

HAIRDRESSERS AS A SOURCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Hairdressers as a Source of Social Support

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Abstract

With the exception of health care professionals, hairdressing is one of the few occupations where workers physically interact with clients. As a result of this, hairdressers are people to whom clients are often comfortable in confiding private information. Despite this, relatively little is known about how hairdressers understand and experience this role as informal confidants. This study aimed to address this using an in-depth qualitative approach to capture what hairdressers are hearing from clients, and how hairdressers respond and feel about supporting clients. Interviews conducted were participant led using prompt questions and were transcribed and analysed using Thematic Analysis. Results indicate clients disclose information about family, health, identity, mental health and women's health. Important themes to emerge in relation to the role of hairdressers included: the need to have a client focus; blurring role boundaries; behaving like a therapist; providing a place of safety and advice, while also maintaining confidentiality. Hairdressers reported feeling more involved than a hair service, undervalued, emotionally drained, and in need of support, however, also reported having good job satisfaction. Such hairdresser-client interactions may promote better mental and physical health outcomes for clients due to psychological buffering arising from the social support provided by hairdressers.

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published except where due reference is made. I give permission for the digital version of this thesis to be made available on the web, via The University of Adelaide's digital thesis repository, the Library search and through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the School to restrict access for a period of time. I also give permission for this thesis to be made available for photocopying.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: 'It's Not Just a Haircut'

1.1 Hairdressing Industry Overview

The hairdressing industry is a personal service industry, or intimate contact industry where hairdressers have permission to physically touch their clients in order to provide a hair service (Wu & Hwang, 2012). Hairdressers provide services that have a focus on clients' physical appearance, client self-image and self-esteem (Barnes, 2001; Cohen, 2010; Garzaniti, Pearce, & Stanton, 2011; Paulson, 2008; Wolkowitz, 2002). Hairdressers are professional trades people, who complete training requirements in Australia by studying a Certificate III qualification. In 2017 throughout Australia, 43% obtained their qualification from private institutions, and 49% obtained their qualifications at a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institution usually as part of a four-year course and apprenticeship (Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), 2017). As of 2017 there were 54,400 registered hairdressers in Australia, and this number is expected to grow to 58,200 by 2022. In South Australia, in 2019, there were 4,300 employed hairdressers, with 79% having studied a Certificate III at TAFE South Australia (Technical and Further Education South Australia (TAFE SA), 2019). Certificate III in hairdressing involves learning a range of technical skills for both men and women's hair. Trainees are required to complete learning modules in hair cutting, styling, colouring, chemical styling, and client consultations, as well as on the job training with a salon employer. The job description specifies attributes needed include, great interpersonal skills, active listening and speaking, critical thinking, active learning and service orientation (AISC, 2017; TAFE SA, 2019). Hairdressers frequently engage in in-depth conversations with clientele; however, they are not required to have a qualification in counselling. Moreover, hairdressers also engage in roles that are not

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necessarily a part of their job description. Hairdressers often provide a confidant role to their clients with whom they discuss personal topics and provide an environment in which clients can express themselves and potentially make them feel better within themselves (Mbilishaka, 2018; Sattler & Deane, 2016). Hairdressing is a profession that has the capacity to support clients in many ways other than hairstyling, yet the hairdressing industry is considered to be a low skilled and low paid job which may understate the true contribution of the profession (Cohen, 2010; Eayrs, 1993; Lee et al., 2007; Soulliere, 1997).

1.2 Previous Research Involving Hairdressers

Although the literature relating to how hairdressers experience their role as a confidant to their clients is sparse, there is a broader, but relevant body of research that has examined informal caregiving, social support, and emotional labour; and, in some instances, this has involved hairdresser-client interactions (Sattler & Deane, 2016). Other studies have focused on hairdressers' interactions with older clientele in rural areas (Anderson, Cimbal, & Maile, 2010; McLaren et al., 2010; Stephens, 1990), but such work has not usually investigated both male and female hairdressers and their clientele. Such research indicates that hairdressers support their clients' emotionally and physically by helping clients with their identity, the aging process, and self-esteem; hair is seen to be an integral part of self-identity and clients' self-esteem generally increases after visiting the hairdresser, particularly for women (McFarquhar, & Lowis, 2000; Ward, & Holland, 2011). The ageing process has been reported to negatively affect women particularly, especially with the accumulation of grey hair, and the way older women are perceived by society (Hurd Clarke, & Korotchenko, 2010; Paulson, 2008).

