwards, that is, it is not conditioned by the sovereign but by discourse, and (3) power is not primarily repressive but productive (Christensen, 2024).

In practice, for example, in prisons, schools, and hospitals, oppressive power seems to merge or exist with productive power simultaneously (Christensen, 2024) as a collective of human and more-than-human involvement.

Turning to Bennett's (2010) work, she calls vital materiality and claims that material things 'have a positive, productive of their own' (2010, p. 1), and highlights the 'active role of non-humans in public life' (p. 2). Bennett believes that everything, including inorganic matter, has the ability to act and for Bennett, agency denotes a relational concept rather than something to be located in a single bounded, spatiotemporal entity. She analyses the agency and affective power of things, from a small collection of rubbish to a nationwide electricity grid, using Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage as an example of a 'confederate agency' (Bennett 2010).

Assemblages

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) 'agencement' in French (named 'assemblage' in English) links with the above discussion, as assemblages are critical in understanding the entanglement of related entities and proposed an ontology of relation. Agencement refers to design, layout, organisation, arrangement, and relations of exteriority. As Gherardi (2022, p.321) highlights, the components of an assemblage are not things or bodies or ideas but rather their relations and their intra-acting dynamics. Thus, the main focus of assemblages is not on content but on relations, relations of patterns. Furthermore, relational ontology challenges the concept of individual identities, claiming that humans and non-human things do not have separable identities, as they are always in changing relations with one another (Ingold, 2018).

Assemblages are heterogeneous, and multiple forms of matter can be bodies (Giaccardi et al., 2024; Puar, 2014). There are no assumptions about what can be related – humans, animals, things and ideas – nor the dominant entity in an assemblage. In other words, assemblages do not privilege bodies as humans. Moreover, it is that specific set of connections or relations in a given situation that gives a concept its meaning. For example, gender, as seen from an assemblage perspective, is an ongoing movement (Lagesen, 2012). As Coffey (2019, p.77) claims, "understanding gender as an assemblage sees it as a functional, active arrangement of connections operating as only a temporary articulation or territorialisation rather than as an essential identity category."

Assemblage thinking focuses on actual practices. Thus, as Kimanthi, Hebinck and Sato (2022) claim, it recognises gender for its meanings exhibited, produced, and reproduced by the interacting elements rather than as a fixed identity category. It involves fluid and flexible associations of material, social and ideological elements. Thus, gendered practices are flexible or change, shaped by negotiations, contestations and resistance (Herbert, 2000). In a similar vein, scholars have used assemblages to reconsider bodies and social categorisations. For example, Saldanha (2006) uses Deleuze's relational concept of assemblage to embody, re-materialise and re-ontologise race as material movements of, and connections between, bodies, things and places, while Puar (2012) uses assemblage theory to explore the intersectionalities of sexism, racism, heteronormativity and nationalism in contemporary western societies.

In her interview with Khan (2009) on 'agency, nature and emergent properties', Bennett mentions that human agency is best conceived as the outcome or effect of a specific configuration of human and non-human. When humans act, they do not exclusively exercise human powers but express and engage in various other things, including food, micro-organisms, minerals, artefacts, sounds, bio- and other technologies. For example, she acknowledges the difference between a human individual and a stone. However, she contends neither, when considered alone, has real agency. In other words, neither has true agency on their own. Instead, the locus of agency is always a human-nonhuman collective (2009, p.101).

Further, Bennett (2010) distinguishes "Vital Materialism" from Marx's Materialism, Foucault's biopower and Butler's early ideas of bodies that matter through the emphasis or over-emphasis (as she mentions) on the agentic contributions of non-human. Thus, Bennett emphasises the role of non-humans in shaping agency, while these other mentioned theories downplay or ignore their contributions. Thus, her approach invites us to think of how things have a vital force and the ability to produce effects and to make things happen (Frykman and Frykman, 2016; Benozzo, Distinto, and Priola, 2024).

New Materialism

New Materialism is an interdisciplinary, theoretical, and politically committed field that emerged as a part of the material turn. It is influenced by post-structuralist, feminist, post-colonialist, cultural and queer theories, which reject the idea that economic and structural determinism is sufficient to critique patriarchy, rationalism, science, and

modernism (Fox and Alldred, 2015a). However, the 'New Materialism' strand of thought does not represent a homogeneous style or a single theoretical position, but encompasses many different approaches and disciplinary perspectives (Lemke, 2015). For example, the field of New Materialism is influenced by thinkers such as Deleuze, Guattari, Barad, Braidotti, Grosz, Bennett, Kirby, and DeLanda. Critical distinctive new materialists and theories include Deleuze and Guattari's microphysics of becoming, Barad's materialist onto-epistemology; Braidotti's posthuman and the post-humanities, Latour and actor-network theory are prominent (Fox and Alldred, 2019).

Besides the differences, New Materialism or New Materialist approaches generally critique that the natural world and technical artefacts are merely resources for technological progress, economic production, or social construction. Thus, they seek to develop a new understanding of ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics by overcoming anthropocentrism and humanism, the split between nature and culture, linguistic or discursive idealism, social constructivism, positivism, and naturalism (Lemke, 2017). New Materialists believe that humans are just one form of being among others. They reject the idea of human mastery, and insist that humans are entangled with non-human bodies (Shomura, 2017). In so doing, they extend the agency and power to non-human entities, and believe that everything has the ability to act (Braidotti, 2013; Bennett, 2010; Barad, 2007).

New Materialist ontologies are abandoning the term 'matter' as an inert substance subject to predictable causal forces. They recognise materiality as something more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, and unpredictable. Thus, according to Coole and Frost (2010, p.9),

In sum, new materialists are rediscovering a materiality that materialises, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms, recognise that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces, and consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency.

This suggests that matter is no longer imagined as a massive, opaque plenitude, but is recognised as indeterminate, constantly forming and reforming unexpectedly (Coole and Frost, 2010, p.10). Conceiving matter as possessing its own modes of self-transformation, self-organisation, and directedness, and thus no longer as simply passive or inert, disturbs the conventional sense that humans are exclusive agents

who possess the cognitive abilities, intentionality and freedom to make autonomous decisions. It also challenges the presumption that humans have the right or ability to master nature. Instead, the human species is being relocated within a natural environment whose material forces manifest specific agentic capacities, and where the domain of unintended or unanticipated effects is considerably broadened.

However, Shomura (2017), exploring the promise of New Materialism, argues that New Materialism suppresses different lived experiences of power to ontology, neglects the insights of feminist and queer theory as well as indigenous cosmologies, and stumbles when it comes to race. Shomura mentions that scholars like Puar and Saldanha are in a project of creative refashioning of the materiality of race (Shomura, 2017, p.3), and warns that the use of New Materialist perspectives may marginalise issues of race, gender and sexuality if not inflected by feminist, queer, and critical race theories.

Turning to epistemology, New Materialism proposes a knowing different from Cartesian understandings. In short, Cartesian claims for the immateriality of the rational mind, which can think and direct human action in isolation from the irrational and animalistic material body. It also makes boundaries between humans, animals, objects, and nature, and sees humans exclusively as producers of knowledge. However, New Materialists uphold that individuals do not obtain knowledge by creating representations at a distance, but rather from a direct material engagement with the world (Barad, 2007). As Barad suggests, 'practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated' (2007; p. 185). She argues that entangled entities create entangled knowledge, and that we should see that knowing cannot be fully claimed as human practices, not simply because we use non-human elements in our practices but because 'knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part' (Barad, 2007, p. 829). Furthermore, according to New Materialism, our expressions of knowledge and research products cannot be seen as faithful mirrors of the world, but are potentially helpful assemblages for ongoing learning (Toohey, 2018).

This theoretical direction is thus well-fitted for what I am exploring in my research, where I attempt to investigate bodily interactions in service encounters and the involvement of multiple bodies. At the same time, it calls us to consider encounters as a social space—as discussed in an earlier section—and as assemblages.

Human and more-than-human bodies, Affect theory and power

Affect theory offers a different perspective on the potential of human and more-than-human bodies. The word 'affect' comes from the Latin *afficere* and implies passivity, meaning "to have had something done to one" (Frykman, and Frykman, 2016). Importantly, affect theory is not an abstract concept, but rooted in lived experience (Stengel, 2013), making it relatable and tangible for us. As Pellegrini and Puar (2009, p. 37) mentions "[Affect] is precisely what allows the body to be an open system, always in concert with its virtuality, the potential of becoming."

Affect refers to the various capacities of bodies to affect and be affected, and thus, it relates to visceral forces and intensities. However, Seigworth and Gregg (2010) explain that no single, generalisable theory of affect exists. Instead, the literature suggests several different and interlinked, overlapping theories of affect. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) list eight interlinked orientations and sometimes overlap in their approaches to affect. However, affect theory can be split into two vectors or camps: those who see affect and emotion as structurally distinct, and those who conceive of them as essentially interchangeable (Palmer, 2017; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). Seigworth and Gregg (2010) note that the research within this approach focuses on "those ethico-aesthetic spaces that are opened up (or shut down) by a widely disparate assortment of affective encounters" (p. 8).

The interest in affect first focused on bodies and embodiment and then shifted to human and non-human bodies or entities. Spinoza (2002;1994), one of the influential thinkers here, defines affect as the modifications of the body whereby the active power of the said body is increased or diminished, aided or constrained, and also the ideas of such modification. As he puts it "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections." (Spinoza, 1994, p.154). Spinoza rejects the mind-body dualism and the assumption that the mind can rationally control the passionate body, and emphasises the question of what a body can do. McCormack (2008) argues that Spinoza's thinking provides a valuable source of orientation as it offers a way of conceiving body affectivity. Spinoza's theory of the affectivity of bodies does not necessarily relate to human corporeality. In other words, while Spinoza concentrates much of his attention on the affects of the human body, his analysis extends the category of the body beyond the sphere of the human. Therefore, for Spinoza, bodies are not defined in terms of their organic form or functional properties, nor are they to be defined in terms of the kind of matter of which they are composed.

Instead, the question of what a body is can be considered equivalent to what a body can do. Spinoza defines what bodies can do along two axes (McCormack, 2008). The first of these is kinetic. Because for Spinoza, 'all bodies are either moving or at rest', bodies (at least simple bodies) are therefore 'distinguished concerning motion or rest, quickness or slowness, and not concerning substance'. If a group of bodies move at the same speed or in such a way 'that they communicate their motions one to another in a specific ratio, these bodies are reciprocally called united bodies. The second axis is dynamic and refers to the capacity that a body has, to affect and be affected by other bodies. As such, some affective relations and encounters will enhance the capacity of bodies to act, and others will diminish it.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) employ Spinoza's term 'affects' to characterise body capacities. According to them, what distinguishes one type of body from another is its specific capacities for being or acting in certain ways, and its capacities for interaction with other bodies. This characterisation of bodies in terms of affects leads to a novel conception, i.e., bodies are no longer understood in terms of their form or the substance of which they are composed, but in terms of their capacities to affect and be affected. In other words, this is a conception of bodies defined by their powers. So, bodies are capable of various kinds of action or interaction with other bodies. We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do and what are its affects. Among the affects of a body may be the capacity to enter into certain kinds of becoming: "Affects are becomings." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.256).

Following Spinoza and Deleuze, Massumi defines affect as "the capacity to affect and be affected." This locates affect in encounters in the world, rather than the interiority of a psychological subject. Affect theory pays special attention to feelings, emotions, and affects. For affect theory, they are not cosmetic, but rather the substance of subjectivity. (Schaefer, 2019, p.1). Although we use feeling, emotion and affect interchangeably in common speech, these terms have distinct meanings. For example, Massumi, in his translation of Deleuze and Guattari's work, mentions that;

Neither [affect/affection] word denotes a personal feeling (*sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari*). *L' affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting body (with [a] body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies).

Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, xvi, italics in original.

Accordingly, a feeling is a sensation checked against previous experiences and labelled (Shouse, 2005). It is personal and biographical. Every person has a distinct set of previous sensations to draw upon when interpreting and labelling their feelings (Shouse, 2005). In contrast, emotion, as Massumi (2015, p. 4) defines, “is the way the depth of that ongoing experience registers personally at a given moment.” Emotion is the projection/display of a feeling. Unlike feelings, the display of emotion can be either genuine or feigned. For example, sociocultural values could influence how we display our emotions in an encounter, even during our interactions with family members. A worker in a service encounter could hide his/her emotions from the client by following the workplace rules and regulations as a code of conduct. So, we express emotion to the world as an expression of our internal state as well as a response to fulfil social expectations.

So, emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience, which is, from that point onward, defined as personal. It is a qualified intensity. However, affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable (Massumi, 1995, p. 88). An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity, a moment of unformed and unstructured potential. Affects are aroused easily by factors over which the individual has little control. It is what determines the intensity (quantity) of a feeling (quality) (Shouse, 2005). Moreover, Massumi (2002) argues that affect is autonomous, to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is.

Affect is synesthetic, implying a participation of the senses in each other: the measure of a living thing’s potential interactions is its ability to transform the effects of one sensory mode into those of another... Affects are virtual synesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them. The autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. Its autonomy is its openness.

Massumi, 2002, p. 35, italics in original.

It is said that affect cannot be fully realised in language and is always prior to and/or outside of consciousness (Massumi, 2002). Affect is the body’s way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance, by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience.

Affect holds a key to rethinking power. As affects track the force of becoming, they translate into streams of power (Schaefer, 2019). Affect theory stresses the role of

nonlinguistic and non- or paracognitive forces. It pays attention to what bodies do – what they want, where they go, what they think, how they decide – and especially how bodies are impelled by forces other than language and reason. So, as Schaefer (2019, p.1) states, it is also a theory of power.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer two words for “power” in French, *puissance* and *Pouvoir*, but each denotes different concepts. *Puissance* is immanent power, and can be understood as a potential, as the capacity to affect and be affected inherent to entities. *Pouvoir*, by contrast, is actualised power: a concrete ensemble of relations (Müller, 2015). According to Hillier (2023), *Pouvoir* is associated with dominance, a sort of ‘power over’ that includes concepts such as territorialisation. *Puissance* is creative and could be linked to the ‘power to’ approach. *Puissance* refers to a range of potentials. Deleuze has defined it as a “capacity for existence,” “a capacity to affect or be affected”, a capacity to multiply connections that may be realised by a given “body” to varying degrees in different situations. It may be thought of as a scale of intensity or fullness of existence (or a degree on such a scale) analogous to the capacity of a number to be raised to a higher “power.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, xvii).

As Massumi translates, Deleuze and Guattari use of *pouvoir* is very close to Foucault’s, “as an instituted and reproducible relation of force, a selective concretisation of potential.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, xvii). However, Massumi (1992) distinguishes between force and power. Force arrives from outside to break constraints and open new vistas. Power is the domestication of force. Power builds walls (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Massumi, 1992, p.6). As such, force and power are connected yet different from each other.

Influenced by these views and claims, I consider bodies as material rather than treating them as containers or sites of social categories or textual or discursively constructed. I then study multisensory lived experiences during service encounters to examine how the physical bodies of clients, workers, and others participate in and matter in interactions. Therefore, in contrast to previous research, my research will make the body and embodiment visible and reject their being rendered inferior to the mind in a binary logic promoted in Cartesian dualism.

Summary

In this chapter, I argued that there is currently a noticeable absence of research that attempts to study how the body work unfolds, the physicality of multiple bodies, human

and more-than-human and the sensory experiences and how they participate in body work interactions. I identify critical reasons for this absence and argue the importance of studying these neglected aspects. So, taken as a whole, this chapter demonstrated the significance of addressing my research questions and showed the potential of my research in contributing to the existing knowledge of body work.

In the following chapter, I connect my research questions with my research methodology and design choices. It also presents how I produced, analysed, and interpreted data in addressing my research questions, and the research ethics and my reflections on the project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

I start this chapter by briefly explaining how I acknowledge New Materialists' ontological and epistemological stance in addressing my research questions. I then describe my choice of qualitative research approach and the use of affective ethnographic style—an embodied approach for my study. I then familiarise the reader with the context in which I conducted my research. It is essential to have a section on this because it shows how the vitality of the bodies and forces with which my study and I got entangled, shaped my research design and fieldwork. At the same time, I present my choices for the research sites and how I produced data there. Then, I explain how I produced data through auto-ethnography, formal and informal conversations with both clients and workers, active participation in physical and online observations, which enabled me to capture photographs and video recordings, and how I reviewed the relevant digital and physical documents relating to the sites. Next, I describe how I analysed and interpreted data following the thematic analysis and elements of the diffractive analysis method. The latter part of the chapter includes how I adhered to research ethics, along with my reflections on my project.

Ontological and epistemological Stance

I located my research in New Materialist philosophy, more specifically drawing on Spinoza's and Deleuze's perspectives on affect and Bennett's work on vital materialism, as it helps me explore my research inquiry well. My research looks at clients' and workers' bodily interactions in encounters, and how multiple bodies get involved in such interactions. New Materialist philosophy helped me better explore human and more-than-human bodily interactions, as it draws attention towards what things do and their affective potential. For example, Benozzo et al. (2024), and Tompkins (2016) support the adaptation of New Materialism to rethink the interconnectedness among human beings, work, organisational objects, and the environment. Furthermore, as Brice and Thorpe (2024) and Bell and Vachhani (2020) highlight, it has the potential to uncover the affective dimensions of embodied material encounters with non-human entities and forces. Such a philosophical stance also helps me to see the material world as made up not of fixed, stable entities but as lively, relational and in constant flux (Aldred and Fox, 2017), where liveliness arises as a consequence of the agentic capacities of multiple bodies that researchers encounter, through their actions and activities.

I believe in the ontology offered in New Materialism, and that humans and more-than-humans are not defined by static states, but rather by a continuous process of becoming. For example, in my study, I acknowledge that clients, workers, practices, objects and myself (as a researcher, a client of body work and a woman) are constantly in relation, interacting and evolving together, transforming into something different from what we once were. In other words, I recognise the need to look at body work as assemblages, that are complex, and the trajectories of change cannot be predicted or predetermined (Toohey, 2018) due to the interconnectedness of the sites, human participants, more-than-human bodies, myself and interactions.

Epistemologically, as Barad stresses, I believe that "knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from a direct material engagement with the world" (Barad, 2007, p. 49). Knowledge is a process that cannot be separated from the practices performed to enact it (Barad, 2007), and the researcher (Gherardi, 2019; Bispo and Gherardi, 2019) who produces and interprets data. In line with these views, my own body was key in producing data in this research, along with incorporating the lived sensory experiences of workers and clients. In producing data, I paid attention to bodily relations I had in body work encounters, as a client and as a researcher. I acknowledged multiple sensory experiences in my becoming with the research participants and the research journey.

Research approach

The lived experience of bodily interactions needs to be studied by focusing on interactions and multisensory experiences of workers and clients in service encounters, because it is through the bodies and senses that they connect with each other. So, I used a qualitative approach in my research. This approach, unlike quantitative methods, seeks to discover and describe in a narrative form what particular people feel and do in their everyday lives, and what their feelings and actions mean to them. Thus, this approach helped me to address my questions, and to gain understanding about worker-client interactions that would have been impossible with only the quantitative approach.

In a project that uses a quantitative approach, the research problem is best addressed by understanding what factors or variables influence an outcome (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Here, a researcher collects data on an instrument that involves measurements and analyses, using statistical procedures and hypothesis testing (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In other words, the research involves testing a theory

by specifying hypotheses and analysing data to verify to support or refute the hypotheses. So, the methods are used to summarise, average, find patterns, make predictions, test causal associations, and generalise results from a sample to a broader population (Rana, Gutierrez and Oldroyd, 2021). In contrast, qualitative research has its focus on “the qualities of entities” as well as on “processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 8). Qualitative approaches help to document the stuff (Patton, 2014) that happens among people in the real world in their own words, from their own perspectives, and within their own contexts (Liamputtong, 2023), by understanding or interpreting “the meanings of human actions” (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2017, p. 627). This approach embodies an individual as the “whole person living in dynamic, complex social arrangements” (Rogers, 2000, p. 51). As such, the qualitative research design applied in this study enabled me to actively engage with the clients, workers, and more-than-human bodies during my fieldwork in producing data on bodily interactions. It then facilitated me to analyse and document their experiences, to foster a greater understanding of workers’ and clients’ lived experiences in their embodied interactions.

Literature in this area also supports my choice of qualitative research approach. For example, Fox and Alldred (2015a; 2015b) mention that qualitative methodologies are widely used to study New Materialist social inquiries. Qualitative methodologies have the capacity to contextualise events, and capture the ambiguities of affective and emotive experiences, thereby revealing the range of relations comprising assemblages and affective economies (Frykman and Frykman, 2016; Fox and Alldred, 2015a). Within this approach, ethnography is the favoured methodology, sometimes with an auto-ethnographic element (Frykman and Frykman, 2016; Fox and Alldred, 2015b). In addition, observation and interviews have been used to identify assembled relations, and how affects and capacities produced in bodies make an assemblage work together. Meanwhile, some other scholars have used exclusively in-depth qualitative interviewing, including telephone interviewing (for example, Montgomery et al., 2024), while some combined qualitative approaches.

However, arguments and dissension exist, concerning the ontological separations of humans and matter depicted in some of the existing qualitative studies. Cooren (2020, p.2) argue that some researchers have explored materiality from a position based on the ontological separation between humans and matter, where matter is ‘something tangible or visible’, dissociated from the world of thoughts and discourse pertinent to

humans. Cooren (2020) makes claims against such separations, as it leads us to recreate a dissociation between the world of human affairs (the world of thoughts, meanings, discourse, and interactions) and the material world (the world of natural elements, artefacts, and technologies). Further, Benozzo et al. (2024) claim that current approaches to studying materiality and workplace objects in management are based on the assumption that human and non-human entities' components pre-exist, in their collective association. They provide current studies on organisational culture and aesthetics, which investigate symbolic and tangible meanings of objects and artefacts, as examples for their claim.

I view assumptions that the material world is separated from the social world as recreating or reestablishing a dualistic worldview or binary thinking. Moreover, New Materialism does not welcome or accommodate such assumptions. New Materialism instead focuses on the interconnection of humans, and the material environment in producing knowledge. It emphasises that single entities do not exist outside their entanglement, but emerge from and within it. Besides, bodies have no independent existence outside an assemblage. I avoid thinking of separations. Instead, I used the assemblage approach, which allows us to look beyond the dualism of the social and the material without demoting the value of either. As explained in my Literature Review chapter, the assemblage approach facilitates comprehending 'the in-between, a set of relations that are inseparable from each other' (Deleuze and Parnet, 2007, p. viii), and focus on what the assemblage does, and how it functions. Further, it helped me become more alert and conscious of the relations between human and more-than-human bodies that inhabit a particular spatiotemporal arrangement of body work and what they do.

Research design

Following the New Materialist epistemological stance that knowledge is embodied and learning essentially involves the body, I implemented an embodied research design (Thanem and Knights, 2019) in my study. It represents a fusion of a phenomenological approach and ethnography, where I employed an affective ethnographic style. Phenomenology as a methodological approach enables collecting rich data that permits readers to gain significant insights into the lived experience of a phenomenon (Urcia, 2021), where the meanings are constructed by individual lived experiences of objects, space, time, embodiment, and interaction with other human beings. The phenomenological research method aims to describe, understand, and interpret the meanings of human life experiences, as it focuses on research questions such as what

it is like to experience a particular situation (Bloor and Wood, 2011). In other words, this approach helps interpret the meaning of a phenomenon by exploring individuals' lived experiences on spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality (van Manen, 2017) through appreciating embodiment.

Embodied ethnography is different from traditional ethnographic efforts, for various reasons. Traditional ethnography involves a people-focused emic research design that uses data collection methods such as participation, observation, and interview, which unfold through thick description and interpretive contextualisation. Moreover, the researchers attempt to approximate as accurately as possible the representation of their research subject(s) as a faithful rendition of the word 'as is'. So, in a way, such ethnographic accounts strive to mimic and merely report the events in the field (Vannini, 2015). However, using an embodied approach in ethnography, my research attempted to animate rather than mimic, and to evoke rather than just report (Vannini, 2015). Moreover, I tried to relate to five qualities offered by Vannini (2015) in conducting my ethnography, namely: vitality, performativity, corporeality, sensuality, and mobility. For example, my autoethnography, which involved me as a client and observations, enabled me to treat my body as an active data producer in salon and yoga service encounters as such data got intertwined with my lived experiences.⁴ Embodied knowledge involves sensory elements and experiences (Ellingson, 2008). Accordingly, in my research, I appreciated the experiences of multisensory cues: touch, smell, sights and sounds. Moreover, the knowledge grounded in bodily experience encompasses uncertainty and messiness in the everyday lives of clients and workers, as well as mine. Accordingly, embodied research methods helped me use the body's capacity to generate knowledge, craft lively accounts, and come up with concepts that enrich our understanding of how people live, work, and interact with their bodies in salon and yoga encounters. Moreover, I recognised how my body affects and is affected by the bodies I encounter in my research process, for example, in data production and analysis. Thus, my research approach links with what Gherardi (2019) defines as affective ethnography.

Gherardi (2019) considers 'Affective Ethnography' as a style of performative ethnographic process that relies on the researcher's capacity to affect and be affected to produce interpretations that may transform the things that they interpret (p.742). She

⁴ I have explained how I incorporated these in my study comprehensively in the section on data generation techniques.

proposes affective ethnography as a research style that acknowledges the complexity and interconnectedness of all elements involved, such as texts, actors, materialities, language, and agencies and discusses affect as “a resource for ethnographic practice—a resource enacted through the researcher’s embodiment” (Gherardi, 2019, p.743). As Gherardi highlights, in affective ethnography, there is a mutual transformation, a becoming emerging from the affective flow in the encounters between the participants to research, whether they are researchers or not. It is this participation which elicits new interpretations that “may transform the things that they interpret” (Gherardi, 2019, p. 742). Baxter (2021) explains that affective ethnography entails attuning to the flows of affect through and between members of her research site by employing her senses. She reflects on her affective attunement as both a participant in the research site and a researcher of the unfolding process. She uses a combination of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), tracing affective flows (Pink, 2012) and Anderson’s analytics of affect (2014) to fully explore the materials and how they were related (Baxter, 2021, p. 900).

Affective ethnography is based on three pillars (Gherardi, 2019, p. 754). The first is the embodiment and embodied knowing. Doing fieldwork implies the ability to resonate with, becoming-with, and the capacity for affective attunement. The second aspect relates to place as, flow, and process. The third relates to affect as the power to act and, therefore, to the presence in the fieldwork of the capacity to “make do”, either intentionally or unintentionally (Bispo and Gherardi, 2019, p.30). As I present my experience in producing, analysing and interpreting data in the following sections, I will exemplify how my way of doing ethnography connects with these three pillars of affective ethnographic style.

Fieldwork - plans, context, contingencies, and how it went

Fieldwork requires thorough planning, thoughtful consideration of the context, preparation for facing contingencies, and continuous reflection on how it goes on. My PhD study started in October 2020, during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Embarking on the study and continuing it was like navigating a new, volatile terrain on gloomy days, where getting lost and finding the pathways was quite frequent, and through which I managed my (in) flexibility in completing my project. At the initial phase of the study, being away from my home country, I experienced concurrent feelings of doubt, fear and stress on possible (un)known outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring and adhering to the precautionary health and safety activities of myself and my loved ones, sadness about the suffering and loss experienced by (un)known

people around the world, and taking care of and sending “positive” vibes to friends and relatives infected with the virus. However, frequent email communication and online and in-person meetings with my supervisors made me feel strong and facilitated my perseverance.

As I began planning my fieldwork and gaining ethical clearance for my study, the COVID-19 pandemic was coming under control. However, due to the unpredictable and changing situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sri Lanka and the UK, I paid attention to the possible consequences, such as travel bans and government restrictions on accessing the research sites. Accordingly, with my supervisors’ support, I planned for three possible scenarios for doing my fieldwork. Along with other documents, these plans were also submitted for ethics approval from the Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology Ethics (ELMPS) committee of the University of York, UK.

Scenario 01 was that travel back to Sri Lanka was considered safe, and I conducted all the physical fieldwork in Sri Lanka. Scenario 02 was where I could travel back to Sri Lanka, but face local or national COVID-19 health restrictions. As a result, I planned to do part of the fieldwork in person, following requirements for social distancing or other protective measures, like wearing face masks. Moreover, considering the possibility of a situation where COVID-19 would worsen again in Sri Lanka during my stay, I also planned to use remote/online research techniques. Scenario 03 was where my travel back to Sri Lanka became unrealistic, due to health concerns and travel restrictions. In this scenario, I planned to conduct the research using fully remote/online research while remaining in the UK.

While I had prepared for different scenarios of doing my fieldwork, I was eager to conduct in-person research with the physical participation of both myself and the participants. I was hesitant to execute my data gathering online. By the start of 2022, Sri Lanka had passed the ‘peak’ of the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and was in a situation where people were able to ‘manage’ the pandemic and its aftermath with protective approaches by this time. So, with such an improved health situation in Sri Lanka, I received approval to return to Sri Lanka. My supervisors, too, were very supportive of this option. So, I was thrilled and treated myself lucky to have been able to return and start my work.

I returned to Sri Lanka on the 18th of February and planned to complete my fieldwork within six months, starting at the end of February 2022. However, despite the chance I got to start my fieldwork according to Scenario 1, which was my preferred option, as it is the most suited approach to doing my fieldwork, my research got entangled with another unexpected matter— a substantial local socio-economic and political crisis in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka started experiencing one of its greatest economic crises in recent decades in the year 2022. The collapsing economy was as much a product of the country's corrupt politics as of global economic trends. On the one hand, it was caused by authoritarianism, corruption and economic mismanagement of the governing party and nepotism of the family of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa (2005-2015) and his brother President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, who was the President from 2019. On the other hand, the situation worsened with the global economic downturn and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

As the crisis heightened gradually, the public had to stand in queues for long hours to access the necessities and essential items, such as liquid petroleum gas for cooking, fuel for vehicles, medicine to be brought from pharmacies, and essential food items. Prices of goods skyrocketed with the high inflation in the country. In the meantime, Sri Lankans experienced enforced power cuts, which lasted for eight hours per day for a few months and then for four hours. So, in March, people in different areas of the country started to protest against the current regime, the undeniable nepotism on the political front, corruption, and shortsighted economic and financial policies and decisions.

The initial protests were peaceful and aimed to express dissent towards the government, calling for the resignation of the President along with his administration and a new constitution. Various forms of activism, such as political demonstrations, online campaigns, rioting, strikes, and protests, gained significant attention nationwide. Within a month, this led to a series of massive protests islandwide, later named as අරගලය (*Aragalaya*) in Sinhala or 'Struggle' in English. The government took authoritarian actions to manage these protests, such as declaring a state of emergency, allowing the military to arrest civilians, imposing curfews, and restricting access to social media. For instance, on the 1st of April, the President declared a nationwide public emergency. Soon after, it was frequent practice to impose a curfew occasionally.

Meanwhile, during the third week of May 2022, Sri Lanka was in sovereign default for the first time in its history. At the same time, the value of the LKR has been falling. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka implemented a flexible exchange rate policy on the 8th of March. As a result, the LKR lost more than a third of its value. It became probably the worst-performing currency in the world amid the nation's worst-ever economic and political crisis. Apart from the exchange rate issue, the banks were experiencing a foreign currency deficit. Thus, the banking sector faced massive issues managing its funds and foreign currencies.

On the 13th of July 2022, the country experienced a state of emergency as the President fled to the Maldives. Following his official resignation, a new President was elected on the 20th of July in a secret ballot. The newly appointed interim government managed to bring an apparent calm to the political unrest in the country. However, despite the concerted efforts taken to restore the economy's health, the nation suffered significant economic issues. This crisis led to a downturn in all aspects of the economy, including healthcare and education. In addition, in 2022 and 2023, Sri Lanka experienced a record-high labour migration.

My self, the research, my research sites, and the participants were part of the crisis. Thus, we all were affected by the forces of the crisis. Its vibrant and volatile nature and its causes and consequences, such as queues for essentials, power cuts, frequent curfews, the fluctuation of currency exchange, and the force of a high tendency to migration, caused me significant delays and problems, so that it took me around eleven months, till mid-January of 2023, to finish my fieldwork.

Therefore, despite my initial excitement and confidence in conducting physical fieldwork, I experienced many emotions throughout the journey. This included fear, restlessness, doubt, excitement, and a paradoxical sense of accomplishment. These feelings arose due to the challenges I faced in gaining access to research sites, the uncertainty of the process, and my interactions with human and non-human forces during my research. Nevertheless, the journey provided an understanding of how bodies, incidents, and events, including my research, interlinked and mutually affected each other. The behaviour of the crisis and forces fuelling it were mainly beyond our control. But I learnt, being a part of it, how my research sites, the participants and my relationalities with this crisis mattered to us and affected us, including myself and my project. However, apart from the discouraging effects aforementioned, some aspects were fruitful. For example, despite my plan to conduct physical fieldwork, I also had to

conduct a few of my interviews online, using the Zoom platform, and observe online yoga at one studio. This provided me with good experience in using online research methods to produce data, and showed me how bodies and materiality matter in such circumstances.

Access to the research sites

Gaining access to research settings of yoga studios and salons took longer than I anticipated. However, there is research conducted in Sri Lanka about salons and yoga, such as studying entrepreneurial efforts (Wijeyeratnam and Perera, 2013), difficulties faced by women in beauty care (De Silva et al., 2021), and yoga as a mindfulness activity and a tool of peace education (Perera, 2023). However, these have relied only on interview data collected from the workers or owners of salons and yoga studios. While carrying out fieldwork in the research sites, I learnt that observing, photographing or video recording the setting and talking to clients are usually restricted in these settings. For example, the owners of Divine Yoga said they do not allow outsiders, strangers, or even their family members to observe yoga practices. As a result, I had to go through several stages of negotiations to gain access to the sites.

As mentioned in the Introductory chapter, the genesis of my research came from my experience at Shrina's salon, making it one of my intended fieldwork sites. However, as of 2020, the salon was no longer in operation. Shrina, who was in her fifties, and her husband, who retired that same year, had to change their lifestyle for personal reasons. In light of the circumstances, Shrina decided to close her salon. Thus, I had to look for some other options. I contacted ten Sri Lankan salons while in the UK. I gave them oral and email explanations about the study and supplied the relevant documents, such as ethics approval, participant information sheets, and my authorised studentship record.

I explained what I intended to study, and how I would maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of data. Although some salon owners were willing to participate and talk about their experiences, they refused my request to observe and talk to clients when I explained my study requirements. The main reason they highlighted was the confidentiality of the service process, and the exposure of the client's privacy to an outsider or a researcher like me. Some were reluctant to allow me to observe the service delivery process as they felt it would expose their brands and unique procedures to outsiders. Others preferred something other than the idea of me observing and contacting their clients, which they felt would disturb their

confidentiality. Some claimed busy schedules, while others said they did not receive many client appointments. Only two salon owners agreed to participate, but they did not prefer me to access their clients. I felt that being away from Sri Lanka, without approaching them in person, was a barrier here. The owners did not know me and had not even seen me, physically. I realised I should make contact with my family members or friends. I reached out to some of my friends in Sri Lanka to get in contact with beauty salons via them. However, all attempts failed as the owners expressed reluctance to permit me to observe the setting and service delivery. I realised that physically accessing the settings in Sri Lanka is crucial. Meanwhile, I contacted one of my senior schoolmates, Apsara, who now runs Divine Yoga with her husband, Rohan. I contacted her via Facebook Messenger on the 28th of July 2021, and we had a WhatsApp call on the 1st of August 2021, during which I explained my requirements. They agreed to participate in my study and invited me to join an online class the following week to check if it suited my requirements.

After my return to Sri Lanka, I got an appointment to meet Apsara and Rohan on the 25th of February to discuss further what I expected from them for my research. This discussion generated valuable data for my research, such as how they started the studio, class schedules, rules and norms, and some clues on maintaining client relationships. Moreover, I observed the layout and produced data on why they arranged the studio that way, and their views on those arrangements.

Later, Apsara and Rohan helped me access two beauty salons and two yoga studios within their friendship network. They first contacted the owners of these two salons and yoga studios, gave them a rough idea of my research, and then asked me to reach out to the owners. I contacted and visited all these possible organisations. However, the owner of one salon I visited soon underwent surgery. So, she was afraid to allow me to continue the study when she was away from the salon, during which time she transferred some critical decision-making to one of her closest co-workers.

Meanwhile, I contacted two yoga studios in Kandy and Mirissa, which cater to overseas clientele. However, with the country's political and economic crisis and post-pandemic restrictions, the arrival of tourists was drastically reduced. So, given the problem, I decided to initially go ahead with the site that got a considerable number of clients. I kept them informed about my requirements and my planned study time frame.

Within a half-month, Serene Yoga, the studio located at Mirissa, and Urban Escape, a women-only salon, accepted my invitation to participate in my research. The contact was made via Apsara and Rohan. Samantha, the owner of Urban Escape, had been a student of Divine Yoga a few years previously, and she had been the bridal dresser and make-up artist of Apsara on her wedding day. I realised the crucial role that networking plays in gaining access to potential research sites. As Holliday (2007) notes, there is a general understanding of doing favours for friends without expecting anything in return. Holliday highlights the potential advantages of being a friend of a friend or a friend in accessing participants. It is a culturally acceptable way to approach a potential research site, and it was instrumental in my situation.

By connecting with owners or managers through mutual acquaintances, I received more positive responses and benefits in the process of data collection. I established trust, and avoided or minimised any suspicion I might otherwise face as a researcher. Most of the participants I contacted were empathetic to my research goals, and wanted to help in any way they could, given the conditions in the country. Overall, networking and utilising existing relationships proved critical in successfully gaining access to the research sites.

By now, I had access to two yoga studios conducted by male and female trainers and a salon run by a woman. So, I thought of choosing a salon conducted by a man to help me understand different interactions and experiences. Although my primary research purpose was not to see gender dynamics, I believed having a sample of men and women is appropriate as it gives my study a different combination of interactions. For instance, as discussed in the Literature Review, Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) and Cohen (2011) show how the social and individual meaning of touch, which plays a vital role in organising and performing body work, varies depending upon workers' and clients' gender, race and age. However, accessing such salons proved to be complicated. One owner, a man, advised me to refrain from embarking on this kind of research. He said that, as a woman, it would be uncomfortable to spend time serving men at a salon. Moreover, many salons in the country were already struggling to survive and fulfil their appointments due to frequent power cuts and schedule changes. Despite my attempts to convince them, they did not want any additional trouble by having me participate in their business. One owner disclosed that their business was

running poorly and doubted what I would perceive. He said, “Miss⁵, we do not know what you would think about our business, *api rim eke yanne*⁶, Miss.” They wanted to avoid me getting to know their financial situation, which was not good, and seeing low client arrival.

So, I decided to wait some more time, hoping for better socio-economic conditions, though I knew it would not be sooner. In this situation, two friends of mine, Aruni and Sahan, helped me. Aruni directed me to Sahan, who runs a bridal dress renting shop. Sahan gave me the contact details of five salon owners. Four gave me verbal consent to participate in my research, but those were later declined implicitly; for example, some did not answer my subsequent calls. Then, I decided to visit the possible salons and explain my requirements in person. Sahan agreed to come with me and introduce me to the owners.

On an agreed-upon day, we visited two salons: a unisex salon run by a male and a women-only salon run by a female. They both gave me the consent to participate in my study. Although the owner of the unisex salon consented to our initial discussion and welcomed me to make observations, he later told me he could not permit me to do the observations. On the one hand, he was worried about my safety. He said that he is usually out of the salon during the day. Thus, even though he owns the salon, he could not guarantee my safety. He added that clients from various upbringings talk about different topics, which can cause inconvenience for me as a young lady. Though I tried to convince him I was okay with it, I failed. On the other hand, he said it is inconvenient for the workers to be observed by a young woman during their service delivery. This—for example, being worried about my safety and possible inconvenience caused by being observed by a female—exemplifies how socio-cultural ideas inform gender dynamics and shape interactions.

However, the owner of Pinky Grace, the women-only salon I visited with Sahan, expressed her willingness to participate in my research. She told me she was very happy to get to know and help me, as I am an early-career academic and a student

⁵ *Miss* is commonly used to address not only girls and young, unmarried women but also when one is unaware of whether the woman is married or not. This also implies respect for a woman.

⁶ “*Rim eke yanne*” is slang used to express that things are not going as well. It denotes poor financial condition at a home or business. So, efforts are made to manage things with great difficulty.

mother who wants to pursue higher education. She said she believed in my study approach and the trust I would maintain. So, even though I did not plan to have two women-only salons in my research, I felt Pinky Grace would be a great place to research. Moreover, the salon's physical layout and wall decorations (which I will explain with photos in the next chapter) enchanted me, and I was curious to research this site.

Meanwhile, I found access to a male-only salon, which is a 20-minute from my home. It is a partnership business run by a woman and a man. Dilini has taken care of dressing and make-up for women for over twenty years. The business partner, Supun, had ten years of experience in hairdressing for men. However, the business shut down soon after Supun accepted a job offer in Malaysia, following the country's new migration trend of skilled and professional workers. After that, Anitha, our son's caretaker for two years, offered a solution for accessing a male-only salon. She was working at a paint manufacturing factory at the time. Through Anitha's daughter, she provided me with a contact at Scissors N Razors, a salon owned and managed by a father and his son. I spoke with the son, Tharaka, over the phone to schedule an appointment, and upon my arrival, I met Lal, the father. After discussing the project, he kindly accepted my request to select his salon for my study.

I understand that most of the challenges I faced are common, such as the non-acceptance of a potential participant's invitation to participate in research. However, what is unique in this situation is how such challenges intensified due to the crisis, while the cultural and gendered dynamics as restraining forces become more apparent in such a situation, making it difficult and stressful to navigate the fieldwork journey. My human and more-than-human participants enabled and also restricted me in data production during my fieldwork and research sites. In addition, the data produced affected my interactions with the bodies. Frequent rejections, abrupt business closures due to worker migration, and setbacks caused by crises brought me anxiety and stress. However, I kept a sense of hope for the future. It is worth noting that if I had not been connected to this network, these challenges would not have affected my data production as intensely. Despite all, my supervisors were a source of courage, as they helped me stay motivated, lessen frustration, and remain focused on my work.

Access to clients

In almost all research sites, I had the help of the owners/workers to access the clients. Gaining access to the clients via the worker/owner had advantages and

disadvantages. For instance, the client might feel more at ease discussing with me as I am being introduced by the owner/worker, who is already known and trusted by the client. However, owners/workers also became gatekeepers in my study, as they essentially mediated and ensured to whom I gained access. A gatekeeper is a person who controls research access (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). However, a gatekeeper could be a group or policy as well. As Andoh-Arthur (2019) states, they can grant or withhold access to people or situations during research into organisations. As the research sites in my study were privately owned and managed, owners as gatekeepers controlled the access to participants through their work or personal relationship with a participant. Chaudhuri (2017) argues effective working relationships with gatekeepers require renegotiations, and open confrontations with both formal and informal gatekeepers are unavoidable, particularly when confidentiality is threatened as a result of the gatekeeper's attempt to exert power.

In my study, I learned how difficult it is to gain access to workers and clients through my experience during the initial months of my fieldwork. So, although it generated some problems, as mentioned above, I was relieved to contact the clients via workers and to have their participation in my research. In almost all cases, I was given a contact list of the clients whom the owners thought were willing to participate in my research. However, access to the clients at my beginner's yoga class in Divine Yoga did not need this method. I gradually developed a good relationship with them and was able to gain their access during informal conversations we had during the course series. I gave them the information sheets and consent forms. I asked them to spend time reading and understanding the purpose of my research, and regarding their contributions and my expectations. I made them aware of the techniques I use to maintain anonymity and protect confidentiality. I also asked them to ask questions and clarify if they found any problems with their participation in my research or any other related things.

Data sources and choices of research sites and sampling methods

My study involved multiple data sources in exploring embodied interactions in body work encounters, namely: (1) encounters of worker-client interactions, i.e., salon appointments and physical and online yoga sessions, (2) individuals' experiences (the experiences of clients and workers, including mine as a client) in body work encounters, (3) more-than-human bodies, such as objects, animals other than humans, and things like air, heat, plants that inhabit service encounters, (4) the digital and physical documents, the official websites of the research sites and their social

media platforms. These documents and platforms carried background information and posts on service experiences the clients and workers shared regarding service encounters, along with photographs and videos.

I used snowball and purposive sampling to select my research sites and participants. Creswell (2014) states, qualitative snowball sampling is “a form of purposeful sampling that typically proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks to recommend other individuals to be sampled” (Creswell, 2014, p.209). As explained in chapter 1 and the earlier section of this chapter, I chose my five research sites with the aim of investigating different combinations of service interactions. I looked at different combinations, mainly the perceived differences in touch involved in worker-client interactions, i.e., high and low amount and frequency of touch as categorised by Cohen (2011). I also considered the access and willingness to actively participate. As exemplified in the section ‘fieldwork- plans, context, contingencies’, gaining access to observe the interactions and accessing clients were difficult in salons and yoga.

I got the contact for the research sites using my friendship networks and referrals. I started with a small number of initial contacts or seeds (Parker, Scott and Geddes, 2019), such as Apsara and Rohan, who fit the purpose of the research. As they agreed to become participants, I asked for their recommendations for other contacts who fit the research criteria, and who potentially might also be willing participants, for example, the clients of Divine Yoga and Samantha, the owner of Urban Escape. Meanwhile, I also used purposive sampling to select the sites and participants. I viewed them as ‘rich’ cases, sites or individuals capable of producing detailed insights, enabling me to learn much about matters of central importance to the purpose of my research (Patton, 1990, p.169). When selecting the clients for the interviews, I considered the time they had been involved as clients, their willingness to participate and talk freely, availability, and ease of access (online or in-person). In yoga studios, this became convenient as I had prior involvement and observations of most of the clients as a classmate or online observer beforehand.

Data producing techniques – choices and rationale

The salon owners permitted me to sit in and/or walk around the salon, observe the interactions, and ask questions if I wanted to. Visiting salons at different times and days of the week, I recorded my observations of the interactions between clients and workers. Moreover, I became a client of Urban Escape and Pinky Grace. In yoga, my participation and observations were dependent on the class schedules. The

studio owners or trainers preferred me as a client rather than being a “mere observer of the yoga sessions”. As I mentioned in the ‘fieldwork context’ section, I learned they do not allow anyone, including their family members, to observe the classes. Being a client of two yoga studios and two salons enabled me to conduct an immersive, autoethnography, where my embodied, lived experience helped in understanding the interactions within body work encounters. In addition, I conducted formal and informal conversations with clients and workers, took photographs, videos, and field notes, and did digital and physical document reviewing as critical data-producing techniques, to get to know the experiences of how client-worker interactions occur in the encounters. Table 3.1 (p. 79) includes details of my fieldwork time at each site.

Table 3.1: Duration of fieldwork at each research site

Site	First visit	Duration
Divine Yoga	25th February 2022	Five months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two-hour sessions for twenty-six days of in-person beginners’ classes (from March to May) ▪ Two-hour online sessions for eighteen days spanning four months (from April to July, on Saturdays and Sundays, from 6.30 am to 8.30 am)
Urban Escape	25th of April 2022	Four months
Pinky Grace	22nd of May 2022	Four months
Serene Yoga	22nd July 2022	Five months (Full-day yoga retreats usually from 7.30 am to 4.00 pm)
Scissors N Razors	10th October 2022	Four months

Note: My observations at the research sites were conducted with varying frequency, from daily to weekly, and for different durations, ranging from two to six hours. These visits were scheduled following the timetables of the yoga studios and salons, and the length of my participation at each site varied. For instance, in some months, I spent approximately eight hours per week at Urban Escape and six hours at Pinky Grace and Scissors N Razors.

Source: Author

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is “a self-narrative that reviews the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (Spry, 2001, p.710). It considers personal experience as an essential source of knowledge in and of itself and a source of insight into cultural experience (Ellis and Adams, 2014, p. 255). Autoethnography, as a data producing method, fits in my research as embodied approaches to research involve moving away from the traditional mind-body divide. It involves repositioning the body within research to

consider that the whole body is “making sense of the world and producing knowledge” (Ellingson, 2017, p. 16, as cited in Fleetwood-Smith, Tischler and Robson, 2022b, p.265). In other words, it is about repositioning the body as a source of knowledge and understanding instead of merely a vessel for the mind (Fleetwood-Smith et al., 2022b). This involves attending to how people know through their bodies. Therefore, my body became the key to ‘ethnographic knowing’ (Yanow, 2012).

My autoethnographic accounts emerged from my bodily interactions as a client and a researcher with workers, other clients, and more-than-human bodies in service encounters. As a client, I received facial treatment, an oil massage for my hair, a haircut at Urban Escape, and eyebrow threading at Pinky Grace. Regarding yoga, I was a client at Divine Yoga’s three-month beginners’ class and Serene Yoga’s retreats. On the 22nd of February, I came across a Facebook post about the start of a three-month class series for beginners at Divine Yoga. I saw this as a window of opportunities: First, as expected, I could experience the service encounters as a client. It also facilitates building relationships with other clients who are potential participants. Rohan and Apsara agreed to have me as a client. They also believed it would be an excellent opportunity to experience the service encounter by myself and develop connections with other clients so that I could contact some clients and obtain their permission to participate in my research.

I had my first class on the 02nd of March at Divine yoga. Since then, I attended the beginner’s yoga class for three (03) months. The classes were held two days per week, every Wednesday and Friday, from 9 am to 11.00 am. Divine Yoga is located around 6 km away from our home. I attended all sessions during the course series except for two days. On the 8th of April, I had to take both of my parents to cataract surgery, and on the 27th of April, I was absent since I attended my school’s online PhD conference. One class was cancelled due to the island-wide public protest on the 6th of May. However, we had a class on a Monday to cover what the instructor promised at the beginning of the session series.

I arranged my visits to Serene Yoga according to the retreats and scheduled programmes informed by Sathish. By the time I attended Serene Yoga, I was aware of the basic concepts of yoga, and my body was already in ‘systematic training’. So, it made me participate more effectively in the retreat. Sathish and the clients, too, gave their support. As Serene Yoga is located nearly 160 km from my home, I left home around 4 am to participate in retreats, starting at 7 in the morning. Due to the fuel crisis

and the country's situation, I used public transport and came home every night. Although I had plans to stay overnight in a hotel near Serene Yoga, the country's volatile situation, including sudden curfews, prevented me from doing that.

My bodily involvement as a client in yoga changed my daily routines, such as my food intake, time for exercising, and breathing practices. As per a suggestion of Rohan, a trainer at Divine Yoga, my morning tea or coffee was replaced with hot water or herbal porridge to keep my body 'active'. I had gained weight by this time. However, the yoga sessions helped me reduce my body stiffness and enhance my body flexibility. As advised in classes, I practised breathing techniques at home and some basic poses in my initial days of yoga classes. Later, Surya Namaskar, the sun salutation yoga sequence, became a part of my routine.

According to Ellis and Adams (2014), autoethnography features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterisation, and plot. I did my level best to adhere to the principles of autoethnography, namely the use of personal experience, familiarity with existing research and incorporating the advantages of autoethnography (Ellis and Adams, 2014; Méndez, 2013). I learnt how to adapt my behaviour as I continued as a client. I maintained punctuality and other expected behaviours, such as commitment to practising yoga and adhering to rules communicated to us. I also developed a good network with my classmates. Such behaviour and "skills" were not alien to me as most of it was a part of my lifestyle. So, I realised I did not need to fabricate my body language and behaviour. Through these experiences, I attempted to recognise and respect my relationships with others and treat research as a 'socially conscious act' (Ellis and Adams, 2014; Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011).

My participation as a client produced embodied data. With salon services, my body experienced hair treatment and head massage done by Ganga, facial treatments from Samantha and Ganga, and eyebrow threading by Neela. In these processes, I also engaged with multiple bodies via direct multisensory experiences and better understood embodied experiences. I practised yoga poses and breathing techniques with other clients. I experienced my interactions with multiple bodies through my own body (Wacquant, 2015). The clients I met at Serene Yoga were foreigners. They were surprised and happy to hear about my research, which they found interesting. I played the role of a student in a mock teaching session designed as a part of a teacher training course for two Austrian clients; I realised that the body flexibility I had been developing

at Divine Yoga had helped me try new techniques. Moreover, as I continued with yoga sessions, I identified that I spent time with objects following what Bennett (2010, p.17) suggests for researchers: to stick around or deeply engage with objects so that the vibrant matter can be felt. I found this true when practising yoga on my mat, especially during the Sun Salutation and *Savasana* poses. Thus, my becoming (Gherardi, 2019) a client with other bodies rather than a mere observer helped me experience the service interactions in a more engaged and embodied way. Later, this facilitated engaged and 'live' analysis of data produced by recalling my diverse experiences at body work encounters. Moreover, it helped me to do diffractive reading and analysis with my data (see section on diffractive analysis, p. 95).

In my fieldwork notebook, I recorded my experiences and observations as a client, including the sensory experiences and what I felt during service interactions. I also audio-recorded the yoga sessions and salon appointments I had, and video-recorded some yoga sessions in my beginners' class, and when I got my face and hair treatment from Urban Escape. Autoethnographic accounts can take a variety of forms, including short stories, poetry, performance, new media, art, and multivoiced work, such as collaborative autoethnography, co-constructed narrative and collaborative witnessing (Ellis and Adams, 2014, p. 255). For example, Spry (2001) articulates the personally/politically emancipatory potential of autoethnographic performance in a weave of performative autoethnographic poetry and theoretical prose. Spry uses authorial voice in the autoethnographic texts to make her writing far more engaging as emotional texturing of theory and its reliance upon poetic structure to suggest a live participative embodied researcher. Through this use, she argues and demonstrates that even though emotion and poetics are considered scholarly treason, they can be used well (Spry, 2001, p.709). So, informed by these studies and approaches taken by scholars like Spry (2001), I incorporated a review of plots, photo stories, verses and poems apart from narrative writing in reporting my experiences. The fundamentals of affective, embodied methodology I adapted facilitated this method, as it produces knowledge via how our bodies connect us to the world and through bodily experiences and sensations in studying a phenomenon.

Like Spry (2001), I attempted to engage a reader of my thesis and make them visualise the situations and plots easily and lively through techniques such as using a personal tone in my writing my experience. For example, when I describe the research sites in chapter 4, I attempt to make a reader visualise as if he/she is walking with me within the research site while they read the sections. I used photographs and video stills,

attempts at poetic arrangements, and a live commentary of a research plot. I tried to avoid highly abstract and jargonistic writing in such presentations. So, in my research, the lived experience of my body and my body's sensory experiences were essential sources of knowledge for gaining insights regarding worker-client interactions at body work. So, it took a corporeally textual orientation (Spry, 2001), where my body was the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns. Further, as Spry (2001) argues, it thus rejected Denzin's (1992, p. 20) notion that "lived experience can only be represented indirectly, through quotations from field notes, observations or interviews" (Denzin, 1992, p. 20 cited in Spry, 2001, p. 711).

Observations, photographs, video recordings and field notes

Observations refer to methods of generating data which entail the researcher immersing herself or himself in a research 'setting' so that they can experience and observe first-hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting (Mason, 2002, p. 84). A part of my observations comes under my autoethnography, as discussed in the previous section. At the same time, I also made observations as a non-participant at salons, and online observations of Divine Yoga's intermediate classes as a researcher who produced data for my study.

I observed how my classmates and workers interacted at my beginners' class at Divine Yoga and yoga retreats at Serene Yoga. At Divine Yoga, they had online classes delivered to 'intermediate-level' clients who had been practising yoga for more than six months, and some more than eight years. By January 2022, Divine Yoga had shifted both individual and group sessions to hybrid mode, i.e., the classes for the intermediate level were held at the studio, and the camera was set to webcast the same for those who preferred online mode. However, addressing clients' concerns, Divine Yoga continued with hybrid mode even during my study. So, while at home, I observed intermediate-class worker-client interactions and how more than human bodies get involved in online interactions via the Zoom platform. At salons, I usually sat in a corner in the waiting area or service area and observed how worker-client interactions occur.

I also observed how the clients and workers talk to each other, their behaviour, the interactions with more-than-human bodies, like mats and blocks, singing bowls, blow dryers, scissors, chairs, rugs, clothes and food, sites' layouts, and other spatial elements. Observations also included bodily appearances and timings of the service interactions. I also considered the multisensory dimensions of these interactions and the actions and reactions. Observations at salons and yoga studios covered the smell,

such as sanitisers, joss sticks, hair sprays and gel, body lotions, sweat or the sounds of multiple bodies, the sight of spatial and temporal organisation of service setting, and movements during service delivery. Along with these, my observations and review of official websites, social media, and WhatsApp communication threads enabled me to generate data on service settings history, customer feedback, and comments on service interactions.

I considered the techniques of observing materialities by Royer (2020, p.29). Royer categorises the techniques into three based on the role of sight: *observing materiality in actions*, *observing beyond seeing*, and *making participants observe*. Moreover, “as observers, whether participant or not, researchers need to record various data, including who is present, what each [body does with each other], how they do it in the physical space, and what they say about artefacts and spaces during the action” (Royer, 2020, p.29). During my observations, I photographed and video-recorded the interactions during service interactions among workers, clients and more-than-human bodies. In addition, I took down the field notes appropriately. I documented events, conversations, and behaviours observed in the field and my reflections on them. Moreover, I audio-recorded most of the service encounters I observed. This helped me make my field notes much more detailed and comprehensive.

The video recording technique used in my observations helped me to preserve the actions of workers and clients during the service interactions. In addition, it preserved verbal exchanges and sounds (for example, sounds made through singing bowls, trees, rain and music played) and the richness of images. It allowed me nuanced analysis of actions and behaviours, including facial expressions and tiny movements. As suggested by Royer (2020), I used a fixed video camera technique, as well as my mobile phone video recording, considering different angles of postures and interactions. It was important to take such angles to have a clearer picture of interactions.

Because of its static nature, photography is not the most accurate way to capture actions. However, it allowed me to record relationships between bodies in the studied context, such as how workers touch clients in the service interactions, their facial expressions, how they look at each other, how clients and workers handle objects used, equipment in salons, or yoga mats or singing bowls. In addition, I used photographs to capture the service setting, its layout, and surroundings. In my

conversations with my participants, I found that participants more readily accepted my photographing them rather than video recording.

Although the purpose of observation was to witness what was happening in the sites during service interactions, it sometimes was challenging to work out what to observe and what to be interested in. I felt unfocused and vague during the first couple of days of observations. I prepared myself as thoroughly as possible regarding my observation before visiting yoga studios and salons. I checked the functionality of my tape recorder and camera, including battery life, storage, and memory capacity. In taking photographs and video recording, I used my Nikon D 7200 camera. I located the camera on a tripod in an appropriate place in each service setting to video record the data. However, at Urban Escape, Samantha requested that I use my mobile phone to take photographs and video recordings as, given how the space is arranged, it would make clients uncomfortable to use a camera on a Tripod. However, when I had my appointments as a client, I used a fixed video recording camera.

My observations involved watching the bodies of others as they act, perform and interact. Even though knowing that being observed can make participants have different thoughts, feelings and ideas, I attempted to minimise the possible distractions while I did my observations. For example, I did not switch on the camera during my observation of online classes, so as not to distract the clients. During my digital observation of them, my face or bodily image was presented by a black window with my name on it. The participants knew I was observing them, but I did not want to cause any distractions or make them uncomfortable by switching on the camera and showing my face on the screen. However, I also identified that the clients had no time to look at the screens while doing practices; they were engaged with the poses and breathing in line with the flow of Rohan's verbal directions.

I found that participant observation was beneficial in researching bodily interactions. It allowed me to move beyond listening to my participants and watching the setting. Moreover, my observations facilitated me to conduct interviews in a more embodied and engaged way.⁷ It allowed me to generate multidimensional data on service interactions as they occurred. It facilitated me to generate a rich data pool, as it went

⁷ I will discuss this further under the section on interviews.

beyond what I generated from my formal conversations that rely on participants' retrospective accounts, and their ability to verbalise and reconstruct a version of their interactions at service encounters (Mason, 2002). During my interviews, I recalled the incidents and asked how workers and clients experienced certain situations within their interactions, their experience with certain facial expressions, noises such as when an electric generator was put into operation by the nearby supermarket, and their experience with certain smells. Table 3.2 (p.86) summarises the data generated through my observations.

Table 3.2: A summary of the different types of data generated through observations

Site	Form of data	Number of items
Divine Yoga	Audio recordings during my stay at the studio (which includes the conversations that took place during the in-person sessions)	26
	Video recordings of the setting and the in-person yoga sessions	23
	Photographs of the setting and some of the in-person yoga sessions	120
	Video recordings of the online yoga sessions I observed	18
	WhatsApp communication	03 threads
	Video recordings of the TV programmes	04
	Photos of the workshops conducted for employees at different business organisations	10
	The screenshots of the FB posts and clients' reviews	17
Serene Yoga	Audio recordings during my stay at the studio (which includes the conversations that took place during the sessions)	02
	Video recordings of the setting and some of the yoga practices	10
	Photographs of the setting and some of the yoga practices	56
	Video recordings of the online yoga sessions I observed	02
	Photos and the screenshots of the official website and FB page	30
Urban Escape	Audio recordings during my stay at the salon (which includes the conversations that took place between clients and workers)	16
	Video recordings of the setting and some of the service delivery (including a recording me as a client)	09
	Photographs of the setting and some service delivery	120
	Photos and the screenshots of the social media platform	10

Site	Form of data	Number of items
Scissors N Razors	Audio recordings during my stay at the salon (which includes the conversations that took place between clients and workers)	10
	Video recordings of the setting and some of the service delivery	10
	Photographs of the setting and some service delivery	63
Pinky Grace	Audio recordings during my stay at the salon (which includes the conversations that took place between clients and workers)	09
	Video recordings of service delivery	15
	Photographs of the setting and some service delivery	59
	Photos and the screenshots of the social media platform	5

Source: Author

Formal conversations (Interviews) and informal conversations

Qualitative interviewing involves constructing or reconstructing knowledge (Mason, 2002) and ensuring that situated knowledge can be produced. According to this perspective, meanings and understandings are created in an interaction, effectively a co-production involving the researcher and participants. I did thirty-seven interviews during my fieldwork with thirty-three participants. I interviewed three workers, and one client twice (see the details of the interview participants listed in Table 3.3, pp.89-91). I produced data on the clients' and workers' experiences at encounters during interviews. After building a quick rapport by asking how my participants felt on the day or if/they were comfortable attending the interview, I usually started with questions like, "How did you start with yoga", or "How did you get to know the salon?" Then, I asked about the experiences of interactions with workers or clients and how they experience the more-than-human bodies that the service encounter inhabits.

Apart from these formal conversations, I had informal conversations with the clients and workers, for example, before and after their salon appointments, yoga classes, or while the salon clients were receiving the services. I consciously tried interacting with the clients and workers before and after yoga sessions at two yoga studios. For example, I spent ten to fifteen minutes after my session at yoga studios aiming to have informal conversations with my classmates. I ensured that the participants knew my intentions to write about their experiences in my research.

During formal and informal conversations, I sometimes walked with the participants (Pink et al., 2010) within the service setting and incorporated embodied methods within the research process. Through that, I attempted to understand participants' multisensory engagements with the service setting. I walked with the workers to where they had placed the specific equipment and tools, such as sets of scissors, blow dryers, singing bowls, mats and other objects like masks at Pinky Grace, and wall hangings at Divine Yoga. Then, I pointed out those objects and asked about their uses and experiences with the workers. Most of the time, the workers took the equipment into their hands and explained their experiences. It made them more engaged with the discussions, as they touched them fondly or with some emotional attachments. Moreover, during my conversations with both workers and clients, I recalled incidents that we encountered together in specific service encounters and asked them to share their experiences in such incidents or interactions. These techniques of 'using things' (Fleetwood-Smith et al., 2022a; Fleetwood-Smith et al., 2022b) and 'recalling events' facilitated more embodied and sensuous conversations.

Table 3.3: Details of the interview participants

Divine Yoga								
	Participant	Owner/Worker	Sex	Age range	Occupation	Interview place	Language medium	Nationality
1	Rohan	Owner/Worker	Male	40-45	N/A	At the studio, and at the land their house is being constructed	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
2	Apsara	Manager/Worker	Female	35-40	N/A	At the studio, and at the land their house is being constructed	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
3	Rafia	Client	Female	30-35	Event Manager	Online	English	Sri Lankan
4	Pravi	Client	Female	45-50	Housemaker	At a public park	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
5	Suvitha	Client	Female	45-50	Former accountant	Online	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
6	Tharu	Client	Female	30-35	School teacher	Online	English	Sri Lankan
7	Anil	Client	Male	55-60	Manager	Online	English and Sinhala	Sri Lankan
8	Sarala	Client	Female	55-60	Counsellor	At Sarala's home	English	Sri Lankan
9	Himaya	Client	Female	45-50	Housemaker	Online	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
10	Weena	Client	Female	55-60	Former school teacher	At a public park	Sinhala	Sri Lankan

Serene Yoga								
	Participant	Worker/Client	Sex	Age range	Occupation	Interview place	Language medium	Nationality
11	Sathish	Owner/Worker	Male	40-45	N/A	At the Yoga studio	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
12	Sophia	Client	Female	50-55	Businesswoman/ graphic designer/ social worker	Online	English	German
13	Gamaliel	Client	Male	55-60	University Academic (Prof.)	Online	English	Israeli
14	Noam	Client	Male	25-30	Entrepreneur	At the Yoga studio	English	Austrian
15	Valerie	Client	Female	20-25	Entrepreneur	At the Yoga studio	English	Austrian
16	Meriam	Client	Female	45-50	Yoga trainer	Online	English	Israeli
Urban Escape								
	Participant	Worker/Client	Sex	Age range	Occupation	Interview place	Language medium	Nationality
17	Samantha	Owner/Worker	Female	45-50	N/A	At the salon	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
18	Ganga	Worker	Female	20-25	N/A	At the salon	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
19	Celestina	Client	Female	55-60	Housemaker	At the salon	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
20	Chirani	Client	Female	30-35	Digital marketing executive	Online	English	Sri Lankan
21	Devmi	Client	Female	45-50	Entrepreneur	At the salon	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
22	Sayuri	Client	Female	35-40	Yoga trainer	Online	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
23	Kamanthi	Client	Female	55-60	Retired teacher	Online	Sinhala	Sri Lankan

Scissors N Razors								
	Participant	Worker/Client	Sex	Age range	Occupation	Interview place	Language medium	Nationality
24	Lal	Owner/Worker	Male	50-55	N/A	At the salon	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
25	Tharaka	Worker	Male	20-25	N/A	At the salon	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
26	Nalin	Client	Male	40-45	Businessman	At the salon's waiting area	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
27	Chandula	Client	Male	20-25	Undergraduate	Adjacent vacant shop	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
28	Ariyathilaka	Client	Male	50-55	Retired army officer	Adjacent vacant shop	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
29	Hemanga	Client	Male	50-55	Vegetable vendor	Adjacent vacant shop	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
Pinky Grace								
	Participant	Worker/Client	Sex	Age range	Occupation	Interview place	Language medium	Nationality
30	Neela	Owner/Worker	Female	40-45	N/A	At the salon	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
31	Theja	Client	Female	40-45	Office Assistant	Salon's reception area	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
32	Venuri	Client	Female	30-35	Housemaker	Salon's reception area	Sinhala	Sri Lankan
33	Kalhari	Client	Female	35-40	Housemaker	Kalhari's home	Sinhala	Sri Lankan

Source: Author

I conducted interviews in Sinhala and English, considering my participants' preferences. All of the interviews with Serene Yoga clients were conducted in English, and they were from Germany, Israel, and Austria. They preferred to talk in English as they were fluent in English other than their native language. In addition, five Sri Lankan participants (four at Divine Yoga and one at Urban Escape) preferred to conduct our conversations in English. Most interviews ran for 30 to 45 minutes, while three ran for one hour. Participants' consent was obtained prior to recording all the interviews. The in-person interviews were recorded using an audio tape recorder, and the virtual ones were recorded using the Zoom facility. The virtual interviews thus contained video recordings of the interviews. This consequently enabled me to refer to the participants' non-verbal cues more comprehensively, rather than to notes regarding non-verbal cues taken while the in-person interviews were done.

Interviews were done face-to-face during the service encounters, at client and workers' homes, and via Zoom online platform. The main reason for having online interviews was the fuel crisis; some were in fuel queues during the day and preferred interviews at night. Alternatively, even though some preferred to be interviewed at public places such as a café or restaurant, they faced difficulty reaching them due to the fuel issue, so I had to opt for online interviews. The crisis caused delays in fixing appointments and the mode of the interviews. For example, once Anil asked me to postpone his scheduled interview, setting another date took more than three weeks. We were trying to fix it, but on the very morning or just before the interview, he had to cancel it due to emergent issues with fuel issues or at his workplace due to the countrywide crisis.

I identified that we, both I and my participants, considered not only what we talked about or listened to but also attempted to read each other's body language or observe how each other responded to questions and answers. For example, with some of my facial expressions, such as surprise and expressions of 'I did not get it', the participants asked if he/she needed to elaborate more. Suvitha once said she found through my reactions that I did not understand what she said and repeated with some more examples. Similarly, I led some questions by reading the participants' facial expressions and tone during our interviews. So, it is not only about me as a researcher who considered my participants' bodily actions and reactions. Participants, too, observed me and reacted. So, our bodily actions and reactions affected how the interview evolved and made it happen. It shows "all bodies involved in the research inquiry are active participants whose meaning-making exists in the moment of encounter" (La Jevic and Springgay, 2008. p. 7). Thus, our conversations were

'embodied encounters' (Thanem and Knights, 2019) shaped by bodily practices, actions and gestures, and facial expressions and dimensions such as proximity and distance created mainly by in-person and online interviews.

While paying attention to my safety, I always wanted my participants' convenience and freedom so that I could speak to them, and settings which would give them an excellent space to talk about their experiences. I visited the home of two female clients and the land where Apsara and Rohan's home was under construction, to do interviews. I had two formal interviews with Apsara and Rohan. The second one was done close to the end of my fieldwork and was done on the land where their new house is being built, where they planned to set up a new yoga studio as well. So, Apsara and Rohan were proud to have the conversation outdoors rather than in the rented studio. It lasted nearly two hours.

All interviews relating to Scissors N Razors were conducted in the salon waiting area or attached vacant shop, which was quite comfortable for both the participant and me. Lal, too, preferred this option. He did not like the clients having my contact number and me having their contact numbers, arranging meetings at public places they prefer, or having online interviews with them. The reason was gender, me being a young woman and the clients being men, and perceived issues relating to that. Lal told me it would be a safe approach to have conversations at a place like this, which would be safer for me. Moreover, it would give the client the freedom to talk and maintain the confidentiality of the data.

I interviewed Weena and Pravi at a park, as per their preference. For Suvitha, we planned to meet at a coffee shop where she enjoyed spending time. However, she later decided to save her car's fuel and changed her mind. So, we conducted two virtual interviews. Despite the physical distance between us, Suvitha expressed that she felt at ease and comfortable while being interviewed from her home, seated in her favourite chair in her favourite spot. Using these methods and techniques, I identified that I produced 'rich' data via my interviews, maintaining ethical behaviour in research.

Data analysis and interpretation – methods and the process

As explained in the above sections, I produced extensive data. However, the data was in bulk, making me feel it was challenging to handle and analyse. Analysing data was a slow and messy process. At the same time, my engagement with the data was embodied and enjoyable. I felt happy when I saw the richness of the data. I enjoyed

choosing different colours to highlight, underline and comment frequently. At first, when I realised that the visual data, transcriptions, and field notes amounted to loads and loads and derived heaps of coding, I felt happy. However, later, I felt overloaded, and that I was being drowned in the river of data. It made me stressed. As Corbin and Strauss (1998) say, I sometimes got perplexed by this task. I felt overwhelmed, bored (and angry) by the sheer number of field notes, documents, and interview pages - "mountains of data". I was also troubled by questions like how to make sense of all this material. How can I lead them to theoretical interpretations? How do I combine all my analysis to create a concise reading and interpretation and contribute to the field? Nonetheless, at the same time, I started living with data.

From the data analysis and interpretation stage, my raccoon mode was switched on, not in terms of the smell of my body, but the dark circles under my eyes, which were caused by long-term work that involved sleepless nights. My body regained weight. My yoga routines were missed. Instead, I kept sitting on my chair, usually from 8 am to 12 noon, then from 4 pm to 6 pm, again from 9 pm to 1 am, and only having some breaks from time to time. When I read the data, it generated mixed feelings, such as happiness, sadness, and pride. For example, I felt proud when foreign clients appreciated Sri Lankans' hospitality despite the prevailing situation.

Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis involves an iterative process. I used thematic analysis to analyse my interview and visual data. where I referred to Braun & Clarke (2006; 2012; 2019; 2020). Also, I was informed by Gibson and Brown (2009), Butler-Kisber and Poldma, (2010), Byrne (2022), and Naeem et al. (2023). According to Braun and Clarke (2019), although thematic analysis is commonly used to analyse interview and focus group data, it can also be used for other forms of data, such as photographs, videos, and other visual material. When using thematic analysis with visual data, the process of identifying themes may involve identifying patterns or recurring visual elements such as colours, shapes, or symbols. In addition, the researchers may analyse the contextual information surrounding the visual data to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the image (Naeem et al., 2023).

The whole process of data analysis engaged a "manual" process. I first started transcribing the interview data. I listened to the interview recordings, transcribed the content and typed or wrote in a notebook. Listening to the interviews was very engaging and encouraging. However, getting them into a digital or physical document

took much work and time. As many would agree, this was tiring and time-consuming, and it was a happy and sometimes tedious process. Then, I got the transcribed data and went through it repeatedly, trying to find the codes and specific themes.

I separated the data relevant to five research sites and stored them in folders. I followed the six phases: familiarising myself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. In analysing and developing my draft writings, I avoided common errors Braun and Clarke (2006) highlighted, such as providing data extracts with little or no analysis, simple paraphrasing or summarising data, and using data collection questions as themes. I attempted to come up with coherent themes and analyses supported by evidence and enough data to convince the reader that this pattern was evident. Also, in developing and revising my analysis, I ensured that data-based claims were justified within my theoretical position (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

However, my first two stages of data analysis required more focus on my research objectives. Although I had read through some of the data, I realised that I had been mainly attracted to a few codes. I submitted my preliminary thematic maps to my supervisors twice to ensure that I was still on track with my research objectives. I realised I still needed to provide them with a clearer picture of where my data was leading. In this situation, I took the advice of my supervisors and started reworking on identifying derived themes. At the same time, though it was not identified or planned initially, I realised that I got involved in diffractive analysis (St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014; Mazzei, 2014; Taguchi and Palmer, 2013) in my data analysis and interpretation.

Diffractive analysis

Diffractive analyses read data from empirical research alongside other materials—including researchers' perspectives, memories, experiences, and emotions—to provide novel insights into events (Fox and Alldred, 2023, p. 93). Diffractive analysis is also known as 'diffractive methodology' (Barad, 2007), 'thinking with theory' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) and 'plugging in' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013). As Barad (2011, p. 445) argues, diffractive methodology is a means for social researchers to make the entanglements and differences explicit via analytic techniques that read data 'through' other texts, personal experiences, or other data. For example, data from a study are read on another source of affect deriving from the analyst's own experiences, memories, emotional responses, or theoretical position (Fox and Alldred, 2023, p.103). Thus, this kind of analysis produces an emergent and unpredictable series of readings

as data (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743). Moreover, Taguchi (2012) identifies diffractive analysis as an embodied engagement with the materiality of research data. It therefore emphasises becoming-with the data as a researcher, similar to my involvement in my research.

As explained in my data-producing techniques, my autoethnography enabled me to quickly recall and relate the experiences in service encounters during my formal and informal conversations with the participants. Moreover, my auto-ethnography considered the entanglements and relationality of human and more-than-human bodies and how they come to matter in their interactions, making it easy to follow the diffractive analysis. My approach was different from traditional (auto) ethnography. For instance, Guillion (2018) introduces diffractive ethnography as a methodology and states the focus must not be solely on studying and analysing people, cultures or groups. In other words, it does not merely involve “describing people and the things they do” like in traditional (auto) ethnography. Instead, it encourages the researcher to ask questions about “the nature of relationships between humans and other matter and the entanglements that these relationships form” (Gullion, 2018, p. 121) within the interactions that take place in service encounters. Thus, my engagement made it easy for me to work with data and analyse them effectively.

Turning to my experience in data analysis and interpretation, even though I have mentioned the systemic thematic analysis process in the thematic analysis section, I acknowledge that there was no clear-cut starting point in data analysis. For example, my data analysis occurred even when I was observing the research settings and interactions. When I visited Divine Yoga for the first time, I linked my observations and conversations with my previous readings of power relations in encounters and some theoretical interpretations. I had the first formal conversation at the studio. There were some folded chairs in one corner of the studio. However, they did not intend to offer one to me. Neither did I take one of the chairs to sit on. Rohan was already seated on his yoga bench. It made me sit on the floor. After standing for a while, Apsara sat on the bench. I realised how the bench appeared and how Rohan sat on it and urged me to sit on the floor. This made me think of objects like yoga benches and body postures that could provide self-interpretations on producing relations between bodies. My readings on aesthetics, material culture, and related factors backed this realisation. Moving beyond, I realised how the spatial arrangement affected my behaviour and the relations in the given encounter. As per my observations and reflections, these

arrangements made me and my classmates in the beginners' class behave in a certain way during our service encounters.

In addition, I found an inseparable relationship between data and me (MacLure, 2013). As I analysed the interview transcripts of my yoga classmates, I found that they had recalled some incidents that I, too, was involved in. So, I started drawing upon my memories of the events and incidents they recalled during the interviews. My review became intertwined with my recollection of my actions during these occurrences. I was with them, and data became more familiar to me.

The data was embedded within my lived experiences. It enabled data weaving through my thoughts and daily experiences and contributed to analysis interpretation. Sometimes, my mind wandered into the data, and sometimes, the data haunted me (Wilson, 2018), appearing as 'academic frights' during most everyday tasks, such as cooking, sweeping, gardening, and especially during my bedtime. It is through this context of living that part of the embedded meanings for my data emerged.

Although I developed my own themes in the thematic analysis process, some were later re-named as per literature or theoretical explanations. For example, I found various facets of bodily interactions during my data analysis. In labelling these facets, I recalled my reading of the work of Hare (1960; 2007) on the dimensions of face-to-face social interactions and the work on two primary dimensions of social relationships, namely control and affection, by Kemper (1973). I must mention that I was slightly influenced by these writings in reading, identifying facets of interactions, and labelling codes.

As I iteratively refined my codes and themes, re-naming my themes and sub-themes for the final time, I must acknowledge that I read the data relating to sensory studies and affect theory, particularly Spinoza's work. For instance, while the data showed me the emergence of a supporting, restricting, or controlling role of bodies, the themes I derived as enabling and restraining came to my attention via my reading of affect theory.

My analysis outcomes in different stages were read from time to time by "another pair of eyes or ears" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 258) than mine, and such reading was important in refining as well as fine-tuning the analysis. My supervisors' readings and comments on my multiple drafts of data analysis, as well as our conversations on the themes and

the interconnections, made me look at my data from another direction. Moreover, with the directions of my supervisors, I drew my attention to Massumi's (1995) differentiation of sense, feelings, and affect in identifying and naming the different affective flows, such as intimacy.

Although a code is usually understood as a researcher-generated construct that symbolises and attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorisation, theory building, and other analytic processes (Saldaña, 2013), I acknowledge that these codes got re-named through my reading of data with theory and literature and the discussions with my supervisors. These exemplify that my data analysis was a merge of thematic analysis and diffractive reading of data.

The outcome

Data analysis required several rounds of going through the data, coding and identifying common themes I could collate. As Saldaña (2013) has suggested, my first cycle codes were initially applied to the data, and then I inductively did my second cycle codes applying to the data within the generated first cycle codes. In other words, in the second cycle, I further analyse the coded text of the first cycle, adding a second layer of coding to the initial first cycle codes. I also used this cycle as an inductive (Saldaña, 2013) process. To simplify the process, I referred to a colour scheme in coding and categorising interview excerpts and used a specific colour for each theme I identified. This helped me quickly identify quotes and categories relevant to each theme. In the initial phase, I produced more than 50 codes through the data on worker-client multisensory lived experiences in service interactions, which I took under sensory elements like touch, hearing, sight, and smell. There were multiple layers of codes, while some appeared isolated, and some showed clear interlinks with other codes. So, I combined the codes as appropriate. However, reviewing, refining, and combining data led me to funnel them to a lesser number. I then went for the second coding cycle, where I identified that I could refine and re-name the codes and grouped them into facets or dimensions of bodily interactions. The analysis of the data next led me to recognise how flows of affect are experienced by workers and clients within interactions. So, I derived nine sub-themes of flows of affect that emerge through bodily interactions.

Moving forward in analysis, I identified these affective bodily interactions either as enabling or restraining the bodily capacities in body work. Then, I looked at how I am

going to account for enabling and restraining interactions that make through flows of affect. Data revealed that all interactions involve a diverse range of human-more-than-human bodies. However, I clustered the flows of affect that emerged through interactions mainly into two themes: (a) enabling and restraining human-human interactions and (b) enabling and restraining human-more-than-human interactions. These two themes further presented two sub-themes in each. The human-human interactions are comprised of (a) worker-client and (b) client-client interactions. Under human-more-than-human interactions, it includes (a) client-more-than-human and (b) worker-client-more-than-human interactions. This clustering was determined based on the vibrant data (Bennett, 2009) in an event or particular assemblage of body work service encounters. Through vibrancy, I am referring to the data of liveliness and vitality, where a particular body or body elicited a more intense sensory experience, as revealed by my participants - the clients or workers, or as illustrated and identified in my autoethnographic accounts. Arranging the flow of presentation of the themes and sub-themes in this way enabled me to avoid repetitions that could occur in my writing of findings in chapter 6 as much as possible.

Once I had identified the sub-themes and themes, I copied the evidence for each into separate Google documents, such as the relevant interview excerpts and field notes sections. I also included extracts of informal conversations and my experience as a client appropriately as evidence for relevant themes. I gave cross-reference numbers to relevant evidence of my paragraphs and the video recordings. This helped me quickly refer to the data when drafting my writings on each theme. Table 3.4 (p.100) outlines the outcomes of my data analysis.

Writing stage

The writing stage involved risks, difficulties, frustrations, fatigue, and moments of joy and happiness. Usually, it has been identified that there is a risk of losing the embodied, relational, and multisensorial aspects of embodied and multisensorial data along with interviews and field notes while translating them into language (Rieger et al., 2022). I found it challenging to incorporate converting data on my embodied and multisensorial experiences, especially about expressing feelings and expressions in my mother tongue and converting them into writing in another language. However, to address such problems, I incorporated photographs, converting my data into written paragraphs and verses. However, as a beginner in this field, these might also have some drawbacks in converting my experiences.

Table 3.4: Landscaping the outcomes of my data analysis

Types of interactions	Forms through which bodily interactions occur—the sensory interactions	Sub-facets of bodily interactions	Key facets of bodily interactions or flows of affect experienced through bodily interactions	Characteristics of affective bodily interactions
Worker-client interactions	Touch, sight, hearing, smells	Professionalism, care, benevolence, safety, trust, respect	Intimacy	Enabling or restraining bodily capacities in service encounters
	Touch, sight, hearing, smells	Consistency, familiarity, novelty, proximity, access	Enchantment	
Client-client interactions	Sight, hearing, smells	Safety, confidence, reliability, harmony, care	Compatibility	
Client-more-than-human interactions	Touch, sight, hearing, smells	Consistency, familiarity, novelty	Enchantment	
		Unsafe, lack of harmony, distancing	Isolation	
		Devotion, care, consistency	Commitment	
Worker-client-more-than-human	Touch, sight, hearing, smells	Consistency, proximity, access	Enchantment	
		Care, devotion	Commitment	

Source: Author, based on her data analysis

My study included inter-corporeal involvement with data. During fieldwork and later in interpreting the data and writing my thesis, I acknowledged my bodily encounters with other bodies and materialities, sensed via touch, hearing, smell, sight, and taste. Moreover, as I used my body to generate data, I realised that such experiences reveal their active inter-corporeal involvement in producing sensible knowledge. This is the same as how the interactions evolved with humans (workers and other clients) and with more-than-human bodies. Thus, the data produced, too, had no escape from being affected and affecting other bodies.

For example, entanglements occurred with my participants, research supervisors, my family and PhD colleagues, university administration and procedures, procedures of the research sites, my computer, draft documents, camera and mobile phone, weather, encounters with strangers and many more. Moreover, my everyday practices, together with practices related to cultural and social status, personal life practices such as domestic work and family responsibilities, daily routines, daily contingencies and large-scale events such as the COVID-19 Pandemic, the post-pandemic and Sri Lanka's socio-political and economic crisis entangled positionality⁸ (Nikulkin and Zvonareva, 2024) during my research.

Research ethics

I adhered to research ethics during the stages of my PhD research journey, including initial planning and reviewing the literature, my relationship with my participants, producing data, developing my data analysis, and writing. Moreover, as the research evolved, I tried my best to pay attention to my own body with care and respect, and approach the more-than-human bodies I got entangled with in a more caring and responsible way. In this section, I will elaborate on how I did so in different stages of my study.

I acknowledge that the elements of my research process; planning, fieldwork, analysing and writing were co-produced by my entanglement with multiple bodies during this period and my historical engagement with those bodies in terms of memory and knowledge. I avoided plagiarism and acknowledged the authors throughout the research journey. In gaining access to research sites and participants, as well as the workers and clients at the salon and yoga, I supplied them with participation

⁸ My 'entangled positionality' is discussed in the section on reflections.

information sheets and consent forms. I developed separate consent forms for owners/workers and clients, as they needed different aspects to provide their consent. I gave the potential participants enough time to review these documents and give their Informed consent. Informed consent is an ethical requirement, necessitating that research participants are advised of all relevant aspects of the research—especially any potential risks to them—as a pre-condition of providing consent to participate (Newman, Guta, and Black, 2021). Further, I told them to ask questions or provide detailed clarification. Some sheets and forms were emailed to the participants, while others were given printed materials.

After a couple of visits, my presence became familiar to workers. This was also similar with the yoga clients, as it was the same group/s of clients at a particular class series or a yoga retreat. However, at salons, I had to be introduced to the clients. At Urban Escape and Pinky Grace, some clients first assumed me to be a trainee, or a worker, as I still needed to introduce myself. However, those clients had not started their appointment time. Based on their observation in the waiting chairs, they asked such questions. However, I ensured that a proper introduction was given to the clients before they started with their respective service receipts, and that I had their consent. This involved verbal consent in most cases.

I remained dedicated to my project, adhering to the research ethics agreed upon by the ELMPS Committee and emergent ones. I adhered to appropriate data protection techniques, such as maintaining anonymity and confidentiality. For example, all the participants and research sites were given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. In photos and in video stills, I blurred or used black bars to make the person or places unrecognisable.

During fieldwork, I encountered multiple ethical dilemmas, such as aspects relating to my entanglements in research settings and ethnographic immersion, data analysis, and presentation of findings. With the direction of my supervisors and the use of situational approaches to facing dilemmas, I managed to effectively manage them to maintain ethical and moral behaviour in conducting this research.

I prioritised the safety of my participants, the data I produced and myself. During the interviews, I encountered sensitive moments as some participants shared their struggles, anger, feelings of shame, disgust, happiness and joy in recalling their experience at service encounters. Some clients shared their critical comments about

the workers, including displeasure and anger. Similarly, the workers revealed moments of disgust and anger towards some clients, who were known to me as colleagues in my yoga class or as participants in my study. However, in their conversations with me, the clients and workers told me they trusted me and believed I would not tell the relevant individuals. I ensured data confidentiality by not sharing data with any other participants.

I was careful in protecting audio and video recordings. As I conducted online interviews using the Zoom platform, I took security measures beforehand. I prevented others besides the “host” from recording the session, refraining from possibly sharing it with the participants with their friends or family members. However, as I know there are several modes of recording that participants can employ, such as screen recording, I informed the participants that I expect they, too, will guarantee the confidentiality of data. I considered the safety of where and for how long any recordings would be stored. I recorded and saved all my data, physically or digitally, as appropriate. As I experienced lengthy power cuts, I voice-recorded my daily experiences, as I could not write them down in the dark during the night. Later, I typed/ recorded them in a Word document. I arranged my notebooks, critical readings and the pile of interview transcripts in a neat, tidy, and safe manner. My laptop and temporary data storage became the critical objects I cared for and protected. I drafted most of my writing on my laptop, and data was saved in my temporary data storage device until uploaded to the University Cloud. My laptop and mobile phone were password protected. To ensure the safety and security of my data, I stored it all in a safe University Drive Folder as soon as possible and kept my field notes in a locked drawer in my cupboard. Additionally, I took extra precautions while travelling back to the UK and took care of the storage device I used to store my data.

Furthermore, I meticulously planned and prepared for my safety during the study. I gathered extensive background information about the organisations and the participants. I scheduled most in-person interviews during the day, within research sites, or in public places. I carried only the essential interview equipment, and ensured my mobile phone was fully charged. I took the time to familiarise myself with the locations beforehand and carefully considered safety methods, mainly when I had interviews at participants’ homes. I shared the location with my partner, using a mobile App on my first visit to all the sites. However, as all contacts were made based on a friendship network, my fear was somewhat controlled. The first trip to Serene Yoga was my first trip down south alone. Before this, someone always accompanied me

when I was leaving Colombo. However, due to fuel shortages and the caring responsibilities for Apurva, our son, I asked my partner to stay at home.

There were some occasions when I had to be careful in handling my relationships with my participants. For example, Yoga clients Pravi and Suvitha often called me to share their experiences, saying, "I think you need to hear this and hope it helps you!" Further, Suvitha asked me if she could help me contact other clients. However, later, I identified that she wanted to get to know whom I had interviewed. Here, I needed to consider maintaining ethical relationships with my participants, and I politely declined Suvitha's help.

I also recall an incident at Divine Yoga involving my audio recordings of class sessions that caused some concerns. Apsara and Rohan suspected I had shared the recordings with a student, Vindya, who often missed our class sessions due to family problems. Vindya usually contacted me or Pravi to find out what was covered in the class. Apsara directly questioned me about this. After explaining the situation and providing evidence, Apsara thanked me for maintaining ethical behaviour. I assured her I always strive to uphold ethical behaviour as a client and a researcher. I had never shared my audio recordings with anyone. I informed Apsara that I had once sent her a voice message via WhatsApp, summarising what we did in the class, such as the names of the poses and any preparation for the next class. Rohan and Apsara explicitly accepted and encouraged this type of sharing during our classes. I sent her screenshots of my WhatsApp communication with Vindya to demonstrate that I had not shared the recordings. Apsara thanked me again for maintaining ethical behaviour, and apologised if her questions caused discomfort. Rohan and Apsara had been concerned and upset that their unique teaching content and method had been leaked to unintended recipients. I thanked Apsara for straightforwardly addressing the issue, which improved our relationship.

This incident highlighted the importance of acting and reacting appropriately as a researcher. It enhanced the trust in our relationship, and Apsara subsequently became more open in expressing herself during our interactions. Confidence in my conduct and their direct approach to addressing the issue put me at ease and allowed my research to generate richer data. As a researcher, I recognised the importance of demonstrating transparency and maintaining ethical conduct, not only through official clearance documents but also through my actions and responses.

Reflections

I am closer to two months from my submission when I revise this section. As I edge closer to the submission date, I reflect on the past four years. I made a New Materialist inquiry into body work encounters. This, in turn, helped me understand and accept my becoming-with as a researcher. I acknowledge that the elements or stages of my research; planning, fieldwork, analysis and writing were co-produced by my entanglement (Barad, 2007) with multiple bodies during this period, and my historical engagement with some of the bodies in terms of memory and knowledge. Each of the bodies was affective in different ways. My body, research supervisors, family members, research participants, the COVID-19 pandemic, and crisis in Sri Lanka, my laptop, the books and journal articles, university and school, my rented home, my cat and her kittens, to name a few.

Entangled positionality

My positionality as a researcher outlines how my position as a researcher interacted with research processes and outcomes (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Holmes, 2020). The dominant version of positionality theory would likely position me as a Sri Lankan, a middle-class mother who was raised in a multiethnic and multi-religious social background and is in a research and academic career. Nevertheless, my entangled positionality (Nikulkin and Zvonareva, 2024) was not only about predetermined biases derived from these social statuses. Instead, it is also produced by multiple, diverse, and unpredictable everyday practices. My entangled positionality (Nikulkin and Zvonareva, 2024) as a researcher, accounts for my everyday research practices and the human and non-human bodies with whom I interacted over the time and space of this research, while my experience of previous attachments, too, has an impact. I identify that these experiences and practices shaped me through feelings of joy and happiness, anxiety, fear, sickness, and grief, and made me more sensitive to experiences leading me in a particular direction and ways of (un)doing my research and becoming-with my thesis.

Most of my everyday practices related to 'large-scale events' (Nikulkin and Zvonareva, 2024), namely the stages of COVID-19 (mainly from 2020 to 2023) and Sri Lanka's crisis 2022 both made me think of alternatives and decide on the choices involved in my research. For example, how many interviews are conducted, where they will take place, and how observations are made. As I explained in an earlier part of this chapter, I had to go for physical as well as online interviews and observations of online yoga classes, as Divine Yoga continued with its online courses during the countrywide crisis.

Further, it affected my time schedule for fieldwork, in terms of its planned duration, from six-seven months to nearly a year.

In a typical everyday context, I would have reviewed the data I collected and updated my field notes on the same day. However, during the crisis in 2022, I had to prioritise daily chores, such as cooking dinner before the scheduled power outages, and then search for alternative lighting to review my notes. There were occasions when I had to go without using my laptop for several days, due to the lack of electricity to recharge it. Managing daily life and household responsibilities demanded more attention and effort than usual. My partner, too, was conducting fieldwork for his PhD. Instead of solely focusing on our PhD studies, we dealt with the unexpected challenges of daily life, much like many other Sri Lankans. I often found myself questioning my decision to pursue research during these stormy times in Sri Lanka.

The crisis also influenced how others perceived me and their interactions with me. For example, Urban Escape, one of the selected salons, is situated in the high-security zone near the Parliament. During the crisis of 2022, there was a constant security presence of armed forces and police on my route to Urban Escape. On some days, such as those following the attack on the President's residence and days requiring emergency discussions, there were nearly 100 soldiers and police officers ensuring peace and security in the area. I often carried my backpack and camera. I carried my yoga mat bag on certain days and headed to the salon right after my yoga class. Therefore, I was frequently asked for identification while walking along the road to Urban Escape. Once I was cleared, it was common to hear questions and remarks like *"Are you a journalist?"* or *"You look like a journalist"* in a friendly manner. Similarly, when I visited Serene Yoga, the villagers quickly identified me as a stranger. I received inquisitive looks from the locals, especially when walking past the fuel queues.

Moreover, I had to adapt and manage many contingencies, such as a sudden island curfew within my fieldwork period. The following verse exemplifies another stressful day, yet shows how I managed to engage in my fieldwork and produce data. It also shows how my involvement with the tragic news, then my ride on the bus, my connectedness with Facebook, then with my yoga classmates and the session affected my body and behaviour and my data-producing attempts.

Twentieth April twenty twenty-two

It was the morning
Twentieth April twenty twenty-two

With tense feelings,
full of frustration
full of anxiety

It was the morning after
one person was killed
in a public protest in *Rambukkana*⁹
by the open fire of police
The man was an 'unknown' to me till he died,
but his death shocked me
I started to read about him and
my thoughts were with his family

But,
I needed to continue with my work
I needed to be there and experience the service encounters
Amid all that's going around me
I could not miss attending my research site
I had to speed up the data collection
sensing that tomorrow will be more gloomy
I got into a bus
Uploaded a post to FB
against such a crime
the only act I could do
a display of my resistance
against such a crime
As I entered the class
Pravi was there to share my thoughts
She consoled me, reminding me that 'life is not fair.'