Hairdressers are often people to whom clients are willing to disclose private information to, topics that they might not always feel comfortable discussing with other

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professional people with whom they interact (Beebe et al., 2018; Cowen et al., 1979; Cowen, 1982; Gershon & Biller, 1977; Mbilishaka, 2018; Wiesenfeld, & Weis, 1979). This may be due to the close nature in which hairdresser-client interactions occur; hairdressers are permitted to physically touch their clients while doing their hair and thus the profession is classified as an intimate contact service or industry which includes beauty therapists, massage therapists, and barbers. The intimate contact feature is often observed for formal care givers such as doctors and health professionals (Barnes, 2001; Cohen, 2010; Garzaniti et al., 2011; Paulson, 2008; Wolkowitz, 2002; Wu & Hwang, 2012). The conversation clients have with their hairdressers in a hair salon, can foster friendships and help build rapport between hairdresser and client. The relationship is built on mutual trust that is developed through conversation and provides a space for clients to talk openly about the challenges of life they experience. Hairdressers and beauty therapists provide a client focus that can assist a client's self-confidence and relieve stress (Eayrs, 1993; Cohen, 2010; Garzaniti et al., 2011; Sharma & Black, 2001; Wu & Hwang, 2012). Despite adopting these informal help-giving roles, hairdressers have no formal training and have also been described as lay-counsellors (Seaberg, 1979). As such, they adopt a role that supports the community and which provides social support to people including those who are suffering from mental illnesses (Anderson et al., 2010; Cowen et al., 1979; Cowen 1982; McLaren et al., 2010; Seaberg, 1979; Sattler & Deane, 2016). Research indicates that hairdressers sometimes report having clients who reveal quite serious things to them (Cowen et al., 1979; Sattler & Deane, 2016). Indeed, Sattler and Deane (2016) found that the issues clients discussed with their hairdresser are often similar in nature and severity to the problems that might usually be raised with a mental health care professional. Hairdressers may often be the first people to hear of these problems because people might feel more comfortable to divulge their private lives to their hairdresser who they know and trust, due to the social and psychological barriers in seeking formal

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professional help (Beebe et al., 2018; Cowen et al., 1979; Cowen, 1982; Gershon & Biller, 1977; Mbilishaka, 2018). Examples of serious problems that clients have revealed include sexual assault, mental health problems and domestic and family violence (Beebe et al, 2018; McLaren et al, 2010; Sattler & Deane, 2016). Although hairdressers have reported being open to discussing sensitive topics with their clients, they also believe that ongoing support and training would help them deal with the informal support role they provide (McLaren et al, 2010; Sattler & Deane, 2016).

The caregiving role hairdressers provide to clients can be viewed in the context of broader understandings of the role of social support. In response to clients expressing their difficulties, hairdressers apply many of the skills that might be practised by formal counsellors: they listen, provide empathy and try to make their clients feel better and cared for (Anderson et al., 2010; Eayrs, 1993; Milne, & Mullin, 1987; Stephens, 1990). Therefore, the hairdresser-client interactions can similarly provide a way of buffering the psychological distress that clients may feel via the care and support their hairdressers engage in (Ditzen & Heinrichs, 2014; Kent de Grey et al., 2018; Stephens, 1990; Taylor, 2011).

Their role is also consistent with the principles of social support which relate to the interpersonal relationships that individuals experience as part of a social group. Social support is the perception that a person feels cared for by their support network and has benefits to a person's overall health, both mental and physical aspects (Ditzen & Heinrichs, 2014; Kent de Grey et al., 2018; Stephens, 1990; Taylor, 2011). This includes both perception of support and received support, that comes in the forms of informational (advice), instrumental (physical assistance), emotional (empathy and affection), and companionship (a sense of belonging) (Taylor, 2011). The buffering model of social support emphasises how social support lessens distress that people may experience and how this can benefit both

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mental and physical health (Ditzen & Heinrichs, 2014; Kent de Grey et al., 2018; Stephens, 1990; Taylor, 2011).

The informal confidant role and the potential demands this entails could also be understood as a form of emotional labour. This is due to the emotional expression and suppression involved in working closely with people and monitoring responses of interaction when listening to clients' disclosures (Hochschild, 1993; Cohen, 2010; Jeung, Kim, & Cheng, 2018; Lee et al., 2007; Pisaniello, Winefield, & Delfabbro, 2012; Sharma & Black, 2001; Wolkowitz, 2002). Emotional labour has been recognised as leading to emotional burnout and this could potentially occur for hairdressers if there is increasing pressure for them to do favours for clients, maintain friendships with clients, and listen to clients' disclosures. This can negatively impact the hairdresser if they feel there is a lack of reciprocity from clients and a high demand to produce positive client feedback to help their client feel good (Cohen, 2010).