Our session began
I mixed up and messed up
some poses at first
but little by little
my body got engaged,
through
the rhythms, voice, and actions
my body was healed

And for those two-plus hours,
I was out of my sorrow, my tensions.
I felt engaged, and I felt serenity.

Source: Author

⁹ A town in the Kegalle District of Sri Lanka

My everyday research practices essentially concerned motherhood and family while living through the above-mentioned large-scale events. Waiting in fuel queues and for groceries changed and influenced how I planned my fieldwork. Likewise, sharing household and child care responsibilities with my partner, driving home faster after completing observations, cancelling all plans to pick up my son who fell sick at the nursery, and cancelling the appointments due to the curfew imposed, and running to buy the necessities for the coming days, getting involved with my parents' cataract eye surgery, in a situation where lenses were in short supply due to banning of imports and related 'mafia' domination of the pharmaceutical industry. Although we both shared the childcare work, there were many times this sharing schedule did not work effectively due to the 'demands' of our son. Some days, he wanted to spend more time with me, while on other days, he wanted to be with his father.

Additionally, heavy snowing days in the UK, the unexpected birth of four kittens to our pet cat and caring responsibilities, weather changes such as heavy rains over three weeks and diseases like cold and fever, and viruses had an impact on how I continued with my work, especially during the data analysis and writing stage. Although not all everyday practices or experiences are equally important in shaping fieldwork and co-producing researchers' positionality, my reflections on our fieldwork experiences, however, demonstrate how different forms of everyday practices played a salient role in shaping how I conducted my research.

Body reflexivity

My research paved the way for me to use my body to experience and interpret data (Gherardi, 2018; Wacquant, 2015). My body played a crucial role in my research process, allowing and constraining me to gain sensible aesthetic knowledge (Gherardi, 2019; Pink, 2015; Strati, 2007) in body work service interactions. It also reminded me of what Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. xvii) suggested: "The world is not what I think, but what I live through". So, my reflection on my body or body reflexivity is essential to explain.

My body reflexivity accounts not only for my body but also its relations with other bodies and a deep reflection of personal experience. It involves how my body was open to the unsettling co-presence of bodies affecting each other in time-space (Vannini, 2015, p. 321). For example, during my becoming-with yoga (Gherardi, 2018) at Divine and Serene Yoga, I started paying more attention to my body, yoga mat, yoga studio/shala floor, or practising area at home with much increased respect and care. I made sure

the mat and floor were clean and tidy. I was more conscious and alert about my body movement, speed and breathing patterns during the yoga sessions and other times of the day. I monitored my weight and waist size occasionally, and spent time in front of a mirror checking my arms and armpit muscles.

During the initial yoga sessions, I suffered from body pains in the evening and the following day due to the rigorous exercises and warm-up stretching I participated in. Then, the warm-up work and yoga *asanas*, especially sun salutations, became a part of my morning schedule, even if it was not a yoga class day. My son, too, joined me in practising these. Then, in my writing stage, yoga got left out of my schedule. I was interacting more with my table, chair and laptop. My relationality with my right hand, mouse, palm, fingers, and keyboard, looking at my laptop screen, looks of staring and immersing in the screen, intensified, and those became the most significant ones to me. My body regained weight, and back pain, neck pain, and eye strains were afflicting me. My use of *Siddhalepa*¹⁰ was so frequent.

I learned that the salon workers were concerned about my appearance. One day, after seeing my hairstyle, Samantha told me it would make my hair tight and damaged. Instead, she asked me to use another hairstyle to keep it safe. At Pinky Grace, Neela was conscious of the sunburns I had. She also showed concern over my hair, which I should care more about. In attending all salons, I paid 'extra attention' to the neatness of my dress, hair, and nails. On some days, I visited salons after my sessions at Divine Yoga. I made sure to wash my body to remove any sweat. Since my body tends to heat up quickly after yoga, I chose a mild perfume to prevent unpleasant odour. I kept my hair tightened neatly. In attending Scissors N Razors, I was extra careful with loose-fitting outfits.

My demeanour and mode of presenting myself at my research sites were similar to my "usual" behaviour. That was crucial in obtaining access to research sites and continuing my data-producing activities. Apsara once mentioned that Rohan is usually unwilling to grant outsiders, including researchers, permission to observe or locate a study at Divine Yoga. She told me that even family members cannot observe the sessions, as they, too, are not allowed. Nevertheless, Rohan had started liking what I

¹⁰ *Siddhalepa* is a balm, an Ayurvedic herbal formulation that relieves headaches, toothaches, and muscle and bone aches.

do in my research and how I do it, along with my professional conduct, work ethic, discipline, and commitment to adhering to the class protocols and norms, such as punctuality. In addition, according to Apsara, their observations on how I interacted with other clients within sessions and how I willingly supported my classmates made them support my study. Apsara continued, *“You were doing your research, and we, too, were observing your conduct.”* Additionally, my classmates at Divine Yoga remarked on my approachability and ability to connect with others.

I felt comfortable at the yoga beginner class, as all the clients were new. So, they, too, wanted to get to know each other. In attending yoga classes, I did not use any makeup or jewellery. I used a mild cologne and tightened my hair in a ponytail or a bun. The yoga studios preferred simple practising kits, mostly old, used T-shirts and comfortable pants. I took special care in dressing up so I did not appear "very smart" or fashionable. I usually wore a shirt, casual blouse, cotton trousers, or denim trousers in attending the class and had an old T-shirt and sports pants for practising. This kind of understated bodily presence made building rapport with my classmates easy (see Figure 3.1, p.110).

Figure 3.1: On my way to Divine Yoga



Source: Pathum, my partner took this photo while I was waiting for a bus (6 April 2022)

Mingling with my classmates at Divine Yoga

*"You don't present among us as a lecturer"; Pravi said.
Of course, I was not carrying my "status bag" with me, and I never did;
I said to myself.*

*"Maybe because you appear so natural and simple."
or is it because of your "free-birdy" or "ever-smiling" face?
Pravi said, displaying a pondering face.
"Yeah, we [my classmates] ponder,
Maybe cos you are not very big in size, and you are young-looking," Weena said
"But for sure, I like how you behave with us; you get along well.
I am more than willing to give a hand to your project." Pravi told
"Yes, me too", Rafia, who was quiet so far, said with a smile.
"Let's forget about what's going on in our country and all our struggles," Weena said,*

*Words of Weena lightened our faces
We all had a good laugh
I, by the passage of time, started to realise
How I present myself, my body and my behaviour appear to them
as a body to accept,
a body whom they can freely approach,
to whom they can freely talk,
seek help as a classmate and
as a body to share their stories,
even very personal (and political)
a young mother at work, a mother of 5 years old
who needs "more maturity", as Weena and Pravi, the two eldest clients, said*

*I, however, still yet to know
what a lecturer's body should look like,
per their perception or
Sri Lanka's "social" perception.
Maybe, a wise-looking, calmer, person
Reserved and with a little bit of "status" pride,
exemplifying the power of a "learned" body"?
So, am I undermining myself?
Or is this all my perception only
I am yet to explore...*

Source: Author, based on field notes during my third week at Divine Yoga. The conversation took place at the bus station near Divine Yoga while we were waiting for a bus after a session.

This conversation started when my classmates asked more about my research. On the same day, I introduced them to my research as Apsara and Rohan asked me to do, during a break in our yoga session. As reflected in my verse, I understand such attire and engagement generated feelings of approachability and openness. These indicate that in this type of research, where I, as a researcher, have a prolonged relationship with the participants, they also observe and notice my behaviour and respond accordingly based on their perceptions of me. The level of engagement and openness in sharing our experiences and thoughts is affected by the rapport we establish as classmates or clients, men and women, or researcher participants.

Taken together, if I had not been an active participant in this research space, listening to yoga lessons, practising yoga, attending salon client appointments, writing field notes seated in the corner of a salon, and sitting in my chair at home, attentively observing online yoga, I likely would have failed to “see” the importance of the body, in service encounters. In other words, I would have missed how the absent body becomes present, had my body not been engaged in these settings. My engagement gave me a first-hand understanding of the corporeal engagement necessary in the research site and the physical body’s significance in interactions within that space. It allowed me to improve my body flexibility and breathing. However, using my body as a source of knowledge sometimes involved risk-taking, such as my attempts to achieve a ‘perfect’ Crow pose. I was careful to avoid injuries that may have been caused, as it was vital to have my body fit to continue with fieldwork.

Relationships

As mentioned in the previous section on ethics, I realised that even though I had obtained my participants’ written/verbal consent, developing trust was essential in this project. And developing trust took time. It needed some time to get to know each other and get their active involvement in my studies. As time passed, the workers frequently checked in to see if I generated data aligned with my research questions. Whenever I returned to them seeking more information or clarifications about the data I generated, they were willing to assist me. However, sometimes, it took some time in their busy schedules.

Like other citizens, the clients experienced difficult, disruptive and unusual circumstances in their daily life during this period. Therefore, it was strange for them to see me, a woman, a mother, and a PhD student, returning to Sri Lanka and conducting research fieldwork. However, at the same time, most of them were

empathetic and helpful. I witnessed acts of kindness and helping behaviour from the participants. As Nalin, a client at Scissors N Razors, noted once I finished the interview with him,

“I had some things to take care of, but I rescheduled them for later. I understand how important this task is for you, especially during these challenging times. We should support each other, and I’m happy to help with your task.”

These indicate that the crises we experience can make people help each other, or strengthen their helping behaviour. Consequently, I enjoyed my presence, interactions, and engagement with my participants and the more-than-human bodies I encountered in the field.

I identified some participants who saw themselves in me and were very empathetic. For example, Weena, Anil, and Suvitha all participants in my study had conducted research for their bachelor’s and other higher degrees. So, they told me they understood how difficult it is to collect data for research. At some other times, I realised that being a woman and a mother facilitated gaining support from my participants, as some highlighted that with the work involved in life, they are proud of what I am making at this time, especially given the crisis. Yoga clients, namely Pravi, Weena, Suvitha, and Sophia, and owners/workers of yoga and salons, namely Apsara, Samantha and Lal, were more helpful than I thought. They expressed their willingness to provide further clarification if needed. Statements like “I feel you”, “I see you”, “You are working hard,” and “We know how hard it is to balance all this work as a woman, mother, and a researcher during this crisis” were offered. So, it shows how I, my research techniques, and my participants got involved with each other, how such involvement generated feelings for each other, and my becoming-with (Gherardi, 2018) the research.

Meanwhile, I felt how power swings within our relationship as a researcher and participants. I was treated as a young woman who had less experience and interactions with men. For example, while sharing her experience in interactions with Sathish, her yoga trainer, Meriam, a participant from Israel, told her that she had experienced whether she sensed the touch was terrible or not. I looked very young to her, and she later told me that she thought I was still in my twenties based on my size and appearance. Moreover, her awareness of being a beginner in yoga had been a factor in her considering me very young and inexperienced.

I also noticed that most clients at the sites were curious about my background. After the interviews, many participants asked about my plans to stay in the UK, suggesting finding a job there after completing my PhD. As I was introduced as an early career academic pursuing a PhD at a university in the UK, many of the participants inquired about migration pathways for their children or themselves. After the interviews, most participants asked about my plans to continue my stay in the UK. They suggested finding a job in the UK or any other country after completing my PhD and settling down, considering the economic challenges in Sri Lanka.

I gradually learnt to develop a healthy researcher-participant relationship in continuing my data production effectively. I felt the research sites generated a caring atmosphere for me. Out of all of this, I was treated with much care at Scissors N Razors. Lal frequently asked me if I was okay or if there was any discomfort I was experiencing. One day, a regular client came into the salon under the influence of alcohol and began talking with Lal and Tharaka. He had not come for a service receipt but to talk with Lal. Suddenly, the client began to accuse another individual known to Lal and Tharaka. He then used vulgar language. As no other clients were present, Tharaka promptly escorted them outside and politely asked him to leave. Afterwards, Tharaka apologised to me for the situation, but I assured him everything was fine and there was no need to apologise. Tharaka, however, insisted they wanted to take care of me and assist me in completing my research. He emphasised the importance of their role in ensuring my safety and success. This highlights how my gender and role as a researcher were vital in our interactions.

Moreover, I was offered food and drinks during my stay at Serene Yoga, Urban Escape and Scissors N Razors. I refused them politely, initially. However, I later realised it was a part of their caring behaviour. So, it seemed disrespectful to deny them. Later, I, too, started sharing the food I had with them. Taking meals together and sharing had some positive effects on data production. Cutlets, buns and fruit juices at Scissors N Razors, the breakfast and lunch, tea and king coconuts offered to clients at Serene Yoga, and home-made rice and curry, snacks, tea and juices at Urban Escape were typical during my visits. In addition, at Divine Yoga, Apsara shared some herbal leaves to make porridge for me and my classmates. In return, I gave her a sunflower plant and two indoor plants, as I learned that she loves gardening. When I reflect on these interactions with food and human bodies, I realise that the food and the time we shared made us more relaxed, opened up ourselves to talk, and made things happen in producing data.

These experiences shifted me from the traditional 'being there' to the 'being with' research sites (Gherardi, 2019). I produced data through my body, where I realised it is not me alone producing data; it is a different human and more-than-human bodily engagements that produced data. So, in this way, I related with the three pillars of affective ethnography (Gherardi, 2019): (1) embodiment and embodied knowing, where my body was considered a meaningful material. (2) placeness, where the place and the potentialities for action are present in that place, and I explained how research sites shaped how I produced data. (3) I did not play a passive role by being a passive observer or data producer. Instead, I actively participant in the encounters, provoking and creating situations through my actions.

Despite my initial enthusiasm for analysing, coding, revising, and typesetting, I found the process tedious. There were moments when I spent hours scrolling through my transcripts and coding data without making any significant progress. However, the incremental excitement of discovering minor or major findings kept me motivated. As I approached the submission deadline, I often felt a surge of adrenaline while working on my laptop. The clock's ticking became a source of motivation, pushing me to type quickly, even when I was exhausted. However, as the deadline drew closer, the constant ringing of the clock became a source of stress, making me feel overwhelmed and sweaty at times. I eventually realised its impact on me and decided to silence the clock. I persevered despite boredom, tension, and feeling lost in the data.

Erandathi, my pet, was a motivator at this stage. Growing from a kitten to a mama cat, the furry and affectionate *Erandathi* provided me with comfort and support during sleepless nights spent writing and editing. *Erandathi* sought warmth, protection, and care from me as a kitten. She sometimes interrupted my work and sought refuge in my lap, as my lap and shoulder were her favourite places to sleep. Gradually, as time passed, with her warmth, 'being there with me, on my lap, my feet, under my table, or chair,' I found that her warmth and companionship helped me persevere through the most challenging nights. I grew accustomed to her presence, whether she was curled up at my feet or nestled under my desk. I was affected by her presence. It enabled my body to continue my work on silent, cold, or hot nights, knowing I had my friend with me.

Becoming with my research: analysis and writing stage

I start;
Here comes my chair and table¹¹,
With my most precious laptop and data storage
The lampshade, the fan,
The pile of books and papers
And the *Siddhalepa*
My instant pain reliever

I struggle;
The notebook with Sinhala transcripts
My laptop opens the English transcripts.
Lines and paras. appearing in colourful lines
I open multiple Google documents
Rename them with collated coding,
Themes are yet to be named
I read the texts again and again
It is 15 past 1 (am)
The Seth Thomas clock reminds me

I keep the cursor on each and every bubble in my thematic map, one by one
Reading them, renaming them
I go through my transcripts, photo collection
As I go through them one by one,
Find something interesting to explore, re-read
it makes me happy,
“yes, you did it.”

My little Erandathi – is sitting on my feet¹²
She finds the night so calm
my feet are so comfortable it seems
But I,
I am in a struggle
Struggling with what I am going to come up with
With the “failed” attempts or work to re-do
My eyes are strained, and it makes me blurry
it is not entanglements of themes I see, now
I want to have a break,
Yes, I really went to sleep.
I pause my work
for hours and day

¹¹ Also, see Figure 3.2, p. 119

¹² Also, see Figure 3.3, p.120

I return;
I return
I re-read
some articles,
the notes I took down during supervision meetings,
emails from my supervisors,
Critical reception of my work, plus
the care and continuous encouragement
it echoes in my ears from time to time,
“There is a lot of improvement in this chapter. Well done!” that’s Carolyn in 2023
“A PhD student is not just for Christmas... it’s a long-term thing!” This is Lynne, back in 2021
“Take care of yourself at this stage, please?” It is again Lynne in 2024

I re-connect ;
Me, the racoon,
with dark circles under the eyes
is stagnated, is frustrated,
my little “eureka” moments are yet to come

Then it happened, one day
I was cooking *kiri-hodi*¹³,
The spoon in my hand continuously stirred the mixture,
In one direction, till the dish gets prepared:
touch, rhythm, essential recipe ingredients and patience got combined,
making a good smell all around the kitchen
resulting in a good *kiri-hodi*
I relate this with my research data and experience
how things get connected and affect each other

I continue;
The daily rhythm changed,
sleeping pattern changed,
The chair, table, laptop, lampshade, and the table fan
became my closest
The desk, my hands and the laptop computer,
the wind of the tiny fan
actively produce
different writing assemblages
Well, I am only a component of it.

¹³ *Kiri hodi is literally translated to milk curry. It is a traditional and famous Sri Lankan fragrant coconut milk gravy made using a few essential ingredients: thick coconut milk, turmeric, pepper, salt, cinnamon, Malabar Tamarind, pearl onions, green chillies, curry leaf, pandan leaves, and lime. To make it nutritious, edible, and tasty, the dish must be cooked on medium and low heat and continuously stirred in one direction using a spoon.*

I started loving my fingers more and more,
and my laptop's typing pad
stiffness of my fingers and right hand
and back pain are now inseparable from my body
The ticking of our Seth Thomas clock alerts me
The ticking at 15, 30 and 45 minutes and then the hour advises me
"Hurry up, *Vasana*, time flies."

Among all, Erandathi, my comfort and warmth while I write:¹⁴
Our relationality grew,
She was curious,
She needed care and protection
She, during silent late nights and early mornings, kept me "wake up"
I feel her breathing and its rhythm
it makes me "go"

Days passed by
Erandathi became a mama cat
And we became carers for four kittens
As I get closer to my submission.

It's 2 am in the morning
I continue typing
in a few seconds, I relate to our little Apu,
who sleeps in the adjacent room with his 'E'¹⁵
so silent and in so much comfort
it made me hope for a better tomorrow
"any dream will do."

¹⁴ Also, see Figure 3.4, p. 121

¹⁵ Our son's teddy bear

Figure 3.2: Me, my research and my tables at home (in the UK and SL)

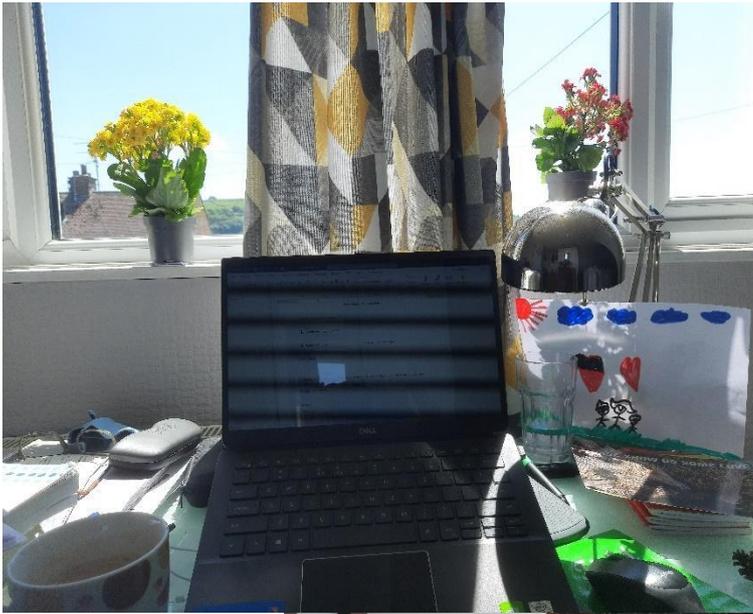
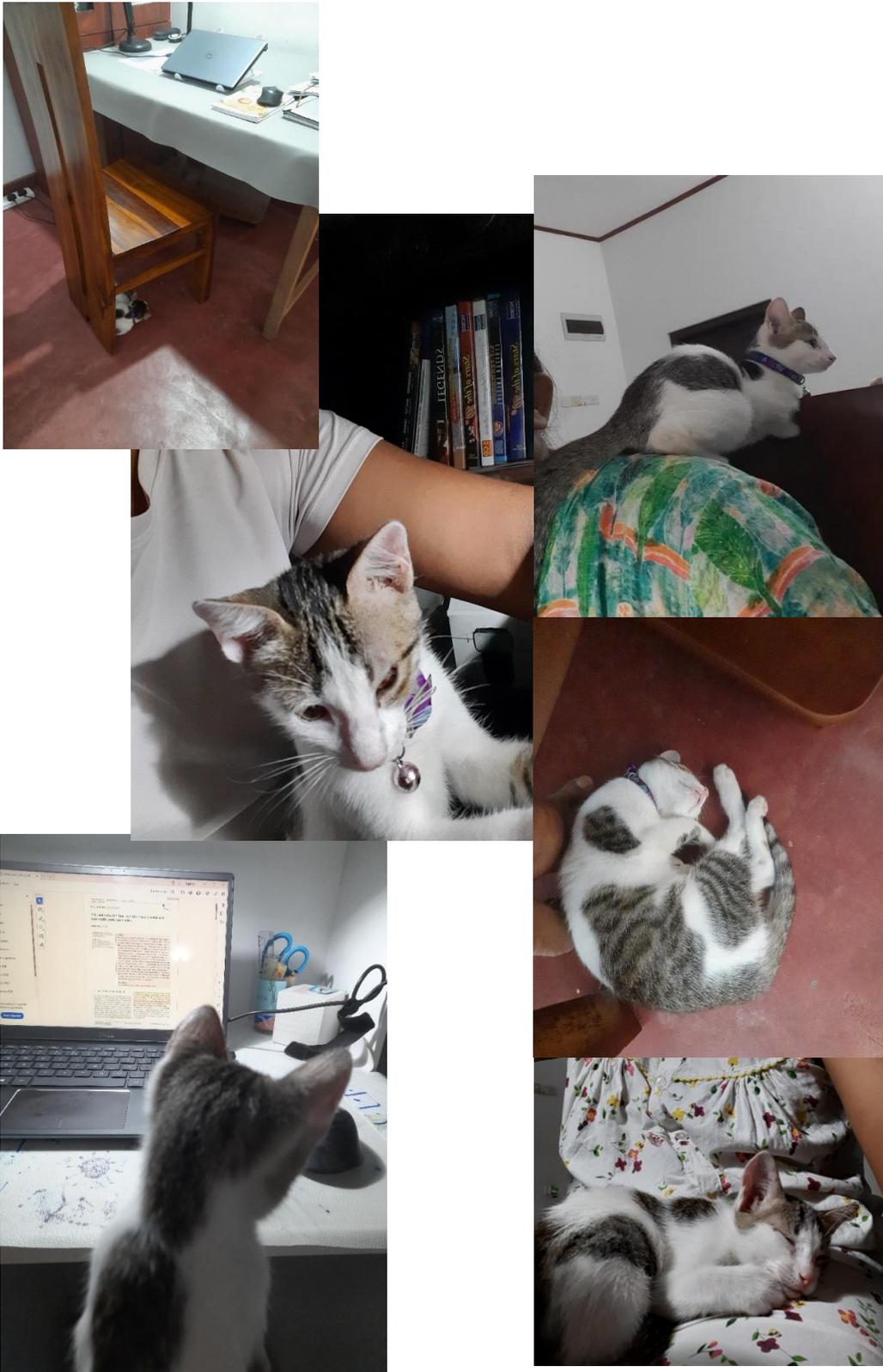


Figure 3.3: Me, my research and my cat, *Erandathi*



Source: Author

Figure 3.4: Me, my research, my cat and the kittens



Source: Author

Summary

This chapter provided the methodological choices I made while conducting my research. I explained how I used an affective ethnographic style as a form of embodied research to produce data in my five research sites. The techniques I used to produce data, including autoethnography, observations, photographs, video recordings, and digital and physical document reviews, helped me produce relevant data. Thematic analysis and diffractive analysis methods enabled me to develop sound data analysis as well as come up with findings on embodied interactions in salons and yoga. In the final sections of this chapter, I discussed how I followed research ethics and my overall reflections on my research experience. The following two chapters present a presentation of data, along with the analysis and findings of the data I produced in addressing my research questions. chapter 4 will introduce my five research sites and interpretations of my observations of their service settings. chapter 5 will provide a detailed analysis of my findings on the bodily interactions during the service encounters in these sites.

Chapter 4: The Research Sites

Introduction

This chapter on research sites initiates my study's data presentation and interpretation. It describes the five research sites I chose for my study. Each description details the location of the research site, the owners and workers, the clientele, the services offered, an explanation of the service setting, its layout and composition, and an overview of service encounters. These basic descriptions will provide an understanding of the background and related activities of the organisations and how body work is done in service encounters. However, the accounts offer more than just introductions to the sites. Along with photographs and screen captures of the video recordings I did during my fieldwork, these also include autoethnographic narrations and interpretations of my sensory experiences, how I felt on my first encounter with the physical research site, and my observations and feelings of being there during the fieldwork duration. So, in line with the affective ethnographic style I follow, I first give the reader an understanding of the research sites with the view of giving them a 'live roadmap' to walk and experience the sites. Besides, it offers an analysis of data I gathered on my sites and facilitates a reader's comparison of the five sites. The fundamental data presented and interpreted in this chapter eventually connects with the following two chapters. Therefore, this also enables the cocreation of my findings and helps me reach my conclusions in subsequent chapters.

Research site 1 - Divine Yoga

Location

Divine Yoga operates at a rented space in Thalawathugoda, a suburb of Colombo. It is on the third and top floor of a building near a main bus road. On one side, the building is bordered by a supermarket chain store and, on the other side, a salon, a grocery shop, and a fruit stall. A motor vehicle repair and spare parts shop occupies the ground floor of the building. In addition, another motor vehicle cleaning and repair shop is located on the opposite side of the road (see Figure 4.1, p.124). This surrounding atmosphere lacks the calmness and serenity often expected to be associated with yoga practice. Thus, on my first visit to Divine Yoga, I felt it to be an unlikely place for a yoga studio.

Owners and inception

Founded in 2013 by Rohan, Divine Yoga is now run and managed by Rohan and Apsara, who are life partners. Rohan has been practising yoga since 2008, and Apsara

since 2016. Having been a victim of the Tsunami in 2004, Rohan moved to Colombo from the Southern part of Sri Lanka. He became interested in yoga and trained under a reputed female yoga practitioner in Sri Lanka. He has also participated in several workshops at an Indian yoga ashram. After excelling as a student, Rohan became an assistant to his teacher, and conducted workshops and classes for several years. Rohan and Apsara met in one of these workshops conducted at a human resource management education institute where Apsara was studying. With the wider society's increased interest in learning more about yoga, Apsara joined Rohan's yoga teacher's sessions. The training has enabled her to equip herself with a solid foundation in yoga. Furthermore, she, too, has participated in several yoga retreats in India.

Figure 4.1 : Surrounding of Divine Yoga



Source: Author

During my fieldwork, I observed that Rohan and Apsara incorporated ideas, concepts, and arguments from various sources, such as philosophy, politics, and the commercialization of yoga in their teaching. They motivate their clients to embrace yoga as a way of life, and encourage them to read more about it to gain a deeper understanding. The duo also created a WhatsApp group, where clients can share their knowledge and engage in discussions. Additionally, they urge clients to scrutinize their teachings and ask questions rather than blindly accepting everything they say.

Rohan and Apsara are proficient in the *Shivananda* tradition through practice and extensive reading. Accordingly, Divine Yoga bases its teaching on *Shivananda's* tradition. A primary goal of the *Sivananda* yoga tradition is to ensure that the human body maintains vitality over the years, lowering the risk of illness. This tradition has its roots in Hatha yoga, which promotes five basic principles, namely: (01) Exercise (*Asana*), (02) Breathing (*Pranayama*), (03) Relaxation (*Savasana*), (04) Vegetarian diet (*Sattvic* diet), and (05) Positive thinking coupled with meditation (*Vedanta* and *Dhyana*).

The clientele

Divine Yoga has a local clientele mainly comprised of adults in their 20s, but also has clients in their 70s and kids aged 4 to 11. The clients are multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Divine Yoga also does workshops for employees in different industries at the request of the management of companies. Moreover, by invitation, Rohan and Apsara participate in TV shows for discussions on yoga and conduct live TV segments on yoga.

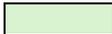
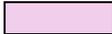
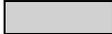
Rohan and Apsara divide their clients into three categories assigned by age (adult and kids), mode of class (individual and group and stage of practice (beginners and intermediate level). Divine Yoga's session timetable for April 2022 is depicted in Table 4.1 (p. 126)¹⁶. However, the clients could attend other parallel classes during the week if they missed a class or wanted to practise more under the trainer's supervision. This was irrespective of the monthly flat rate.

¹⁶ Rohan or Apsara did not have this kind of overall timetable sketch developed for themselves. Instead, they noted the days and times in Apsara's diary. In addition, as Apsara said, the schedule was in their memory. Having developed a draft timetable based on our initial discussion, I informed Apsara I got it all into one picture and wanted to cross-check with her. She asked me to forward it to her to check if it includes all. In her feedback, she told me to include one more class she had forgotten to mention during the interview.

Table 4.1: Divine Yoga’s session timetable

Time	Days						
	Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays	Saturdays	Sundays
6.00 am-7.45 am		G/A/I G-1		G/A/I G-1			
6.30 am-8.00 am	I/A/I		I/A/I		I/A/I		
6.30 am-8.15 am						G/A/I G-2	G/A/I G-2
9.00 am-10.30 am							I/A/I
9.00 am-10.45 am		G/A/B G-1	G/A/B G-2	G/A/B G-1	G/A/B G-2	G/A/B G-3	G/A/B G-3
3.00 pm-4.30 pm				I/A/I			
4.30 pm-6.00 pm				I/A/I			
5.00 pm-6.00 pm			G/K/B 1*				
6.30 pm-8.15 pm	G/A/I G-3		G/A/I G-3				

Key:

-  = Group Sessions – Adult (Beginners)
-  = Group Sessions – Adult (Intermediate)
-  = Group Sessions – Kids (Beginners)
-  = Individual Sessions – Adult (intermediate)

G-1, G-2, G-3 = Group 1, Group 2, Group 3

Source: Based on the interviews with Rohan and Apsara

Service setting – Physical arrangements

As I made my way up to Divine Yoga on the second floor, I noticed a shoe rack at the start of the short staircase. It usually contains Apsara and Rohan's shoes and slippers, as they arrive early for class. Then, as I approached the stairs to the third floor, I encountered a series of rugs (see Figure 4.2, p.127). The first is a dry rubber rug placed at the entry to the third staircase. Once reaching the third floor, a client will find another rubber rug with a wet fabric rug that is soaked in sanitised water. This rug cleans and cools the feet. Two more rubber and fabric rugs are provided for wiping the feet before one reaches the studio. Finally, another rubber rug is positioned at the entrance to the studio. Hand sanitiser bottles are also made available at the entrance to clean the hands (see Figure 4.3, p.128).

The narrow veranda of the studio has a bamboo blind hanging on the roadside roof to provide some cover. Four cement blocks are available on the veranda for sitting or placing one's belongings. In addition, two plant pots are kept in the left corner of the veranda. There is a nicely grown mango tree that is taller than the third floor of the building. If one waits on the veranda for a few minutes (see Figure 4.4, p.128 and Figure 4.5, p.129).

Figure 4.2: Encountering the shoe rack and the first rug on the way to Divine yoga



Source: Author

The studio has two front doors on the left and right sides. The front side wall of the studio is made of non-see-through (opaque) blue-coloured glass with white clouds-like spots, making a sky-like design altogether. The lower parts of the studio walls, except the front and back, have some cement-made square designs, enabling air circulation in and out. Also, the windows available on the two sides enhance this air flow. The studio is bathed in invigorating sunlight and fresh air when the doors and windows are opened. Moreover, two fans are fixed to the studio's left and right wall

Figure 4.3: Santiser bottle kept near the right-side (main) door



Source: Author

Figure 4.4: Veranda and the view



Source: Author

Figure 4.5: Outside view from the left-side windows



Source: Author

Upon careful examination, this building floor appeared to have previously functioned as a rooftop with a parapet wall. The designers kept the original parapet wall layout when the area was transformed into a studio-type space ((see Figure 4.6, p.130). Decorating the inner front wall of the studio are an array of yoga-related statues, pictures, and posters (see Figure 4.7, p.130). A metal rack, which holds folding chairs, mats and blocks, is positioned in the right corner and extends towards the middle of the inner back wall. This rack also provides sufficient space for clients to store personal belongings, such as bags and mat covers. The inner back wall also houses a clock and first-aid box on the inner back wall. In addition, a clean and tidy changing room and a toilet are located in the left back corner of the studio. A pair of slippers is kept outside the bathroom so that anyone can wear them while using the toilet if they prefer (see Figure 4.8, p.131).

The roof of the studio is composed of aluminium sheets. It led me to ponder the potential pros and cons during yoga sessions. With a high temperature outside, the

roof could generate much heat, whereas, on a rainy day, it could have a cooling effect but could also cause disruption from the sound of raindrops hitting the roof (see Figure 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10, pp.131-132).

Figure 4.6: The studio's wall with its parapet wall



Source: Author

Figure 4.7: Yoga-related statues, pictures, and posters



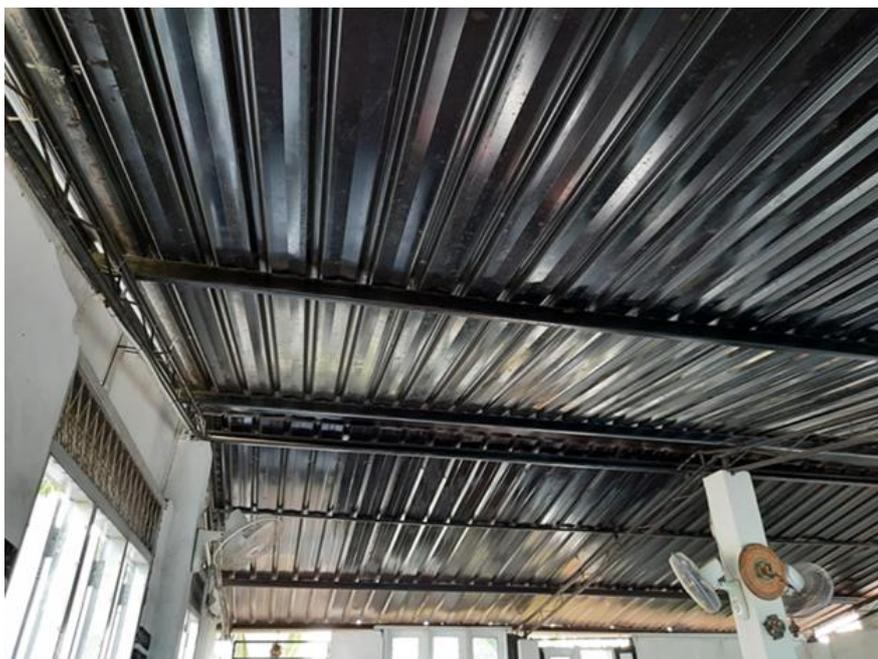
Source: Author

Figure 4.8: Changing room, washroom, clock and the first-aid box



Source: Author

Figure 4.9 : The roof



Source: Author

Figure 4.10: Centre of the studio



Source: Author

There is a long wooden yoga bench for sitting, teaching, and demonstrating yoga practice, such as opening and closing prayers, poses and breathing techniques. The bench is placed on the inner-front side of the studio. A floral design cloth covers the bench. Rohan uses a thin, unfolded red mat and a yoga block while teaching on the bench. However, Apsara occasionally does the demonstration on her mat unfolded on the floor, or without the mat on the bare floor. Beside this bench is a container of stationery items and a small-scale whiteboard (see Figure 4.11, p. 133).

At Divine Yoga, the practising area was partitioned into rectangular sections. The clients are required to place themselves in these rectangular sections. This reminded me of the standard vehicle parking lot in public places, such as the supermarket parking lot nearby. Similar to how a vehicle is given a personal space in the parking lot, clients are encouraged to place their yoga mats and bodies in the lot. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the clients were allowed to place themselves in a rectangular section as they preferred, and all the sections were allowed for practice. However, when Divine Yoga restarted the classes during the post-pandemic period, Rohan and Apsara asked the clients to maintain their distance from each other. Later, they have marked some sections with a cross (X) to highlight that the particular space must be left vacant (see Figure 4.12 and 4.13, p. 134). According to Apsara, this has made it

easy for the clients to identify the area and remember the distance they should maintain.

Figure 4.11 : The yoga bench and the nearby



Source: Author

Figure 4.12: Before marking 'X' in the floor sections



Source: Apsara (From a collection she shared on the Divine Yoga's Facebook page)

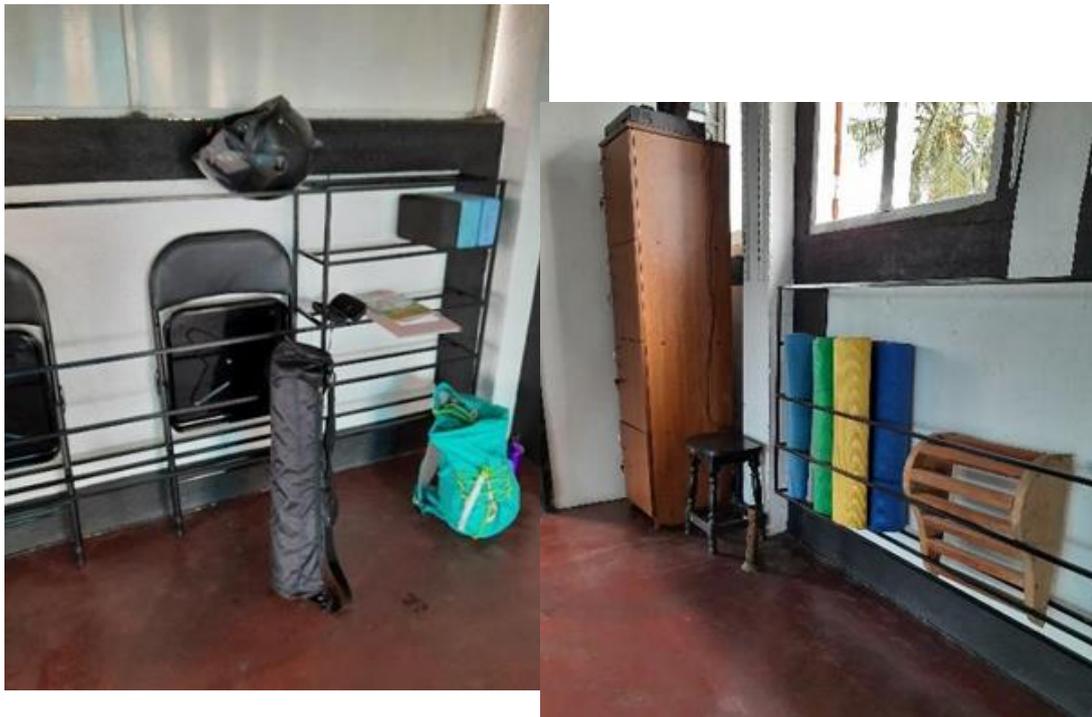
Figure 4.13: After 'X' is marked on the floor sections



Source: Author

Divine Yoga's teachings stress the importance of owning a personal yoga mat. Thus, clients are encouraged to bring their mats to class. However, the studio keeps four to six clean reserve mats for use in situations such as clients forgetting their mats, sudden tear-off, or failure to grip (slipping on) a mat. The studio also provides blocks and cushions in different sizes to support the clients in keeping their straight back posture during breathing practices and when performing certain poses, such as Shoulder Stand or Headstand (see Figure 4.14, p.135).

Figure 4.14: A few of the blocks available and the reserve mats



Source: Author

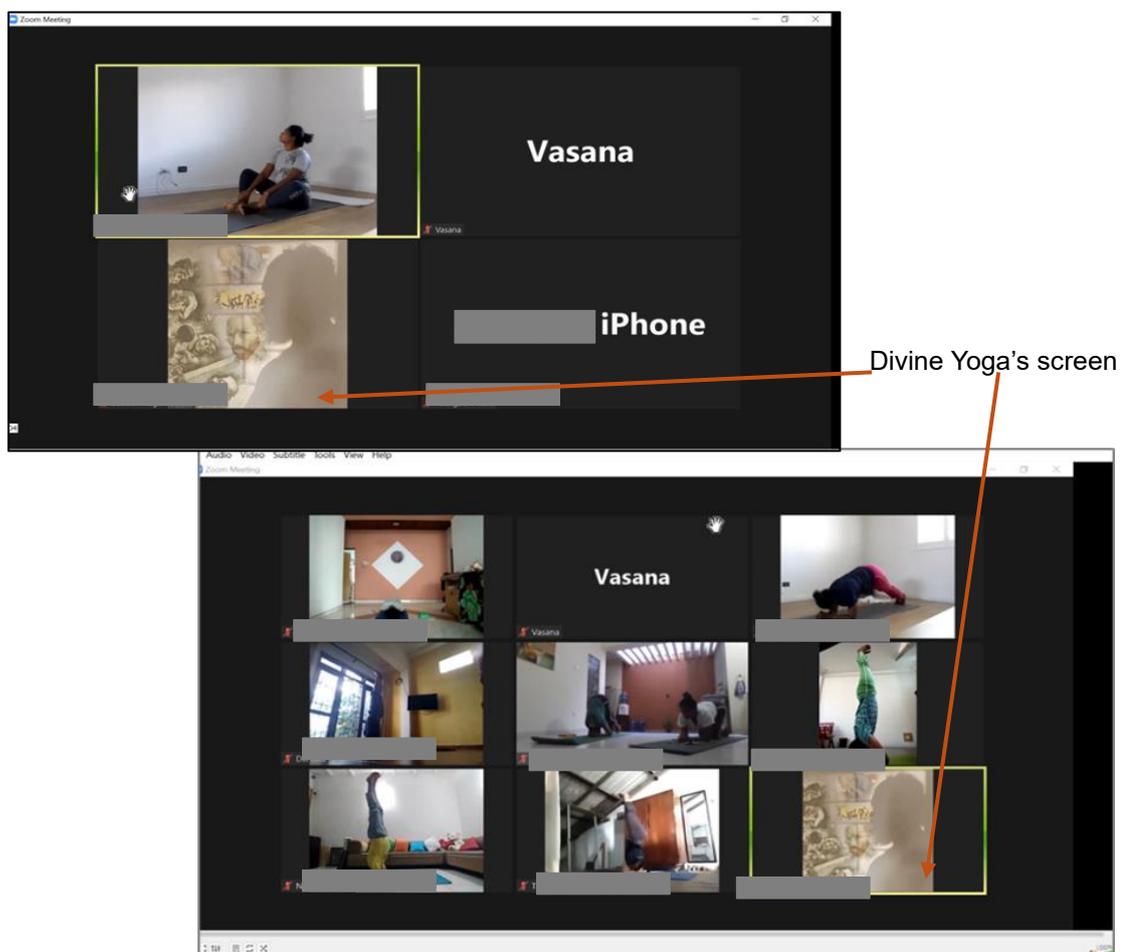
Service setting - Online classes

With the Covid-19 pandemic, Divine Yoga closed its studio temporarily and moved its classes to the Zoom platform. Rohan and Apsara worked from their home delivering the services. Then, as the country improved in control of Covid-19, by January 2022, they shifted both individual and group sessions to hybrid mode, i.e., the classes for non-beginners were held at the studio and the camera was set to webcast the same for those who preferred online mode. Rohan and Apsara were looking forward to stopping the online classes. However, with the emergence of the unsettled day-to-day life events caused by the country's economic and political crisis, the clients, like many Sri Lankans, were victims of a fuel shortage. Thus, some of the clients preferred to continue practising online. At the same time, the clients who lived close by and

desperately needed the trainer's attention preferred attending the session at the studio. So, addressing clients' concerns, Divine Yoga had to continue with hybrid mode even during my study.

Although clients were required to keep videos on during online sessions, Rohan's screen showed a picture of a yoga teacher (see Figure 4.15, p. 136). Nevertheless, Rohan, similar to physical classes, continued to observe and correct his clients. At the same time, he gave clear instructions, counted down, and followed the routine flow smoothly. At the end of each session, as he did in the physical classes, Rohan asked if they needed any clarifications from the clients.

Figure 4.15: The screen shots of online yoga sessions



Source: Author

Service encounters

Rohana and Apsara live four kilometres away from the studio. So, they arrive at Divine Yoga well before the scheduled sessions start. Usually, it is Apsara who does the cleaning and morning arrangements in the studio, namely, sweeping or mopping the floor, checking and refilling the sanitisers, opening the windows and placing the rugs and the shoe rack outside, lighting the joss sticks and switching on the *bhajan* music (see Figure 4.16 p. 137). Apsara or Rohan places these rugs well before a session starts. At the end of a session, and if it is the final session for the day, the clients will join in to place the clean rugs at an appropriate place within the studio. At the end of a session, the clients voluntarily clean and rearrange the items, doing such things as putting rugs back in storage and closing the windows. If a class is scheduled for 6.30 am, Apsara and Rohan go to the studio around 5.45 or 6 am and make the arrangements. Thus, if one enters the studio about 30 minutes before a session starts, he/she usually sees the cleaning in progress, which includes sweeping and mopping the floor. Alternatively, one can observe how trainers and/or clients practise preliminary exercises to prepare their bodies for the class. At the same time, one could smell the joss sticks lit and hear or get mesmerised by the play of bhajan— *Namah Shivaya* (“O salutations to the auspicious one!” or “Adoration to Lord Shiva”), a traditional, spiritual mantra played before each class.

Figure 4.16: Joss sticks fragrance that fresheners the air



Source: Author

The clients at Divine Yoga are informed about the rules and expected behaviour during the sessions. These are conveyed in writing and orally during the first session of a course and they are reminded, if necessary, during other sessions. As per my observations, Rohan is more vigilant in monitoring clients' adherence to these rules than Apsara.

The clients are expected to be punctual and to attend the class at least ten minutes early, so that they can be prepared with a relaxed mindset and have normal breathing. Moreover, they are encouraged to wear a simple T-shirt, primarily used to enable flexibility, and no sleeveless T-shirts are allowed. As Sri Lanka has a hot climate, the trainers prefer light and loose clothing instead of tight clothing during practice. This enables body muscles to move freely and quickly while allowing proper body ventilation. Mobile phones have to be switched off or in silent mode, and if one needed it for an emergency, one could go out of the room to take a call. Any jewellery or wristwatches were not encouraged, as they may be barriers to performing the poses.

Service encounters - Intermediate-level classes

A yoga session for intermediate-level clients at Divine Yoga starts with the chanting of "Om", leading to the beginning mantra and relaxing positions (*asanas*), such as Corpse Pose (*Savasana*). Then, the trainer asks the clients to prepare for breathing techniques, such as *Kapalabhati* (Skull Shining Breathing), *Nadi Shodhana* (Alternate Nostril Breathing), before going through the basic *asanas*. Practices such as *Kapalabhati* and *Surya Namaskar* (Sun Salutation) start with a slow rhythm and speed up gradually. Then, the final phase of the session is allocated for learning or practising new or advanced forms of the *asanas* they currently do. This phase takes a more customised approach, where trainers help each client understand and explore new capacities depending upon the clients' abilities and the trainers' evaluations of their growth potential.

Service encounters - Beginners' classes

Divine Yoga opted not to offer any virtual classes for beginners during the pandemic, as Rohan and Apsara believed it would be risky for newcomers to start practising yoga online without a trainer's physical observation and support. However, as of March 2022, Divine Yoga resumed in-person classes for beginners, including adults and kids.

A beginners' class series takes three months and has a different schedule from that of the intermediate-level student sessions. In the first two months, one day out of two

days a week is a discussion day, and the other is allocated to learning to 'do' yoga techniques and practising day. In the third month, all days were spent practising yoga techniques. During these months, the trainers monitor the progress while teaching new *asanas* and breathing techniques. Based on the progress of all, if not of most of the clients, the trainers will introduce more *asanas* beyond what is promised in the 'syllabus' for the beginners' course.

A beginner class involves much demonstration by the trainers. When teaching each new pose, the students are taught: (1) the name of the pose/breathing technique in Sinhala, English and Sanskrit, (2) How the pose/breathing technique originated, with related mythologies, (3) the benefits of doing it (4) The common errors made in doing the pose/breathing technique (5) The circumstances in which one should not perform the pose/breathing technique. The clients are encouraged to maintain a notebook, and write down what is being taught during a session. Furthermore, they recheck if the clients have understood them correctly. For instance, on subsequent practising days, Rohan and Apsara recalled what was taught and discussed in previous sessions and/or asked questions based on five sections.

During teaching, they use the mini whiteboards to illustrate their points. After a couple of step-by-step demonstrations of each new *asana*, a couple of full version demonstrations are done, and then trainers ask the clients for any further clarifications. Then, when the clients start to move, Rohan and Apsara mostly walk around while counting rhythmically. They observe the clients' positions and poses diligently. When clients make mistakes, they give verbal instructions to correct the actions. Then, if the error continues, Rohan or Apsara demonstrates how the client does it, showing the wrong action or the pose and then the correct version of it. If the client continues again with the mistake, they assist the client with physically using their hands – with touch. The most common physical help they provide occurs during the initial stage of practising the Shoulder Stand and the Headstand. Moreover, whenever the clients need help with stretching, Rohan or Apsara quickly come to offer assistance (for instance, in twisting pose, Rohan or Apsara use his/her foot in positioning the client's foot – the angle or hands to position the client's shoulders correctly).

As in the intermediate-level classes, trainers guide the clients in practising with a slow rhythm, allowing them to check if their positions are at the correct angles. Then, slowly, they speed up the counting. However, they monitor if a client needs to maintain the tempo and follow the technique when they speed up. If so, the clients are reminded to

follow their counting to continue the correct technique and positioning. Moreover, as the sessions evolve, the length of the holding of an *asana* or the number of rounds done of a technique (say, the sun salutation) increases.

In addition, the clients are asked to keep their stomachs empty and have a light meal two hours before the class; if it is a heavy meal, have it four hours before. This is advised to avoid vomiting and any internal damage to the body and manage body flexibility. Also, it will prevent emission of the body's 'natural' sounds and smells caused by passing gas.

Research site 2 - Serene Yoga

Location

Located on the top of a hillock in a village near Mirissa Beach, one of the famous tourist beaches in the Southern part of Sri Lanka, Serene Yoga gives a beautiful view of the Indian Ocean. The studio is surrounded by "unaltered" land. The sounds of birds, trees, and ocean waves seemingly create a soothing, "stress-free" environment to engage with yoga practices. It takes 3 minutes to drive a car or bike ride from the main road to reach Serene Yoga. However, most clients prefer walking to the studio, which takes 10 to 15 minutes. However, the time depends on the bodily stamina and flexibility of those climbing the steep hillock.

Owner and inception

Serene Yoga is owned and run by Sathish. He has nearly 25 years of experience as a yoga and meditation master. He combines several classic and modern methods of Yoga in his teachings. After receiving his basic training as a yoga student, he assisted two leading yoga teachers in Colombo for six years. He then served as the official yoga trainer at three tourist hotels for foreign customers. Realising the importance of owning a yoga studio, he first started teaching yoga classes at a building in a temple near his current studio. He bought the land close to the beach and developed the studio into its current status. Sathish's home is located 15 km away from this studio. However, in the past two years, his family, including his mother, father, and sister, started living with him in the annexe adjacent to the studio.

As Sathish is an expert in both *Hatha* and *Kundalini* yoga, Serene Yoga offers teaching based on both traditions. According to Sathish, Kundalini yoga involves chanting, singing, breathing exercises, repetitive movements, meditation, spiritual practice, and

self-development, and aims to awaken *Kundalini Shakthi* or energy and raise complete body awareness around chakras. In contrast, as Sathish explained, Hatha Yoga is a set of practices that aim to achieve harmony and balance in the mind, body, and spirit. It includes the practice of physical postures and breathing techniques, which includes practices of *Asanas* – to gain control over the body, *Pranayama* – to gain control over the breath, *Mudra* – to manipulate and stimulate pranas (subtle energies), *Bandhas* – to stimulate *Chakras* (energy centres), *Kriyas* – to purify internal organs, and *Mantras* – to control the mind.

The clientele

Serene Yoga has classes for local as well as foreign clients. However, most clients are foreigners who come for yoga retreats and follow his yoga teacher training programmes. The retreats typically last 14 or 21 days for beginners and experienced clients. Serene Yoga maintains two separate small accommodations on the same land, where the stay is low-cost but with essential room facilities and meals. The clients who come for the retreat can stay at Serene Yoga's accommodation, depending upon availability. Alternatively, they could live in a hotel nearby that offers a more comfortable tourist experience.

Unlike Divine Yoga, the clients are not asked to follow written guidelines regarding dress code, mobile phone usage during sessions, or meal plans. However, Sathish strongly encourages clients to be punctual to ensure that the sessions run smoothly. Per my observations and as Sathish told me, the clients on retreat maintain a discipline that suits the practice of yoga, without any rules being told by Sathish. One reason is that most of the clients are knowledgeable in yoga and are already practising it. For example, some clients are yoga teachers who aspire to enhance their practices and learn new methods. Moreover, Sathish once said to me that it is easier for him to work with clients who already practice yoga since they come with a “true” purpose of doing yoga. Per my formal and informal conversations with the clients, they told me they aspire to improve their overall way of living instead of limiting yoga to narrow purposes, such as slimming their bodies, or yoga as a ‘time-passing’ activity. On the other hand, the clients have chosen Yoga retreats during their vacation for 14 or 21 days, detaching from other life struggles, such as employment and family chores. So, as they said, with the detachment from their “usual life”, they find relaxation easily.

Figure 4.17: Beside the gate and entrance



Source: Author

Service setting – Physical arrangements

Sathish and the clients refer to the yoga studio as '*shaala*'. Beside the gate of the *shaala*, there is a small cave where a Buddha statue is kept. There are two cement steps encountered in entering the *shaala*, each with two fabric rugs on them. One's slippers or shoes must be removed at this point (see Figure 4.17, p.142). If a client prefers, they can wash their feet at the washroom nearby, which includes a shower, wash basin and an attached toilet.

After entering the *shaala*, one meets a table and a chair and the practising area. Sathish usually occupies this table and chair during leisure time. This table also serves breakfast and lunch for Sathish and the clients. Close to this table, a photo of Sathish receiving an award was kept on the floor (see Figure 4.18, p.144). In addition, one can observe a pile of mats, sanitiser bottles, and a water basket in a corner of this *shaala*. The *shaala* is decorated with photos, posters, items related to the yoga tradition, and pictures of renowned yogis. On the left side wall, two statues of Lord Buddha and

several other Hindu deities and gods, including God Ganesha and Sarasvathi, are placed (see Figure 4.19 and 4.20, p.145-146).

The *shaala* is open to a natural environment with various green trees, plants, and animals. The roof is made of Sinhala roofing tiles¹⁷ and wood, while the walls are made of natural clay and bricks. The floor has a top layer of ash cement. These constructions, altogether, have a cooling effect and refresh the *shaala*. So, imagine walking into a yoga *shaala* on a hot summer day, and feeling the cool breeze on your skin. That is what these unique constructions do. They work together to create a refreshing and revitalizing atmosphere that will leave one feeling energised and ready to take on yoga practice. According to Sathish, he has crafted every detail of its design, from the selection of materials (see Figure 4.21, p.147).

In addition, cats and dogs, toque macaques, squirrels, and birds inhabit this land. I observed that the clients usually grow fond of the toque macaques, the cat, and the dog and feed and cuddle them (see Figure 4.22, p.148). The sight of toque macaques sitting on the side walls or nearby trees and gazing at the clients is quite common. However, I was curious to know if their sounds, gazes, and movements might affect the concentration of the clients during their practices.

¹⁷ *Sinhala roofing tiles, unlike asbestos or metal roofs, own a natural way of controlling heat. Natural clay and bricks do the same.*

Figure 4.18: The *Shaala* and the surrounding



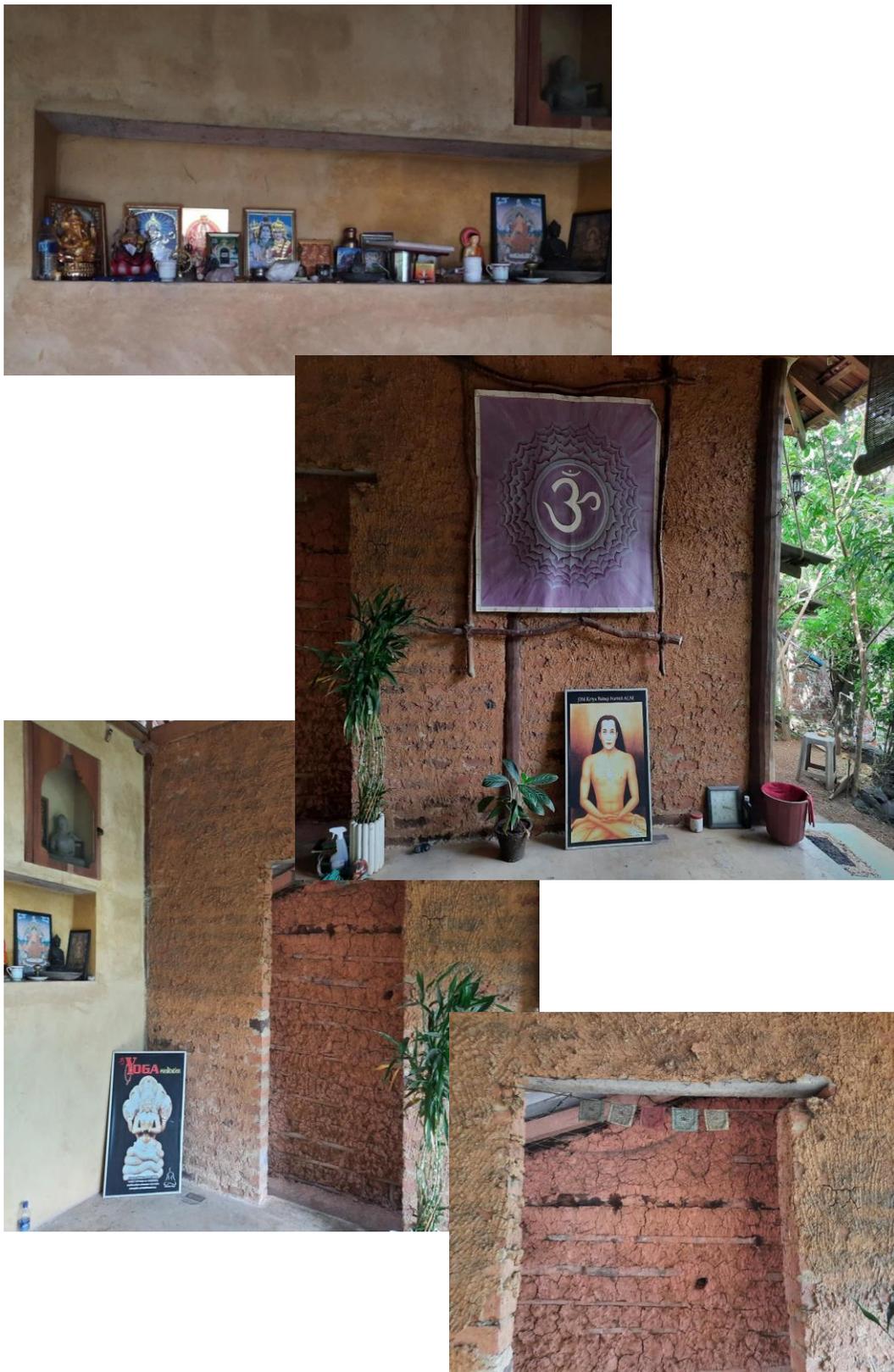
Source: Author

Figure 4.19: Arrangements within the *shaala*



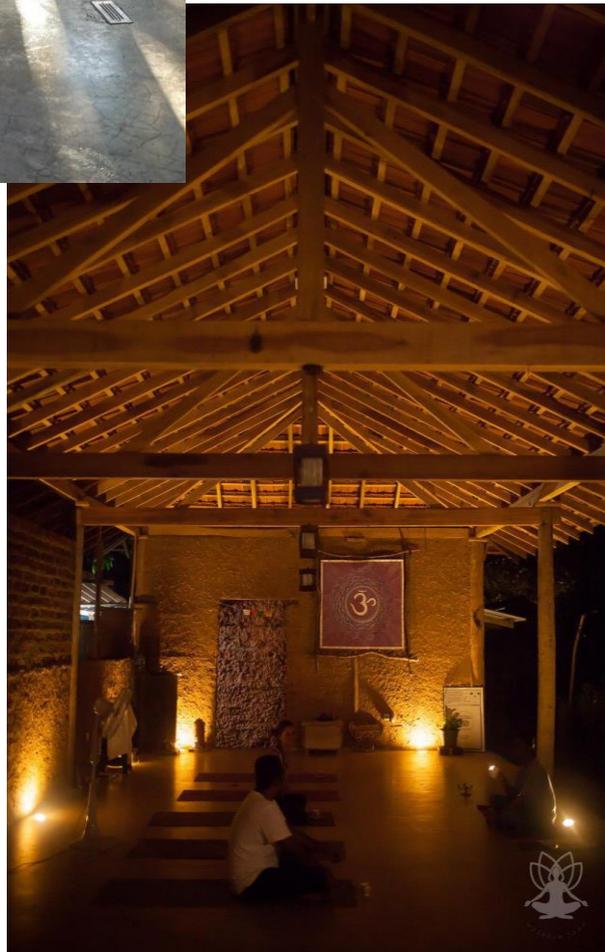
Source: Author

Figure 4.20: Arrangements within the *shaala* - continued



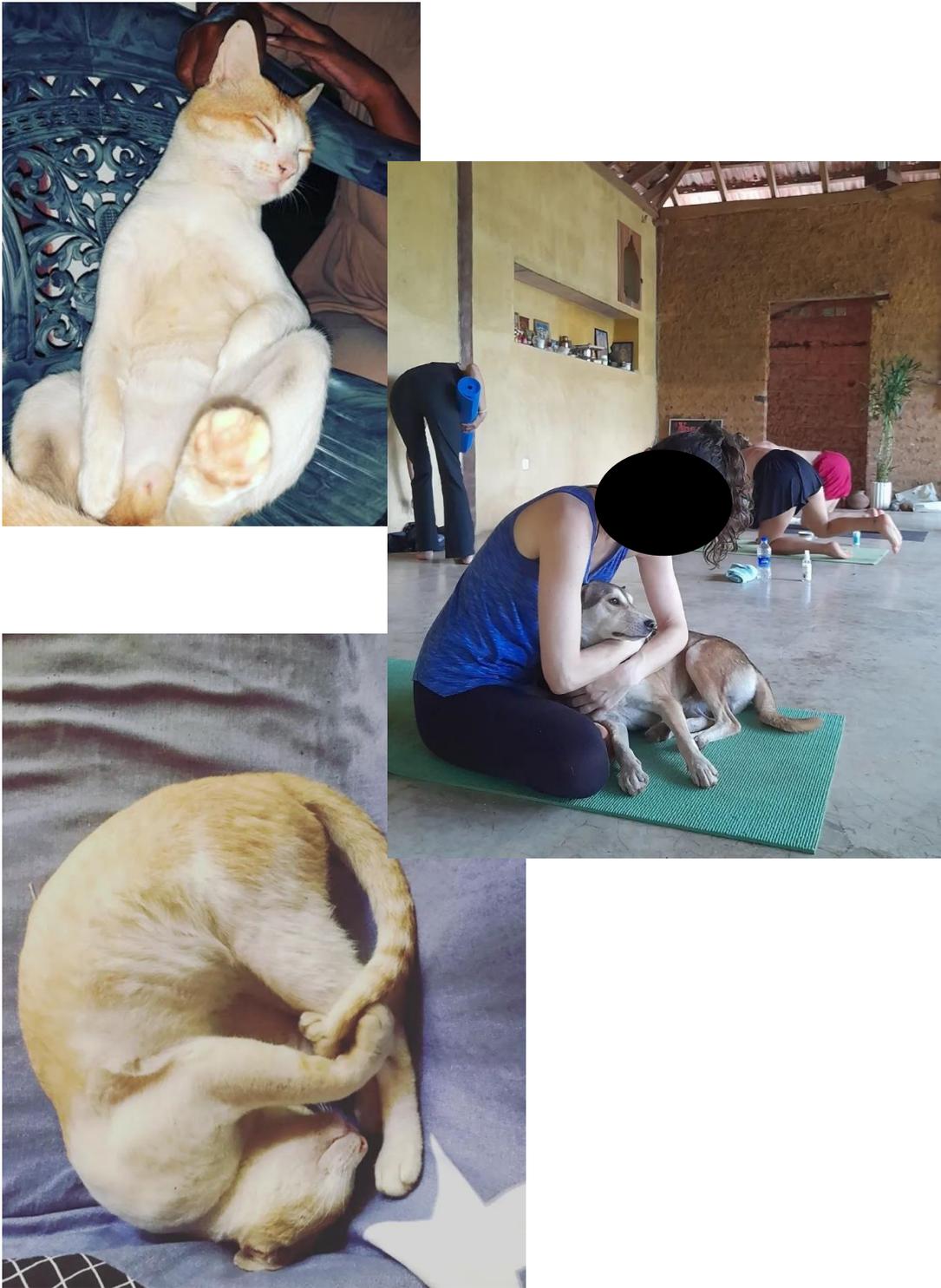
Source: Author

Figure 4.21: The view of *shaala* in the morning and night



Source: Author

Figure 4.22: Captures of Rinky, the cat and Max, the dog

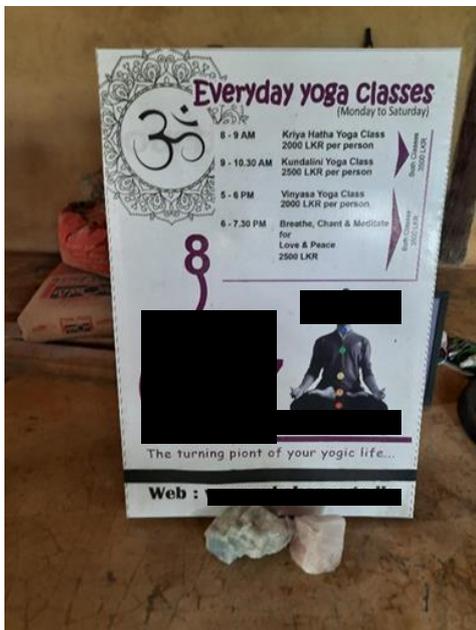


Source: Sathish

Service encounters

Serene Yoga offers classes from Monday to Saturday between 8 am and 7.30 pm. The classes include Kriya Hatha yoga from 8 am to 9 am, Kundalini yoga from 9 am to 10.30 am, Vinyasa Yoga (*linking movement with breathing techniques*) from 5 pm to 6 pm, and a breath, chant, and meditation class from 6 pm to 7.30 pm (see Figure 4.23, p.149). However, the schedule may get altered if there are scheduled retreats. This means that on some days, the opening and closing hours at Serene Yoga may not be clearly defined, and the content of the classes may vary based on the clients' requirements.

Figure 4.23: The class schedule displayed in the *shaala*



Source: Author

The mornings at Serene Yoga are silent and calm, blending sea and tree winds and morning bird perching. Sathish wakes up around 5.30 am for his morning meditation and yoga practice. Clients, as per their preference, can join Sathish around 6 am or else at an agreed time, mostly at 7.30 am. Thus, a typical service encounter at Serene Yoga starts with morning meditation, leading to yoga practice. Sathish and the clients have water or tea while they are at yoga practice. Then, around 9.00 am, Sathish and the clients will have breakfast together. Sathish's mother, with the help of his sister, cooks morning meals, food, and drinks. A simple but healthy nutritious meal plan is offered, and they also consider the preferences of foreign clients, especially in terms of the spiciness of the meals. It is a light and healthy meal, such as sago porridge or traditional herbal gruel, milk rice with jaggery and lunumiris , healthy roti , Sri Lankan

red rice with coconut sambal and fruits. Some days, they will go for brunch, at 10.30 am or 11 am (see Figure 4.24, p. 150).

Figure 4.24: It's mealtime!



Source: a and b by Sathish, others by the author

They restart yoga practice around the time agreed upon by the clients and trainers. Some days, there will be only morning sessions, allowing the clients to go on a walk or a ride around the village or travel outside the village to tourist destinations. Therefore, retreats and teacher training programmes at Serene Yoga have a flexible schedule with the clients.

Usually, after breathing techniques, different poses with the gradual development of the poses are taught. Sathish first demonstrates the *asanas* and discusses the benefits, and outlines the mistakes a client could make. He uses a soft voice when teaching and correcting the mistakes in performing the poses. Sathish only walks a little around the clients and instead keeps a close eye towards the clients' practices. He makes alterations by gently touching the clients and supporting them to stretch their body parts, such as the arms or legs. However, before touching a client, he first asks the client for his/her permission to do so.

The clients sit in a half-circle on-the-floor seating arrangement to see Sathish, who sits at the front centre. He sits on the same floor. During the sessions, Sathish does Yoga chanting and counting. Chanting is a spiritual practice that is most widely popular in the ancient Indian tradition. The musical repetition of powerful sounds creates vibrations throughout the body, calming the mind and deepening the practice. Sathish also makes use of singing bowls¹⁸ in his sound healing sessions. He utilises the bowl by striking the bowl in a rhythmic arrangement¹⁹.

Research site 3 - Urban Escape

Location

Urban Escape is a home-based salon in Battaramulla, a suburb of Colombo. It is located in an area designated as one of Colombo's high-security zones, as several critical local and foreign administrative office buildings, including the Sri Lankan Parliament, are located near Urban Escape. For instance, it will take a 5–7-minute car drive to the Parliament from the salon. This area boasts a variety of upscale residential options, including individually designed houses by premier architects, bungalows, and

¹⁸ *Singing bowl sound meditation is a traditional practice that has been utilized for thousands of years in Tibetan and Buddhist societies to promote healing and relaxation. The technique involves the skillful utilization of metallic bowls, typically made of various metals such as brass or crystal, to create a therapeutic auditory experience (Seetharaman, Avhad & Rane, 2024).*

¹⁹ *During the yoga sessions, I learnt from Sathish that some yoga teachers have another person play it, while some teachers place the bowl on client's body in healing sessions.*

multi-story dwellings. It is also home to the head office of a major political party and several politicians' residences.

Owner and inception

Samantha, a woman in her late forties, owns and runs this salon. In her early twenties, she was a management trainee at a leading Sri Lankan conglomerate. During my first formal conversation with Samantha, she said she wanted to become a "committed and perfect" homemaker and soon she was getting married. So, she decided to resign from her job. However, after a couple of years, she realised her resignation was one of her biggest mistakes. She found it difficult to bear being financially dependent on her husband to run the day-to-day expenses at home and fulfil "her own" needs, such as buying gifts for her parents or friends or spending on her necessities. In her search for employment, she got attracted to a newspaper advert for a hairdressing and beauty care course. After being inspired, she decided to join this Course, aspiring to become a salon worker. After completing the Course, she worked as an assistant in two salons run by reputed beauticians in Sri Lanka.

Then, she opened her first salon at a shop her parents owned, distant from where she and her husband lived. However, two years later, considering the ease of managing her child's caring responsibilities and possible financial savings, she moved her salon into a room in her house. The house is built on the same land as her husband's ancestral home, in one of Colombo's high-security zones, and it had been under construction by then. However, with the growth of her professional skills and knowledge as a salon worker, Samantha received wide popularity and her clientele grew, mainly based on word of mouth.

In 1998, she faced a harrowing experience. Her husband lost his job related to aviation catering due to the Government-initiated restructuring process. From that point onwards, Samantha's salon, which was run to generate extra money for her needs, became the primary source of income for the family. Thus, she decided to expand her business. The first move was to relocate Urban Escape. Samantha constructed an annexe to her home and repositioned the salon with a separate entrance. Moreover, she hired assistant workers for her salon.

By 2020, three assistants worked at Urban Escape for over six years. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath on her business, such as financial problems, she now runs the salon with only one assistant, Ganga. Ganga is in her early 20s and

dreams of opening her salon in 5-6 more years. She is skilled in almost all salon work through on-the-job training.

The clientele and services

Urban Escape is a ladies-only salon. The age of the clientele ranges from teenagers to older women in their 80s. They are multiethnic (Sinhalese, Tamil Muslims, Burghers, and Malay) and multireligious (Buddhists, Catholics, Christians, Islam, and Hindus). Samantha's clients are mainly drawn from the surrounding area and range from upper-middle-income to high-income economic layers. Apart from those clients around the area, the salon has clients from around Colombo and from a distance, such as Kandy (120 km away from Colombo) and Matara (150 km away from Colombo). The salon services that Urban Escape provides include haircutting, hair colouring, dyeing and styling, head massages, waxing and other forms of body hair removal, facials and skin care treatments, manicure and pedicure, leg massages, bridal dressing, and makeup services.

According to Samantha, Urban Escape's client network is expanded by word-of-mouth in two ways. The first is through Samantha's friendship network, and the second is through family networks, i.e., in families from generation to generation, namely, from mother to daughter, grandmother to niece, or woman to their daughters-in-law. She also uses an Instagram and Facebook page to promote her business. She has initiated such promotion, with advice and suggestions from her close clients who are conversant with digital marketing. However, as Samatha believes, word-of-mouth plays a pivotal role in this interactive service.

Samantha has retained some of her customers for more than 15 years. Samantha attributes such a stay to her art of service, specifically, face management strategies, politeness, availability, and helping clients in critical moments in hair and beauty care or their personal or family life. As Samantha said, since her younger age, she has been a person who loves to care for others. She defines her personality as being willing to care for others, which goes beyond skilled professionalism. Samantha said she is a friend who assists her ill or hospitalised friend in need and attends to their bodily care work. She takes care of her parents when they are sick and has taken care of her mother-in-law while she was bedridden and has attended to caring for her in addition to her professional work.

Moreover, Samantha said that even though some would consider some aspects of caring to involve handling unpleasant activities, such as cleaning dirt, for her, it is about healing and making another person happy. In my conversations with clients, they attributed their attachment to Urban Escape to the "magical service qualities" of Samantha and her staff. I will discuss these "magical qualities" in my data analysis section. Also, I must mention that despite the country's adverse political and economic situation, Urban Escape faced only a slight reduction in client appointments. Moreover, being located in close proximity to a few prominent government institutions, Urban Escape did not experience scheduled power cuts for lengthy hours, as happened in many parts of the country.²⁰

Service setting – physical arrangements

A clear signpost at the starting point of a narrow walking path to the salon directs one to Urban Escape with no difficulty. A notice on a separate parking area for clients is also clearly apparent and visible. After a 1-minute walk through the narrow path, one finds a black gate on the right-hand side—the main entrance to the salon and Samantha's home. To the right side of the land, a tap with a sink, soap dispenser, and sanitiser are kept. The parking area of Samantha's family car and her husband's bicycle is on the left side, and a mini-home garden is next to it.

Figure 4.25: The signpost



Source: Author

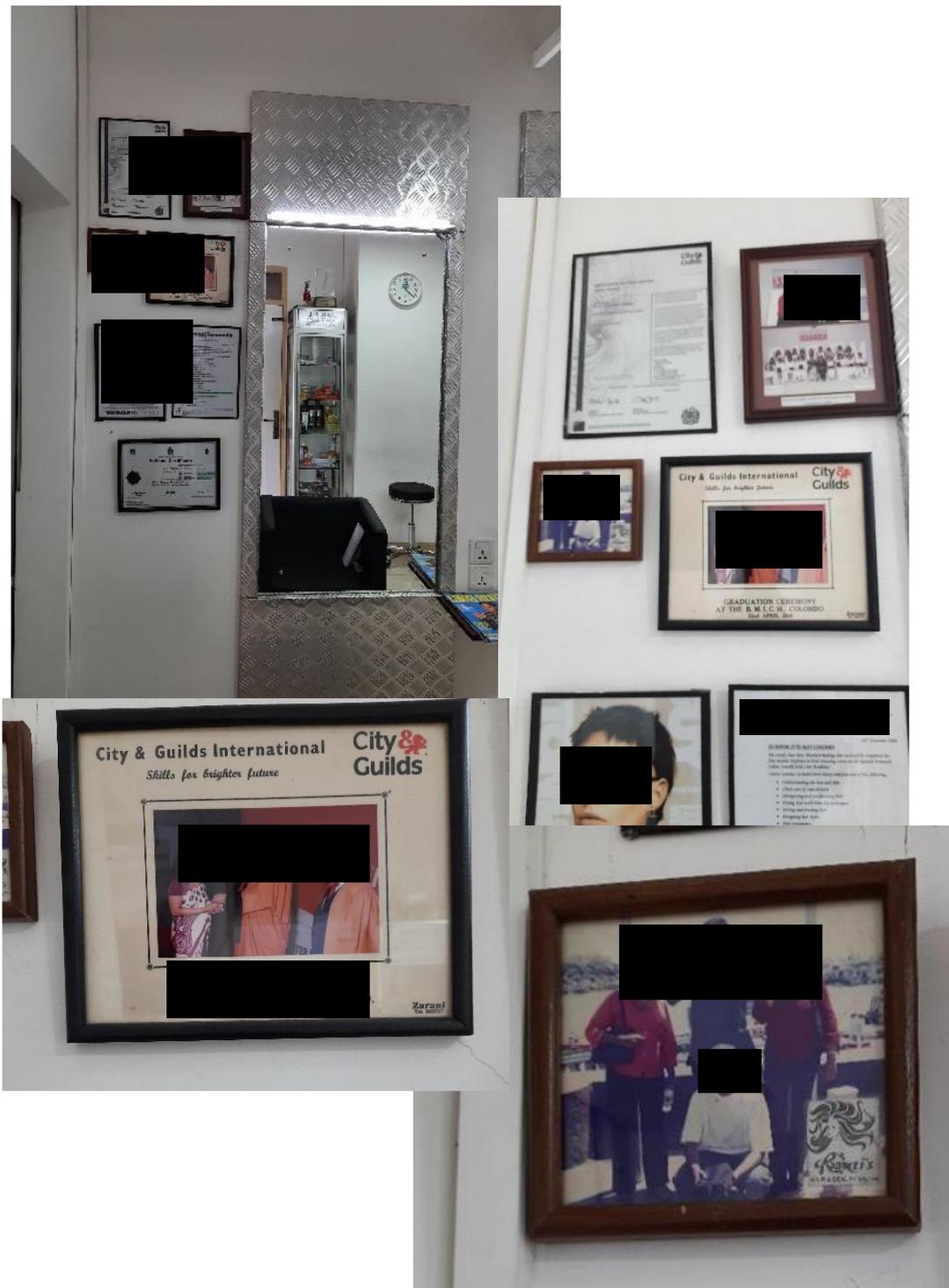
²⁰ Except for a few days during this crisis, power cuts did not occur in prioritised, urgent, and essential places, such as hospitals, the Parliamentary complex, and airports. As a result, houses and other premises very close to such places experienced no or very brief power outages.

The salon entrance is on the left side of the home's main door. There is a steep veranda with three chairs. A black rubber rug is found in the garden before a person step onto the veranda. Next, a black fabric rug can be found at the door entrance to the salon. The clients usually remove their shoes or slippers before entering Urban Escape. The clients are required to knock on the white wooden door for entrance. As I entered the salon, the first thing that caught my eye was the display of certificates and achievements and some photographs Samantha had taken with a reputed beauty care professional (see Figure 4.26, p.156). These are hung on the opposite wall to the door so that one entering the salon can see them well. Two large mirrors with seemingly comfortable black-coloured chairs are next to those wall hangings. Furthermore, a couple of women's magazines published in English were made available on the mirror tables (see Figure 4.27, p.157).

One of the left corners of the salon's layout contains a chair and a small salon bench/stool allocated for a manicure and pedicure (see Figure 4.28, p.157). Ganga is the one who uses this stool. A small cupboard is placed nearby. It contains a steriliser machine, an electric kettle, tissue boxes, and many more relevant tools and equipment. A four-layer rack with a collection of nail polish bottles is available on its top. The other left corner had a standing fan, the used towels to be washed, and a waste collection. The top of the other left corner is allocated for a rack containing cream and shampoo bottles.

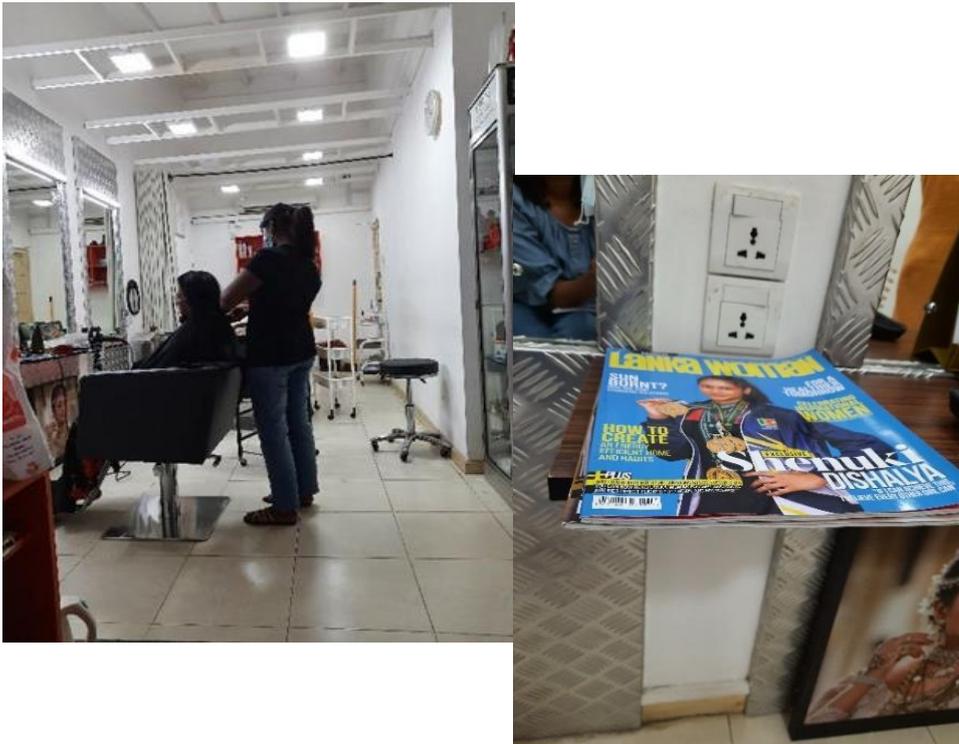
A shampoo bowl is located on the right side of the door. It is used for washing the hair of the clients before a haircut or after a dyeing/colouring treatment. Above that bowl is a rack with a collection of folded towels. To the left, a glass cabinet contains branded creams and gels. On top of that cabinet is a simple but elegant trophy that Samantha had received some years back (see Figure 4.29 and 4.30, p.158).

Figure 4.26: The certificates and photos displayed



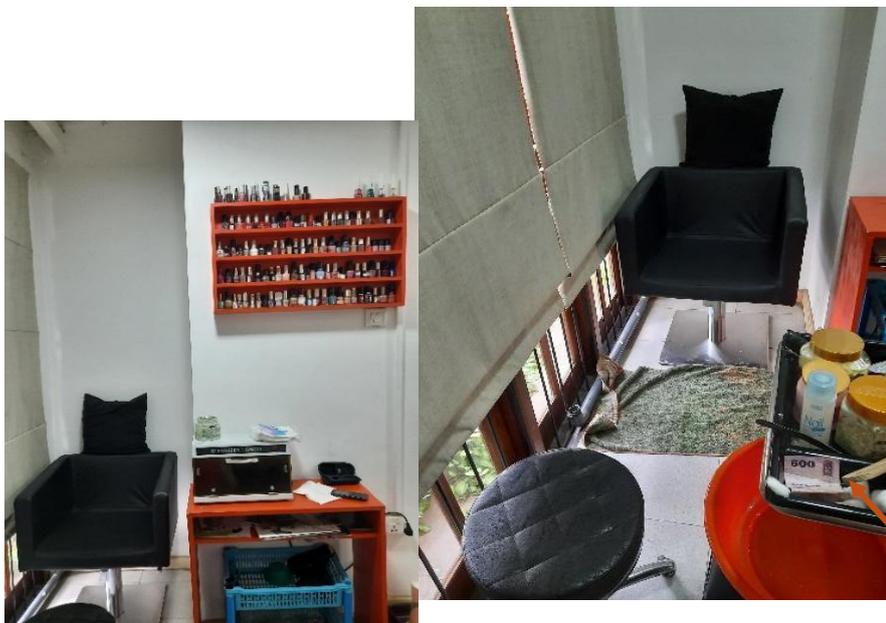
Source: Author

Figure 4.27: Service area



Source: Author

Figure 4.28: Service area for manicure and pedicure



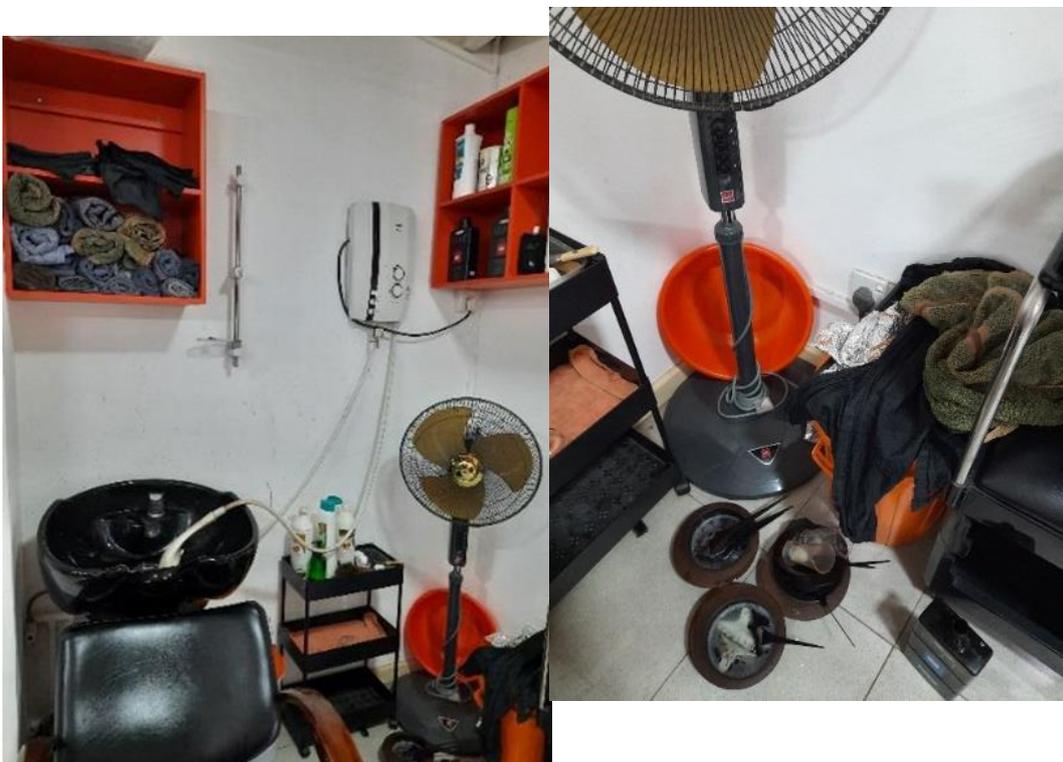
Rs. 500 Currency Note received by Ganga as a tip.

Figure 4.29: Shampoo bowl and the chair



Source: Author

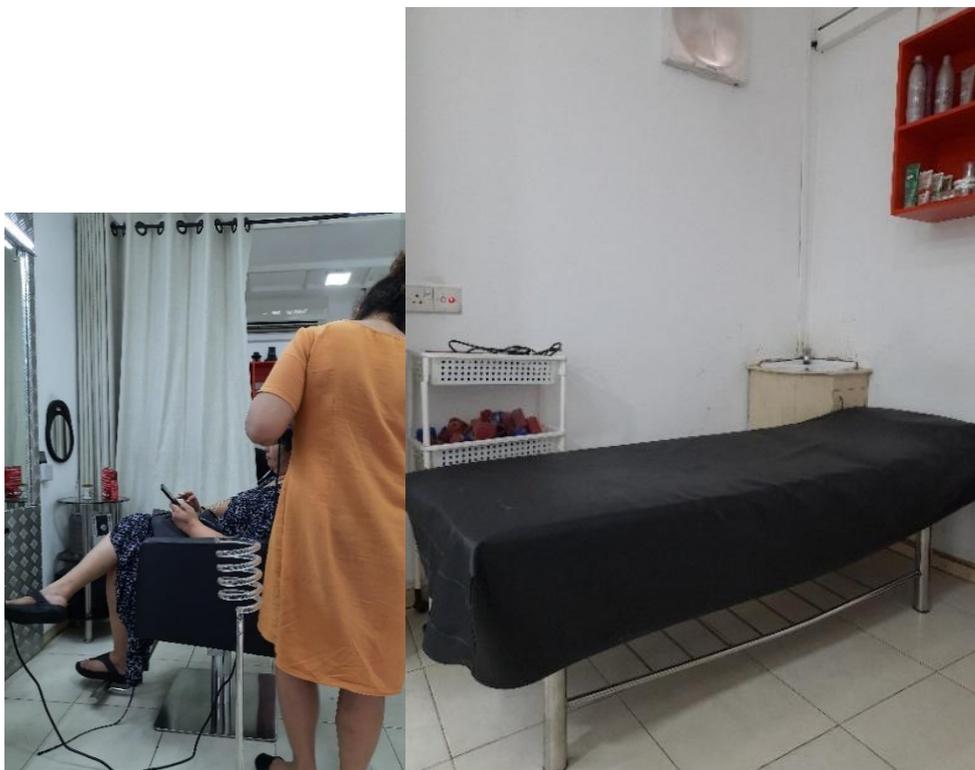
Figure 4.30: Area for used materials till they go to washing



Source: Author

At one of the right corners of the salon is another sink, and that area is assigned for the performance of all types of waxing, body cleansing, facials and cleanups. That area is closed off, using white curtains, when a client is being served (see Figure 4.31, p.159). Opposite that, there is a room, with a connecting door to her home, used for a client who wants to get her clothes changed, especially in bridal dressing, before dressing up and make-up. This room is also used as a primary service area for threading and essential make-up work, and even for haircutting, on the days they do a monthly cleaning of the salon's central area.

Figure 4.31: The facial and waxing corner



Source: Author

The salon has three portable trollies: one for hair-related work, with combs, pins, and dryers; another for cleanups, facials and waxing; and the other for multiple-purposes. The salon uses no natural lighting, and the architectural design does not support such natural lighting. However, on some days, the curtains are kept open so the clients receiving manicure and pedicure services can see through the mini-garden, which is a pleasant view. Internal lighting was comfortable, with the white-coloured walls. Also, natural flowers and floral air fresheners kept the setting more pleasant. Samantha used an air fan and an air conditioner to maintain proper ventilation within the salon. In

addition, Samantha was considerate of the salon's noise level. She played an English radio station in Sri Lanka or classical Western music on the salon's radio at a lower volume. Additionally, she had installed soundproof technology on the walls to ensure that the people in the main house would not be disturbed by the sounds, and vice versa (see Figure 4.32, 4.33 and 4.34, pp.160-161).

Figure 4.32: The three trollies



Source: Author

Figure 4.33: Lighting at the salon



Source: Author

Figure 4.34: Radio



Source: Author

Service encounters

Urban Escape is open every day except Tuesdays. Their regular opening hours are from 8.30 am to 7 pm. However, when an appointment involves bridal dressing, including the dressing of bridesmaids and flower girls, and/or where a make-up service is scheduled for early morning, they start work around 3 am or 4 am. The salon gets busy on Saturdays and Sundays and in the evenings during weekdays. Nevertheless, Samantha and Ganga are not “free” during the daytime on weekdays, as it gets filled with appointments from young homemakers and elderly clients.

Samantha and Ganga start their work around 7.30 am and clean the salon. They get ready for scheduled appointments. For example, if it is hair dyeing, they get the dyeing colour tubes and bowls into a tray with all other necessary equipment. Ganga usually eats her breakfast, which she brings from her home, at the salon. It is a frequent occurrence to see Samantha share food with Ganga and add more food items to Ganga’s plate. When they are on a tight schedule, Samantha and Ganga will have their lunch around 3 pm. So, as they said, both prefer having a good, healthy breakfast on such days.

The clients’ visits are made by prior appointments, and the clients seldom experience a long waiting time. The appointments are usually made one or two weeks before the respective appointment. However, some clients can make appointments a day before or the same morning. This favour is given considering if there is spare time between the scheduled appointments, and based on the closeness and bond they have built up over the time of their worker-client relationship.

Samantha and Ganga prepare for the client beforehand. Samantha usually talks with Ganga about the client, her preference, and the previous services they have provided the client. When the client knocks to gain entry, Ganga checks through the spyhole to see if the client is on their expected schedule, and then opens the door.

At Urban Escape, the clients were observed to be punctual for their appointments, and they ensured that their hair, face and underarms were washed and cleaned before attending the salon. I noticed that the clients carefully clean and remove hair oil before they attend the salon for a cut or treatment. Samantha told me it is rare that a client has visited her salon without adherence to the cleanliness they should maintain in attending a salon.

As Ganga and Samantha go straight into work with some clients, they briefly discuss what they are going through in their lives or the country before the work gets started. These talks will be led by either the client or Samantha. During the negotiation process with the client on what she needs, they further talk and agree on service. Furthermore, if it is a dressing-up of a sari and make-up, much discussion goes on before and during the service on how it looks or the outcome (for example, the thickness or lightness of the make-up, the eyebrow colour, and hairstyle). If the service appointment is on a wedding day dressing-up, Samantha and Ganga will work on the bride's body and dress her up as they agreed with the bride-to-be well in advance²¹. I observed much calm and careful behaviour during a bridal dressing. Samantha told me that she considers a wedding dressing-up appointment sacred, as it begins a couple's new life. She said she usually prays that everything goes well with the couple while delivering the service.

Out of the different services available at Urban Escape, Samantha mainly does haircutting, dressing and make-up, while either Samantha or Ganga do hair dyeing and colouring based on their availability. Ganga is assigned manicures, pedicures, washing hair before treatment or after dyeing, and head and leg massages. Ganga shows high obedience to Samantha. Samantha and the clients praised Ganga's service qualities during and after the service, mainly referring to her touch in hair and leg massaging and her caring nature in her work. The clients gently tap Ganga's shoulder to praise her, while verbally appreciating her work. With her captivating qualities, it was observed that Ganga also plays a pivotal role in retaining clients for Urban Escape.

Some clients are given fruit juice, water, and occasionally food during service delivery. I noticed that it depends upon the bond they maintain, the service's type and time length. Samantha considered clients' preferences on what they like to do while receiving the service. Some clients preferred silence, while others read magazines available or used their mobile phones for social media during their stay in the Urban Escape. Some prefer to share jokes and/or have chats with Samantha or Ganga on various topics, namely, the country's political situation, family matters, movies and

²¹ Usually, wedding day dressing-up and make-up work is decided in advance. The bride-to-be and Samantha will discuss the preparations and how it should be done. In such discussions, I observed Samantha giving her instructions on maintaining the bride-to-be's body and guiding her to have proper food and water intake. Moreover, Urban Escape offers preliminary beauty care treatments, such as different types of facials and body hair removal before a wedding day.

teledramas, actors and actresses, and religions. When they were having a serious talk, such as about the country's political situation, a family problem of a client, or friendly talk with clients, the music was switched off, or the sound was lowered.