1.3 The Present Study

Given this background, it would appear that there is a need for further investigation about what clients tell their hairdressers, how hairdressers deal with the content they hear from their clients, how they feel about their informal role and, whether hairdressers are getting the ongoing support they require when dealing with the types of issues they are hearing about. Investigating this topic will provide insight about the support role from the point of view of qualified hairdressers from South Australia, including the types of things people talk about, the emotional issues that arise, as well as how hairdressers balance their role as professional people and as confidants to their clients. At present, there are no published qualitative studies which consider how hairdressers experience their role as a confidant and social support to both men and women clients of all ages. Particularly, no

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research has been published on hairdressers from South Australia, furthermore, no studies have been conducted by a researcher who is also a qualified hairdresser.

1.4 Research Aims

This research aims to use qualitative data collected from interviews with hairdressers working in South Australia to provide in-depth insight into the nature of hairdresser-client interactions. This project aims to examine the role hairdressers play in their clients' lives due to the connection hairdressers have with their clients; in particular, where clients disclose information about themselves that they may not otherwise disclose to other professional people. The three principal Research Questions addressed in this study are: (a), 'What do clients disclose to their hairdresser?' '(b) How do hairdressers respond to client disclosures?' and, (c) 'How do hairdressers feel about being a confidant and social support?'

CHAPTER 2

Method

2.1 Participants

Participants were $N=10$, 2 men and 8 women with 6-42 years of hairdressing experience (age range of 25 to 57 years). The inclusion criteria required participants to be qualified hairdressers, above the age of 18, who were currently working in a hair salon in South Australia with access to clients. Inclusion criteria also required participants speak fluent English. Participation was voluntary with no incentives offered.

2.2 Procedure

The study was approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Subcommittee in the School of Psychology (Approval 19/33). Study participants were recruited using purposive sampling (Braun & Clark, 2006; 2013) to ensure the interviews included participants from various age groups, gender, and a range of salon types, including high end, upper middle, lower end, and home salons. Participants were initially recruited through advertisement of the study via a hairdressing peak association, the South Australian Hair and Beauty Association (SAHBA) whereby information about the research was distributed to 1212 members who received an email, and 2,200 in SAHBA Facebook posts. Interested parties contacted the researcher. Passive snowballing was encouraged whereby participants passed on the researcher's details to interested colleagues. Further recruitment involved 55 printed flyers (Appendix A) distributed throughout suburban Adelaide. The participant information sheet (Appendix B) stating the research method, aims and potential use of results were also passed on to participants before commencing the interview. Consent forms (Appendix C) stating that participation was voluntary and anonymous, and that participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time were given to participant as

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well as a second copy for the researcher. Participant validation was encouraged through member checking, whereby $n=6$ chose to receive their deidentified transcript; participants also had the option to receive a summary of the research with $n=8$ choosing to receive a summary, for trustworthiness and authenticity (Braun & Clark, 2006, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

An initial pilot interview was conducted prior to participant interviews to allow for practice for participant interviews, this helped develop the skills needed in building rapport with participants who were unfamiliar to the researcher. Interviews with participants were guided with prompt questions, and notes were taken for prospective interviews continually after each interview to allow for new information from previous interviews as per the recursive method of data collection and analysis. After each interview was transcribed and anonymised a second researcher double-checked data reducing individual bias for rigour and trustworthiness (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Tracy, 2010). All interviews were audio recorded with consent and raw data anonymised. Thematic Analysis was employed to assess patterns and themes generated within the transcribed interview data. This method of analysis is useful to gain insight into a research topic that has not previously received much attention (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013). Prompt questions were used, but the interviews were also led by the participants. Interviews were conducted one at a time, with nine face to face and one via telephone.

An audit trail from the beginning of the research to the end was kept for transparency and trustworthiness; including self-reflection of the researcher throughout the study to assess individual bias, assumptions and values. Being reflexive by acknowledging and owning my own perspective provides a transparent and sincere approach as recommended for quality qualitative research methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008; Tracey, 2010). Following these recommendations, it should

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be noted that the researcher had an insider perspective of hairdressing; spending a decade working in salons with a large clientele. This experience provided insider knowledge into how clients discuss many personal topics with their hairdressers.

2.3 Analytical Approach

Thematic Analysis was conducted on the transcribed anonymised data which comprised six main phases, including; (1) *immersion and familiarisation of data*, (2) *coding data*, (3) *generating candidate themes*, (4) *reviewing themes*, (5) *defining and naming themes*, and finally (6) *reporting themes* (Braun, & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019). Collection and analysis of data based on the six phases was not linear and involved integration across the phases to enhance the rigour and trustworthiness of the results. Themes generated are based on a patterned response of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Braun et al., 2019; Pope & Mays, 2006; Tracy, 2010). Data were gathered until saturation was reached; this is signified when no new themes emerge from the interview data. Transcription of interviews were completed after each interview for familiarisation of data, line numbers were added to each transcript for accuracy of identifying quotes when coding data.