The client usually agrees on the price when they make the appointment. Although a standard charge is prescribed for each service, Samantha provides discounts and concessions for her long-term clients. Moreover, almost all clients who get Ganga's services pay her a service tip directly if they pay in cash. If they pay by card, they ask Samantha to allocate the amount for Ganga. Samantha records it in her notebook and includes it in the monthly wages. These tips are forms of appreciation. I noticed that it encourages her to maintain the same level of excellence or even surpass it in future appointments with the same client. For instance, one day, when she went through the appointment schedule in the morning, she told Samantha and me, "Today we are having (naming the client) here for foot care. Well, this is a good client. She is kind. She never forgets a tip for me, and she loves me. I always make sure I do my best for her". In addition, I observed that Ganga employs effective face management techniques and provides extra caring and attentive service when she knows there is a good possibility of getting a tip from a specific client.

A client is ushered to the door after completing the service and done with the payment. The client usually praises the service and/or discusses the next possible appointment date. Some hug Samantha before they leave. Samantha always guides the elderly clients to their vehicles. Furthermore, when it rains, Samantha accompanies her client to the car with an umbrella. Samantha believes that such warm care helps build stronger relationships.

I observed that Samantha always pays attention to maintaining a clean and safe environment with high-tech salon equipment, such as blow-dryers, salon chairs and quality products. She maintains a separate mobile phone for the salon's work, receiving client calls on appointments and clarifications and contacting suppliers. However, depending on the close friendship built with some clients, Samantha's private mobile phone is also used for making appointments. The work schedule, with the client's name, type of work, and time, is recorded in Samantha's notebook, which Ganga also has access to. There is another notebook to record the income generated from each service daily, which gets filled after each service is finished.

Research site 4 - Scissors N Razors

Location, owner and inception

Scissors N Razors is located on the first floor of a shopping complex in the city centre of Homagama, a suburban area about 24 kilometres southeast of Colombo. Before being established in its current city centre, the business had operated in two other locations in the same city. Lal owns the salon. It is run by him and his son, Tharaka, who is in his early twenties. Lal, now in his mid-fifties, started his career as a hairdresser 35 years ago as an assistant at another salon in Kalutara, a major city in Kalutara District. Lal entered this career just after his schooling finished and found an interest in improving his skills in hairdressing. Working in a salon as a haircutter has been fun for Lal at his young age. Working in a salon as a haircutter has been fun for Lal at his young age. However, having identified the job as a good source of income and feeling that it suits him, he has determined to improve his skills and remain in the profession. His first job was as an assistant in a salon located in Kalutara²². A few years later, he moved to Homagama. Tharaka joined this family business around two years ago. Before joining Scissors N Razors, his father's business, he had worked in another salon for six months as a trainee. He is studying for the National Vocational Qualification in Hairdressing and Barbering.

The clientele and the services

Scissors N Razors is open only to men, ranging from teenagers to older men. Most of the clients are Sinhalese and from lower and middle socio-economic strata. Services of Scissors N Razors include haircuts, hair colouring and dyeing, beard shavings, and oil and non-oil massages for hair, neck, and shoulders.

Service setting – physical arrangements

The entry point of Scissors N Razors involves a steep staircase with no handrail. I observed that this caused difficulties for elderly clients (see Figure 4.35 and 4.36, pp. 166-167). However, Tharaka or Lal are always there to assist them in getting up and down the stairs before and after their appointments. The salon is the first shop one sees upon entering the first floor, and it has two rubber rugs outside. Lal and Tharaka usually work barefoot, and leave their slippers near the rugs. Sometimes, Tharaka wears a pair of slippers that is only used inside the salon.

²² Kalutara is a major city in Kalutara District, Western Province, Sri Lanka.

Figure 4.35: The surrounding area of Scissors N Razors



Source: Author

Figure 4.36: The entryway



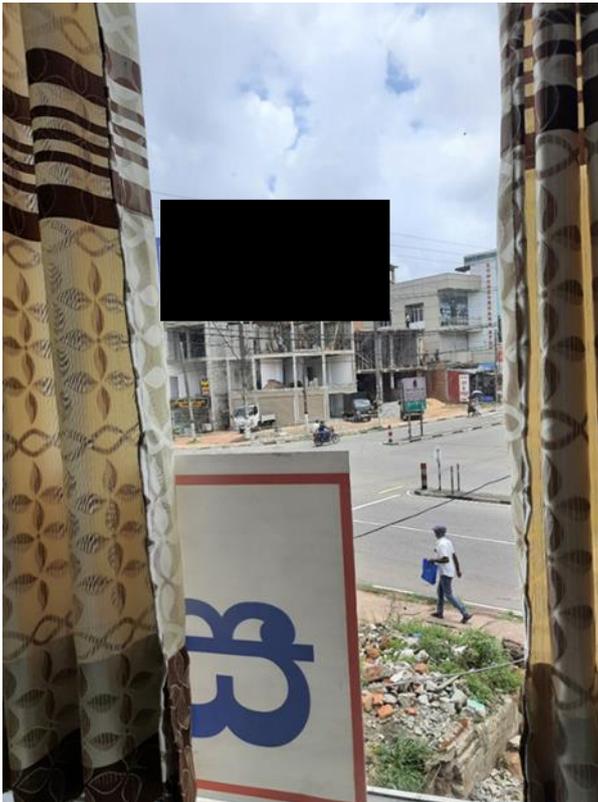
Source: Author

One side of the salon faces the city centre, and that side is covered by a glass wall with curtains (see Figure 4.37, p. 168). The opposite side adjoins a shop, which was vacant for sale/rent during my fieldwork. So, Lal and Tharaka use this shop to have their lunch. There was no attached washroom in Scissors N Razors. Lal and Tharaka, and the clients, if they needed a washroom, used the shared washroom available for the shopping complex.

The salon has two large mirrors and comfortable chairs with headrests or neck support. There are also two aluminium and plastic storage trays for equipment, and six plastic chairs for clients to use while waiting. A Lord Buddha statue and a lit lamp used for worship are placed in the right-hand corner, while the shampoo bowl is in the left-hand corner ((see Figure 4.38 and 4.39 pp. 169-170).

As they have a glass wall, instead of windows they use an air conditioner. Moreover, they use artificial lighting. However, the curtains are usually folded and drawn apart in the morning and evening but unfolded and closed from 11 am to 3 pm to avoid heavy sunlight. Most clients appreciate the salon's spaciousness and better natural lighting compared to the previous location, which had been smaller and darker.

Figure 4.37: An outside view through the salon's windows



Source: Author

Service encounters

Scissors N Razors is primarily a walk-in salon. However, some clients come from distant areas and make appointments in advance. It is open all seven days, except on *poya days*²³. Lal and Tharaka live in the same home, located 7 km away from the salon. Each morning, including weekends, Lal arrives at the salon around 8.00 am and Tharaka around 10 am. The salon starts work at 8.30 am and usually closes around 7 pm on weekdays. On Fridays and weekends, the busiest days at Scissors N Razors, they take in work till 9 pm, depending on the client's arrival.

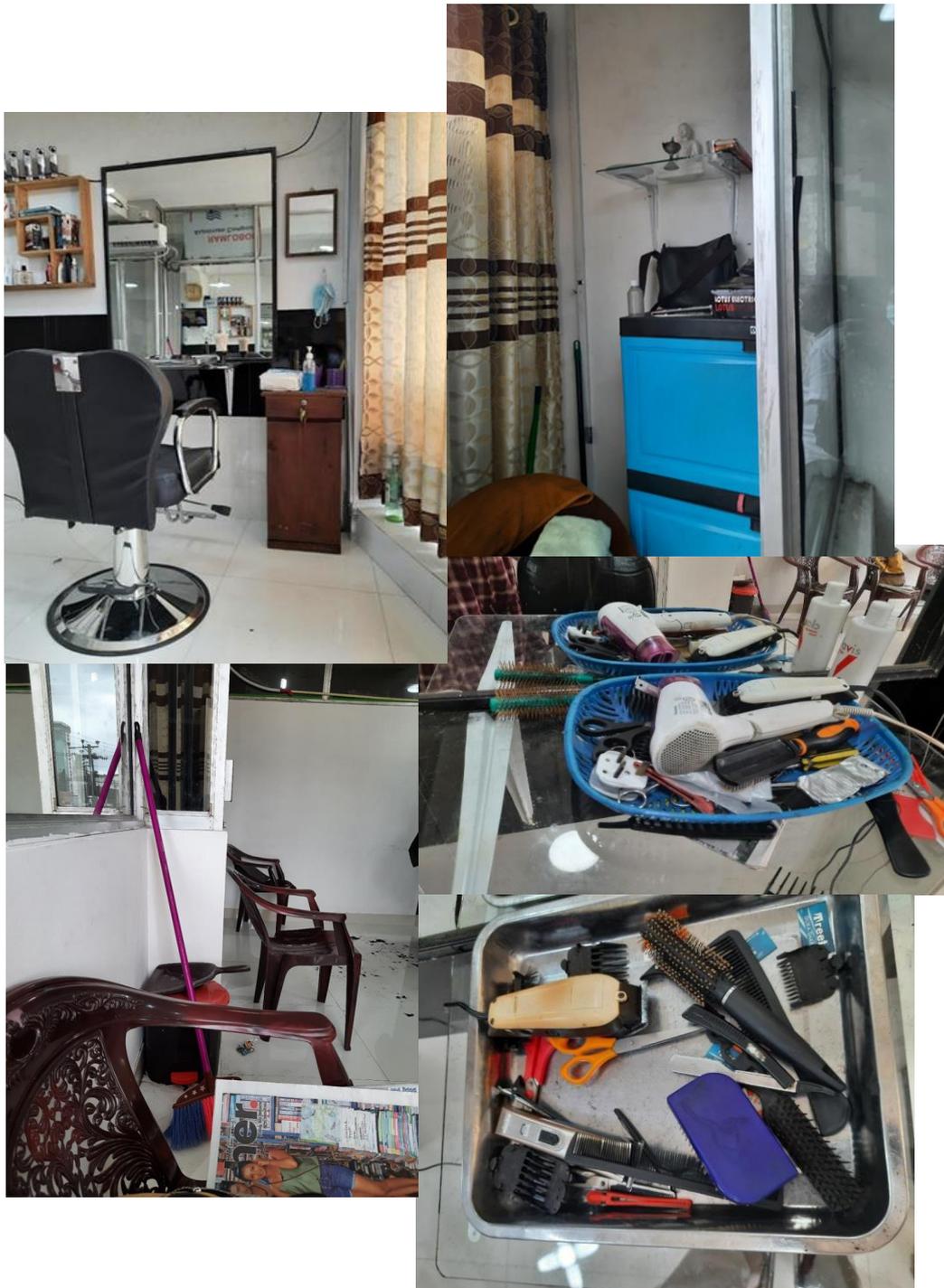
²³*Poya Day in each month generally falls on the Gregorian date of the full moon. However, occasionally, it falls a day on either side. It is a holiday in Sri Lanka. Around twelve Poya Days correspond with the Buddhist lunar calendar and moon-phase marking system annually.*

Figure 4.38: The service area



Source: Author

Figure 4.39: Physical arrangement and equipment



Source: Author

Before giving a haircut, Lal or Tharaka check the shape of the face, hair type (such as straight, wavy, curly and coily hair), hair volume, and client preference. The nature of the client's job or employment is also considered in designing a haircut, by both the hairdresser and the client. (For example, office workers generally prefer to keep a larger

volume of hair within the cut, compared to workers in the construction field, such as masonry workers. They prefer an undercut/side cut or shaved cut. Some retired army officers tend to have a trim around their ears. Teenagers and school students have specific rules about haircuts prescribed by the schools). However, due to the close and solid worker-client relationship over a long period, the hairstyle or the beard style which is preferred by and best suited to a specific client is known, chiefly to Lal. As I observed, most clients come and do not specify the cut; instead, it is done by Lal. If a new or recently joined client comes in, Lal and Tharaka talk to the client first and then agree on the design. Some haircuts and shavings include massage, and some are non-massage. If it includes a massage, it starts with the haircut and then with the beard shaving, followed by a massage. The clients are asked about their preferred oil or massage cream. The floor is swept and mopped after each haircut by Lal or Tharaka, whoever is available at the time, to maintain cleanliness by removing cut hair (see Figure 4.40, p.171).

Figure 4.40: Service delivery moments and cleaning in between



Source : Author

Lal or Tharaka attend to clients based on their availability. If both Lal and Tharaka are on service delivery, clients can wait seated in the salon for their turn. Lal or Tharaka, whoever finishes the work, will provide the service to the client in line on a first-come, first-served basis. However, it was observed that most of the young clients who have recently entered the client base prefer Tharaka's service, as the young perceive Lal as outdated in regard to the latest haircuts. In contrast, the older clients preferred to receive the service from Lal. These clients explicitly expressed their reluctance to get Tharaka's service, and chose to wait for Lal for a few hours if Lal was out of the salon for some personal work. Lal told me that during the initial stage, when COVID-19 was under control, but the salons were prohibited from starting their work, some clients arranged transportation to Lal or funded the fuel costs for his vehicle to reach the client's home.

There are Sinhala daily newspapers available for clients' use. Moreover, the television is switched on the whole day. Lal is a cricket lover. So, if a match is scheduled for the day, Lal selects the live telecast of the cricket match. If not, a channel telecasting teledrama series or, a movie, or a musical programme is selected by Lal. However, all these TV programmes are played at low volume. Moreover, it was observed that most of Scissors N Razors' clients prefer little talk during service delivery. This behaviour is a significant difference I observed in comparison to women-only salons. However, some clients talk with Lal or Tharaka while waiting for the service receipt. In such times, most clients talked heavily about the political and economic status of the country, their businesses, and sports. But they hardly talked about their families or family life. As revealed in my informal conversations with them, most clients consider the salon as the place to detach from their concerns in their day-to-day life and "the perfect space for relaxation" with the magical touch of Lal or Tharaka. Thus, it appeared as if the clients preferred a silent or calm service environment.

As Scissors N Razors is a walk-in salon, the punctuality of a client is not a criterion to which Lal and Tharaka pay attention. However, similar to Urban Escape, they expected the clients to come in a clean condition to receive the service. Lal told me that some builders or constructors come for haircuts after finishing their daily work and have not had a bath before attending the salon. He says that he would not use the usual combs and equipment as a protective strategy in such moments. I asked Lal if he had communicated the behaviour he expects from the clients. He said he had done so verbally, but some do not take it seriously, and repeat the negligent behaviour.

Research site 5 - Pinky Grace

Location, owner and inception

Pinky Grace is run at a rented place in Piliyandala, a suburb 18 kilometres south of Colombo. The salon is in the city centre, next to the main road of Piliyandala-Colombo. Neela, who is in her early forties, owns Pinky Grace. She is a mother of two kids, and her husband is a professional stage drama actor. Neela entered the hair and beauty care industry as a salon assistant 20 years ago. After finishing her Advanced-Level school exams, Neela aspired to pursue a career in beauty care. She started as an assistant to a hairdresser, receiving on-the-job training. Neela had worked in five different salons as an assistant before starting her salon. Then, with the help of her mother, who provided her with essential beauty care products and a toolbox, she opened her first salon in a rented location in Piliyandala, but in a different location than the current one. The current salon is Neela's third location for her business.

Neela is now qualified at the standard stage of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and is preparing for the advanced stage. She also contributes to a weekly women's magazine to educate a vast audience on hair and beauty care tips. Neela mentioned that her extensive exposure to various salon types as a training assistant equipped her with versatile skills as a beautician.

The clientele, and services

Pinky Grace is a ladies-only salon, and the clients range from kids to adult females from middle-income socio-economic strata. Almost all the clients are Sinhalese who follow Buddhism or Catholicism. The hair and beauty care services at Pinky Grace include hair cutting, hair and scalp treatments, hair colouring, facial and skin treatments (both herbal and regular), eyebrows makeup and body hair removal, and bridal and party dressing and makeup. Pinky Grace is primarily an on-appointment salon. However, it accommodates walk-in clients, taking into consideration the type of service and the time it takes. All client appointments and income are recorded in a diary and a notebook. The service payments can be made only in cash.

Service setting – physical arrangements

Pinky Grace has a parking area shared mutually by other adjacent shops. A couple of potted plants were kept beside the entrance. The front side of the salon had a glass wall with some posters on it, and the door was also made of glass. There was a bamboo blind fixed to the front glass wall. Nevertheless, Neela usually folded the bamboo blind to allow natural lighting to enter Pinky Grace through the glass walls. A

sink and a tap were fixed outside Pinky Grace for clients to wash their hands before entering the salon, or for drinking purposes. I observed that pedestrians, too, used the tap to quench their thirst (see Figure 4.41, p.175).

The clients are required to remove their shoes or slippers before entering the salon. Two rugs were available at the entrance. One rug made of coir (coconut fibre) was kept outside the door (on the pavement), and a fabric rug was placed inside the door entrance. Nearby, the rug outside, on which was usually found a pair of slippers, implied that the clients should remove their shoes before entering the salon. Thus, the clients were barefoot within the salon. However, a client who comes for a dress-up can take clean shoes to wear since it is compulsory to check the length of the dress and the body shape, especially regarding *sari/osar*²⁴.

One side of the reception area wall was adorned with a collection of masks. These masks originate from Sri Lankan traditional mask making art and craft. I have visited many salons, but this was the first time I had witnessed this artefact. Before leaving the salon on my first visit, I also understood the decorations she had used on the wall - the different sets of masks. It had been the idea of her husband, a professional stage drama actor, to have such an idea ((see Figure 4.42 and 4.43, pp. 176). According to Neela, such decoration denotes that everyone has different facial and bodily versions; however, a beauty care worker can make that self more beautiful. She believes that a beauty care worker should be able to make any one on more presentable to society, through proper analysis of a client's body and the worker's touch, and by guiding the client in a kind and compelling manner.

²⁴ *Sari/osari, is traditionally worn in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Osari, a Sri Lankan Saree, also called the Kandyan saree, deriving its name from the Kandy region. Sinhalese women wear it for all occasions, to workplaces, weddings, and religious purposes.*

Figure 4.41: The front view of Pinky Grace



Source: Author

Figure 4.42: Pinky Grace's entrance



Source: Author

Figure 4.43: The set of masks as a wall decoration



Source: Author

The salon is set up in a rented place. However, Neela was free to alter the interior decorations and arrangements, including partitioning. When this space was first occupied for rent, it had been an empty and unpartitioned area. It is a narrow, steep building, and Neela has partitioned it into four areas. The first part is assigned as the reception and waiting area—the right-side wall is decorated with framed certifications, and the left with masks. The reception desk with a book is the appointment record book. Also, there was a statue of Lord Ganesha (The Elephant-headed God) and her visiting cards. In the backdrop, there was a large photo of a bride. There were two framed certificates displayed on the left side of the wall. A bench was kept, allowing clients to wait for their appointments (see Figure 4.44 and 4.45, pp. 177-178).

Figure 4.44: The reception area



Source: Author

Figure 4.45: The reception area - continued



Source: Author

The second segmented area included the service encounters for hair cutting and essential services such as threading and cleaning up. The salon has two large mirrors with standard salon chairs and uses the air fans. The third section is assigned to facials, body clean-up, and dressing-up work. At the far end, the fourth part is for the private use of Neela, her children and her close friends. It is where the children (and Neela) had lunch, did homework, played, napped, and slept until Neela finished her work (See Figure 4.46, 4.47 and 4.48, pp. 180-182). While reception area benefits from ample natural lighting, though these adjacent sections rely on artificial lighting (see Figure 4.49, p. 182).

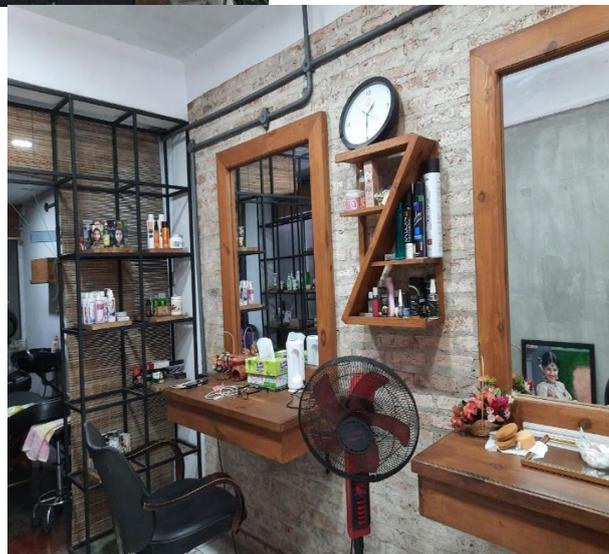
Neela strongly believes that Feng Shui²⁵ rituals facilitate the smooth functioning of the business and her success so far, despite a drastic decrease in client appointments due to the country's situation. Feng Shui, also known as Chinese geomancy, is a traditional Chinese practice of arranging items in living spaces to create balance with the natural world. Her belief in Feng Shui has led her to decide on the salon's design and arrangements and how she chooses colours for the salon's wall paintings and daily outfits. Feng Shui also influences the colours of the flowers she offers to Lord *Ganesha* (see Figure 4.50 and 4.51, p.183).

Moreover, Neela plays *pirith*²⁶ recordings in her audio player most of the day at the salon. If not, no other music is played. She believes *pirith* protects all living beings. For herself, it facilitates a peaceful environment essential for beauty care work and smooth worker-client relationships.

²⁵ *Feng Shui claims to use energy forces to harmonise individuals with their surrounding environment. The term Feng Shui means "wind-water" (i.e., fluid). Feng shui includes astronomical, astrological, architectural, cosmological, geographical and topographical dimensions. Some users of Feng shui aim to gain a sense of security and success. It plays an essential role in producing harmony between man and nature. Thus, natural elements are highly valued and used in choosing sites. For example, it encourages that the sites of the buildings or cities should take complete account of the effects of sunlight, wind direction, water flow, sorts of plants, and surrounding roads (Han, and Lin, 2023; Chen, 2007; Mak and Ng,2005).*

²⁶ *Paritta" in Pali, "paritrana" in Sanskrit and "pirit" (pronounced pirith) in Sinhala means protection principally. Paritta suttas described certain suttas or discourses delivered by the Buddha and regarded as affording protection. It has been found that listening to pirith has many benefits. It is suitable for the heart and increases the body's immune system, producing lasting changes in the brain, leading to increased IQ level, sustained positive emotions, giving relief for insomnia, reshaping and expanding the mind to foster happiness and cultivate compassion, thickening the brain tissues, increase attention and sensory processing, and increase the well-being and sense of trust in social situations (Jayaratne, 2007).*

Figure 4.46: The service area (The second segmented area)



Source: Author

Figure 4.47: The service area (The second segmented area) – continued



Source: Author

Figure 4.48: Different types of trollies



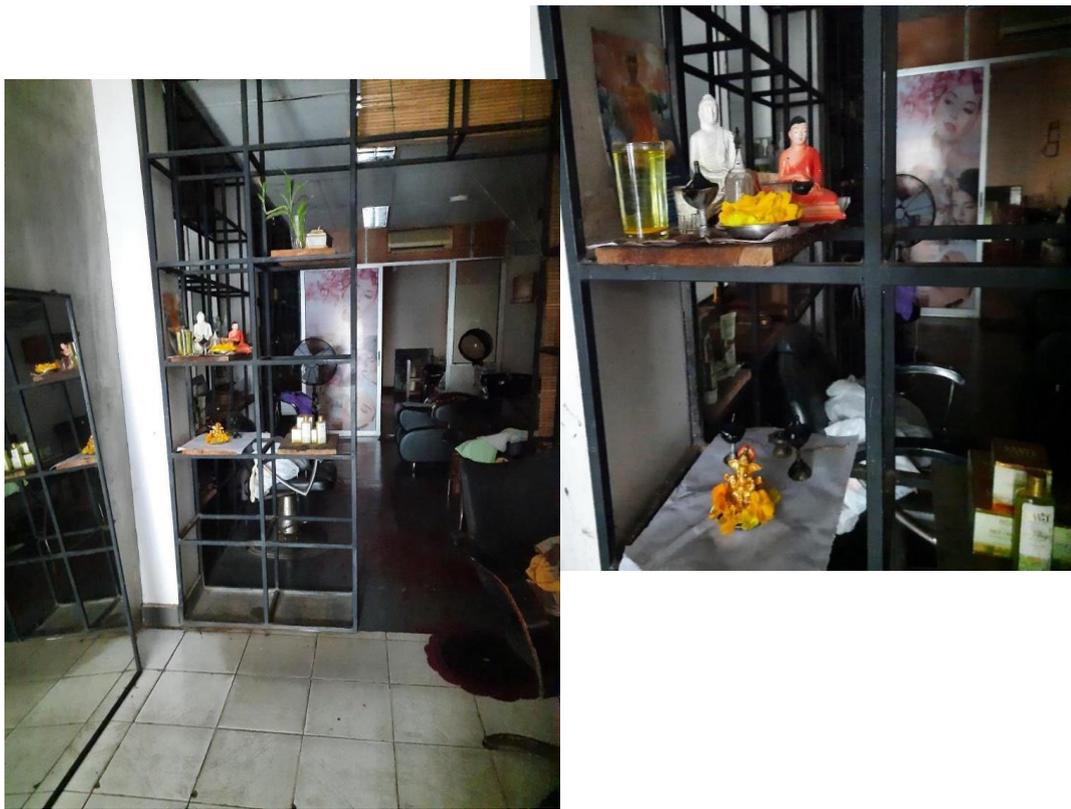
Source: Author

Figure 4.49: The lighting



Source: Author

Figure 4.50: Lord Buddha and Lord Ganesh Statues, placed in the main service area



Source: Author

Figure 4.51: Offer of flowers to Lord Ganesha statue kept on the reception table



Source: Author

Service encounters

Pinky Grace is open every day except Sundays, and the busiest times occur during Friday evenings and Saturdays. Neela has kept Sunday “free” from her salon work, as

she has hairdressing and beauty care classes following National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level exams. Neela usually starts her daily business activities at 8 am. She drops her two kids off at school and reaches the salon around 7 o'clock.

However, exceptions are made to the daily start-up time based on bridal dressing appointments. For instance, in May, June, July, October, December and January, they typically get many appointments for bridal dressings. On such days, she attends the salon at 2 am or 3 am, depending on the '*nekath*' or auspicious times the bride and wedding party are following. There had been many occasions where she had taken her kids to the salon at night and got them prepared for school at the salon. For some appointments, it is not only the bride but also the bridesmaids and flower girls, and for some, it includes the bride's mother and relatives who get the service. On such occasions, she gets the help of Rina, one of her closest friends, who has temporarily withdrawn from beauty care work due to her family commitments. The bridal dressing days are tiring. After delivering the bride's primary dressing service, Neela either goes with her to the hotel for additional touch-ups and re-dressing for the "going away" function, or the bride returns to the salon in the afternoon for the "going away" function.

Neela usually spends around 45 minutes with her opening rituals for the day. She believes that can affect how effective the day is. She mops the floor daily and cleans the area with natural turmeric water. She then offers flowers and lights the lamp for the Lord Buddha statue and offers flowers to Lord Ganesha's statue. Next, she rechecks the appointment diary to remind herself of the day's tasks. The tasks, with the client's name, type of work, and time, are recorded in Neela's diary. This diary is also used to record the income generated from each service.

Neela welcomes her clients with a lovely smile and discusses the work to be done. She addresses elderly clients, some of the clients who do teaching jobs as "Ms." and all other clients with/without first name. Except for her very close, same-aged and elderly clients, others address Neela as "Ms." implying superiority and authority due to her professional position.

The service encounters appeared friendly. Like Urban Escape, the clients of Pinky Grace seldom experience a long waiting time. However, I observed that they preferred talking with Neela instead of using their mobile phone or reading newspapers or magazines during the service encounter. The clients talked about recent happenings in the country, family activities, such as almsgiving functions (giving away cooked food

to the Buddhist monks or needy people), parties and everyday life problems, or news of their partners and children with Neela. Some of these discussions showed that Neela maintains close relationships with some clients, who have become her family friends. For example, they talked about the events they attended together and their experiences. However, as per my observations, amidst all these discussions Neela was mindful of the service encounter and every step involved.

Neela's advisory role during a service encounter was a key observation. Her advice usually includes how clients must maintain their bodies in a healthy condition and practise bodily habits to maintain vitality and stability internally (for example, regarding hormone-balancing and better digestion) and externally (tips for applying medications to skin or hair maintenance). For example, she encouraged the clients to increase their daily water intake by having healthy food. If a client visits for a clean-up and a facial, Neela first examines her skin. Then, she explains the healthiness of the skin to the client. For example, whether the client's face is delicate or has got "damaged" due to acne, excessive sunburn, or negligence).

Further, in service encounters, Neela showed her ability to understand clients' moods, for example, if they are happy or suffering from stressful conditions. She did that by examining the client's facial expressions and skin types. She showed interest in identifying the influence of issues related to hormone changes on clients' bodies during different stages and ages of the client's life. For some clients, she emphasised that they need to have medical treatments and intake of nutrients to make their bodies healthier and their outer appearance more pleasant, and she could then do a better job. Sometimes, she directed her clients to visit a dermatologist or physician instead of doing surface treatments for the respective client's skin.

If it is a bridal dressing appointment, Neela and the client have several pre-wedding appointments, and Neela discusses the treatments and the time schedules with the bride-to-be. She guides the client's water intake, maintaining her body fitness, and, if possible, reducing weight. At the same time, I observed that Neela advised some brides-to-be on their matters, such as issues regarding their private parts of the body, conflicts between bride and groom, and family matters.

Neela was keen to maintain the cleanliness and neatness of how things are arranged at the salon. However, it was observed that her drawers and trollies sometimes get messier as she fails to do the cleaning as planned. This usually happens when she

gets busier with client appointments consecutively at a stretch. On such occasions, she keeps all used equipment and towels in a corner of the salon, sweeps the place quickly, and shifts her attention to the other appointment.

Neela believes that a beauty care worker should be able to make a client look pleasant and in line with social expectations. According to her, this can be done by adequately analysing a client's body, and using the worker's skill in guiding the client in a kind and compelling manner. Nevertheless, Neela recalled how some clients need to pay more attention to dandruff and head lice. As told by Neela, she gets frustrated with the unpleasant work involved in service encounters, such as removing the bulk of blackheads and whiteheads, washing smelly hair, treating hair with lice and nits, and waxing underarms. She said she is disgusted by such tainted work and thus sometimes loses her appetite. The negligence of clients' proper hair care also causes Neela to pay extra care to protect herself and her equipment, such as combs, salon capes and caps, as it would badly affect other clients together.

In addition, I observed that only a few clients of Pinky Grace maintained punctuality. Neela told me that clients being late for an appointment is a big problem, as it disturbs her and other clients' schedules. She said she usually asks the client to come 10 minutes before the appointment. But that, too, has not worked well. However, she believes her work— making another's body pleasant and beautiful — is unique. According to her, it also makes a good source of income. Thus, the belief, the satisfaction, and the financial return keep her going as a salon worker.

Summary

Through this chapter, I provided a reader with a comprehensive understanding of the research sites I selected for my study. As I discussed the location, their owners, workers, clients and physical arrangements, I was able to develop a clear picture of the service settings. At the same time, I engaged a reader more in the sites through my use of photos, video stills and autoethnographic accounts about the sensory experiences in the settings. In the next chapter, I provide my data analysis and findings in relation to the data produced about the service encounters that took place in these five sites.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, I present my findings along with analysis and interpretation of data to address my two research questions: (1) How do worker-client bodily interactions occur in service encounters, particularly taking into account the varying extent of touch? and (2) how do multiple bodies participate in worker-client interactions in body work? I elaborate my analysis and findings following the codes and themes I presented in the section on 'outcomes of my data analysis' in chapter 3 (p.45) (also refer to table #, p. 47). In that section, I summarised how my data analysis indicates that the sensory elements, namely touch, sight, auditory, and olfactory (smell), lay the foundation for bodily interactions. These sensory experiences contribute to identifying different facets or dimensions of bodily interactions. Professionalism, care, benevolence, safety, trust, and respect are a few examples. Furthermore, these facets of interactions collectively create flows of affect, such as intimacy, attraction and compatibility.

I will use the following flow to present the analysis and findings. I first present my analysis of the flows of affect created through human-human interactions and then illustrate the flows of affect generated via human-more-than-human interactions. Each has two sub-sections. The human-human interactions are comprised of: (a) worker-client and (b) client-client interactions; while human-more-than-human interactions include: (a) client-more-than-human and (b) worker-client-more-than-human interactions. Along the way, I present how the flows of affect enable or restrain the bodies' capacity to desire; what they do or can do in body work service encounters. I draw on my autoethnographic narrative writing, interview excerpts, poems, observation notes of interactions, descriptions and events, photographs, and video stills to support my analysis and findings.

Worker-client interactions

Intimacy

Intimacy was identified as one key facet of bodily interactions as well as a flow of affect experienced through bodily interactions. Intimacy involves mutual self-disclosure in relationships, warmth, affection, and closeness and interdependence (Perlman and Fehr, 1986). Similarly, Timmerman (1991) recognises intimacy as a quality of a relationship in which the individuals have reciprocal feelings of trust and emotional closeness towards each other, and can openly communicate thoughts and feelings with each other. As per my data analysis, intimacy in salon and yoga service emerges

through, with, and as a combination of professionalism, trust, comfort, care, benevolence, safety, and respect that materialise through touch, sight and hearing in clients' and workers' bodily interactions. As Tharu, an intermediate-level client at Divine Yoga, commented on this:

“It was all ladies in my class, and I remember. I cannot remember exactly if it was the first day, but I remember at the initial days of the Course, Sir told us, you know, that we have to dress in a particular way, Dress properly...And when we do our headstand or Shoulder Stand, he reminds us to tuck our T-shirts in. Be mindful that you're bending in the class, so dress appropriately and things like that. And I think you can feel it, like whether [your trainer] is a weird person or not. So, from the minute I started [yoga] here, I felt it was very safe; I was safe in that environment. So even though we have a male instructor, he doesn't make you feel uncomfortable. And it is yoga. So, of course, you know, when you're being corrected [on the poses], it needs a lot of touching. But you can feel that it is very professional, and you know nothing funny or bad about it.”

Tharu's account of her experience illustrates the sense of safety she encountered at Divine Yoga through her interactions with Rohan. She discusses gender dynamics and mentions Rohan's attention to ensuring modesty through instructions on clothing and tucking in T-shirts during practice and emphasises the importance of being comfortable during her interactions with Rohan. It leads to strengthening the intimacy via allowing her to feel that she was cared for, and that she is receiving the comfort that she needs as a client in the service encounters. Tharu clearly identifies Rohan's professional approach to physical touch. This approach, too, has significant implications for building a safe and conducive atmosphere that creates intimacy in interactions. Professionalism connects with values, behaviours, and relationships underpinning trust, while demonstrating competence, caring and compassion within a specific profession (Cruess and Cruess, 2012). In Tharu's narration, she feels secure and at ease within the environment, which is attributed by her mainly to Rohan's touch, demeanour and bodily actions. So, it shows that while necessitating direct control of the clients' movements in yoga, touch gives them a sense of safety and trust in the body work.

Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) categorise feminine and masculine meanings of touch and highlight the organisation of body work as a process which requires workers to recognise that there are social and individual (among clients and workers themselves) meanings of touch, and that they need to manage these effectively. In addition, Evans (2002, p. 444) states that regardless of the 'good' purpose they have, body workers such as male nurses touching patients, particularly women patients, is potentially dangerous; and that men's touch is usually seen as sexualised. Women patients might

get uncomfortable and/or misinterpret their touch – a situation that, in turn, might lead to accusations of inappropriate behaviour or sexual harassment. As a result, it is apparent that men working with women are in a dilemma, and even if they want to have the same level of close interaction with their clients, they must also distance themselves to avoid the dangers of suspicion (Simpson, 2009). According to Rohan, whether it be a male client or a female, being in work that requires touch as part of service delivery, there is a potential risk of misinterpretation and accusations of inappropriate behaviour. At the same time, he said that women are the majority of his clients, and he is extra careful when interacting with them. He said he always attempts to take a professional approach in his client interactions:

“I am always careful when interacting with my clients. There are different types of clients. We have women as clients, mostly. They approach me differently. Some are lonely homemakers, and they love to chat. Some come for yoga as a fad. I see that most of the clients are really good; they are professional and well-disciplined, I mean as yoga students. I, too, exemplify my professionalism. I am careful to make the closeness in my behaviour, words, and how I talk and act. I make sure no clue of sexuality is promoted via my touch or looks. We have enough stories and incidents in the industry of abusing clients, locally and in other countries. So, I always try to create and maintain trust so I am clean and my reputation is saved... I am not here to pamper the clients but to teach and develop the individuals with correct techniques...”

Rohan, Divine Yoga.

Rohan's intention to maintain professionalism is put into action through his bodily actions. He wants to teach the clients the correct techniques, and not pamper them. My autoethnographic accounts of my observations and my experience as a client establish these bodily actions. For example, he used touch where it was necessary to do so. If he finds a client doing a pose incorrectly, he first tells this to the client and directs him/her to adjust the body by himself/herself. He does not approach the clients too close to their body. He uses gentle, evident and direct instructions while adjusting the posture of the client's body.

Moreover, the sensory cues he presented, for example, through facial expressions, made him seem a tough person during most of the sessions in the series. He avoided jokes or “irrelevant” or “unnecessary” topics, as Rohan referred to during discussion time. During the classes, he only talked about yoga and related matters. Although some clients sometimes started to talk about the country's situation or attempted to divert our discussion to their personal or life struggles, he soon brought the discussion to a yoga-related topic. He made no room for pampering but showed severe attention to yoga matters. By having such restrictions on what he talks about with clients, Rohan

attempted to display his professional behaviour by relating to the clients in a safe atmosphere and being connected and close only in relation to yoga-related work.

Meanwhile, having a female co-worker at Divine Yoga has been beneficial in organising work at Divine Yoga and building a comfortable and inclusive atmosphere which improves intimacy. The co-workers are married to each other, and as I found, they allocate the work with a gendered approach. As mentioned previously, Rohan mainly attempts to attend exclusively to the clients' yoga-related matters. However, they encourage the clients to discuss their family-related or day-to-day and personal matters with Apsara if they have anything to share. This thus avoids close, very personal and possible emotional talk or attachments developing between Rohan and the clients. They attempt to build a positive perception of safety and develop intimacy with their clients. Further, in our beginners' class, if female clients had cramps or pains due to a menses period on a practice day, they were asked to communicate to Apsara so that she would attend to the client with a customised approach of yoga *asanas* and related. However, for general pain in the back or any diseases that a client was suffering from, they were free to bring this to Rohan's notice, who then suggested customised techniques for those clients. As Rohan and Apsara view it, the way they used these gendered practices ensured a comfortable and inclusive atmosphere for their clients. This links with what I discussed in my literature review on organising for and managing social meanings attached to gendered relations in body work encounters. Cohen and Wolkowitz (2018) recommend that workers and their employers consider the deep-seated social expectations about the meaning of touch, and think of managing these effectively. As my data shows, Rohan and Apsara's arrangements in their interactions have been able to organise for and manage to build a 'proper' or 'socially accepted' context for body work.

At the same time, as touching is experienced through a sensual, affected, affective lived body (Purcell, 2011), the sensing elicited by this physical act of touch needs to be understood through lived experiences. In other words, even if the social meanings and organising for them appear important, it is also necessary to look at how the "actual" lived sensory experiences of a client or worker form and shape interactions. As per my analysis, clients of both Divine Yoga and Serene Yoga have made careful observations regarding their interactions with the trainers. Meriam, a seasonal yoga practitioner and teacher in her 40s shared with me that her extensive experience in yoga has granted her the ability to intuitively sense and evaluate her yoga instructors.

As we conversed, Meriam expressed how she felt about the welcoming and secure environment at Serene Yoga based on what she sensed and felt about Sathish.

“I’m 42, OK? with over 10 years’ experience in yoga. I’ve been through things. I can see if a person has sexual energy or not; you can sense it, you know. Well, you are very young. But, when you are my age, you will know who is not naive and who is very good. I can tell about people. And nobody messes with me (laughs).”

Meriam, Serene Yoga

Meriam’s sharing of her experience, in a way, highlights how her past experiences have enabled her to assess her current sensory experiences. Her previous interactions, memories, and experiences are influential in deciding whether the touch is good or bad. On the other hand, she took me as very young, and she later told me that she thought that I was still in my twenties based on my size and appearance. The politeness she found in my talk with her and my being a beginner at yoga for this research purpose also had been factors influencing her consideration of me as very young and inexperienced. That then led her to consider that I lacked experience in interactions with people, especially men. So, during our discussion, I sensed how power swings within our researcher-participant relationship. Moving back to her recalling her observations and how she sensed Sathish, Meriam went on to say,

“He is very respectful. On the first day, he said he does not usually make body adjustments physically or use his touch; he does it verbally. However, one day, I asked him if he could make an adjustment for me that I agreed with because I wanted to learn how to make it [the pose], and then he did it very gently...And I didn’t feel a problem with his gender thing, you know.”

This shows how Meriam’s observations and her view of Sathish’s interactions mattered in sensing and making impressions on Sathish’s service interactions with her as safe and trustworthy. Similarly, Sophia, a female client from Germany, highlighted that Sathish made her feel comfortable with his professional approach, and she felt no risk in his way of touching her.

“[Sathish] is an instructor who uses words more and uses touch only when necessary. Correct your position with words. And uh, if he says if he wants to correct my position, he says, can I come and touch you and correct [my] position? And he only uses his finger, and he presses a little bit like here and a little bit like this (shows how he does it). So, I always felt very, very comfortable. And um, yeah, I can say he’s because he’s not like one of these fancy trainers, but because he’s Yogi. Uh, he’s a Yogi. He does it because it’s his life. “

Sophia differentiates Sathish’s approach in his bodily interactions from fancy trainers she had worked with before. She identifies those fancy trainers who are famous for

highly commercialized yoga and popular with those impressed with fads. In contrast to them, she sees Sathish's actions as an authentic character who does yoga with a "genuine" approach. This realization comes through sensing what Sathish says and does, and how the client sensed the touch of Sathish (also see Figure 5.1, p. 193). So, sensing the skill of the body worker comes again through what she saw and how she felt through her sensory cues in her interactions with Sathish. In addition, Noam, a male client, shared his experiences and observations as follows:

"There are different styles of yoga. There are styles in which the teacher touches a lot and corrects the positions and postures of the students. There are other styles in which the teacher doesn't want to touch his students because he wants to keep his energies to himself, and they just give instructions... Sathish gives a verbal correction. He is careful. He helps when you're not keeping the [body] balance. He then comes and helps us, touches us or asks us to use the wall. But it was very rare that he came to us and touched us to correct our posture every time. And then, when he did it, especially with women, he asked for permission: "Can I touch you? Can I press here more?" and so on, but he did it rarely and very carefully."

Noam, a client from Austria

The data shows that the use of "careful" or "minimal" touch, avoiding body pampering, enforcing rules on attire, trainer's strategies for avoiding emotional or personal conversations with clients, and using a firm or calm tone of voice, words, and body language are all important in demonstrating professionalism and creating safe and comfortable service encounters. This also reflects how a client observes, listens and senses how his/her trainers interact with him and his classmates. Noam's experience established how he sensed Sathish's bodily interactions and that this made him feel safe to study and perform yoga with Sathish. As such, how the service is delivered, and received is a felt experience. Here, it is through the sight, hearing and touch.

I also bring my experience practising yoga poses, such as the Crow Pose and Shoulder Stand at Divine Yoga, here to explain how the interactions made me sense the safety and care of the trainers.

I bent my knee slightly. I planted my palms on the mat, shoulder-width apart, with my fingers spread wide and spaced evenly. My palms were about a foot in front of my feet. I pressed down into the corners of my palms to distribute my weight evenly. My palms are firmly on the mat. I bent my elbows straight back. I opened the knees so that they lined up with my upper arms. I began to bring my weight forward into my hands, lifting my head to the front. I came onto my tiptoes, lifting one foot and then the other off the mat. It engaged the inner thighs for support while keeping the knees on the arms. I toppled the front as I looked at the front, focusing on the feeling of the body lifting.

Diary notes on my first attempts At Crow Pose, 4 May 2022

Figure 5.1: Sathish helping the clients at Serene Yoga, other clients are being observers



Source: Author (photos and video still images)

Initially, the Crow Pose seemed easy for me and within my grasp, but my first attempt revealed its actual difficulty. It's often the first arm balance that yoga students tackle, and at first, it seemed to be all about arm strength. However, I soon discovered it was more about self-awareness, understanding my body's centre of gravity, and how I

distribute my body weight to achieve balance. The biggest hurdle I had to overcome was my reluctance to move enough of my weight forward into my hands. I tipped forward and backward at the initial attempts as I could not balance. But with each fall, I felt a surge of determination to try again, to conquer this pose that seemed so elusive. It was crucial to consider the body's positioning, and the amount of leverage applied to execute the pose effectively; achieving a flat palm position requires adequate flexibility in the flexor part of the forearm, while the upper body, abdominal, and core muscles must be sufficiently strong. In addition, I needed to be mindful of the midline and centre of gravity. This pose develops confidence and opens the door to many more poses involving arm balance. It can also improve our awareness, and enhance body control. Moreover, beyond the physical benefits, attempting this pose made me more self-aware of my body's ability to sense movement, action, and location.

However, Rohan found that my pose was misaligned. My legs were not hooked high enough on the arms due to stiff hips or back. He demonstrated how to avoid toppling forward and making my body align. Sometimes, I sensed my body was unable to balance my weight. I reposed, keeping my hands down firmly. At the same time, I was thinking about how to get rid of the stiffness in my hips and back. It was on the fourth day of practicing that I was successful. As I reflect on my improvement, I realise it is not only my efforts but how Rohan guided me, his observations, and his being near me which gave me a sense of care and safety and his non-verbal cues, encouraged me to 'yes, go on' or 'hold on' which made me perform this pose effectively. I also tried the pose at home, but I sensed the lack of safety and failed. However, from the third day onwards, I managed to perform well, and then I gradually increased my holding time of the pose at the Divine Yoga studio. Apsara and Rohan exercised close monitoring, demonstrating care from their facial expressions. Most days, Apsara stood behind me as if to help me if I toppled back. It made me feel safe.

While the above analysis shows how sensing through touch, sight, and hearing creates intimacy in yoga work, the data relating to salons suggest that intimacy is mainly created through a sense of care, benevolence, trust, and openness elicited via touch.

Narrations of Nalin on Lal's service at Scissors N Razors give a perfect example:

“Lal's head and shoulder massage is unique. He has what is called '*ath gunaya*'²⁷. It works well for me. It is all about care. So far, for all these years, I have not had such service from any other... Here, I feel the care, warmth, and lot of individual attention.”

Nalin, a client with more than 20 years of experience at Scissors N Razors

Nalin mentions that Lal has '*ath gunaya*', a particular characteristic in providing the service, generating a unique, better feeling that heals and is irreplaceable. Most importantly, the feeling generated during the service delivery is more consistent over time. It makes Nalin attached to Lal's services, experiencing a healing touch.

Lal is known as a barber with '*athgunaya*' by Nalin and most of his long-term clients, as revealed in my informal conversations with them. '*Athgunaya*' can be referred to as the effects of the magical hand, which can be related to personal abilities in gardening, cooking, healing or caring services (also see the Footnote). For instance, Lal has not taken professional haircutting, shaving, or massaging courses. Nevertheless, his practice and experiments, vast on-the-job experience, tacit knowledge, and relationship management techniques have fruitfully led him to sustain his career. He has been able to retain a solid client base for many years, some for more than twenty-five years. It is through the touch that he shapes his encounter with his clients. So, in a way, this care materialised through touch in bodily interactions has made Nalin find his connection with Lal irreplaceable and remain with his salon as a client for many years.

²⁷ '*Ath gunaya*' (a Sinhala term) refers to the effects of a magical hand, which can be related to abilities in gardening, cooking, healing or caring services) '*Athgunaya* is a unique ability. It is an ability (of touch that cures or heals) that has been consistently proven. To possess '*athgunaya*', one must not be professionally qualified. Instead, he/she has tacit knowledge of performing the task very effectively, following his/her experience in the task at hand and unique techniques.

For instance, if a person called Sahan cooks a dish with a unique taste and maintains consistency and cannot find that taste in another's cooking, Sahan is said to have 'athgunaya'. However, Sahan may not have attended a cookery class or is be a professional chef.

Similarly, if one plants a seed or a small tree, and it grows well, blooms well, and gives a good harvest, that person has the 'athgunayain gardening i.e., he/she has green fingers—a natural ability to cultivate and farm. Moreover, others sense this ability and firmly believe in a person's performance with 'athgunaya.

Regarding salon work, it is said that a worker's athgunaya sustains massaging service. The sensation a client receives from the service given by a worker with athgunaya is irreplaceable. It ensures a unique and relatively consistent sensation over a period. In addition, some clients may strongly believe getting a haircut by a specific barber or hairdresser is 'the perfect choice' for their hair's health and regrowth.

Meanwhile, data also shows that salon workers recognise the vitality of touch dimension, in making strong connections and intimacy with their clients.

“It is a very amazing thing, sister²⁸. When I think deeply, through touch it creates a great link with my clients. Say, some clients come for hairstyles and hairdressing. I think there is more to it than just cutting one’s hair or treating it. It’s because, sister, we touch their hair, their head. We use our hands. We use our hands on their head. When we do it with good intentions, there is something great about touching a hair or face. They feel our touch, and at the same time, we feel them as we touch their skin. The connection we build through touch is critical. If it is with good intentions, it would be mostly inimitable. Also, as time passes, it is through touch I have been able to understand my clients’ skin problems and related issues.”

Samantha, Urban Escape

Samantha emphasises the importance of touch in connecting and making a bond with clients and their bodies. She recognises the significance of her hands and fingertips in providing a tactile experience for the client. Additionally, she talks about the importance of having good intentions while providing touch, which can lead to a deeper connection between the client and the provider. The way we touch each other can convey care and build strong connections, as both the person being touched and the person touching experience a range of sensations.

“I have understood that there is something great about this job. You know what I mean? We touch our clients, their heads and their hair. Their face, and body. It is not something that everyone gets. That’s a big blessing, sister. It’s merit and a special chance to be involved in good deeds. I feel it and understand it. I also say to Ganga, “Ganga, you are doing a great favour, a good deed”. For example, when cleaning one’s legs and feet, we find that some clients cannot bend their knees properly, and they can’t do it alone. It’s like that. When we clean a face, it involves good deeds. I have thought about all those things more deeply. I sometimes think I have been able to put my hand on someone’s head and cut their hair, and I think that skill has increased daily with that thought [of performing a good deed]. There is a feeling involved in it. We don’t just do it; we do it with a feeling. We do it with love and with a lot of devotion...”

This explains how Samantha feels about her experiences of physical contact with her clients over time. Her actions and belief in performing good deeds and acts of merit are all rooted in the love and care she provides through her touch. However, Samantha admits that it has taken her time to comprehend the significance of the touch that her work involves, the profound impact it can have on her clients, and the connection it develops between her and the clients.

²⁸ Samantha referred to me as "Sister" instead of using my name and indicating her friendship and care.

“It was time I started doing pedicures and leg massages, and my mother asked how I felt about touching and cleaning others, the unknown clients, and why I didn’t restart with a job at an office. But I did not feel this was a ‘low job’ or ‘low status’. I am the type of person who can clean and take care of another. I looked after my mother-in-law when she was sick and bedridden. I bathed her and cleaned her. I did not feel unpleasant attending such work. I can clean a so-called dirty body. If any sick person needs help and care, for example, if one is there at (name a government Hospital), I am ready to go and take care of her, even now. I am confident I can take care of her, touch her and clean the person without thinking how disgusting the work involved is.”

Samantha seems to take the caring disposition—a “genuine” openness and concern for others—as part of her personality, established habits, and skilled professionalism. Her adherence to Buddhist values and her innate compassion allows her to connect with her clients on a deeper level, even when it involves performing less glamorous tasks. Despite initial objections from her mother about Samantha’s chosen profession, she has found that her caring nature has grown stronger over time.

That said, I observed that Ganga is now responsible for all types of massage, manicure/pedicure work, and hair washing. As I observed, Ganga voluntarily accepts the task of performing such jobs, while Samantha avoids such work. For example, one day, Ganga was doing a hair-cutting job. Meanwhile, a client arrived at the salon for hair dyeing. Samantha told Ganga that she would take care of the rest of the hair-cutting job and asked her to wash the hair of the client who had just arrived. Similar types of incidents were frequent. In some circumstances, Ganga voluntarily shifted to such work without waiting to be told by Samantha, as if mutually understood or learnt. I attribute this behaviour to the contrasting status and hierarchical difference between Samantha and Ganga as owner/worker and assistant/trainee. Literature provides similar evidence that dirty work and/or work involved with taint is typically undertaken by those at lower levels of organisational or societal hierarchy (Hughes, 1958), or involves shifts to lower levels. For example, those with perceived higher status or professional standing will shift or transfer such preparation, taint or dirty work to others with a perceived lower status (Vicary, Young and Hicks, 2019; Stacey, 2005).

Here, being a beginner who works under Samantha, Ganga is treated and accepted as the one who is essentially responsible for such work. As Ganga told me, doing work involving taint by a trainee or a newcomer is a norm in the salon industry, and it enables the strengthening of her skills. It is a starting point for getting to know and having hands-on experience with all aspects of salon work. In a way, I identify this work shift as making us see the subtle effects of power among bodies. First, Ganga appears

submissive in her relationship with Samantha and her clients, who usually represent a “higher social class”. However, as per my observations in her service interactions on manicures, pedicures, hair washing, and oil massaging, Ganga’s bodily actions enable her to exercise power over the clients. She attended to her work with care and respect, and as I observed and as per the comments of the clients, this shows how Ganga materialises her power via touch in her service delivery.

“Ganga is young, and she has three or four years of experience, but she knows how to care well. She is patient and shows love and care. I feel it. I am nearly 60 years old now. Ganga treats me like we are caring for our mothers. She is serious about her work, and she is a good listener. She has a lovely smile on her face. I feel her kindness when she treats my legs, feet, and toes. She usually asks me to rest my legs on her lap, which makes me feel comfortable and at ease. With all her touches, and gestures I feel her attention and care.”

Celestina, a client at Urban Escape

The above excerpt showcases Celestina’s contentment with the services provided by Ganga. I interviewed Celestina after her manicure, pedicure, and hair colouring appointment. As Celestina was narrating her experience just a few minutes previously, I also recalled how Ganga exhibited exceptional care and patience while attending to Celestina’s service. During the calf muscle massage and pedicure, Ganga kindly requested that Celestina rest her leg on Ganga’s lap, as depicted in Figure 5.2 (p.199).

Taking someone’s legs into your lap while offering them a paid service is a unique practice that might be embedded in certain cultures. In Sri Lanka, we treat our family members with respect, love, and care like close relatives. As revealed by Celestina, she is suffering from difficulty with leg movements, so assisting her with care and respect made their interactions more intimate. As Samantha once said, this approach to beauty care reflects the Buddhist teachings of caring for the ill and those in need, including animals, of treating others with kindness and compassion and demonstrating patience over the bodily inflexibilities or impairments due to the ageing of the client. Meanwhile, I view these bodily actions of Ganga, such as taking the client’s leg onto Ganga’s lap, along with her way of delivering the service results in her exercising power over her clients in a subtle way. Her positioning of the client’s legs on her lap, touch, and other actions collectively make the client act and react in a way that displays obedience or agreement to what Ganga says and does.

Figure 5.2: Ganga working on Celestina's pedicure and leg massage



Source: Author

As per the informal conversations and interviews I conducted, it was revealed that Ganga's way of doing things, her touch, and her bodily interactions make clients feel relaxed and more engaged. The way she does the work, how she touches and massages hair, washes it with the gentle care of her hands and touches hands and feet in manicures and pedicures have led some clients to find her irreplaceable. All her clients gave her relatively large tips at the end of her service. As I view it, these tips go beyond what is given in a customary practice in service work. It is a hope or an investment for future encounters by the clients, and can make Ganga act more caringly in her future encounters with the clients. At the same time, Ganga's touch and other bodily interactions subtly make Samantha recognise Ganga's prominence in the success of Urban Escape and display caring or develop a better relationship with her. Thus, even though the shift of work that involves taint to Ganga appears from a 'power over' her by Samantha, the involvement with dirt, the touch, and other bodily interactions can subtly make different power effects within employer-worker and client-worker interactions.

Next, I will show how intimacy emerges through the trust the client develops via the workers' touch. Here, trust involves clients' sensing of how a worker performs the work and its 'positive' outcomes, for example, whether a head massage gives a client the healing or hair growth he/she hopes for. Reflecting on Ganga's service, Chirani, a client at Urban Escape, shared her experience:

"The way Ganga performs the hair massage is truly remarkable. She does it with such finesse. I used to suffer from severe headaches when my baby was an infant, with work and all. So, even if I did not need the hair treatment, I asked my husband to take care of the baby for a few hours and got this service. It was so good. It is like I haven't fallen asleep, but I felt sleepy and so relaxed. When she does it, it's so comfortable; it's so really, I mean relaxing. Even my friend said the same thing, and she said that she also gave Ganga a good tip because that was so good. She also had recently shifted into this area. She is a housewife; her daughter was also two or three years old. And she didn't have a permanent place, I mean, a permanent salon to go to. Now she's pleased with this place [Urban Escape]. Then, I recommended this place to another friend who works at (name a university). Now, both of these friends are happy about the place, mainly because of the head massage and hair treatments of Ganga."

Chirani, as a young mother and digital marketer, has found solace at Urban Escape. Amidst her hectic schedule, her appointments with Ganga have become a cherished source of stress relief, again thanks to Ganga's service through her touch. Moreover, Chirani's words underscore Ganga's consistency in delivering care to her clients (here, Chirani's friends) and her commitment to providing a relaxing and enjoyable experience at Urban Escape. In a similar vein, Sayuri, another client, explained that she chooses Ganga's oil treatment and head massage as her touch and bodily actions, how Ganga's hands make the pressure on her body has developed the feeling of trusting her service as curing her hair problems, and headaches with care.

Meanwhile, as Nalin explained Lal's capacity to attract him to the salon, he said that Lal's touch makes him develop openness and share his life matters with Lal.

"Do you know that only a barber gets the chance to touch the head of a king or country's ruler? This has been the practice since the king's era. Of course, the queen and selected women in the Kings' women's quarters (the royal harem) had the opportunity to touch the king's head or hair (Nalin smiles). So, a barber has unique power and access to an individual's body. So, during the Kings' era, and I think even now, a barber is a special one with a lot of trust. Have you heard stories of enemies attempting to kill kings using barbers? Since a barber is the one who is allowed to touch the head, face, neck, or shoulder of a king. The kings sometimes shared their secrets with barbers. If I take Lal, he knows a lot about me."

Accessing an individual body through touch is rare in other commercial work, but in body work. Hair cutting, shaving and massaging involve an extensive touch of clients'

bodies. This access to interactions gives barbers like Lal the ability to exercise power in their interactions. As expressed by Nalin, such accessibility makes him develop intimacy, build trust and open up and discuss personal matters with Lal. As Nalin's experience tells us, Lal has irreplaceable dedication to service in his interactions with him, and it shows how workers have the capacity to materialise power through touch. In other words, power materialises through how sensory cues, such as touch, are elicited and received within interactions.

Moreover, as I described in chapter 4, Neela at Pinky Grace showed that her advisory role during a service encounter was a key component. However, in my interview with Kumari and Theja, I identified that although Neela offers advice, the clients follow or adhere to what she suggests based on how confident they are, or how much they trust the work performed by Neela. This suggests how on-site assemblages of interactions in body work, and the trust the clients' sense through such interactions, are directed to clients' actions and reactions in relation to off-site assemblages of relations. It also shows that although, in general, a salon worker is identified as an expert in beauty care or is with knowledge, it is through bodily interactions, the way he/she uses touch and sensory cues in providing service, that materialises the power over the clients. So, if a worker's body has the capacity to affect a client's body, it involves how his/her body manifests and materialises such effects through sensory cues and how clients sense and feel them.

It is also important to pay attention to how salon workers interact with clients who demand styles that are not well-matched to them. Neela, Lal, and Samantha had similar views on how they treat clients who want their designs or style tried out, although they do not match the theories and concepts in hair styling or make-up art. They mentioned that such clients should be treated with more care and kindness. For example, Neela once said:

"We must pay attention to their needs and express our kindness through our work. Some clients prefer hairstyles that don't match their faces. I have seen some clients who would have been much prettier with their hair being combed in a particular style or, say, having their hair with side-parting. But they insist on doing another. I remember (name a client). She is a lovely client with five to six years of contact with my salon. A few years ago, she wanted to attend a wedding function. I told her she would look beautiful if her hair was spilt in the front, and I suggested the style. I know from experience it will better suit her face shape. I showed her some model photos of the hairstyle. However, her facial expressions were not supportive. At first, I noticed a bit of reluctance from her to reject my suggestion. But no. Just after a few seconds, I saw her facial expressions; she said, "No, I want to have the hair combed back and tight as a bun. That's how I have presented myself at these types of social events". So, even if

I knew it did not fit her well, I did the style she preferred. She was happy, and I sensed it as I observed her relaxed facial muscles. She had a nice smile after I finished my work. I know there is a high possibility of damaging my reputation as a stylist by listening to such client preferences because most would find that the style does not match her face and may criticise the hairdresser. But the client was happy, and she continued visiting my salon”.

The text exemplifies how the workers' body work is influenced by the demands of their clients, even if it is not their preferred method. They carefully observe the clients' non-verbal cues and communication styles to tailor the service delivery accordingly. Moreover, as the client receives attention that caters to their individual preferences, it fosters a sense of care and trust in the workers' actions. The interactions thus create an intimate space that makes the client feel cared for, valued and understood.

So, the flow of affect of intimacy created through sensory interactions of touch, sight and hearing experiences shapes how the service unfolds in salon and yoga encounters. It makes the clients' and workers' bodies act and react in a specific way. Intimacy enables yoga clients to perform poses well while helping the workers deliver their service successfully. When it comes to salon work, intimacy makes workers and clients collectively work, support each other, and make things happen, such as a hairstyle or head massage. The interactions also showed how body work signals subtle effects of power in intimate interactions. Thus, I view intimacy as affect that flows within body work assemblage, which makes yoga and salon body work evolve within service encounters.

Enchantment

The worker-client interactions are also formed and shaped through enchantment in their connection with each other's touch and sight, such as the workers' gaze, and the client's hearing of their voice tone and rhythms. Enchantment makes one deeply attracted to someone or something and develops a strong bond, sensed through care, consistency, proximity and access makes a client enchanted in his/her bodily interactions with the workers.

“I had my hair cut once at another salon. It was a few months ago, you know, the salon close to the supermarket (he named it), but it did not fit me. I had to do it because Lal and Tharaka were unavailable due to a family matter. I had no choice but to go there. Because there was a special function. I felt they (referring to the other salon) had new technology, but they were artificial. We (the clients) just have to wait for our turn; they do the service, and that’s it. For them (referring to the other salon), we are just a customer, a sale... I don’t know; it is a different feeling...I don’t know if Lal has done any “washiyak”²⁹ (Nalin laughs) to me, and also to his other clients. I feel so attached to his way of doing things.”

Nalin, a client at Scissors N Razors

At salons, this was mainly experienced by the workers’ touch when delivering the service. As discussed in the previous section, touch also makes a worker irreplaceable. Moreover, it makes a client more likely to become attached to the worker. For example, when he talked about Lal’s service, Nalin emphasised that it is a unique massage, so another cannot replace it. The way he touches makes Nalin enchanted by Lal’s bodily interactions with him. He says he had not formed such a bond with other service providers. Furthermore, there is a consistency in the quality of the service which can be relied on. For Nalin, the effect of the bond is like a magical spell on him.

Meanwhile, Neela explained that while salon workers form a bond with their clients while delivering their services, the proximity and access can sometimes lead to disgust due to bodily interactions. This can result in her holding back on or restraining her ‘normal’ efforts to provide service. For instance, clients are expected to be clean and tidy when they attend their appointments. However, during my interview with Neela, she mentioned that this is not always the case.

“When we work with clients, we connect with them, especially via touch. But we also smell them and sometimes have to touch the unpleasant stuff. Some clients do not clean their hair before they attend the salon. Some have dandruff and lice problems. They do not care about us. We are also human. I sometimes have to wash smelly hair, treat hair with lice and nits, and clean smelly underarms before waxing. I am disgusted by such taint work. I cannot eat for several hours some days...To be honest with you, when I reflect, I think I am not putting my whole effort into such clients. And I think twice when I hear from that client again for an appointment. I would usually refuse such appointments. The clients who care for us ensure their bodies or hair is clean. Some get embarrassed if they find that they have sweated on their way to the salon.”

This shows how the lack of care displayed by clients through their bodily actions leads to undesired bodily interactions from the worker’s side. Moreover, disgust will decide how the present encounter evolves and the withdrawal of possible future encounters.

²⁹ *Magical spell*

In yoga, I found that trainers' voice tone contributes to clients getting enchanted with interactions. The following is how Sarala, a female client at Divine Yoga, talked about Rohan's tone of voice and its affective quality of being enchanted:

"What I did was try to keep my mind with my body and just be conscious of what I was doing, not that I had succeeded at the beginning (laughs). Rohan being there, with his strong voice and steady, he is a sort of solidness, steadiness, which he has, and confidence, and I think that kept me engaged ...His voice was very reassuring. It was intense and commanding, but at the same time, there was much kindness in it; because he is, you could feel that his intention was to help you learn it. Sometimes, it is pretty firm, which is good too, but that firmness, the commanding manner, the confidence, and all that came with it were because of our willingness to help. I felt how much he wanted to help us to learn this. And I think that is the most significant factor, and there is much solidness in it, and it gives you a lot of faith and confidence in him."

Sarala, Divine Yoga

According to Sarala, the consistency of Rohan's vocal attributes keeps her engaged, and encourages her to continue holding in and improving herself further. For some clients, the tone of the trainer and the rhythm are indispensable for performance; as such, I observed that some clients at Divine Yoga took an audio recording of the counting down for some of the *asanas* and sun salutations, as well as for breathing. In my informal conversations, they told me that Rohan's voice, tone and modulations make their body perform, even if they are at home. It helps them to engage in the flow effectively and make their practice happen.

I realized that when I am practising at home, surya namaskar, or breathing, it is [Rohan's] voice tone, the way he counts down, the rhythm echoing. It is not my count or my rhythm that follows my body; it is his rhythm. It is his way of counting. So one day, at a session at the centre, my mates and I asked him for permission to record it and use it when we practise at home. Even when we go online, it is his voice which keeps our bodies engaged. It is so powerful. When I do the counting by myself, I fail to perform well.

Himaya, Divine Yoga

The accounts of Himaya and Sarala talk about how they feel a sense of confidence and engage with how Rohan takes them through the practices, responding to his tone of voice and related characteristics. It again shows how a client senses that sound would make things happen in yoga. In this case, the clients find the recordings and make them perform. Otherwise, they would not do their practice effectively when they are doing it at home alone. Moreover, it invites us to think about how one can affect the other body without being present in his whole body but by using voice, rhythms, and other modulations.

However, it was evident that the trainers experienced fatigue and boredom due to repeating the same teaching routines in yoga classes. For example, Divine Yoga had three beginner's classes six days a week. Rohan or Apsara had to repeat the same routines, conduct similar instructions and count for breathings and poses, such as Sun Salutation. Within one class, they were repeating the counting on the Sun Salutation for twelve to fifteen rounds. Rohan mentioned that it makes them bored, causes his voice problems, and causes health issues in his lungs. He takes lukewarm water to minimise health effects. I asked him why not try recording this counting and playing it during the sessions. However, he said it would not give the clients proper practice. Instead, he, being there and directing, would make things happen.

Further, he said that he observes if at least eight or nine out of ten are in line with his rhythm, and it is only then that he changes the rhythm or continues for more rounds. So, according to Rohan, playing a standardised recording would not work here. Rohan also emphasised that it creates a special connection during the encounters through non-verbal cues.

“When we train the clients, we give them individual attention. When I speed up the counting, I pay attention to the client's capacities and bodily conditions. Sometimes, I see some clients display a lethargic approach. It makes me angry and frustrated. And some make the same mistake continuously. I remind them to follow the correct path; however, if they continue with the same mistake, I no longer bother about that client. On the other hand, a special connection occurs when the whole class or the majority get into a rhythm and do the poses. It makes me go. It's really a motivation to do more and teach more., and a trainer must pay attention to all the clients, identify their bodily rhythms and capacities, and address them.”

This demonstrates how a worker forms strong connections with clients through sensory experiences. These interactions have the potential to captivate the workers, make them enchanted during the encounter, and enable them to deliver a better service.

Client-client interactions

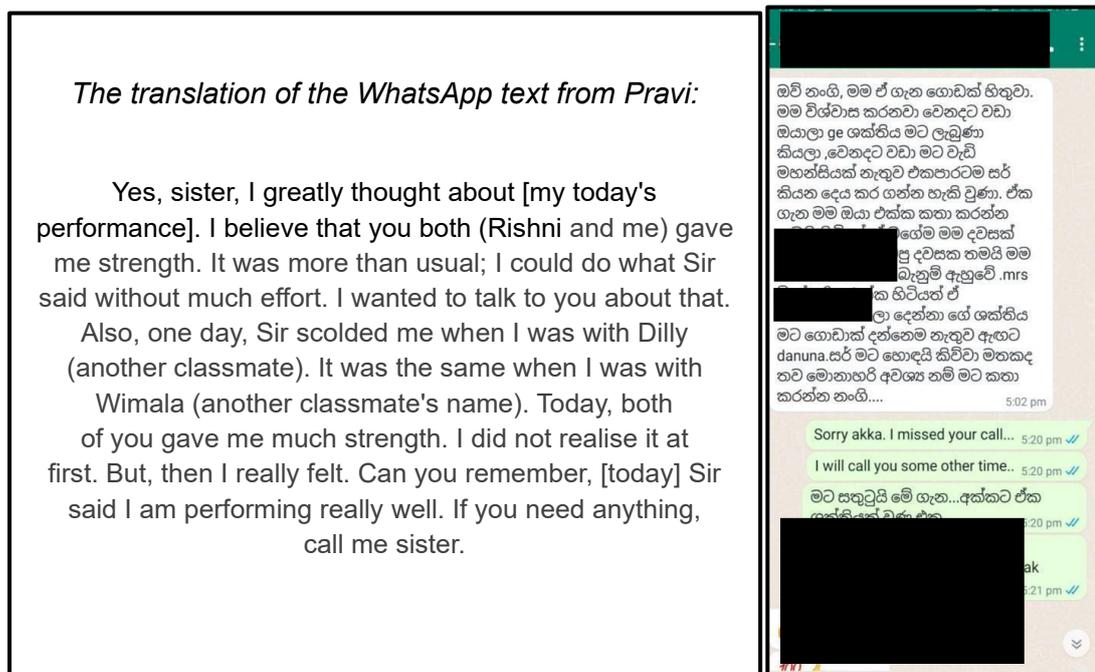
Compatibility

Compatibility involves “getting along with another in a congenial [and] harmonious fashion.” (Clark, 1995, p. 119). As per my analysis, harmony or pleasing combinations of bodily presence and synchronisation, safety, and reliability were evident in body work as facets of sensory experiences which create affective flows of compatibility. In yoga, clients identify that it is not only self-motivation that improves the practice. They realise there is an influence from the other clients in the studio. Findings revealed that group dynamics exert positive and negative pressure on individual performance via

compatibility. The bodily interactions regulate the self in yoga encounters, as compatibility acts as an enabler or creates a restricting effect in performing yoga.

The WhatsApp communication I have given in Figure 5.3 (p.206) and the translation is an example of this. It shows how Pravi expects and enjoys the close presence of some human bodies while disliking being near another. Pravi is one of my classmates in the beginners' class which I attended. She sent me the following text message a day after she received good feedback from the trainer. She expressed her thoughts about the confidence and strength her body sensed and felt during the session. She attributes the confidence and energy she developed in performing well to her proximity and connectedness in the session with Rafia and me. She also recalls 'negative' vibes and experiences on a previous day when she had been near some other classmates.

Figure 5.3: WhatsApp text from Pravi



Source: Author

After this day, Pravi ensured she was close to Rafia and me at the training sessions till the end of the course. In our chats after the session (which we usually had for about 5 to 10 minutes at the bus station), she highlighted the support and energy that she felt from the presence of both of us close to her. Moreover, in my interview with Pravi, she recalled this experience and elaborated more on it.

“I told you earlier³⁰ that when I placed myself in between you and Rafia, I received many good comments on my performance from Sir³¹. I, too, felt that. There is a saying that the power of the universe comes into play and helps when we are close to the correct people. The sessions went well when you both were beside me. I felt strong. It made me feel confident. I was able to follow Sir’s instructions well with much concentration. And Sir told me that I had my poses accurately. But, when I was next to Dilly, it was a disaster. It was so uncomfortable for me to perform.”

Neither Rafia nor I knew what our bodily presence, proximity and behaviour had done to Pravi (or any other classmate). We were unaware of energies transmitted through bodily encounters. However, as Pravi told this during our chat at the bus station, Rafia said,

“Oh! That is nice to hear. I did not know me, my body, or how I perform impacts you in this way (simultaneously, I was thinking the same). I am so happy.”

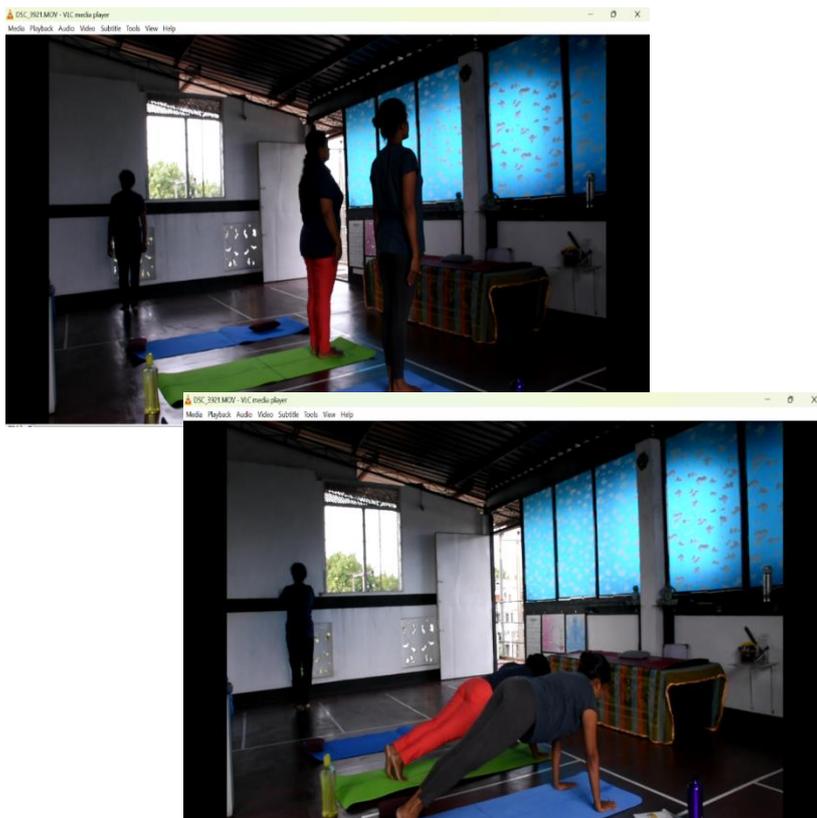
After that chat, as Paravi explicitly expressed her positive preference for proximity to us, we three mostly practised next to each other at different places in the studio. When we completed our daily sessions, we talked about what went wrong, what went well, and how we maintained some poses accurately even when the holding period was increased or the instructors were speeding (also see Figure 5.4, p.208).

Certain clients view pressure for high performance from others as a motivation to put in more effort, reach new performance levels, support themselves, and feel a sense of community. At Serene Yoga, Sophia, Valerie and Noam, in my informal conversation with them, shared three of them find their bodies get well synchronized when performing yoga at Serene Yoga, and that makes their performance better collectively. This shows how connectedness as affect makes things happen in yoga by enabling the interactions (also see Figure 5.5, p. 208).

³⁰ She is referring to our informal chats after sessions and the WhatsApp messages we had previously

³¹ Sir, is a respectable way of addressing a teacher, here Rohan, the trainer

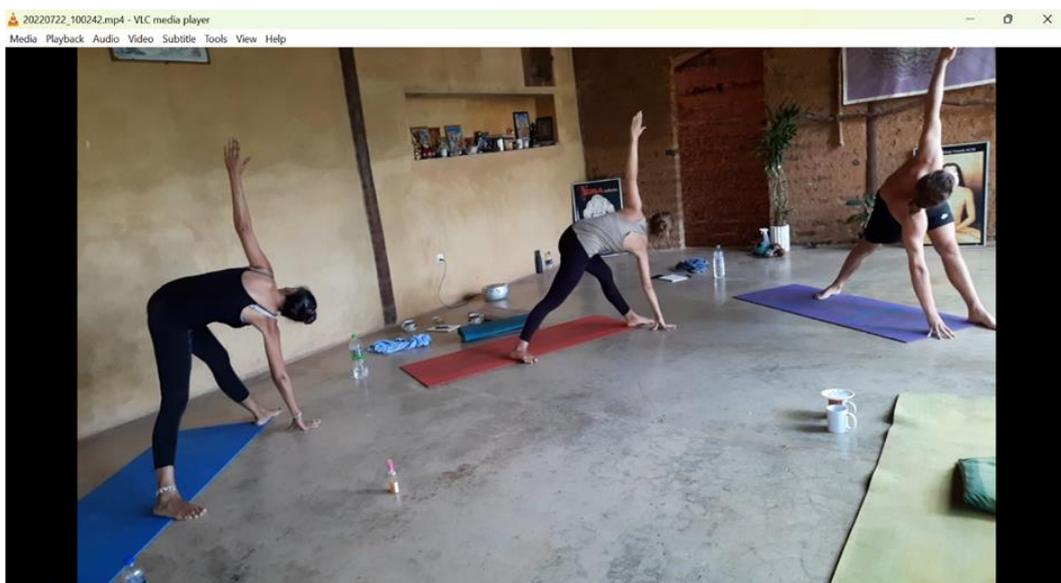
Figure 5.4: Synchronisation of movements of Pravi and me



Note: Weena attends a pose that suits her body condition with the collaboration of wall.

Source: Author (Still images based on video recordings)

Figure 5.5: Synchronisation of movements of Sophia, Valerie and Noam at Serene Yoga



Source: Author (Still images based on video recordings)

In her interview, Sophia also recalled this synchronization effect and bonding with other bodies at Serene Yoga. She told me:

“I feel I am not doing this alone. It is with the energy from my classmates. I don’t know them for long. But when we get into the poses, start and doing, there is someone out of us, you know, it may be me, or Noam, but there is a connectivity and followership of one’s rhythms, and movements.”

However, some clients feel that competition leads to tension in performing beyond their abilities, ultimately resulting in physical harm. This can include damage to the body tissues. Anil, for example, finds the presence of other clients discouraging, as it leads him to compare himself with their performance.

“When we are in a group class, then we also look at others and how others perform, and we sometimes get mentally discouraged. When another is doing better than me, I sometimes feel “she or he can do it, but I can’t,” like that. We are trying to compare this thing. But if you are doing it alone, you can do it in the way you want if you have the feeling and inner power. And you don’t have to concentrate on others. In the group class, we look at others. We as humans usually tend to compare, but that should not be done in yoga. We should not look at others and how they perform. We should not do it because it disrupts our concentration and focus...[However], in the class, you do not get that atmosphere of non-comparison. I hear the teacher praising another; he says, “OK, (name one of his female classmates) she’s very good”, or “She is doing it well”. Then, I feel, “ok, I am not that good at performing”, or I am performing low. So, you must bear (he laughs) that type of thing.”

Anil, a client at Divine Yoga

Even though he understands that comparison should not be made, he also finds that the atmosphere does not facilitate non-comparison. So, according to Anil, a client might have certain understandings and perspectives on something. Nevertheless, when he/she relates to other bodies and through what he/she hears, bodily performance can change. This is because he/she becomes more conscious of his/her living, in this case performing yoga with other bodies, thus doing his/her bodily actions in relation to his/her surroundings. Simply put, the bodies connect via the senses and create tensions that make them do something they would otherwise not do.

“...[S]ometimes the person next to me doing the *asanas* is so good and advanced, and I feel like, OK, I’m not good at this...after some time you don’t really notice what the other person is really doing because you have to concentrate on what you’re doing. But then again, it is like I am feeling “OK, what am I doing? They’re all doing it so well. Look at me, I can’t manage” kind of feelings. But I started to understand that, you know, all have different bodies, and there are some things I can’t do at all. And some people join newly who can do those perfectly well... [but] it is hard not to have tensions through comparisons.

Tharu, a client at Divine Yoga

Tharu also expresses frustration with her performance (which was low compared to others) because of such comparisons. It had taken some time for her to realise her body was unique. Her thoughts indicate that she accepts how each one's physical differences lead to differences in their ability to perform. Such thoughts have made her realise the importance of concentrating on her body without bothering about the performance of others. However, when attending a session, the presence of a higher performer can still create tension within her body. So, proximity, sight, and hearing serve as a gateway to connecting with and comparing others' rhythms and an individual's own rhythms, which create harmony or a sense of safety and reliability. This leads to compatibility, which creates energies or incompatibility that cause tensions and affect clients' performances in yoga.

In this sense, it can be established that affect do not belong to our bodies but are effects of the body's encountering and interactions with other bodies (Ahmed, 2014; Spinoza, 1994). The presence (and absence) of bodies and our interactions matters in how we experience affect. Affect occurs without their consent. Moreover, other clients are unaware of such a transformation of energy from one person to another if it is not explicitly expressed.

Client-more-than-human bodies

Enchantment

In this and the following sections, I present my findings on how enchantment contributes to forming and shaping body work encounters while serving enabling effects. To do so, I will first exemplify my findings in the "client entering into the service site" event. It shows how novelty, familiarity and consistency as dimensions of sensory experiences cause enchantment. At the same time, it shows that a (sensory) landscape is not a mere backdrop but possesses an efficacy of its own, a liveliness intermeshed with human agency (Bennett, 2010).

Despite what the literature provides, a service encounter is a meeting of client and worker; my study found clients and workers experience a collection of encounters where they get intermingled with multiple bodies when they enter and start to inhabit a particular service site, i.e., prior getting into what we generally call a "core" service encounter". If we consider clients, as they enter a salon or yoga studio, they primarily become a part of the sensory landscape, and feel the presence of the atmosphere in different ways, with or without getting into contact with the worker alone. The sensory landscape plays a crucial role in shaping the client's experience, as

his/her body becomes relational and entangled with multiple bodies, and it is through the relationality and entanglement of his/her body that he/she feels starts to act and react. Meriam describes what she felt entering Serene Yoga and getting into the assemblage:

“When I saw the ‘shala’, I felt something energetic there. It told me this is the place for me...I must say this whole area has special energy. With the temple, up there on the hill, the path you walk into the shala, uh, either of the two paths, if you take the stairs and uh, it needs much strength to go up there... Uh, this has a special energy. And I like it, it is very pure and grounded, UM, the shala...It gives much silence...I feel comfortable and forget everything else. It is all yoga, a beautiful garden, and a beautiful view... It makes me to feel good and makes my body to be there...”

Meriam, a client at Serene Yoga

As Meriam describes how she encountered the atmosphere of the service setting, she shows her pleasure with the energy she gains from the shala and the beauty of the green surroundings. When I asked her what she meant by “pure and grounded,” she explained that Serene Yoga’s landscape enables her to feel connected to the earth, nature, and body. As she enters the *shaala*, she removes the shoes or slippers, and being barefoot and practising on the floor helps her be present in the yoga practice physically, emotionally, and with remarkable energy. It enables her body to live in yoga and gets entangled with other bodies. Thus, what Meriam feels is similar to ‘becoming outside of oneself’, forgetting everything, but being connected to her body and yoga, which can be identified as being enveloped by an atmosphere (Anderson, 2009). This is a classic example of how Meriam, as a client, was enabled through a combination of multiple bodies. For instance, Meriam feels the tiredness the walk to Serene Yoga causes. She experiences a challenging trek to Serene Yoga, which requires great strength. Nevertheless, Meriam’s pain is weakened by the relational affect she encounters with other sensory cues, especially with the enchantment she finds with the landscape of Serene Yoga.

Moreover, Sophia, a client from Germany, explains how her body enables her to get in contact with and properly feel the attachments and forces of the world through us and provides the means for our own bodies to be modulated in turn.

“I have never, in all these years in Germany, experienced yoga outside in nature. And to see the beautiful garden, even when you close your eyes and meditate, and you are experiencing that feeling, the wind and all. Here I’m like dreaming in this meditation. Not every time, but sometimes it can really go, Uh, like, yeah, like dreaming. And then, when you slowly open your eyes and look at this beautiful garden, that’s WOW. That’s so beautiful. And even if you are lying on the mat and you look up, you can see a part of the ocean on the side. And, I think, how beautiful is this? When you go to this place, it is a spiritual place. You can see it straight away. And you can feel it.”

Sophia’s account portrays how the natural environment’s sensory experiences, such as sight and touch of wind, leave her enchanted by the place. Additionally, she highlights how the novelty of the yoga setting adds to her experience by providing her with something different from what she is familiar with at a yoga studio in Germany, and how the atmospheric encounter develops her bond with the service setting.

Similarly, Gamaliel from Israel shares his sentiments on Serene Yoga’s setting and compares his previous sensory experiences in his home country’s yoga studio to those in Sri Lanka:

“[The *shaala*] is very nice because it is located in a part of a real jungle. It is not an artificial jungle... So, staying there [at Serene Yoga], nearby in the jungle, was very powerful because it is authentic, it was not something artificial like in where I am from... I felt that I was meeting something more authentic, truer... It is just a piece of concrete covered against rain, and you have a few mats used by all other students; well, we need to clean them before using them (smiles), and it is a different process. And a few sprays against mosquitoes, and yeah, that’s all, but you feel something more authentic and in a natural setting where you get yoga without being pampered. It gave just the sensation that you work with your body, and your feet touch the ground, it is so cool, and not to be, say, under electric lights and AC, the ropes and, all the stuff, that you can see at many yoga studios, usually in our part of the world.”

The feeling of authentic experience is defined by Gamaliel’s bodily connection with his environment and lived experience. It is also backed by his prior experience in a different setting. Thus, the bodily experiences in the yoga setting are underscored by the presence of new/unfamiliar bodies, the absence of their familiar bodies—within their past experience of similar service encounters—and/or the novelty of the bodily experience. These factors play a crucial role in fostering a sense of bonding and stickiness. In other words, such experiences quickly and powerfully captivate or enchant them, enhancing their engagement with the setting. For example, being barefoot, a yoga studio open to natural lighting and surrounded by a natural environment is seen and felt as authentic. Serene Yoga practices mainly involve and highlight the body being intermingled and connected with the natural, rather than the

artificial environment. It enchants a client with Serene Yoga. As Gamaliel, Sophia, and Meriam emphasise, it involves grounding or a form of earthing effect, in a more systemic sense. They appreciated how their bodies were affected by being barefoot, having natural lighting, and practising yoga. Therefore, this embodiment shows how bodies get affected by bodily connectedness with other bodies, i.e., the natural environment. This also highlights the impact of social connections on the sense of authenticity and engagement.

However, my first visit to Serene Yoga did not immediately captivate me with its atmosphere. I acknowledge that I sensed a change in the environment, such as the lush greenery, but it did not immediately evoke strong sensations about the setting.

I got off the bus. I crossed the main road. There was a long-running vehicle cue for fuel. The people looked at me, as I was with a travelling bag, along with my camera. The Google Maps directed me to the narrow path I should walk to get into Serene Yoga. I had a few bites of the buns I had with me as I was feeling hungry. The walk towards the Serene Yoga was on a steep route. Although there were houses and some tourist hotels and spas, it was so silent. It is 6 am. As I saw the name board for the Shaala, I took my phone, switched on my camera, and looked at my face and appearance. I then entered. I was sweating a bit. It was really a walk. However, when I reached it, I felt the cool air. I saw Sathish. I removed my shoes and greeted Sathish.

My field notes, 22 July 2022.

Although, among them, the foreign clients had similar affective experiences upon arriving at the service encounters, my own experience differed from theirs. My body did not feel enchanted by the greenery, perhaps because of familiarity with bodily engagement with Sri Lanka and my imagined visuals of a yoga studio in this area in Sri Lanka. I did not perceive it as a miraculous environment. And my body, in relation to my first visit, did not find it so attractive. However, as the retreat progressed, I discovered a greater sense of calm and ease through practising breathing techniques with the singing bowls, and connecting with my grounding and peacefulness. This evolving perception of the atmosphere differed from my experience with Divine Yoga.

It is important to recognise that Serene Yoga clients, particularly those from overseas, are deeply influenced by their sensory and affective interactions with the local communities and environments in Sri Lanka. These interactions play a significant

role in shaping their connection with Serene Yoga and profoundly impact their embodied experience.

The visual cues organised at salons made clients calm and 'free'. I understood that entering a salon (and spending time there) is a stress reliever due to sensing sights and other sensory cues. If I write about my experience at salons, entering Urban Escape, Pinky Grace, and Scissors N Razors gave me a relaxing feeling. Although I was experiencing problems during this period, participating in it gave me a relaxing and helpful experience. On one hand, I felt that I was producing data.

On the other hand, the architecture helped me to calm and relax. The men and women in my study described it as "me-time" spent in a relaxing space, notwithstanding that the space might not have state-of-the-art equipment. For example, Nalin, a client of Scissors N Razors for more than 15 years, expressed his embodied experience with the atmospheric encounter. He further explained how the presence of Lal strengthens such bonding.

"It is not about having well-developed, state-of-the-art equipment in the salon. When I came here, it gave me a unique feeling. This is a very simple setting but arranged cleanly, and nicely. You see all the necessary items when you come here—no decorations or high-tech equipment, just the essentials. Furthermore, among all, seeing Lal is stress-relieving...It is like my closest friend's place."

Nalin, a client of Scissors N Razors

As Nalin emphasises, for him, it is not stylish decorations but the simplicity of the salon with a clean and tidy environment, that pleases him. Chirani, a client of Urban Escape, shared her thoughts about the salon's entrance and how it made her feel calm and relaxed. She particularly enjoyed the interior design, including the white walls, which she found soothing. This suggests that the physical environment of a service location can significantly impact the clients' affective interactions and experiences, contributing to the overall customer experience at a service encounter.

"It's like going to a friend's place. I am very comfortable. I'm not a very social person, so I prefer to stay at home for a lot of the time. Even my husband is there, we don't go out much. But as I told you, I look forward to my salon appointment because it's very comfortable, the setting is white, and it feels so clean and comfortable. So yeah, it's like home, it's like home. It is like a relative's place to me... For me, it's like going to a temple, something like a different, calm place. I mean, even if you go to a temple, if that's a crowded place, you don't feel that calmness, right? You just go there and come, But here there is something. It's very calm and quiet, and you get to talk about something productive, so calmness is the best if that is an experience. Yeah, it's contrasting from what I feel here at home because it's noisy with the baby and with all her nursery songs and stuff. So it's very noisy, and at night I also have work

so that I do not feel this calmness too much, so from the moment I enter this place it is very relieving. “

Chirani’s words reveal that Urban Escape is a “true” escape or sanctuary from her daily, bustling home environment. Similarly, Kalhari, a patron of Pinky Grace, shared how she was captivated by the salon’s artistic decor. Her words imply that the entrance to this city-centre-based, hustle-and-bustle-surrounded salon creates a calming ambience, that soothes her sensory experience through the atmosphere with all its layout, equipment, and design.

“Pinky Grace has an artistic environment. I have never seen a salon with traditional masks as its wall decorations. The design is captivating. The interior is designed with nice-coloured bricks, and the arrangement of shelves and mirrors is too artistic. It is next to the main road and in the city centre, but you do not feel you are in the city centre. It is a unique setting.”

Kalhari, a client at Pinky Grace

So, taken together, the affective bodily interactions at the entrance mainly involve how clients’ bodies get embodied and interact with more-than-human bodies, such as wind, heat, layout, colours, cleanliness and tidiness, quiet and noise, and the greenery surrounding the location in its setting. These elements combine to create a sensory experience that can influence how bodies feel, act and react in a given situation.

Moving ahead, I present how yoga clients’ interaction with mats creates affective flows of enchantment. The connection with mats shows how the feeling of being bonded shapes service encounters and create affective flows of enchantment. A mat, in yoga practice, is generally seen as the critical assistant for yoga practitioners. Divine Yoga’s teachings stress the importance of owning a yoga mat, one for each client³². Thus, clients are advised and encouraged to bring their mats to class. Rohan and Apsara explained the fundamental use of mats and blocks during my class sessions. They also discussed the history of mats and blocks in yoga, the different materials used in the evolution of the use of mats, and how the texture, thickness, length, and colour of the mat can affect a person’s yoga practice based on the individual’s body size and qualities.

³² However, the studio keeps four to six clean reserve mats for use in situations such as clients forgetting their mats, sudden tear-off, or failure to grip (slipping) a mat. The studio also provides blocks and cushions in different sizes to support the clients in keeping their straight back during breathing practices and when performing certain poses, such as Shoulder Stand or Headstand.

“Don’t enter another’s spiritual world, or do not allow another to enter yours.” It is a very personal connection you have with your mat.

My class notes, 16 March 2022

The discussion also included the spiritual aspects of a yoga mat. He took the example of how a mat links with our bodies during *Savasana*, *the pose of total relaxation* (also known as Corpse Pose), and how the mat connects with individual bodily energy. He said that even though *Savasana* looks simple, it is one of the most challenging yoga *asanas*. It is a meditation in the supine position, which allows us to be aware of our inner self while our body is physically at rest.

The *Savasana* helps us to relax and detach from the physical world. Per the teachings, the interaction between the mat and the human body is unique and involves energy transfer. In such a situation, mats combine an individual’s spiritual and physical energy, and these bodies, mats, and the human body transfer energy to each other. So, a mat is a personal space that combines an individual’s spiritual and physical energy. The yoga mat is a tool that links us to our spiritual world. A mat is considered a personal space that others should not enter. So, we should keep it as a very personal belonging. We should not keep our water bottles on that. It should not be shared. If it is shared, it is like allowing another spirit into your world. Using someone else’s mat or walking on another’s mat while it is being unfolded on the floor, is inappropriate.

After a basic introduction to yoga mats, we were taught how to fold and unfold a mat. All in our class folded the mats by rolling them like a cylinder from one end to the other. However, Rohan taught us how to do it properly, as per the principles of yoga. First, the mat should be folded, connecting two edges of the practising side, one on one. It is due to the idea that a mat contains the personal physical and spiritual energy of the yogi/trainee who owns it. Such folding makes the yoga mat’s total length folded in half size. Then, it should be rolled from one side to the other carefully. By doing so, per yoga principles, personal space is protected. When it unfolds on a floor, we are taught to check the floor for cleanliness and then unfold it carefully. For example, throwing it to the floor is unsuitable.

Based on my class notes, 16 March 2022.

At Serene Yoga, around 15 mats with various textures, thicknesses, lengths, and colours are in the *shaala* for the clients’ use. Nevertheless, clients are allowed to bring their own mats if they prefer to do so. Along with the mats, the *shaala* has blocks and small cotton pillows useful for yoga practice. On the first day of a retreat, Sathish explains the importance of a mat and the connection a yogi or a trainee gradually develops with it. If the clients use mats available in *shaala*, they must clean them using cleaning spray and cotton cleaning cloths available at the *shaala* before and after their

daily practice. Sathish teaches the way to clean mats on the first day of training. Sometimes, he asks the new clients to learn it from others who have attended a retreat earlier. I observed and learnt that cleaning is very calm and methodical. It is done with great care, for the mat and appears as a form of meditation. It involves attention and gentle, rhythmic hand movement when cleaning a mat. There was no rush, and the clients did not talk to each other while the mats were cleaned. In other words, overall, I observed clients' immersion in the cleaning. So, these teachings lead yoga clients to engage with care practices towards the tools of yoga.