CHAPTER 3

Results: 'They Tell us Everything'

This research aimed to explore hairdresser-client interactions by examining the three principal questions: '*What do clients disclose to their hairdresser*', '*How do hairdressers respond to client disclosures*' and '*How do hairdressers feel about being a confidant and support*'. Discussions around hair styles and products were not of interest unless they were relevant to the Research Questions. Results have been illustrated for each Research Question with a corresponding quote. A thematic map for each Research Question has been displayed showing themes and subthemes (see Figures 1, 2, and 3 below).

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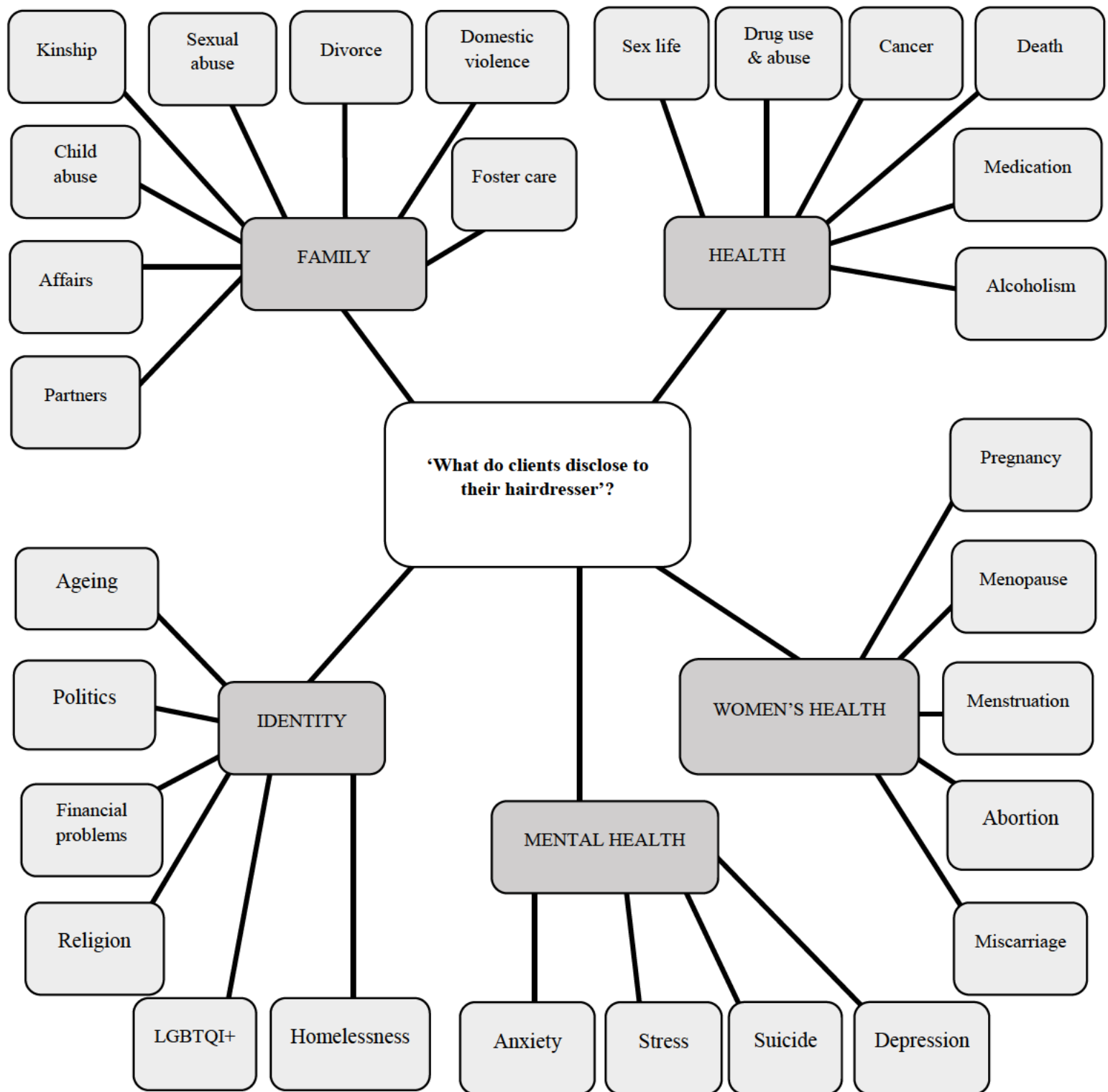


Figure 1. Thematic map representing themes and subthemes for Research Question 1.

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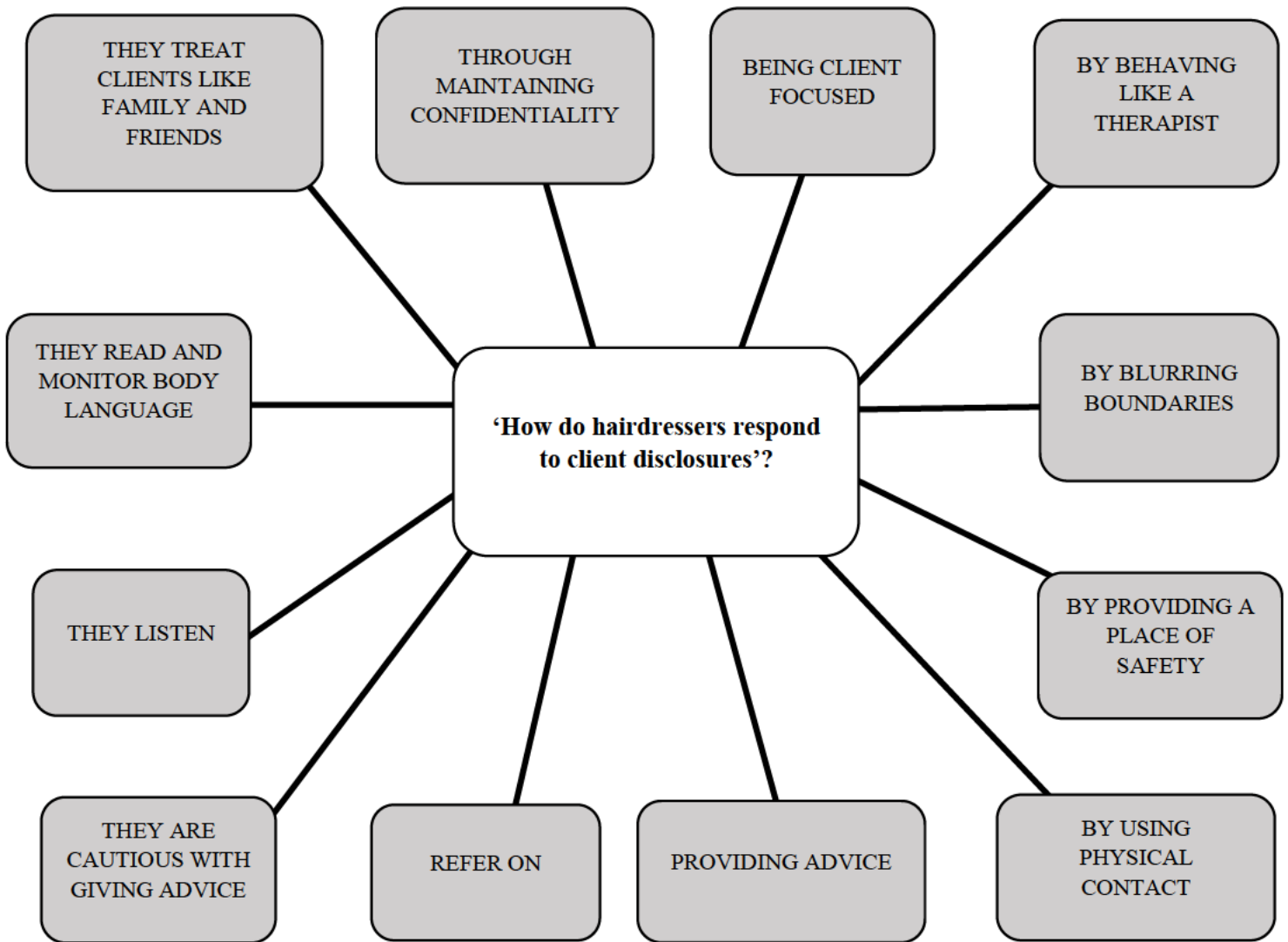


Figure 2. Thematic map representing themes for Research Question 2.