Furthermore, the data revealed that the characteristics of mats, such as their texture, grip, and colours, play a significant role in influencing the body and its interactions during yoga practice. Clients shared that these physical aspects of the mat and their own bodily conditions, such as excessive sweating, contribute to a sense of connection and relationality and facilitate or restrict their bodies while they practise yoga.

Well, it is like this. We develop a connection with our mats. I planned to buy my first mat from (name a popular supermarket) and went there. Then I made a phone call to Sir. I told him about its characteristics, such as length, thickness, texture, and price. He told me it was costly and suggested a place at Pettah. Then, I went to Pettah and bought one from his recommended shop. But that mat did not help me. It did not support me.

Pravi, a client at beginners' class, Divine Yoga

When I asked Pravi what she meant by "the mat did not help her", she explained:

"Well, mats need to be comfortable for our bodies. But the one I first bought was slippery. I couldn't perform well with that. And I got scolded by Sir. It was a standard quality one. But the mat and my body did not match. I don't know how to explain it more, but I did not feel good about it. Then, I changed it. The new one helped me. My body and it fit well. I feel much more comfortable sitting on it during my breathing practice and poses. More importantly, when I do the sun salutation, I feel much support from my mat."

This echoes Bennett's (2010) claim that the locus of agency is always a human-nonhuman collective. Moreover, human agency is best conceived as the outcome or effect of a specific configuration of human and nonhuman forces. When humans act, they do not exclusively exercise human powers, but express and engage in various other bodies.

"If you have a proper mat, it must be very compatible because you are really safe, and your body will feel it...Both things, our body and the mat, are actually interconnected... I'm currently using a blue colour mat. I have used different blue colour mats several times. So that is my personal preference. Also, you must have a good-quality mat, I would say. Because some mats you can't do

it because it is not so heavy. It must have some weight, because it should enable us to lie on properly. Otherwise, when you take your legs, if the mat also comes rolling like paper, it is difficult to do it using that kind of mat. And, some other types of mats are slippery. It depends on your body type and features of the mat.”

Anil, a client at intermediate class, Divine Yoga

Anil’s remarks shed light on how a yoga mat’s colour scheme and sturdiness contribute to his overall well-being and enhance his performance. He further points out that the bond a practitioner develops with their mat fosters a sense of mindfulness and connection, ultimately influencing their decision to continue using it.

While these clients highlighted the mats’ physical aspects and how they affect them, Tharu told me that her bodily conditions, namely sweating and the texture of the mats, make her able to do yoga.

“The upper layer of the first mat I used started to tear, and I found little squares of the material on my body, stuck with sweat. And then you know I got my toes wounded...Yes, the thin top layer was almost gone, and the bottom layer was visible. I started to search for another, and then I found... but now I know what sort of mat I need and how I should match my body and the mat. I need a mat with a very smooth surface, not a lot, not very rough, and not a slippery mat because my body sweats a lot. My hands and feet sweat a lot, and my palms [as well] (she smiles)... [But] my brother finds this type of mat difficult, like so the thickness. Now I use quite a thick mat and put another one underneath it because they hurt, if not my knees. But my husband uses a very thin mat... So, I think it also depends on the person.”

Tharu, a client at intermediate class, Divine Yoga

Tharu’s explanation also highlights how the interaction between a yoga mat and the user makes enchantment. The user’s physical state causes the expected period of use to either surpass or fall short of the manufacturer’s assigned lifespan. Therefore, its durability is not solely dependent on the mat’s usage. Instead, the mat’s (more-than-human bodies) lifetime and materiality are affected by the user’s bodily or physical conditions.

The next two excerpts I have chosen, describe what makes clients select a mat with certain colours. It also reminds me of how they use the materialities to make dirt as a matter out of place. This links with how one labels objects as “clean” and “dirty” and relates with “pure/impure” attributions, and makes subtle efforts to hide the dirt out of sight:

“I prefer dark colour because you know the, I mean the wear and tear show less, and I don't like it when you can see like the marks and stains (smiles), but some prefer the light colour because it is easy for them to mark the lines and follow them and things like that, but for me, it's always a dark colour. I always go for a dark colour mat.”

Tharu, a client at intermediate class, Divine Yoga

“My mat is black; it will always be black because I don't like to see the dirt. I see that people take a mat in Purple or Orange. Then, you can see the dirt. I don't like it. I want to see a clean mat. I feel it when I touch it, and I practise with it. Then, it calls for good practice. If I see the dirt, I will think about it, it will distract me.

Meriam a client at Serene Yoga

Meriam and Tharu both wish to avoid dirt. They are aware that the mat contains sweat or dust particles when it is used, or if not cleaned properly after use. However, opting for black mats allows them to focus on their bodies without any distractions caused by the surface of the body, the mat. Through subtle sensory manipulations, they are able to approach the mat, more pleasantly. Meriam also added,

“I love my mat. It is precious. I don't like it when people walk on my mat... the clients I met at Serene Yoga are different. They respect their and others' mats. Sathish taught us about the mat. He teaches us how to clean it before and after our practice. Cleaning your mat is, again, a meditation. The mat is something personal. You have your sweat on it. You don't want others to stand on or walk through it. You put your hands on this [mat]... So, I clean and maintain it well. And it's perfect. It is the one that makes my body transformed together with my energy.”

This shows Meriam's deep appreciation of her yoga mat, emphasizing the personal connection she has established with it over time, and how such connection form enchantment. She spoke of the profound respect and sense of sacredness she feels towards her mat, highlighting its importance in her practice and daily life. This sentiment speaks to the significance of the mat as not just a tool for yoga, but as a symbol of the deeper connections, and as an enabler of her bodily performance in yoga.

So, the affective flow of enchantment emerges through bodily interactions of humans and more-than-humans, such as mat, sweat, colours, and practices, which allows us to think about how multiple bodies co-participate in body work. It offers knowledge of different ways of thinking about the boundaries of the body during bodily interactions. Usually, one cannot do yoga without a mat. The data shows that mats become co-participants and active agents in yoga. As shared in the experiences of my

participants, the mats entangled; they are not simply "intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities" but "lack an independent, self-contained existence" (Barad, 2007, p. ix). However, the entanglement takes different forms. Moreover, as a co-participant in yoga, like a client, a mat is transformed and affected. The transformation, for example, the "wear and tear," is specific to participants' bodies and the mat's qualities. As highlighted by Tharu, it depends on her bodily conditions, such as excessive sweating and the quality of the mat. Hence, interactions can be understood as being constituted through these intra-actions of the mat's qualities and specific human bodily boundaries.

Isolation

In my previous section on 'client-client interactions', the analysis showed how clients have the capacity to make things happen in terms of increasing or decreasing bodily capacities in performing yoga when interacting in in-person service encounters. The relationality occurred through physical presence and proximity and is sensed through sight, smells, and sounds of each other by participants at yoga studios. However, with clients' and workers' entanglement with the forces of COVID-19 and the country crisis, online yoga platforms came into interaction. The physical distancing and virtual co-presence in online yoga platforms generated different sensory experiences in making the body work.

"There is a difference between doing it with a group at the studio and doing it online, with the same group of classmates. We started online in 2021. So, it is more than a year, and now I can see I am becoming a little bit lazy, and I'm not trying as much as I would have tried if I were physically present with the others, and this is something I've been noticing recently. And the efforts on trying to do a little bit more, all that is becoming less now. But, if I were with my group, I would definitely do more and try more. I have experienced such improvement when we had in-person sessions."

Sarala, Divine Yoga

"Sometimes, if we take a class where most people are quite advanced [in performing], I feel like I can do more. I feel motivated when I see them doing it, so especially when I am holding the *asana*, I don't want to really give up because everyone else is holding [the pose]. So, I feel ok, even if I can't and it makes you feel like you can do it with them. So it's better than [doing yoga online] at home. Online, that's what happens; I have no motivation; I just give up."

Himaya, Divine Yoga

From the above two excerpts, Sarala and Himaya share a common sentiment when practising with a group and engaging in physical contact, particularly with classmates who outperform them. They have observed that a certain synergy arises when bodies

come together, allowing individuals to elevate their performance levels and strive for greater achievements. Such a collective energy fosters a sense of solidarity, and inspires them to push their boundaries and reach new heights.

However, while expressing their dissatisfaction with online yoga, some interview participants revealed that they find it a way to remove some of the distractions created by other clients during the in-person classes. For instance, you may be distracted by comparing yourself with others at in-person classes; whereas in online yoga, having engaged with the trainer's voice and being under the trainer's surveillance, you are left with your breath, bodies, and mats.

"[Online yoga] is the best alternative to continue the practice during a pandemic situation and now, especially because of the current context of our country, where we do not get enough fuel to travel. However, I feel Zoom does not facilitate proper communication. I feel the instructor cannot notice how tired the clients are, and their bodily changes. But when you think about this situation, you are safe doing yoga on a virtual platform. I mean, in online sessions, you are safe. And I don't compare myself with others, as it is difficult to see all through the video, and there's no time for it. It's only me and Rohan [the trainer] ..."

Anil, a client at Divine Yoga

Thus, the presence and absence of human and more-than-human bodies, such as in-person and online group classes, laptops, phones, zoom platforms, and macro forces, such as crises, affect clients differently. However, it was also evident how this affective nature changes with time.

Commitment

Far beyond the use of mats as a facilitator for the body to stand and sit, with their properties such as texture, length and grip, my analysis shows that clients' interactions with mats cause affective flows of commitment derived from devotion and discipline. Usually, a yoga mat provides a user with a stable surface, preventing slips and slides during poses. It also offers a reliable grip, especially when practising on hardwood floors or other slippery surfaces. The mat's stickiness ensures that the user's hands and feet stay put, for example, during Downward Dog and standing poses. It thus provides support and assurance, increasing the client's capacity to balance.

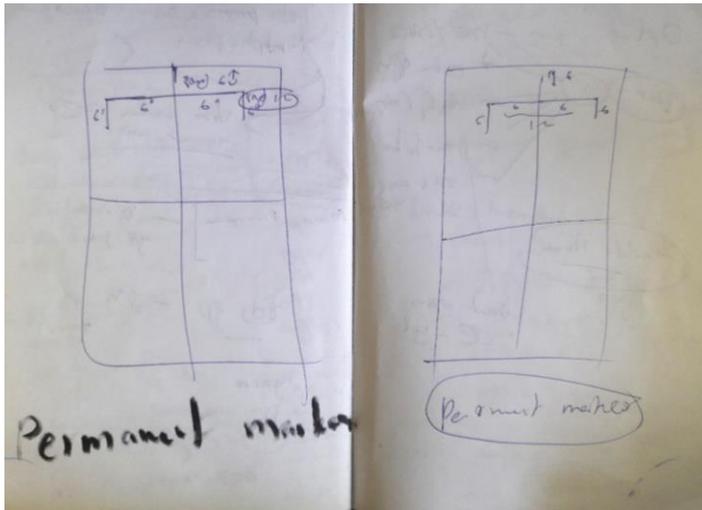
At Divine Yoga, beginners are introduced to a specific method of using mats, such as drawing alignment lines on the mat (see Figure.5.6, p. 223). In our beginners' class, mat lines were introduced when we started teaching the basic steps of Sun Salutation: Mountain Pose, Upward Salute, Forward Fold, Half Forward Fold, and Plank Pose.

During the session, Rohan taught us the fundamental movements of the sun salutation. He demonstrated each step before offering guidance on adequately executing the movements on our yoga mats. He requested that we practise the poses on an aligned mat. As I started to practice on my mats with the lines, I realised that the lines are not merely about marking the mat and providing boundaries; they are also about allowing us to align our bodies correctly in each pose, ensuring a more disciplined and safe yoga practice.

From then onwards, practicing Sun Salutation (starting from its basic steps and the complete technique), Bow Pose, and Triangle Pose were not just beneficial physically, but also enhanced our focus and concentration, leading to a more mindful and fulfilling yoga practice. These lines became my guide, helping me keep my hands and feet aligned lengthways. They affected and empowered me to accurately position my hands, feet, and body throughout sequences. The lines on the mat served as a safety guide, preventing us from overstretching or straining our bodies, and thus, enhancing the overall safety of our yoga practice. For example, in my interviews with intermediate-class clients, such as Anil and Tharu, they mentioned that they find the lines useful despite practising for years. Anil, Himaya, and Tharu said that they keep alert to the lines, and whenever the lines fade away when they use the mat, they carefully draw them again, staying fully present in their practice.

I, too, realised that while the lines are helpful and good guides for achieving proper alignment in their poses. It affects me (like Tharu, Anil, and Himaya) to depend on them. At Divine Yoga, I first position my body and my mat in my preferred rectangular floor space, just like parking my vehicle at a nearby supermarket's vehicle park. This means I align my body with the long edges of the mat, ensuring I have enough space to move and stretch. Then, I **'park'** my legs, hands, and palms on the mat lines, while keeping my body within the inner parking slot- the mat. This means I align my limbs with the lines, using them as a guide for proper alignment. The lines we drew provide boundaries, affect our movements, and thus affect the whole performance (see Figure, 5.7, p.223).

Figure 5.6: My drawing of how a yoga mat's lines should be positioned



Source: Author's student notebook at Divine Yoga, 30 March 2022

Figure 5.7: Parking bodies and bodies at parking slots



Source: Author

The feeling of being devotion and discipline was also exemplified through interactions between rugs and clients. Pravi disclosed how rugs kept at the entrance of Divine Yoga (see Figure 5.8, p.225) led her body to transform into a specific form. She views her bodily connection with rugs as a disciplining technique.

“Every morning, I rush to come to class on time. I must prepare things for my husband and children to send them to school. Then, I have to take two buses, one a long-distance bus. Getting on a bus in the morning is difficult as it is school, and the office crowd is there. When I get off at our studio’s bus station, I hurry up and sometimes run to the studio. I usually run up the stairs, but when I reach the third floor, I know I must slow down. I have to remove my shoes and then walk via the rugs. It makes me slow down. My body feels it, and I feel tension is being controlled. It reminds me I am now for yoga, a disciplined practice...”

Pravi, a beginner’s class client

The rugs discipline the body movement and the body rhythms (for example, slowing down oneself), which then affects the body and changes its rhythmic movements. So, rugs have the capacity to act beyond their material composition and basic affordances, i.e., beyond preventing dust from coming inside and maintaining cleanliness in a physical space. It works beyond assisting in being hygienic. The use of rugs links with discipline in movements, and being clean indicates respect for the place by transforming the client’s movements.

Figure 5.8: Encountering the different types of rugs



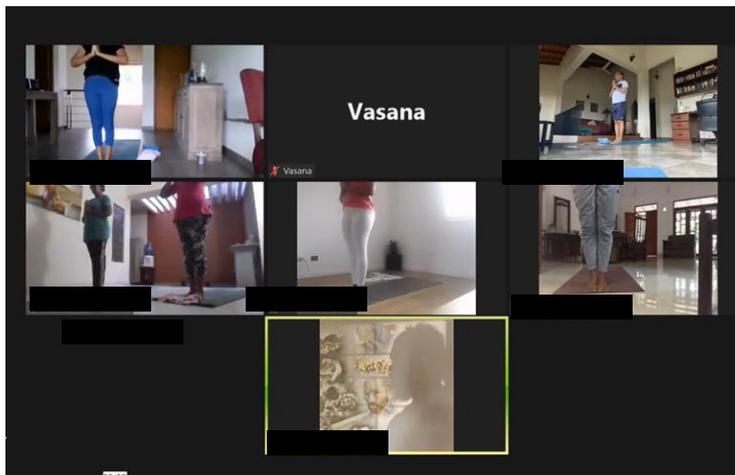
Source: Author

Worker-client-more-than-human

Enchantment

As discussed in a previous section, individuals have different perceptions regarding physical and online yoga service encounters. While some clients made their comments on online yoga in terms of interaction, effects of group dynamics, and anxiety, others may see them as a means of establishing a virtual presence that allows for interaction from a distance. Online yoga involves no physical co-presence of workers and clients, or physical touch by workers. Instead, there is a virtual co-presence that enables communicative exchange through verbal and gestural cues. At Divine Yoga, the clients viewed it as Rohan's tone of voice, the rhythms and being in their homes, the "most comfortable place in the world", as Himaya said, that makes the online yoga sessions effective. In Divine Yoga's online sessions, the video camera of the trainer is usually turned off (see Figure 5.9, p. 226). As such, the trainer's facial expressions cannot be seen through the Zoom "viewing tile". However, I observed that Rohan gives signals that he is a constant observer of his clients. He calls a client by name, and asks him/her to correct mistakes he/she makes when performing a pose. Moreover, Rohan responds to the client's non-verbal cues and gestures. For example, when he observes that clients do not follow the steps correctly when he speeds up his counting-down rhythm, he gradually and carefully lowers the speed.

Figure 5.9: A screenshot of a Divine yoga's online session



Source: Author

In such a context, I observed that bodily communication is facilitated mainly through voice and rhythms. Rohan's voice and rhythm enable the clients to maintain the continuity of their physical movements. This links with Mirchandani's (2015) study, which delved into embodiment in voice. In her article, 'Flesh in voice: The no-touch

embodiment of transnational customer service workers', she highlights embodiment through voice and argues bodies matter in remote customer service interactions. This involves making sense of how ideal workers are embodied in callers' eyes, using their voices.

Thus, online yoga is formed through the virtual co-presence of workers and clients and more-than-human bodies, such as, laptops, phones, Zoom platforms, and electricity. These not only form but also shape and make things happen collectively, along with 'flesh in voice' and online sight and gaze. It thus suggests that these entanglements, particularly in yoga, make things happen, even though physical presence or touch is not involved in service interactions.

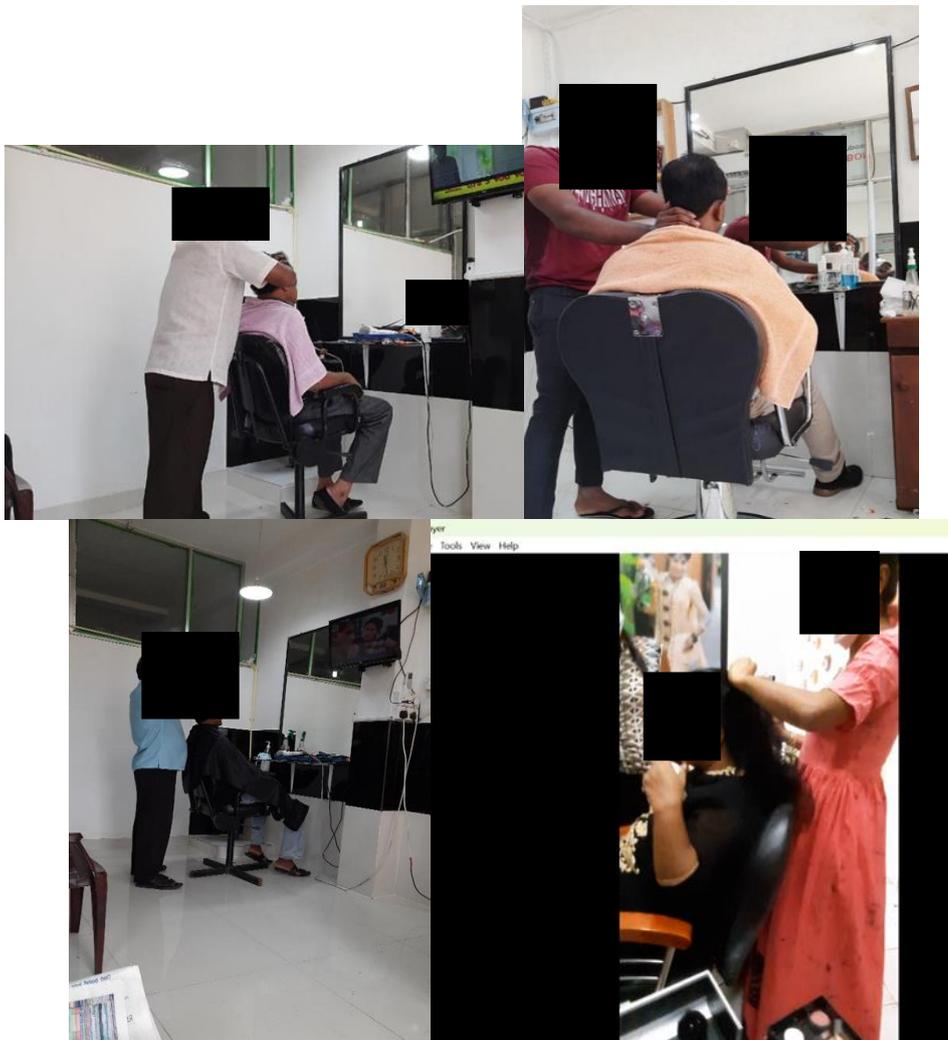
In salons, I noticed the inseparable and indispensable connections among workers, mirrors, and clients while doing haircuts, hairstyles, and head and shoulder massaging (see Figure 5.10, p. 228). Later, I learned that the cleanliness and clearness of the mirror and proper lighting would enable the workers to make the haircut perfect for the client's head and body, keeping the symmetry they sought in positioning the client's head or face. First, they carefully examine the person's facial shape if the client is new. They follow unique techniques, such as using specific angles and measurements, primarily to maintain the head's symmetry and balance the hair style with the person's height. For instance, they might use a comb to measure the distance between the client's ear and the top of their head, ensuring the hair is cut evenly. Alternatively, they might use the mirror to create an illusion of height or to soften the appearance of a round face. When Samantha, Neela, Lal, and Tharaka work on a haircut, hairstyle, or head massage, they frequently use the mirrors in front of them to examine the client's hair. In particular, they rely on the mirror to ensure precise hair levelling rather than depending on their naked eye. Lal later explained to me that well-lit mirrors provide a clear reflection of their hair work, unlike viewing it with the naked eye.

Moreover, this work is facilitated by the clients' bodily interactions and their non-verbal cues while receiving the work. The workers were very good at handling the scissors, trimmers, pins and hair separators while looking at the clients through the mirrors in front of them. I was wondering if they get confused when working by looking through mirrors, but there was no sign of that. The workers were good at checking the hairstyle's evenness or accuracy via the mirrors. Close to the end of work, the

workers looked at the face of the client directly by turning the chair towards their side. At that time, they also rechecked for any adjustments still needed for the hair.

Hence, the worker's visual acuity and the mirror's quality, encompassing purity, flatness, thickness, and the reflective coating of the glass, are vital aspects here. Visual impairments and mirrors with impurities or uneven surfaces can distort the reflection, hindering the worker's ability to perceive hair accurately. Moreover, these factors demonstrate the interconnectedness among workers, mirrors, mirror glass quality, and clients and their capacity to affect each other. The connectedness between mirrors, workers, and work (for example, hairstyling) is indispensable.

Figure 5.10: Mirror, mirror on the wall!



Source: Author

**My kinaesthetic experience and entanglements at Divine Yoga :
I 'live' in/with the body**

Situated with my physical presence,
on my very first day at Divine,
My body was there
taking the space of the studio
but

Did I 'live' there?
"My son, Apu³³ was in his first days at nursery;
his face was in my presence, and his cry echoed
I was not living in my body but somewhere else, with Apu at his nursery.

Days passed by
A totally different bodily experience,
after a couple of sessions,
During the two or two-plus hours,
my body was present,
my body lived
occupying the space
contributing to the social space.

Yes, it took some days for my body to settle down and enjoy living in it.
I became immersed in the encounter.

I felt my body,
the conscious breathing through my nose, the lungs,
The rotation of eyeballs;
The folding and unfolding of my body;
Tightening and squeezing, and loosening of muscles
The neck, the shoulders, the hands, and the stomach,
the back, the legs, the feet and the whole
the sweat,
the pain,
the tiredness,
the fullness
the easiness
the power of holding my body,
the disappointment of giving up;
by the body and of the body
I started to feel the presence of my "absent" body.
With my body presence,
My body sensed
my trainer
his words, voice, his rhythm, his gaze,
urging me to 'keep going, holding more on the pose',
My body got engaged
with my friends

³³ *Short form of our son's name*

their movement, their rhythm,
encouraging gestures, we shared with each other
making collective efforts in
making individual body improved
The love with my mat, which holds my body,
which enables me to perform
Tight at the beginning and
bit wetter
at the end of each session
My body sensed
the natural wind runs through
the fan wind that was switched on during *Savasana*
which eases the sweat,
My body sensed
The natural rainstorm sound,
pitter-patter raindrops on the metal roof
or rain drumming on the metal roof
and the cold in the atmosphere
making my body speed up to sweat more
The warmth of the sun
transforming the dullness of my body
into brightness, with energy
With each breath,
Familiarising myself with my “unknown” body, the objects, surroundings,
I started to live, living with my breath, my body and my mat.
The aching body
wet with sweat
The face, the neck, the shoulders, the armpits,
the chest, the back and the legs
I lie down for *Savasana*,
I live with my breath, my body and my mat
I stand up with a transformation

Source: Author, based on her autoethnographic accounts

I wrote the above based on my experience at Divine Yoga and how encounters evolved after completing around one and a half months of a beginners’ course at Divine Yoga. It demonstrates my attention to my body, what it relates with, and how much relationality converts me to do and act in a specific way. Along with this, I would also like to present one of the plots among a range of observations I had at Urban Escape.

Plot - Ganga's work on eyebrow threading of Nimmi

As Ganga got a client for eyebrow threading, I became busy observing both processes. Ganga's client, Nimmi, is in her early twenties. Ganga got a tiny basket that carried a ball of thread. Then she cut a piece around 10-15 inches long and kept it on a tray on the portable trolley. Then, Ganga cleaned around the eyebrows using some liquid on a cotton ball. Then she tied the thread in a knot, made a loop, held a piece of thread between her two fingers in each hand, and made an "X". Next, she took part of the thread to one end of her teeth while keeping the other two sides in her fingers. However, Ganga still had her face mask on. She asked Nimmi to hold her lid closed with one hand and pull the top of her brow upward with the other, enabling Ganga to get a better angle at shaping her brows. Such holding of the skintight reduces any chances of pain during the threading process. Before twisting, Ganga told Nimmi to let her know if she felt discomfort while threading. Nimmi said she might sneeze when it is being done. Ganga starts twisting over the eyebrow section and moves the thread swiftly. The twisting motion traps hair between the threads and lifts them out whole. It was a very subtle technique for me as an observer. Ganga did it at a considerable speed and looked through the mirror occasionally. I see how this process needed mutual support from Nimmi, Ganga, the chair and the equipment. Nimmi and Ganga had good communication, using facial expressions and verbal. Ganga reminded me to pull her brow from time to time. As Nimmi got tears in her eyes, Ganga gave her a tissue from the box she had on the mirror table. Nimmi said she felt like sneezing, but it did not happen; a fake sneezing signal may be. However, she snoozed several times at the end of the finishing off with both eyebrows. Ganga looked through the mirror to check the balance of the two eyebrows. How did she make the shapes and balance two sides within the process? I wondered. Ganga then brought a small mirror to Nimmi and asked her to check if the eyebrows looked perfect for her. She was happy with the shape and the service. Then, Ganga applied some gel and olive oil around the eyebrows and combed brows softly. The work was finished.

Author, based on fieldnotes on observations at Urban Escape

My writing on my experience at Divine Yoga and the plot I narrated based on my observations at Urban Escape demonstrates how bodies of clients, workers, and different more-than-human bodies get entangled in service interactions. They, step by step or action by action, show how such relationality evolves in entangled interactions and how entanglements are felt through multiple sensory experiences. At the same time, the interactions show how bodies affect each other. For example, how my sensations changed with bodily interactions and made my body learn to practise yoga via flows of affect.

On the other hand, as Ganga delivers her service, the equipment, for example, threads in the process of threading eyebrows, co-produce the work. Moreover, how the client's body acts and reacts makes Ganga change what her hands or body does. The bodily conditions of the client, as well as the worker and the equipment, create another level of effects. Thus, emphasising the interconnections between bodily interactions, these illustrations highlight interplays of complex and intersecting networks, rather than solely focusing on clients, workers, objects, and more-than-human bodies in isolation within service encounters. Thus, similar to my analysis on client-more-than-human

interactions, this again echoes Bennett's (2010) claim that the locus of agency is always a human-nonhuman collective. Moreover, human agency is best conceived as the outcome or effect of a specific configuration of human and more-than-human bodies.

My data analysis reveals that the unique connections formed during worker-client and more-than-human interactions at Scissors N Razors can lead to a sense of enchantment. In an interview with Ariyathilaka and Hemanga, clients of this distinctive salon, it became clear that they had developed a profound connection with the equipment used. Despite the prevalence of machine trimmers, Ariyathilaka's preference for the Scissors N Razors is a testament to this unique bond. He described the sound of the scissors, a unique rhythm, as creating a connection between him and the cutting process:

"I love coming here because I find the sound of the scissors very soothing. It makes getting a haircut enjoyable for me. I am so attracted to it; it takes me to a different world while having my hair cut by Lal."

Hemanga, a client at Scissors N Razors

Hemanga, too, shared similar sentiments regarding his experience with the salon service. While many salons have transitioned to using trimmers, Lal at Scissors N Razors still employs the traditional use of scissors. Hemanga finds that there is a unique rhythm, a specific sound and movement pattern that results. So, he prefers using scissors to trimmers. This rhythm, a combination of the scissors' sound and his hand's movement, is a sensory experience that he finds engaging and comforting. Perhaps his age makes him prefer the older method, but he feels a stronger connection to his body and Lal's way of doing things when he sits for a haircut and hears the distinct sound of scissors. This sensory engagement keeps them involved, creating a unique bond between the client, scissors and the hairdresser. This involvement reflects how Ariyathilaka is being enchanted, which sets the service experience apart.

In yoga, worker-client-more-than-human assemblages help workers and clients enhance their concentration and be enchanted in service. The data I produced on breathing sessions at Serene and Divine Yoga provides rich evidence for this.

We were asked to close our eyes to start breathing practices. It is detached from appealing and distractive sights, as Sathish told us. I listen to what Sathish is saying. There is a moment of silence. I hear birds chirping. A whine of a mosquito in my ear. I open my eyes and apply my mosquito repellent cream. Sathish has yet to start the chanting. He waits for our preparation. I close my eyes again. I begin to hear birds

chirping and wind from the sea sighing through the trees. In a lower sound, Sathish starts playing the singing bowl, which carries lukewarm water. The rhythm is coupled with Sathish's chanting. I aligned my breathing with that rhythm. I inhale, hold, and exhale. I hear the sound of my breath. I feel it. After some time, I started smelling the food prepared by Sathish's mother. It blended smells of lunu miris and milk rice or fish curry. As I blend with the chanting and music, which go hand in hand, I get immersed in my breathing, sometimes feeling my surroundings."

My diary notes on my breathing experiences as a client at Serene Yoga, 25 July 2022

My account exemplifies that even though Sathish asked us to close our eyes to get detached from sights, I found no separation of my body against the world but, instead, experienced my body connecting with and working with the world. As I consider my body immersing deep into breathing, it is not a detached activity. I am breathing in relation to the world around me. This can be further established via more data I produced during my fieldwork.

The breathing practices at Serene Yoga are mainly facilitated by Sathish's use of the singing bowl and his chanting. The clients experienced great connectedness and aligned their breathing in relation to the rhythms of the singing bowl and Sathish's chanting. Sathish's respect for his equipment was evident in his actions. Before each use, he would chant a small verse over the bowl, infusing it with a sense of sacredness. As the retreat progressed, Sathish taught us how to play the singing bowls, emphasizing the need to handle them with care and respect. These bowls were not mere objects but sacred tools that held significance in the practice of yoga. After each use, the bowls were covered in a beautiful cloth and placed securely. These practices, along with the effects created by the worker, the specific equipment, and other bodies involved, create an enchanting experience for the clients, a magic they could not help but be drawn into (see Figure 5.11 and 5.12, p.234).

At Divine Yoga, I realised that external noises, such as the hum of a supermarket generator, had a noticeable impact on how I breathe, my ability to focus on my breath and the effort I was putting into each breath. In addition, my breathing experience at Serene Yoga connected me with the smells I sensed when Sathish's mother cooked for the clients. Similarly, at Divine Yoga, while practising my *Savasana* around 11 am or 11:15 am, I often caught whiffs of food being prepared nearby, as lunchtime approached. These aromas, whether from nearby homes or restaurants, became a familiar part of my practice at Divine Yoga. However, while practising breathing exercises at Serene and Divine Yoga, I realised that it was not just my body doing the

breathing. It was a relational experience shaped by the individuals and surroundings I was connected with at that moment. My engagement with the air, my lungs, and the rhythmic breathing patterns of Rafia and Pravi who usually were next to me, and the verbal directions of Rohan all directly impacted my own breath. Even with my eyes closed to avoid distractions, I found connections with the people and nature around me, each evoking distinct sensations, and that connection made me enabled and sometimes also restrained my breathing practices.

Figure 5.11: Sathish preparing to start a session with singing bowls



Source: Author

Figure 5.12: Sathish teaching us how to play a singing bowl



Note: The bowl is partially filled with lukewarm water

Source: Author (still images of a video recording)

Commitment

As the final sub-theme, I present how practices which involve human and more than humans make body work happen through the affective flow of commitment. People involved in salons have strong connections and practices with regard to food intake. For example, as stated in chapter 4, Neela's advice on water intake and refraining from certain foods enabled her to work on faces better than having to deal with skin damaged or harmed through unhealthy food practices. Moreover, the clients are asked to do some meditation and adopt a restricted diet or have a lot of water intake if they plan for make-up for their wedding day or special events, which leads to internal body healing, including control/stimulation of excessive hormone production. This shows that the demand from workers for clients to perform body work and appearance work on their bodies thereby makes body regulation go beyond service encounters. These, in turn, have the capacity to affect how body work evolves and its outcomes.

The yoga clients' preparations show that making their own bodies ready enables them to perform. The yoga clients prepare their bodies for classes by having their meals beforehand as prescribed by the yoga instructors and doing the pre-exercises (workouts). For example, Divine Yoga outlines this food intake as a rule to be followed by their clients. The clients are asked to keep their stomachs empty and have a light meal two hours before the class; if it is a heavy meal, they have it four hours before. This is advised to avoid vomiting and any internal damage to the body and manage body flexibility. Also, it will prevent the sounds and smells caused by passing body gas in the digestive process.

I found these rules and instructions quite strict when I first encountered them. I wondered if they were suitable for adults like us. However, as I delved into this topic further, as outlined in the coming section, I realised the practicality and importance of these guidelines. They have the capacity to enable, enhance, or limit our bodily performance in yoga.

Along with these practices, being punctual and attending class at least ten minutes early is not just a rule but a practice that sets the tone for a successful yoga session. This time allows you to prepare with a relaxed mindset and regular breathing, enhancing your overall experience. Wearing a simple T-shirt, primarily used to enable flexibility, is a dress code and a way to ensure your comfort during the practice. As Sri Lanka has a hot climate, the trainers prefer light and loose clothing instead of tight clothing during practice. This enables body muscles to move freely and quickly while

allowing proper body ventilation. Mobile phones had to be switched off or put in silent mode, and if one needed it for an emergency, one could go out of the room to take a call. Any jewellery or wristwatches were not encouraged as they may be barriers to performing.

Moreover, I found these practices and bodily interactions created interassemblage flows. I will take food practices as an example. It was revealed that the client and worker's interaction with food and related practices enables them to move and transform their bodies in a certain way. In addition, the practices, such as sharing food, easily form interactions in the encounters.

“I don't take my morning meals before practice. I have my breakfast after practice. Also, on the previous day, I tried to go to bed early because the following day [I] had classes. That is how we manage, I mean. If you have some dedicated time, you must arrange your other activities accordingly to maintain this commitment. Otherwise, it won't work. And I would say you won't be good, you won't get proper practice, and you won't improve. We would stay in the same level of capacity, [but] we cannot improve. “

Anil, a client at Divine Yoga

As Anil mentioned, the food before a session and how we plan the day matter in enabling the body to perform in the yoga service encounter. As a client, I found that performance *off-the-mat* connects to on-the-mat performance. The performance off-the-mat, i.e., body work on own body outside the service encounter (or off-site or off-the-mat), has extended entanglement with the body work at yoga service encounters because such effective pre and post-work smooths the service delivery/receipt. For instance, inclination to proper diet at the proper time, having a good sleeping pattern, pro-social interactions, maintaining of moral code of conduct (*Yama*: non-violence in thought, word and deed, truthfulness, non-stealing, moderation of the senses, using self-restraint to control “sensual cravings”, non-hoarding, and *Niyama*: Cleanliness, contentment, self-discipline, self-reflection, and surrender to a higher power) all provide a path to the improved bodily practice of yoga.

For example, in yoga, at the beginners' class, we were taught how it impacts the body when one eats very close to the practice session and how it causes difficulty in stretching and breathing easily. In my experience, I used to have coffee or plain tea before attending the class. During the session, even though I attempted to actively perform the poses, I started yawning and feeling lethargic occasionally. I asked Rohan about this feeling during the immediate 'question and answer' session at the end. He

explained that tea and coffee fall into *the Tamasic* category³⁴, making one feel lethargic. It might be one of the reasons for yawning during practice. He then explained how yoga teachings categorise food and beverages to all the participants. He said that this topic will be further discussed in detail later, as a part of a session is allocated for this topic in the session plan. He also gave us some web sources to refer to learn more.

Pathum, my partner, usually prepares our daily coffee or tea. Today, I told Pathum I wanted to stop having my morning coffee or tea. He was initially surprised, as he knew how much I liked his cup of tea or coffee. I explained the reasons and told him I would have 'kola kenda' (herbal porridge) or water instead. I decided to change my eating routine and the content not only on the days of the yoga classes but for all days.

My diary notes on my experience as a client at Divine Yoga, 04 April 2022

This shows how human bodies along with techniques and practices are generating control yet creating commitment to enable positive effects during service encounters.

It also provides evidence on how multiple assemblages interrelate. The assemblages of human bodies, rules and norms, and food as off-site assemblages are linked with yoga on-site assemblages. When ingested, the food is co-constituted in an interassemblage with the human body and is mutually becoming. The digested food continues to affect the person (Van Daele, 2022). In this case, too, food has the capacity to affect bodily performance and interactions with other bodies at yoga studios. Hence, even though they appear to have separated, they remain entangled since the effects of their entanglement continue from one assemblage to another, i.e.,

34 Tamasic foods, such as tea and coffee, dull the mind and bring inertia, confusion, and disorientation. Stale or reheated food, items that are too oily or heavy on the stomach, and artificial foods come under this category. As per Indian and Sri Lankan Ayurvedic medicine, our food and drinks are classified into Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. Each type has a different effect on our physical and mental well-being. A Sattvic diet means light and healthy food. It does not go to any extremes of taste – neither too sweet, salty, or spicy – just moderate. Simply put, Sattvic food purifies the body and calms the mind. A Sattvic diet consists of pure food (not processed) that is light in potency and rich in prana (life force). It energises the body and mind. Cooked food, consumed within three to four hours of preparation, is also considered Sattvic. All foods produced by harming living beings (such as meat and fish) are Rajasic or Tamasic in nature and should, therefore, be avoided. Moreover, when Sattvic food is prepared in a Tamasic or toxic environment, it becomes Tamasic and should not be consumed. Having a Sattvic diet helps form and rebuild high-quality body tissues. The intake of Sattvic food helps improve mental health and energy, thereby improving the state of our consciousness. It helps restore the harmony and balance of our body and mind. A Rajasic diet can aggravate Pitta and Vata (types of constitutions of your body) levels in the body. These foods stimulate the body and mind into action. They also increase the level of toxins in the blood. When taken in excess, such foods can cause hyperactivity, restlessness, anger, irritability, and sleeplessness. Simply put, overly tasty food is Rajasic.

Source: fieldnotes and Mhatre, 2023

from off-the-mat to on-the-mat interactions. This tells us that understanding bodily capacities, interconnectedness, and boundaries in interactions is complex.

Summary

This chapter presented my data analysis and findings. For a better presentation, it included a classification of human-human and human-more-than-human interactions. The findings demonstrated that touch is decisive in salon and yoga service interactions. However, other sensory cues also play a vital role in establishing, shaping, and controlling service interactions. In online yoga, where no physical co-presence or touch is involved, the interactions are enabled by other sensory cues, such as hearing of vocal attributes, such as rhythms and tone and gaze of workers and sight of clients.

The analysis exemplified that sensory interactions and experiences, such as touch, sight, auditory, and smell, generate different dimensions of bodily interactions and create flows of affect that form and shape the bodily capacities of workers and clients during service encounters. The findings showed how multiple bodies become affective in their interactions in service encounters. The bodies are vital forces that can make things happen in body work, as the interactions create affective flows during service encounters. In other words, the flows of affect, namely intimacy, enchantment, compatibility, isolation, and commitment, enable or restrain what bodies can do during the service interactions, and decide how body work unfolds. In addition, the final subsection of this chapter exemplified interassemblage connections made through affective flows. The next chapter will comprehensively discuss multisensory and affective experiences during service interactions, and present my thesis on body work as a co-creation of multiple affective bodies.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

The preceding two chapters presented analysis and interpretations of data I produced, shedding light on how worker-client bodily interactions occur in service encounters. In this chapter, I establish my thesis that body work is a co-creation of multiple affective bodies, while addressing my two research questions. This conceptualisation of co-creation provides implications for how body work unfolds in service encounters. While developing my thesis, I discuss my key findings, and how they relate to the existing knowledge regarding body work studies. At the same time, I present how my research contributes to the field. I exemplify how my conceptualisation extends current knowledge on how body work is described—what it involves, and who actively participates in it. It also adds new knowledge of power in body work.

Body work as a co-creation of multiple affective bodies

The term co-creation is used in different fields, such as marketing and technology. For example, in marketing, co-creation is the process whereby more than one party joins forces to interact, learn and share information to create value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). However, my use of co-creation differs from such usage. In other words, co-creation, in my use, is not a binary co-production as it generally could be understood. I refer to body work as co-creation to denote that it involves multiple human and more-than-human affective bodies. I developed this concept drawing from Bennett's (2010) work, although she does not use the exact phrase.

Co-creation in this sphere of experience indicates that body work is not merely a dyadic relationship between workers and clients, as the existing literature maintains. Instead, it involves multiple human and more-than-human bodies. These bodies are entangled (Barad, 2007); they are intertwined with each other and interdependent, thus lacking self-contained existence (Barad, 2007) within service encounters. My conceptualisation of co-creation was primarily developed by considering body work as an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The findings revealed that body work encounters assemble multiple human and more-than-human bodies through a web of sensory interrelationships. In addition, the findings established that the locus of agency is always a human-more-than-human collective (Bennett, 2010), which denotes that everything has the ability to act (Braidotti, 2013; Bennett, 2010; Barad, 2007). In addition, it was revealed that multiple bodies form flows of affect when they get into sensory interactions within the assemblage of body work encounters. These

flows of affect enable or restrain bodily capacities to desire; and expand or limit the extent of what they can do. So, body work is a co-creation of multiple mutually affective bodies that collectively decide how body work unfolds.

The above description summarises critical features of my conceptualisation of body work as co-creation. I will discuss these features in the following paragraphs. As part of my discussion, I will relate the literature and discuss the implications of these features for body work. That will enable me to articulate what my thesis adds as new knowledge to the field, or how it extends the current knowledge of body work.

Human-human interactions in body work assemblage

The current body work studies highlight workers' touch as the critical aspect of body work service interactions. For instance, in categorising occupations as body work, Wolkowitz (2002; 2006) focuses on workers' touch as the critical criterion. Subsequent studies have outlined embodied touch (in varying amounts and on different body parts), and physical contact as fundamental requirements in body work (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Twigg, 2011; Cohen, 2011). I do not entirely dismiss Wolkowitz's (2002;2006) conceptualisation of body work, and scholars use touch as a decisive criterion in defining body work (for example, Montgomery et al., 2023; Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Cohen, 2011; Kang, 2003; 2010 and Cohen, 2011).

However, in my research, I acknowledged studying both workers' and clients' lived experiences of multisensory experiences during service encounters. Such focus enabled me to discover that it is not only workers' touch that matters in body work. My findings showed that apart from touch, workers use their voice and vocal attributes, their sight—the worker's gaze —and other non-verbal cues to deliver their services. As Cohen (2011) mentions, salon work involves extensive touch. However, other sensory cues, such as workers' non-verbal cues and how they speak and smell, also matter in shaping service interactions and the unfolding of body work. In in-person yoga classes, the touch involved was low compared to salons. However, although touch was less critical, other sensory cues, such as workers' gaze and voice, matter when performing body work. In online yoga interactions, where no physical co-presence or touch is involved, it is the experience of sight and sounds that form and shape and impact body work.

In addition, my findings show body work does not merely depend on workers' touch and other sensory cues he/she elicits. It involves two-way interactions of sensory cues

between workers and clients. The sensory cues of workers are sensed and perceived by the clients. At the same time, clients' bodies, too, provoke sensory cues. Such findings show clients as active bodies in service encounters. Moreover, how these sensory cues interact decides bodily actions and reactions, and how body work evolves as a collective work. This indicates that both workers' and clients' bodies actively contribute to the unfolding of body work.

Active worker and client bodies

Current body work studies maintain that workers' bodies are active as they serve as the vehicle for performing the work (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Kang, 2010; Twigg, 2000), while the clients' bodies as the immediate sites of labour or passive objects upon which services are performed (Cohen, 2011; Twigg, 2000). However, as mentioned earlier, my findings show that both workers and clients actively participate in body work. My findings on worker-client interactions offer an understanding of how touch, sight, and hearing enact professionalism, care, benevolence, safety, trust, and respect during service interactions. In yoga, the workers use "safe" touch, or ask permission, and employ gentle touch, which enacts care and professionalism. Moreover, these sensory interactions collectively create affective flows of intimacy. In other words, intimacy in subtle and explicit ways makes the clients do something or act and react. If we take the sensory experience of touch, how a worker touches their client determines how the bodily interactions create trust, care and respect. For example, Meriam felt a sense of trust while being touched by Sathish, which shows that she found safety within the interactions. She considered her history and lived experiences from her past encounters with other trainers. She would not have continued yoga at Serene Yoga if Sathish had not co-created the trust materialised through touch. Her sight also supported this sensing, which is what she had observed. He asked permission to touch, and did it gently. Similar findings can be related to Divine Yoga. Tharu explained that the sense of safety derived from her observation and the sensation of Rohan's sensory cues made her continue practising comfortably, with him.

Meanwhile, the gaze of the workers gives the clients a sense of safety. The vocal attributes develop clients' determination to make more attempts to achieve or improve in a particular pose. Also, it gives them the energy they would not sense otherwise, to continue the practices. So, these findings show how flows of effect emerge through worker-client interactions and make things happen in encounters: increasing their bodily capacities in practising yoga, making them engaged during the in-service delivery, or making the clients attached to the salon or yoga studio as 'loyal' clients.

My findings also show that clients' bodies are not passive recipients, as is maintained in the current literature. Instead, client bodies, too, actively participate in configuring body work within service encounters. Also, workers' and clients' bodies are interconnected as well as interdependent. Within their interactions with workers, yoga clients' bodies individually and collectively pass sensory cues to the trainers on speeding up the rhythms, stopping a particular pose, or the holding time of a particular pose. Clients' bodies also communicate when and how to touch them; for example, the bodies are able to communicate when and how to push them or give support. The clients' bodies have the capacity to encourage trainers to teach more or some complex poses. For example, seeing how Rafia, Pravi and my bodies performed the basic poses, Rohan taught us more complex poses he had not planned for the beginners. Rohan's sensory perceptions of seeing our bodies as well-synchronised, flexible, enthusiastic, and not being lethargic made him do so. As Rohan said, the sight of lethargic bodily engagement makes him feel bored and demotivates the counting. However, the boredom and fatigue in counting and verbal instruction diminish through the sight of the clients' 'devoted' and 'disciplined' bodily actions.

In salons, the sight of clients' lack of care leads to disgust, which makes the workers deliver service quickly to get rid of the client. Such affect also restrains the workers from getting involved in future encounters. As exemplified in Neela's experience at Pinky Grace, seeing the clients come with uncleaned bodies and smelly armpits makes the affective flow restrain the workers, or limits their bodies to performing 'usual' efforts in delivering the service. The affective flows also restrain the workers' bodily efforts put into work and time spent on the service.