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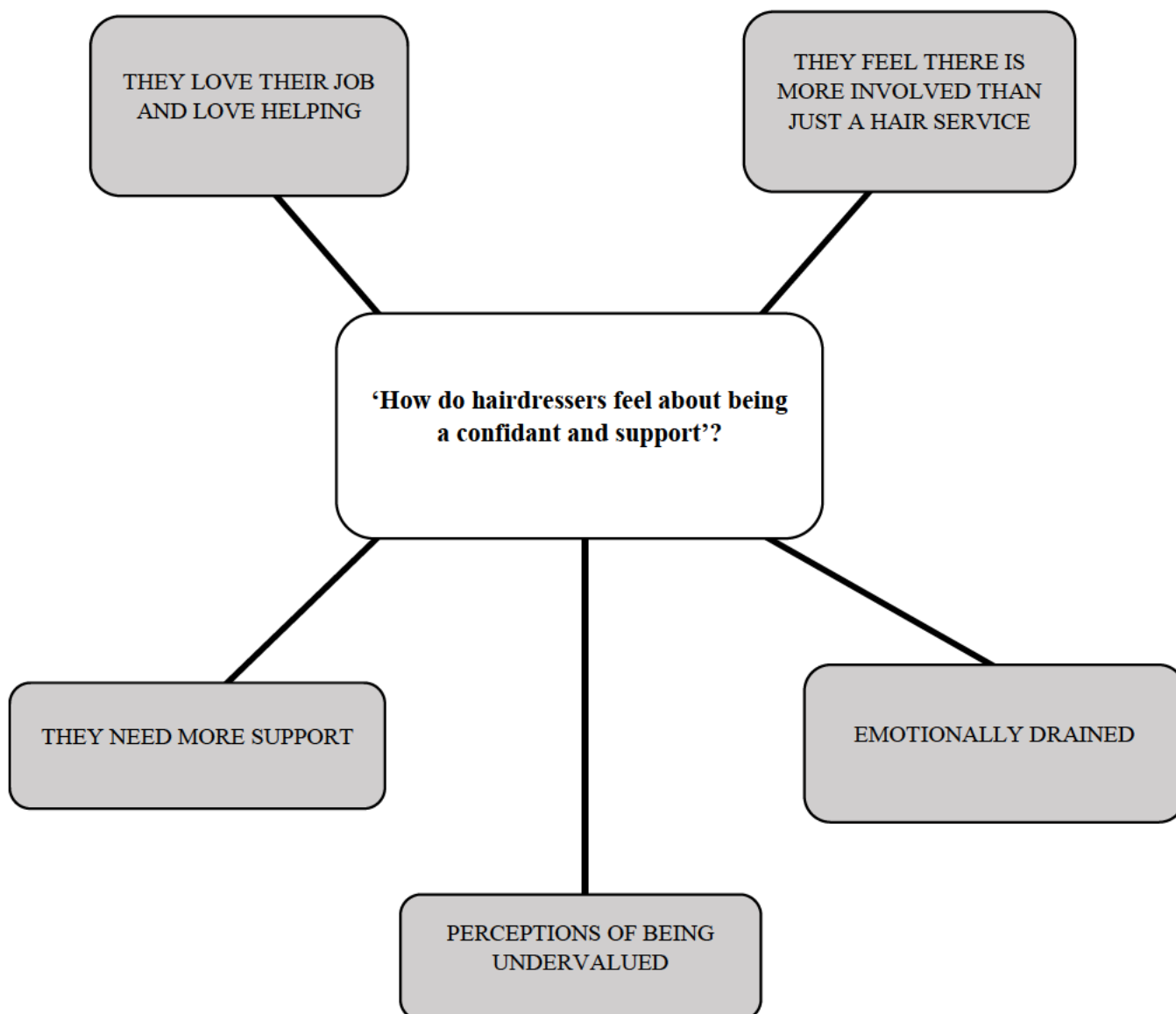


Figure 3. Thematic map representing themes for Research Question 3.

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3.1 Research Question 1. ‘What do clients disclose to their hairdresser’?

Participants explained that hairdressers are told just about “everything”.

...everything, like EVERYTHING! Like their partners, their kids, there are some things they say that will make you blush...it’s the full every single aspect of life is spoken about, so however that person lives their life they will tell you about it.

(Participant # 10, lines 6-8)

Five themes concerning client disclosures emerged and these related to *Family, Health, Identity, Mental health, and Women’s health*. Each theme had a range of subthemes, with a total of twenty-nine subthemes that participants reported hearing from clients. Of the disclosures relating to families, many were around *Affairs* that their clients or their partners were having. In some cases, hairdressers reported clients discussed the affairs they had heard of from their friends and families.

I had a client who is married...she started an affair and, meanwhile she actually found out that her husband had also been having an affair, so it all came out. (Participant # 9, lines 9-14)

Some participants recounted hearing stories of *Child Abuse* in which clients revealed that they had experienced childhood sexual abuse. In some instances, they had never disclosed this information to anyone but their hairdresser. In other cases, participants heard from children that their parents were using excessive drugs and alcohol. Hairdressers also reported seeing parents putting their children at risk by giving their children illicit drugs. Disclosures also included revelations from clients that they had used their children as pawns to infiltrate revenge on an ex-partner.

Clients have told me about sexual abuse they experienced as children and that they had not told anyone else but me. (Participant #10, lines 18-19)

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Divorce was a topic that many clients discussed with their hairdresser, including the impact of relationship breakdown and separation. The disclosures were around the emotional impact on the clients from the actions of the ex-partner.

...a client was talking to me about her divorce and how her ex-husband is being unreasonable with transferring titles with the house and money sort of struggles and she was telling me how it was affecting her. (Participant #6, lines 182-185)

Some participants reported cases of clients revealing that they had been experiencing physical, sexual, financial, verbal or emotional abuse from an intimate partner. This subtheme, *Domestic violence*, included clients disclosing how their partners were abusing them at home. Some clients had asked their hairdresser to help them get out of an abusive relationship whereas other clients would use the time they had in the salon to vent and discuss what was happening at home and talk about the control their partners had over them. Some clients reported finding tracking devices on their cars that partners had planted and told their hairdresser knowing that they would keep the information confidential.

...the client who was going through the domestic violence, when I helped her out, that day when I took her to the police, it was crazy, she had told me what he had done to her, um, it was full on. (Participant # 7, lines 168-170)

There were discussions about *Foster care*, in which clients talked about the children they were caring for. Participants revealed, that clients talked about the history of children in their care and the various challenges they experienced, including information about specific medical conditions the children were dealing with.

...some of our clients are foster parents and they tell us all about the children in their care, their different conditions, their experiences, some of their stories are quite

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extreme especially if they do emergency or casual care, we hear an awful lot about that. (Participant #5, lines 295-297)

Participants reported that clients often talk about the lives of their family members and would reveal details of the interactions they had with their children, partner, parents, siblings and in-laws. This was captured in *Kinship* information clients reveal about their family. Participants reported that clients discussed the conflict they were having with their family, but also the fun and happy times they share at family holidays, birthdays, weddings and events that they celebrated together.

...they have holidays they are getting married, they are having a baby, its mothers-day or fathers-day all the happy sort of um things that happen in our lives. (Participant # 1, lines 126-127)

There were also reports of clients revealing issues experienced with their *Partners* that were not of a violent nature. These included the problems faced by people trying to maintain relationships with their partners in light of experiencing some difficulties. It was reported that clients disclosed the frustrations they felt when their partners were not sharing the load of responsibilities round the home.

...trying to maintain a relationship and being a parent, they do express to me about how tough it is at times, and sometimes it's hard enough for them that they want to jump on a plane and get away. (Participant # 6, lines 35-37)

Disclosures about *Sexual abuse* were discussed with hairdressers, whereby participants would describe clients who talked about experiencing sexual abuse, sometimes by family members. In some instances, clients revealed sexual abuse that has happened to them, that they had not told anyone but their hairdresser.

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...a client told me about how her stepdad, he had abused her, and she had never told anyone. (Participant #10, lines 292-293)

Health was a topic of conversation, whereby participants reported that clients have discussed their various health issues; in particular, *Alcoholism*. This included clients discussing their own alcohol problem or that of partners, family and friends and this sometimes included discussions of the emotional impact that living with an alcoholic had on the clients.

...she left her alcoholic husband, they had been together a long time and now that she has left, she has a new lease on life... she still definitely needed to vent a lot about what she went through, and yeah how horrible it was for her. (Participant # 8, lines 15-19)

Another topic discussed was *Drug use and abuse* which included examples of clients talking about using illicit drugs or overcoming drug addiction. Other accounts related to partners, children, parents, friends and roommates abusing drugs and the negative impact that it had on the clients. Some participants reported they had clients reveal they had to move home to be away from exposure to drug abuse.

I have had clients who have told me about taking lots of drugs and what they got up to or whatever, and I have clients who have told me about having drug problems and they have spoken about their recovery. (Participant #10, lines 95-97)

Participants revealed that *Cancer* was often talked about and how it had affected the lives of clients, whether it was the client going through cancer treatment and needing their head shaved, or the impact of clients' loved ones passing away from cancer. Hairdressers described how emotional it can be discussing cancer and attending funerals of clients who lost their battle with cancer.