Enchantment, as a flow of affect enables workers to avoid resistance from the clients in their interactions. As expressed by clients at Urban Escape and Scissors N Razors, most of them merely accept the haircut suggested by Samantha or Lal. The enchantment features familiarity and consistency, thus allowing workers to act at their own discretion when selecting a particular hairstyle or brand they use for clients. In yoga, enhancement is created through auditory cues, rhythms, and vocal attributes, which shows that it helps clients in physical classes, especially online clients, to become more immersed in the practice. They would not experience this level of immersion if they practised without these auditory cues.

Nevertheless, there are some circumstances in which workers follow the clients' preferred style even if it is not suitable or preferred by the worker. As illustrated in the

previous chapter, Neela knew at times that what she was being asked to deliver was not the best-suited hairstyle, and was impacted by the clients' verbal and bodily expressions of non-consent or displeasure. Even though the worker disagrees with the client's preferred style, the workers carry on the work. It frustrates the workers, but also makes them work with more care and accuracy, as clients are more attentive if they are doing what they have been asked to do.

It was found that consistency, familiarity, and care in salon bodily interactions, derived mainly via touch, can create an enchantment in salon encounters that leads clients to fall asleep during their appointments. Interviews reveal that clients feel relaxed after waking up. Seeing this effect from another angle, this poses the risk of clients not being aware what happens while they are sleeping. Workers may also struggle with time management and scheduling due to the extended time needed for such appointments.

As my study looked into online and physical yoga in group yoga sessions, I analysed how clients get involved through sensory interactions in the unfolding of yoga in the previous chapter. I found other clients too actively contribute to one's body work experience (for example, the case of Pravi and the related events that took place). Being in a physical yoga session, clients experience affective flows of compatibility. The sight of the smooth performance of one client could produce bodily responses of self-motivation and bodily pressures. The smells and breathing sounds of other clients, too, have capacities to affect as they get into interaction. Compatibility is created through a sense of safety and harmony. For example, harmony and synchronisation provide a sense of protection, and allow one to practice yoga effectively. When a client's body senses the bodily rhythms of another via sight and hearing, for example, in performing poses or breathing techniques, it leads to an energised body or frustrates the body. As clients' bodies respond to these rhythms if they become attuned to the movements of others, it would potentially enable a state of energy; if not, it would lead to frustration.

However, compatibility can also have adverse effects on others or sets of bodies. For example, if one such classmate, who the other senses as safe to be with or harmonious, becomes absent, it makes that particular client show low engagement in yoga practice. This scenario arose as I recall how Pravi told me she would not attend the class if I or Rafia were absent. She asked us to keep her informed if we were not attending a class. Moreover, during encounters, there are possibilities that participants could not find the synchronisation as they did previously, or as in their history of

encounters, as bodies are unique, and they experience their own transformations. For example, when I had classes on a day for a monthly period, I did the poses in a bit of a relaxed way. That day, I had heavy body pain, so I did not continue the final rounds of the Sun Salutation. If I recall the day, 20th April 2022, the morning after a person was killed in a public protest in *Rambukkana*, I realise that I frequently misaligned the poses and made mistakes in the initial stage of breathing practices. I found that my performance had been disturbing to Pravi, as she told me later. So, this kind of situation can lead to irritation or frustration. This shows how the bodies are affective in their presence and possible absence in a service interaction. Also, it again shows how bodies are interdependent and lack a self-contained existence (Barad, 2007).

This also implies that there is a client's expectation of experiencing similar encounters over time, although the encounters are unpredictable and evolving. In a way, both human and more-than-human bodies undergo their own transformations. In another way, the bodies assembled in one encounter may not be there in the next, or another encounter. For example, human bodies in yoga or salon encounters may experience different environments, such as a hot natural atmosphere one day and rain the next. The ambient environment could also change from natural lighting to artificial or electric lighting. Even if the same bodies get into interaction, how the interaction evolves would differ from the previous interaction, based on the affective flows it creates.

Thus, during body work in salons and yoga, which involves beautifying, manipulating and regulating or disciplining the clients' bodies, the client's bodies are not mere sites of labour. They are active, and have the capacity to get affected by and affect the workers' actions and reactions. Thus, I conclude this section by restating that body work involves not only workers' touch but also the multisensory cues of both workers and clients. Furthermore, the workers' and clients' bodies enact different facets of bodily interactions, through these forms of sensory experiences. It creates affective flows that enable or restrict bodily capacities in making the body work and decide how body work unfolds.

Therefore, my research extends the current understanding of body work by offering evidence that both workers' and clients' bodies actively participate in the service encounters. Based on these findings, I claim that body work does not only involve 'working on' clients' bodies. It involves workers working with active and affective clients' bodies, rather than workers working on passive objects. Thus, the co-creation is a

collective activity. It occurs with the mutual involvement of active and affective workers' and clients' bodies.

Human-more-than-human interactions during service encounters

My findings on bodily interactions revealed that body work is not simply dyadic as maintained in current literature (For example, Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Sanders et al., 2013; Gimlin, 2002). Instead, a wide range of more-than-human bodies in the social space becomes part of body work assemblage, interplay, and configuration of how body work occurs in a service encounter with human bodies. The following section, along with my findings and examples, discusses how these multiple bodies interplay, affect and get affected in a web of relations within service encounters.

Breathing practices

First, I recall the findings of the breathing exercises in yoga. Although breathing appears to be a self-concentrated inhaling and exhaling process in different rhythms and styles, it was revealed that it is not the self alone that makes the breathing happen. It is a common understanding that we rely on and interact with oxygen for breathing. Beyond that, my experience at these yoga studios taught me the bodies around me made my breathing practice a performance. For example, the wind, the trainers' rhythmic counting, the soothing resonance of the singing bowls, even the distant sound of sea waves, the hum of a generator located at a nearby supermarket, smells of food, breathing sounds of other clients, such as the breathing of Rafia, who usually was close to me, had a noticeable impact on how I breathe, my ability to focus on my breath and the effort I was putting into each breath. This exemplifies how bodies connect and establish what Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests: that the world is what we live through. My breathing is made through living with and interacting with multiple bodies. Moreover, how bodies got interconnected and created interdependency determined the success of breathing practices. If I explain this using an example, being in a breathing assemblage where I sense disturbing sensory cues, such as food smells and the sound of a generator, made my breathing ineffective, whereas sensing some other set of bodies as encouraging made my breathing effective.

I witnessed the unique experiences that singing bowls can create. The music, the bowl's soothing vibrations, and the practice's tempo and vigour all combined to form distinct experiences for each client and Sathish. The use of mantras and the prevailing weather conditions added another layer of uniqueness, whether it was a bright, sunny day or a rainy one. Sathish used single and multiple bowls based on the client's needs

and the worker's preferences. Single bowls offer a focused and concentrated sound experience, allowing for precise targeting of specific areas of the human body. In contrast, using multiple bowls creates a broader and more intricate range of sounds. Singing bowls have the capacity to provide immersive breathing and healing experiences, enveloping the practitioner in a cocoon of sound and vibration. This is further enhanced by the specific techniques and conditions of use, such as the time of day and weather, which can amplify the healing effects.

Sathish utilised various techniques, such as striking the bowl once and allowing the sound to fade naturally, or striking it repeatedly to sustain a continuous sound. On certain days, Sathish opts for a singing bowl half-filled with water. The bowl's vibrations are clearly visible in the water's movements, and can cause splashing if the bowl is too full. Using specific techniques and playing bowls near or on the body also has the capacity to affect the human body. For instance, many of the Serene Yoga clients I spoke with shared how singing bowls enabled immersive moments, and how the calming effect of the sound and vibrations helped them relax, reducing bodily tensions. So, it is not only clients' and trainers' bodily presence, how the trainer guides the clients on increasing their concentration using his voice modulations, and how he plays the singing bowl, the amount of water in it or its emptiness alone that makes breathing; it is how all bodies get connected and then lead to being enchanted that make happen breathing practices happen effectively. Thus, it emphasises the co-encountering of affective voice tones, sounds, and rhythms of humans and more-than-humans, which is another vital aspect to look at in service interactions.

Sensing differs from individual to individual, and what I sensed as disturbing might not give the same sensation to another person. For example, Sophia said she could still manage her breathing when she was disturbed by sound generated through repair work at a home situated in the near vicinity of Serene Yoga. There had been a heavy sound of a hand saw. She said she took it as something for one's development and betterment. In contrast, she has found it brings adverse effects when her breathing involves the sound of a baby's crying. According to her, it brings her pain through sound, knowing that a baby is in some way uncomfortable. Meanwhile, data showed that breathing at Divine Yoga, which is close to a main road, initially appeared distracting for most of the clients. However, when they did the practices, the clients experienced that their interconnectedness and interdependence with Rohan's vocal attributes made their breathing successful. So, this establishes that similar to human

bodies in human-human interactions, human and more-than-human bodies, too, are interconnected and interdependent in body work.

Tools in body work

Moreover, more-than-human bodies participate actively in interactions in the assemblages they get into, and the locus of agency becomes a human-more-than-human collective (Bennett, 2010). For instance, in using mats and singing bowls, it is not the worker solely that affects the client, but together with wind, water, the rhythms, and sounds all have impact on the worker's bodies, enabling or restraining the performance of the singling bowls, affecting the clients' sensory intake. Moreover, my analysis of tools and equipment demonstrates how workers establish embodied connections with items (scissors, singing bowls, mats, rugs, yoga benches and many more, as I presented in chapter 5). These tools are not mere objects; they become infused with the vitality of body work service practices. Workers and clients sense and respond to these tools in ways that shape their interactions with each other.

To relate an example to this discussion, I analysed how Scissors N Razors's clients Nalin and Ariyathilaka explained how the sensory experiences of Lal's magical touch and the sounds of the scissors get them to enjoy and immerse themselves in the service receipt, and engage with the process. As each one gets immersed in the sounds and touch, his body supports the body work, keeping the relevant pose that helps Lal to continue with work. On the other hand, Lal's experience tells of his attachment to specific scissors. It is that connection of his hands, fingers, and scissors that facilitates the haircutting. This suggests that bodies do not simply take their places in the setting. Neither are they situated merely in or located in their particular environments. Instead, "environments" and "bodies" are intra-actively co-constituted. So, human and more-than-human bodies are integral in body work unfolding.

If we consider the rugs at Divine Yoga, such practice links with what Massumi (2015) calls the 'controlled walking' technique. The rugs enact control, limiting the freedom of walking or the way and speed of walking. However, simultaneously, it restrains the body from acting nervously but increases calmness. It happens through bodily knowing. The sight of the rugs, the touch of wet and dry rugs. It then enables the body to be prepared for a yoga session with a caring and calm approach.

Physical settings

I analysed how clients get enchanted by a physical service setting, with the novelty and familiarity of their sensory interactions with these settings. At Serene Yoga, the *shaala* is situated amidst a lush green garden, with refreshing winds and the nearby sea, providing an immersive embodied yoga experience leading the clients to enchantment. This leads us to think of how multiple bodies get involved with other inhabitants of spaces at service encounters at a given time, and think of thing-power, which highlights how we can think beyond the affordances of the objects and more-than-human bodies around us. The foreign clients at Serene Yoga, with its green environment and related facets, sensed the novelty, which differed from their previous experiences. As they viewed it, such enhancement made their yoga experience more effective, as it enabled them to get immersed in the experience. Meanwhile, if I look into the Divine Yoga salon's physical setting as explained in chapter 4, the perforated parapet walls of Divine Yoga have not been filled out as the walls. Accordingly, air circulation gets enmeshed with the client's body and other bodies. The perforations allow air circulation throughout the lower level of the studio, making the poses like *Savasana* comfortable. As the body becomes warm and fatigued, a sense of relaxation sets in, particularly during *Savasana* poses. The air comes through the holes in the perforated parapet walls, enhancing relaxation. When fans are switched on, and if the upper windows too are opened, it facilitates wind from up to the lower level, making the human bodies comfortable. The holes in the wall accumulate dust and water in the openings. So, during a rainy day, the architecture imposes restraining effects, as there is no soundproofing, and rainwater comes inside through the perforated parapet walls, and the sound of raindrops on the aluminium roof disturbs the sensing of Rohan's or Apsara's counting down in practising.

These findings show that a (sensory) landscape is not a mere backdrop but possesses an efficacy of its own, a liveliness intermeshed with the human agency (Bennett, 2011) that makes body work interactions happen. The above illustration also highlights that the landscape of a service encounter possesses an efficacy of its own, a liveliness intermeshed with human agency. Accordingly, the locational setting of the land is more than a geophysical surface upon which events play out. A particular configuration of plants, buildings, mounds, winds, rocks, and moods does not operate simply as a tableau for actions whose impetus comes from elsewhere (Bennett, 2011). As such, human bodies appear instead as a tangled composite of various active forces. Moreover, as my analysis shows, the elements in the landscape, individually or as a whole (or collective of all or some elements), can affect and get affected within the

embodied interactions. This shows that at any time, one element could become more potent and vibrant than other elements.

Sweat

Sweat is a firm reminder of the body's biological capacity to cool the body in hot and humid ambient temperatures. Most clients believed their bodies needed to be "*Theth Wenna*" (getting your body wet by sweat) if they genuinely did perform poses and related activities. Thus, body heat, sweat, and body pain are accepted and celebrated and affect yoga performance. For most clients, the presence of sweat on their bodies was evidence of their commitment and effort in performing poses and related activities. It is a personal achievement that they have pushed their bodies beyond their capacities. Thus, clients, as well as workers, welcome and celebrate sweat and body pain. It is an accomplishment. In other words, the clients do not feel that their body has worked out if it has not sweated. They enjoy the sweat covering their bodies. Unlike in other settings such as offices, homes, or public places, they are not ashamed of their sweat-drenched bodies. This is because they, through sweat, recognise their bodies' efforts in effectively executing the poses, breathing, and overall practice.

This reminds me that sweating is not always dirt and takes my attention to Douglas's (1966; 1975) work. Dirt is what is "out of place" to one person. However, it cannot necessarily be so to another. In other words, dirt exists only "in the eye of the beholder" (Douglas, 1966). However, sweat in yoga links a materiality that recognises the "vibrancy" of matter (Bennett 2010) and posits a relational ontology whereby material qualities are understood to exercise a certain kind of agency. Therefore, sweat is not just a by-product of workouts in yoga studios. Instead, it is a vital force or product that makes a yoga client do more physical training. It increases the desire to do more practice.

This echoes Bennett's (2009) claim that the locus of agency is always a human-nonhuman collective. Moreover, human agency is best conceived as the outcome or effect of a specific configuration of human and more-than-human bodies. When humans act, they do not exclusively exercise human powers, but express and engage in various other bodies. The above identification also establishes that the more-than-human entities are not mere backdrops or mundane or mere symbols. As my literature review brought to the front, the current body of work studies consider objects as taken for granted, while some take them as symbols of culture, identity, or power (Shortt, 2010; Chugh and Hancock, 2009; Gagliardi, 1996). Scholars have until now failed to

notice the co-existence of the workers' and clients' bodies and more-than-human bodies, and how they get involved with work and contribute to experiences in encounters. However, my research uncovers these bodies' capacity to affect and get affected within the assemblages they enter and in which they interact, in encounters with each other. My findings exemplify the actions and performance of multiple bodies, which showed thing-power, or the lively and active qualities, and their capacity to act and impact other bodies within assemblages.

According to thing-power (Bennett, 2004), lively energy and/or resistant pressure are issued from one material assemblage and received by others. Thing-power, in other words, is immanent in collectives that include humans, the beings best able to recount the experience of the force of things. Thing-power as materialism emphasises the closeness and intimacy of humans and non-humans (p.365). So, my findings suggest that bodies in service encounters are vital and are affective. Bodies have the capacity to positively influence others by spreading happiness and energy, fostering connections, and heightening feelings; however, they can only do so when they are in an assemblage. The bodies and relations are affected by or affect others in the assemblage, shaping the body's capacities to desire or enact what a body can do within specific relations.

Moreover, as Heinonen et al. (2010) indicate, the transformative power of experience stretches beyond the service context to daily life. My analysis showed similar findings where my (and other yoga and salon) clients' interactions with food made interassemblage flows and effects (Bennett, 2010). My accumulated lived experiences as a client in yoga and salon work interlinked with my daily routines and practices. Food patterns, breathing patterns, daily schedules on physical exercises, and my attention to my body appearance compared to earlier are a few examples of this. These exemplified how affective flow of commitment via devotion enables smooth service interactions. It made me easily perform the poses that were initially difficult, as my flexibility increased. Being consistent with interactions with 'appropriate food', and avoidance of Tamasic food and beverages, enable me to save my energy and exercise my energy during service interactions. This, thus, exemplifies the inter-assemblage flows in performing yoga and how the flows facilitate yoga practice.

This shows that our relationship with things is an experience of reciprocal encounter—tension, communication, and commingling (Abram, 1996). However, when we merely linguistically define the surrounding world as a determinate set of objects, we cut our

conscious, speaking selves off from the spontaneous life of our sensing bodies, and we tend to objectify a phenomenon only by mentally absenting ourselves from this relation. If we pay attention to our sensuous involvement, say breathing, we can clearly identify our experience of other bodies (p. 43). That will bring to the front the active, animate entity with which we find ourselves engaged.

Aligning with Bennett (2009; 2010), the findings illustrate that human agency is best conceived as an outcome of a particular arrangement of human and more-than-human bodies. When humans act, they do not exclusively exercise human powers but express and engage in other actants. The interaction occurs collectively. In other words, our material body produces effects by operating in conjunction with other material bodies when all get into an assemblage. Therefore, my research adds to the current understanding of inter-corporeality within an encounter by explaining what human and more-than-human bodies do (and the potential of their doing) when they enter an assemblage in a situated context of a body work service encounter.

Body work assemblage, affect and power

Body work literature often views power from a 'power-over' perspective, and implies that power is static, possessive and one-directional. The current studies predominantly maintain a 'powerful' dominant worker, and passive client relationship within the dyad, while indicating that it may differ depending on the type of body work, and the influence of social categories (Cohen and Wolkowitz, 2018; Sanders et al., 2013; Korczynski, 2013; Kang, 2010; Gimlin, 2002). These studies suggest that the dominance or passiveness of one party, i.e., client or worker, remains fixed in their interactions during an entire service encounter.

My conceptualisation of body work as co-creation takes power as something materialises through touch, sight, hearing and smell. Based on Bennett's work about thing-power and vital forces, I discussed how human and more-than-human bodies enable and restrain bodies. With that understanding of affective bodies, we can lead a discussion on power in body work encounters. Affects make us what we are, but they are neither under our "conscious" control nor even necessarily within our awareness—and they can only sometimes be captured in language. This indicates a different direction from what and how power is currently understood to be, in body work literature. My findings showed how workers' and clients' bodies—voice, hands, face, posture, stride, gaze, and movements are involved in affecting each other, together with materialities and sensory cues elicited from more-than-human bodies. The work

of evoking feeling is not done by words alone, although words matter. It is through adding expression, oration, gesticulation, blocking, staging, sound, atmosphere, and a whole embodied toolkit of movements and gestures.

I view that how bodies affect each other could only be identified by looking at micro-level bodily interactions revealed via multisensory experiences. This affectivity is different from what is widely discussed from a 'power-over' perspective, and implies that power is static, possessive and one-directional. The literature highlights the psychological, non-material personal power bases of a body worker, like knowledge power, experience power, and social categorisation-based dynamics, such as class and gender involved in worker-client interactions. The existing body work scholars identify power as a resource possessed by an individual, and as one-directional, where the individual with the influential capacity is active in disciplining the bodies, while the individual being influenced is passively behaving without or with less resistance. My findings show that the effects of affect or power are more diffuse. It is not a resource or something to be possessed.

One could argue that I am attempting to entirely ignore the expertise, knowledge, or experience of the salon worker or the yoga trainer. My argument here is that through bodily engagement, the expertise, knowledge or experience materialise and are communicated to a client through sensory experiences. For example, at Scissors N Razors, Lal's expertise and experience, acquired through his bodily engagement and developed through time, materialise via his body and touch. It is through the physical interactions and generated sensory cues that a client feels the body worker's expertise. As sensing is different for each individual, the expertise will be decided based on how a client's body develops the relationality with the worker's body and their entanglements. So, in body work, such expertise knowledge cannot be further identified as a resource possessed by a worker. Instead, the potentiality of the capacity to affect depends on how a worker and client get involved with bodily interactions and their mutual bodily relationships.

Moreover, as I present in my analysis, I identified that although Neela offers advice, the clients follow or adhere to what she suggests based on how confident they are or how much they trust the work performed by Neela. Trust is relational (O'Doherty, 2023; Baier, 1986). This again shows that although, in general, a salon worker is identified as an expert in beauty care or is with knowledge; it is the bodily interactions, the way he/she uses touch and sensory cues in providing service, that materialize the power

over the clients. So, while these feelings are affecting how body work unfolds, they also reveal the interplay of power between clients and workers. Plus, beyond the power between worker and client, this tells us the affective capacities of more-than-human bodies.

Therefore, clients and workers have the potential to impact each other positively or negatively, irrespective of their expertise, knowledge, or social standing. The clients' bodies can communicate information to instructors regarding the pace, timing, and difficulty of poses. Similarly, the bodies of practitioners can subtly influence clients, encouraging them to remain engaged and connected to the service. Furthermore, more-than-human bodies, such as the physical settings and equipment used or kept in classes, can also affect the bodies of both practitioners and clients. Elements such as sounds, rhythms, wind, water, and other "environmental factors" have the capacity to either facilitate or impede the delivery of the service and the embodied experience of everyone involved.

Moreover, in contrast to what the existing literature maintains, my study suggests that power in body work is not unilateral and centred around or possessed by one body, but always in a client or worker. Instead, as my research suggests, power is diffused. And it is the collective power of a particular assemblage that makes effects in body work. Having said that, it was also evident when there was an emergence of bodies with high vibrancy in body work assemblages. In fact, an assemblage is a "dense network of relations", which are "ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts" (2010, p. 23). So, it reveals that power is not equally distributed but unequally distributed. However, this does not necessarily mean that other bodies have no power at all (Bennett, 2010). Also, the centres change, as assemblages become fluid and transform within body work. If agency is the capacity for things to act and to produce the world in all its dynamic vibrancy and flux (Fox and Alldred, 2016, p. 4), the things we see, feel, hear, taste and touch can be said to be the "effects" of affective properties interacting with their environments: the result of multiple intermingling and assemblages formed by matter and materials.

My study offers insights into how the bodies continuously interact, and how clear boundaries between bodily experiences cannot be drawn. Thus, it cannot be established that a body or force is constantly static and powerful within body work. One body is not superior to all other forms of matter. This might elevate, for instance, the status of a mat from merely an "aid" to a human body to practise yoga, to a necessary

and equal partner in body work assemblage that enables a client to perform yoga well. The same can be applied to clean and fresh air and sights of the landscape. Through my study, as elaborated in the previous sections of this chapter and in chapter 5, multiple bodies, including both human and more-than-human, get actively involved in body work. And how both humans and more-than-humans make flows of affect in their interactions and affect each other. This contributes to the generation of a range of affect within interactions. This shows that humans have the capacity to act within an assemblage and contribute to the transmission of affect among bodies.

Building on Spinoza's notion of affect as an interplay of affecting and being affected, the findings underscore that influence is not a unilateral impact of one individual on another. It does not involve a simple cascading of "one-directional affections" (i.e., individual A affecting B with subsequent "counter affection" of B on A) that sums up to reciprocity merely on an aggregate level. This research challenges the notion of power as something that flows top-down. It asserts that a body work service encounter is not a relation between a dominant worker and a submissive client or vice versa. Instead, it is a correlative interplay of multiple affecting and being affected in an assemblage, highlighting the intricate interdependence of power dynamics.

Furthermore, it is impossible to say that A is affecting B without B affecting A. A client's or a worker's affective capacity is active and receptive. This means that affect is both active and receptive, and the active and receptive involvement of bodies in body work service encounters is inseparable. Moreover, how one individual affect and is affected in a situation, co-dependes on all the other participating bodies, highlighting the interconnectivity and interdependence of these encounters.

Through my data analysis, interpretation and discussion, I illustrated how the presence (and absence) of human and more-than-human bodies and bodily actions affect other bodies via sensory flows, with or without their consent or knowledge, in a situated context. Bodily experience in a situated context supersedes the clients' and workers' pre-determined feelings and/or perceptions. This challenges the traditional mechanical view of the material world, and suggests that how things act and interact cannot be fully pre-determined. Instead, material interactions involve not fully identifiable trajectories, some which are sometimes entirely unexpected. Moreover, what our body (human body) feels does not emerge from us or does not belong to us (Spinoza (trans), 1985; Ahmed, 2014). Instead, it is an effect of the inter-corporality with other multiple bodies we encounter. In other words, affect is all around us: between objects, between

feelings, between ways of being. Affect theory emphasises the causes and impacts of affect and everything in-between (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, p. 3).

My findings show that power is not something that can be possessed by an individual. Instead, while at a time, it may be the workers' body that creates effects of power, within another second, it may be the client's body that makes the workers do something. My thesis proposes power in body work as relational, diffused, and something materialised through sensory experiences. In addition, I identify workers', clients' and more-than-bodies' capacity to act and the distributed agency within an assemblage. It led me to assert that 'power' is not a possession of a particular party who gets into an encounter. It is not static or remains constant within a specific body. This claim contradicts what is currently established in body work service encounter literature.

In conclusion, with the use of affect theory and the influence of Spinoza and Bennett, my study sees power in body work as something that materialises through bodily interactions. In other words, power is a thing related to the senses. Current body work literature maintains that power is only enacted from the top down. However, I find power to be a dynamic among bodies in service interactions. Sensing, affect, and power are interrelated. Power is a "thing of the senses" and materialises through touch, sight, hearing and smell. It is related and understood via our embodied life or bodily interactions. So, encounters during body work services are more than just interactions between workers and clients. Encounters are affective, emotive, and sensuous, and involve enabling and restraining bodies' affective capacity. Thus, bodily interactions have transformative capacities.

Co-creation of body work and outcomes

Conceptualising co-creation in this way highlights being and becoming with body work "as a body". In other words, it is an ongoing process of becoming, with different relations. In this evolution of co-creation, workers and clients make memories of their spatiotemporal nuances and affectivities differently. Clients and workers tend to label their spatial-temporal experience with body work. This labelling provides a nuanced understanding of the capacities of different bodies in the co-creational processes, and how the clients and workers become deeply immersed in a specific relational affect that arises from multisensory experiences and repetitions, at various points during an encounter or a series of encounters.

The data revealed a spectrum of feelings derived through multisensory experiences of moments, varying from joy and happiness to fatigue and annoyance, frustrations which they sense through the dynamic interchange between the body and the world (similar to Ahmed, 2014; Spinoza 1994). I find that these feelings are linked to affect, such as intimacy, commitment, compatibility, and enhancement. Feelings do not “feel” without affect as they have no intensity (Damasio, 1994). Moreover, I would like to link this with two fundamental affects or affectus: sadness and joy (Spinoza, 1994).

According to Spinoza (1994), feelings can be classified broadly into two umbrella feelings: joy and sadness, that result in the potential of increasing or decreasing bodily capacities. In one case, my power of acting is increased, and I undergo an affectus of joy, and in the other case, my power of acting is diminished, and I undergo an affectus of sadness. Spinoza brings about all the passions, based on these two fundamental affects: joy as an increase in the power of acting, and sadness as a diminution or destruction of the power of acting. For example, how body workers and clients labelled these feelings on lived experiences can be grouped into joy and sadness. The feeling of joy would include what they label the experience as pleasant, calming, inviting, serene, magical, authentic, and energetic, while tension, discomfort, and competition can be grouped into sadness. Thus, affect plays an important role in determining the relationship between our bodies, our environment, and others, and the subjective experience that we feel/think as affect dissolves into experience.

These experiences originate from bodily interactions and contribute to creating immersive atmospheres and affective moments, which become imprinted in the memories of clients and workers. This notion of a ‘moment’ in a service encounter is a complex interplay of various factors that extend beyond the immediate experience. These moments link the past and facilitate imagining future encounters (Wilson, 2018); for example, the history of interactions between the service provider and the customer, their backgrounds, and expectations for future encounters. All these elements hold significant weight in shaping a customer’s and workers’ embodied interactions. However, these spatial-temporal moments, which drive as “shared ground” or “collectively”, are temporary because, as discussed in earlier sections, body work assemblages are constantly changing. Thus, the moments involve re-labelling as they are emerging and transforming over a time of loops of service encounters. Additionally, the relational dynamics between clients’ and workers’ bodies change over time. So, how a client or worker defines particular encounters is momentary. Consequently, the moments are continually re-created across the temporality of encounters.

This gives an idea of service encounters in a bigger framework. As discussed in the literature review, which emphasises the relational view, encounters are unpredictable. It is unpredictable how bodies get entangled and what the outcomes are. Workers would attempt to make a 'proper context' for an encounter, such as a safe in-touch atmosphere. However, it is the multisensory experiences of bodily interactions that materialise and make things happen in the encounter. Therefore, knowledge is constructed as active doing or performed by the body-knowing. The body knows and learns (or does not learn) "how to perform" in different stages of body work. Knowing is thus an intra-and interpersonal phenomenon. It involves being active in doing and memorising other spaces encountered simultaneously. It builds from moving in and within these spaces and happens across spaces and through the connections and actions of different human and more-than-human bodies.

My conceptualisation of co-creation thus extends the prevalent understanding of body work, and provides an inclusive definition of the work. It also invites workers and clients to think that yoga and salon body work encounters are emergent and, thus, challenging to unfold as organised encounters. In other words, service encounters involve unpredictability and non-repeatability or non-reproducibility. Because the assemblages of human and more-than-human bodies constantly change in their content and form. This also applies to the sensory interactions, negotiations, and affective flows that enable or restrict the desires and capacities of bodies; in what they do in service encounters.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented my thesis that body work is a co-creation involving multiple affective bodies. I developed a discussion within my conceptualisation process that interconnected my findings and incorporated relevant literature. Through such a discussion, I presented how my thesis contributes to the field of body work in two ways. My thesis extends the prevalent understanding of body work in terms of who and what is involved, and how they are involved, and provides an inclusive definition of the work. Furthermore, it offered a fresh perspective on power in body work.

My thesis deepens our understanding of the active bodies we live and work within our social space. At the same time, it prompts us, including the body workers, clients, and employers, to reflect on the vitality of human and more-than-human bodies, how our presence, sensory engagement, and interactions with multiple bodies could make things happen in encounters in explicit and subtle ways. It also helps to understand

and address interconnectedness and interdependencies as inevitable in our lives. Collectively, these reflections have the ability to make us conduct our interactions with various bodies with more care.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Research overview

My thesis addressed two questions: (1) How do worker-client bodily interactions occur in service encounters, particularly considering the varying extent of touch in different contexts? and (2) How do multiple bodies participate in worker-client interactions in body work? To address these two questions, I investigated the lived experiences of both workers and clients, paying attention to their multisensory experiences in service encounters, and exploring the involvement of human and more-than-human bodies.

My literature review exemplified that body work studies are predominantly centred around the workers' experiences, and comparatively diminishing the importance of the work it involves and the role of the clients in service interactions. By this definition, body work is widely understood as a worker-client dyad involving paid work on clients' bodies. The scholars view workers' bodies as vehicles that work on clients' bodies—the object of labour. While considering the touch involved, some studies have looked at how social and cultural meanings of touch, and social categorisations like gender, race, sexual stereotyping, class, and professional status play an influential role in organising the context in which body work is performed. Moreover, the worker-client relationship is restrictively considered from a 'power over' view, revealing that it is primarily seen as a powerful worker and submissive client relationship, while some research talks about the influence of social categorisations in determining power within this dyadic relationship. In this context, I argued that there is currently a noticeable lack of studies about how work unfolds, the sensory experiences at work, and the role of the human and more-than-human bodies in service interactions. It is essential to investigate these aspects because encounters are social spaces. Human and more-than-human bodies, sensations, and interactions are critical in making the service relationship effective. The bodily interactions and sensory relations could determine how workers and clients perceive the service they receive or deliver, and therefore whether the encounter is successful.

I chose a New Materialist approach for my study as my reading of literature taught me that human and more-than-human involvement and entanglement in body work encounters could be better understood by paying attention to embodiment and materiality. This approach helped me better explore human and more-than-human bodily interactions and the interconnectedness among these bodies. This approach

draws attention towards what things do, and has the potential to uncover the affective dimensions of embodied material encounters between human and more-than-human.

In the methodology chapter, I described how New Materialism informed my ontological stance of relationality and epistemological stance of embodied knowing, and how it made me decide on methodological choices for a qualitative embodied research approach. I followed an affective ethnographic style in conducting my fieldwork. The context in which I conducted the research from October 2020 to October 2024 was essential to include in my methodology chapter, as it shows how my research evolved from unfolding observation of the entanglement of human and more-than-human bodies, particularly with the intensities of COVID-19, post-COVID-19 and crisis 2022 in Sri Lanka, where I did my fieldwork. I selected five research sites for my study, to capture different interactions while paying attention to differences in touch. It included two yoga studios and three salons. I used snowball and purposive sampling methods in choosing my research sites and the participants. The techniques I used for producing data include autoethnography and physical and online observations, which produced photographs, video recordings, fieldnotes, physical and online interviews, informal conversations, and document reviews. Then, it explains my use of thematic and diffractive analysis in analysing and interpreting data. I also included how I practised research ethics to refine my study. As this is a human study, I emphasised my reflections. I discussed my entangled positionality, body reflexivity and the patterns of relationships. I believe it is essential to emphasise reflections in this kind of embodied research as it shows the evolution of this thesis and my personal development with it, as a researcher.

Key findings

In addressing my first research question, I found that client-worker bodily interactions occur as a co-creation of active involvement of worker, client and more-than-human bodies. Findings uncover the subtleties of bodily interactions in service encounters as bodies co-exist, interrelate, and are interdependent; and thus, lack self-contained existence (Barad, 2007). Human and more-than-human bodily interactions are formed through a web of sensory interrelationships within an encounter. The bodies are also affective. The discussion on affect derived from lived experiences, such as intimacy, enchantment, compatibility, and commitment, exemplified how bodies are being enabled and restrained during service encounters. The bodily interactions in service encounters involve a web of sensory interrelationships between human and more-than-human bodies. The findings show how such sensory interrelationship develops

or generates feelings that form and shape body work. It is not only workers' touch that impacts to adorn or beautify bodies in salons and to improve and discipline bodies in yoga. It involves how workers and clients hear, smell and see each other. It is not only these human bodies, but the sensory cues of more-than-human bodies which contribute to body work.

In salons where extensive touch is involved, my research found that other sensory cues, such as the sight of clients and workers' non-verbal cues, and the smells of both workers and clients, matter in shaping service interactions. In in-person yoga classes, the touch involved was low compared to salons. This observation is consistent with what Cohen (2011) brings to the discussion. Moreover, no physical co-presence exists in online yoga. Thus, no touching is involved. The findings show that, although no touch is involved in online yoga, bodily interactions occur through other sensory cues, namely gaze, sight, voice, and rhythms. Moreover, in in-person yoga, although touch is less or no touch is involved, bodily interactions occur through workers', specific clients', and other clients' involvement through sight, smell, and hearing when performing body work. As my study looked into group online and physical yoga, I found how other clients too actively contribute to one's body work experience.

Moreover, in service interactions, workers' and clients' bodies co-exist and are entangled with a range of more-than-human bodies who actively contribute to salon work, in-person and online yoga. As such, my findings showed that objects and the more-than-human bodies are not mere backdrops or mundane or mere symbols. They and human bodies elicit sensory cues through which clients and workers generate feelings that form and shape interactions in service encounters. As such, my research finds that body work is not a dyadic relationship between worker and client, as maintained in the existing studies. Instead, it involves active clients and more-than-human bodies.

In relation to my second research question, 'How do multiple bodies get involved in worker-client interactions in body work?', the finding shows that multiple bodies get involved in interactions as affective bodies. Interactions involve active clients and other bodies. Even though bodies are considered as the surfaces that interact with different bodies, they are not just surfaces but vital forces. Multiple bodies participate actively, affecting one another, aiding or restraining what bodies can do in an encounter. Thus, various bodies form and shape client and worker behaviour, and how body work is enacted in an encounter. They make things happen in body work.

My research findings revealed how the “mundane”, everyday material of more-than-human bodies gets entangled in clients’ and workers’ experiences in body work interactions. They also highlighted the need to consider the potential of human and more-than-human bodies. When thinking and researching body work and interactions, it is critical to recognise the multiple bodies (i.e., human and more-than-human) that play a role in how the body exists and evolves within interactions. My study encourages new ways of attending to the agency of objects, as the findings show even very small, invisible, and/or “mundane” objects can exert their own forces, shaping, enabling or limiting worker-client body work interactions. These are vital bodies. Therefore, workers do not exist or perform body work in isolation. Instead, there is a dynamic interaction and entanglement among the human and more-than-human bodies who inhabit the service interactions.

Consequently, the findings emphasise the indispensable character of multisensory experiences, which we need to consider when exploring lived experiences in service encounters. By understanding and interpreting the multisensory experiences and sensory negotiations, we can gain insight into and elucidate bodily capacities, and how bodies affect and get affected by bodies inhabiting a particular assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Spinoza, 1985). Worker-client embodied experiences include loops of corporeal interactions with multiple bodies, and the bodily sensations or sensory experiences shape these corporeal interactions. My analysis finds that the multisensory cues facilitate the human body’s bodily capacity to act, relate, impress and be impressed and to create dynamic connections among bodies. A human body lives in a moment through embodiment. Such embodied experience of multisensory cues facilitates the body’s capacity to act: in the forms of strengthening or diminishing, aiding or restraining. Additionally, bodies as generative forces (i.e., moving own and other bodies from one state to another, and creating interconnections or breaking attachments) are transformative. Once again, the transformation is facilitated by multisensory cues.

This also shows that the existence of workers or clients is not an individual affair. Individual bodies do not pre-exist prior to their interactions; instead, bodies emerge, and their affective capacity comes into play through their entangled interactions. However, this does not mean that when emergence happens once, it remains constant. The sensations derived through bodily interactions and affective flows generated via the interactions of multiple bodies in a given situation, are only engaged in for that moment. The sensory experiences and flows do not last for long. Because bodies are

not static, they have their own transformations. In addition, a subsequent encounter that consists of the 'same' set of bodies will bring other sensory experiences, given these transformations and differences in temporality. So, how a client or worker defines particular encounters is momentary.

This gives an idea of service encounters in a bigger picture. As discussed in the literature review, which emphasises the relational view, encounters are unpredictable. It is unpredictable how bodies get entangled and what the outcomes are. This knowledge thus offers insight into the difficulty of having organised service encounters. Workers or employers would attempt to make a 'proper context' for an encounter, such as a safe in-touch atmosphere, by considering socio-cultural meanings of touch. The clients may have their perception of the encounter depending on what they have heard about the worker, their first impression on their first visit, or other visits, about the physical or digital space of the service setting, and its benefits or disadvantages. However, the lived experience in the specific social space of the service is felt, and the meanings of the service interactions are derived. Thus, it is through the multisensory experiences that bodily interactions materialise affective flows, that improve or impair bodily capacities in what they do. In terms of engagements in the settings of salon and yoga, the workers' and clients' bodily capacities to act and react are decided through the flow of affect created in their interactions with multiple bodies. Thus, the unfolding of body work occurs as mutual involvement of these bodies, and how flows of affects enable and restrain the capacities or desires of bodies.

In recognising bodily interactions as an entanglement of human and more-than-human bodies, my research findings encourage us to re-think our concepts and assumptions about the boundaries of the bodies, the experience of embodiment, and the materiality, ultimately expanding how current scholars understand body work encounters. Based on these key findings and related understandings, I conceptualised body work as a co-creation of multiple affective bodies. Bodies are not fixed entities. They are evolving. They are not passive recipients but active forces, capable of moving their own and other bodies from one state to another, and creating interconnections or breaking attachments in service encounters.

Contributions

The originality of my research arises from the in-depth study of how body work is enacted as part of an assemblage of human and more-than-human bodies. Where current body work literature is predominantly worker-centred, I recognised the importance of both workers and clients in service interactions. I investigated their lived experiences of multisensory experiences during body work service encounters.

Compared to the existing knowledge in body work literature, my research makes two key contributions to the field. The current literature maintains that body work involves a worker-client dyadic relationship. Moreover, body work is about working on clients' bodies, implying that clients are passive objects of workers' labour. As the first contribution, my thesis extends the current understanding of body work regarding (a) what it involves and (b) who actively participates in it.

Based on my findings, I conceptualised body work as a co-creation of multiple affective bodies. In other words, body work is a collaborative effort of numerous human and more-than-human bodies that are mutually involved. These bodies are intertwined and interdependent. They have the capacity to affect and get affected during their interactions via the flow of effects created through their interaction in body work assemblage. Thus, the unfolding of body work is decided by the sensory experiences and the flows of effect, such as intimacy, enchantment, commitment, isolation, and compatibility. These flows of affect enable the workers' and clients' bodies to expand their capacities or desires or restrain their capacities in how they contribute to the service interactions. Thus, the interactions of multiple bodies and the sensory experience determine the unfolding of body work. Therefore, in contrast to what current literature maintains, I claim that body work does not only involve 'working on' clients' bodies. Instead, it involves workers 'working with' active and affective clients' bodies rather than workers working on passive objects. Moreover, it is not a dyadic relationship. It is a collective effort of interactions between workers, clients, and other bodies that come together in a particular encounter at a given time.

The second contribution relates to the power of body work. The current body work literature often views power from a 'power-over' perspective and implies that power is static, possessive and one-directional. However, my thesis proposes that power in body work is relational and diffused and that something materialises through sensory experiences.

My conceptualisation of co-creation thus extends the prevalent understanding of body work, and provides an inclusive definition of the work. It also invites workers and clients to think that yoga and salon body work encounters are emergent and, thus, challenging to unfold as organised encounters. In other words, service encounters involve unpredictability and non-repeatability or non-reproducibility. Because the assemblages of human and more-than-human bodies constantly change in their content and form. This also applies to the sensory interactions, negotiations, and affective flows; that enable or restrict the desires and capacities of bodies, in what they do in service encounters.

My thesis deepens our understanding of the bodies we live and work within our social space. At the same time, my thesis prompts us to reflect on the vitality of bodies in service encounters and how their presence, sensory engagement, and interactions with multiple bodies can make things happen in encounters in explicit and subtle ways. By thinking through assemblage and affect, we can better comprehend the interconnectedness and interdependencies of bodies and recognise that we cannot escape from affect created through interactions.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Throughout my research journey, I encountered several concurrent challenging events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the post-COVID era, and the socio-economic and political crisis in Sri Lanka. These forces affected me, my research participants, and my thesis. Nevertheless, when I reflect on the journey, I realise that how we—me, my research participants, and my thesis—affected and got affected by it is “normal” within a research process. Although some may consider these unforeseen occurrences as limitations or barriers, I conclude that we must remain adaptable and receptive to the unexpected in research. We, as researchers, are elements entangled in various assemblages, whether they be labelled as macro or micro or simple or complex, within our society. We carry out research in the same assemblages. We become receptive and get affected by these forces. Thus, as I see it, we must be prepared to navigate “unexpected” forces by understanding how we, including our research, affect and get affected through such multiple bodies. As such, how my research was changed and adopted cannot be viewed through or defined by its limitations. Instead, it depicts how a research study, as a body of work, was affected and affected in different assemblages it inhabited while it evolved in social space.

To enrich my research with quality data, I produced data in various forms at five research sites. However, I found myself becoming overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data. Although I effectively managed the data analysis process, I encountered multiple challenges during the data management, writing and presentation stages of the thesis report, primarily due to the diverse forms of data collected. For instance, integrating photographs, videos, autoethnographic accounts, observations, and interview data within word limits and time limitations proved challenging, particularly in ensuring clear and coherent data interpretation and discussion. Therefore, I suggest that future research of this nature would benefit from utilising only one or two forms of data collection, preferably autoethnography and video recording, given their relevance to the study and, most importantly, the accessibility and consent of the relevant parties involved in using such techniques.

As I reflect on my data production process, I believe there is room for further improvement. While my research methods produced rich data, I could have obtained more enriching data if I had asked my participants to keep diaries to record their daily experiences. This approach would have allowed me to capture more sensitive and personal bodily experiences, providing more depth to the data produced. However, it is important to consider the cultural appropriateness of research methods. For example, writing a diary for a research project is not common among most Sri Lankans. The workers and clients did not show much interest in this request, which can be attributed to cultural habits of writing, norms and expectations around privacy and personal expression, and the context of the crisis in 2022. Therefore, future research should consider the cultural appropriateness of research methods, such as 'diary studies', to explore embodied relations at encounters.

Moreover, as my research revealed, body work involves multiple temporal dimensions. It consists of the time of engagements between workers' and clients' bodies and the time of body work. Literature provides evidence for the efforts for standardisation of appointment times, standardisation by transformation and selection at body work with the view of refitting body time to capitalist time to achieve higher efficiency (Cohen, 2011). However, the temporal unpredictability of bodies poses a challenge in equalising the disparity between body time and the abstract clock time of capitalism. In such a context, future research can embark on rhythm analysis (Lefebvre, 1992) of different body work service encounters, offering a new lens to understand how rhythms and timing decide service delivery and embodied interactions.

In addition, reflecting on how one's capacity to affect and be affected is shaped, there is a research potential to further explore how those capacities have been formed through past encounters. Like spaces and timing, histories are fundamental elements of encounters, as encounters renew prior histories of encounters, create imaginations, and incorporate them into the encounters as traces of interrelations (Wilson and Darling, 2016). However, relying on the scope of my research, I did not attempt to delve deeply into how embodied interactions connect from past encounters and toward the future.

Finally, researchers can investigate the areas of the materialities of dirt (Douglas, 1966) at body work encounters. Many forms of body work involve taint and dirty work, and it would be interesting to delve into how workers and clients experience these materialities during service encounters and explore 'doing emotions' in such interactions. However, due to the scope and objectives of my research, I did not delve into this topic. Examining these experiences could provide valuable insights into ethical considerations during service encounters. It would also allow us to understand better the ethics and politics of embodied interactions in body work.

Postscript

My thesis of co-creation and the theoretical directions I took, open pathways for myself and other interested researchers to explore multiple interrelated projects across various fields. This postscript outlines such projects we could plan for in body work studies and other broader areas of Management and Organisational Studies.

I believe that researchers in body work studies can apply this theoretical direction to examine different forms of body work and expand the existing knowledge base. For example, a study focusing on sex workers and their clients could investigate how human and more-than-human materialities shape their service encounters. This research could also explore how these bodies and materialities interactively co-constitute the service encounters and how response-ability (Barad, 2007) evolves within such interactions and care towards multiple bodies.

Additionally, scholars engaged in sustainable management, environmental activists, and ecofeminists could find value in integrating New Materialist approaches with my conceptualisation of co-creation in their research. By adopting this perspective, researchers can foster a more inclusive approach, recognising the interconnected and affective nature of human and more-than-human bodies within the world of work rather

than viewing them as separate entities. Doing so may lead to novel management practices that address pressing contemporary issues.

My research provides evidence for affective flows, such as intimacy and compatibility, which also leads us to explore more features of different forms of organising, namely solidarity and sisterhood, within market-based work arrangements, such as beauty care and yoga encounters. Such understanding could lead to starting a project exploring the entanglement of multiple bodies in such forms of organising and how care is extended towards multiple bodies within such interactions.

Furthermore, there is significant research potential that could examine the ethical implications surrounding more-than-human bodies, exploring ways to care for them better to enhance overall well-being. Inspired by Barad's (2007) concept of the inseparability of ethics, being, and knowing, studying the interactions between human and more-than-human entanglements could lead researchers to develop novel perspectives that challenge dualistic views and popular perspectives in Management and Organisational Studies regarding subjectivity, identity, and difference.

As the final note, methodologically, my research offers insights into how an embodied, non-linear approach—specifically, affective ethnography—can contribute to producing embodied knowledge. The data collection techniques I employed can be refined for future studies to capture data on multisensory lived experiences better. For instance, researchers might consider asking participants to create artistic narratives that reflect their sensory experiences. Inviting and encouraging willing participants to write poems could be a great idea in this context.

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