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...one of my clients has cancer and she doesn't have long left now, when she was diagnosed, we sat there and cried together, she knows I will be there to do her hair when they bury her. (Participant # 5, lines 351-353)

Death was discussed, with participants reporting that clients have expressed the sadness of losing their loved ones and preparing for a funeral by visiting the hairdresser before they attend the funeral. Participants reported that clients liked to talk about the people they have lost and reminisce about the times they had together when their loved ones were still alive.

...a lot of them especially women will come in for a blow dry before a funeral, especially if it is someone close to them, you're sort of their first point of contact for the day, and you can really feel that, and even if it's just for a little bit, you get to help them feel better for the day, so that they feel more prepared to take on the day. (Participant # 8, lines 44-47)

Participants reported that clients disclosed information about their prescribed *Medication*, whereby clients revealed the types of medication they had taken and how they administered it. In some cases, it was noted that, due to chemical reactions from hair colouring products, knowing about a client's medication was important information to know prior to using certain hair products.

...they tell me they take medication, they drink medication, that is how far the conversation goes that we even know what medication and how they take their medication, that is how much they tell you. (Participant # 7, lines 35-37)

Disclosures about clients *Sex-life* was revealed to hairdressers; participants reported that clients disclose information about the sexual activities they engaged in. This included clients sharing information about Tinder dates, one-night stands, and the sexual relations with

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their partners. Participants reported that clients went into depth with hairdressers about the explicit sexual details they have been involved in.

...one of my regulars who is always in tells me about her Tinder dates and shows me the dates on her profile. She tells me what she did with him the night before and then she'll come out with um like what he expected her to do in the bedroom...well we have a bit of a giggle. (Participant # 3, lines 45-48)

Clients personal *Identity* was disclosed to hairdressers; participants revealed that clients discussed how they feel about their identity to their hairdresser, this was so their hairdresser could help them maintain and support a client's self-image. This theme included *Ageing*, whereby clients talked about the changes and challenges related to the ageing process and how it made clients feel about themselves. It was revealed that the ageing process affected women clientele more so than male clientele.

...as women are getting older, they feel more vulnerable...they can feel anxious and unhappy with the way they are ageing, so that is another thing we try to help our clients with, the ageing process. (Participant #9, lines 80-83)

Participants reported that *Financial problems* were something clients disclosed about themselves; hairdressers revealed that clients disclosed the problems they are facing in making ends meet financially. Clients disclosed being in a lower social-economic-status and struggling with little or no income and clients also reported losing their business as a result of financial problems.

I work in a very low socio-economic area, and everyone has finance problems, they discuss that all the time, um we offer after pay so that our clients can actually afford to get their hair done. Sometimes clients tell us they are really broke and explain to us what they want. (Participant #5, lines 160-165)

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Participants reported that some clients reveal situations with *Homelessness* and the struggles and experiences of how they initially became homeless. Participants reported they have provided free haircuts for homeless people and did charity collections for them.

I also do a lot of haircuts for homeless people, so I have that closeness with them and they open up and tell me about themselves, I ask if they have always been in Adelaide...open questions and they say how they became homeless, like they lost a child, got depressed, drank, took drugs, you know that's when they open up.

(Participant # 7, lines 316-320)

Participants revealed that clients have disclosed being a part of the *LGBTQI+* community. Hairdressers revealed they have heard about the gender transition process from clients who were transitioning and from clients who have been transitioned for a long period of time.

We have just recently joined a group called dress code project, which is a project that started in Canada and it's about creating a safe space for people from the LGBTQI+ community, so having understandings of people who are transitioning so they know they can come in here and feel comfortable, and something that I've been talking to a psychologist about is actually understanding how we can talk to clients about that, who are transitioning...without outing them. (Participant # 10, lines 316-322)

Participants revealed that *Politics* was talked about; hairdressers reported that clients discussed their political views and general thoughts on politics. However, hairdressers noted that they were wary of discussing politics because they do not want to encounter conflict about opposing views.

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...definitely like to talk more about politics...yeah especially around election time, but I just let them talk I don't really have anything to add in to be honest. (Participant #8, lines 143-149)

Religion was a topic that clients discussed. Participants revealed that clients talked about their religion, but this was a topic that some hairdressers were wary of due to conflicting beliefs. In some cases, it was reported that hairdressers enjoyed hearing about different religious beliefs and liked to learn from clients about their views in a respectful non-judgemental manner. In some instances, clients indicated how hair had to be cut or prepared according to cultural practices. Some hairdressers provided a private area to allow for religious practices with haircuts that need to be kept private, whereas other hairdressers have provided a home service to respect their client's beliefs. Participants reported that some clients have criticised their hairdresser for not sharing the same beliefs as the client.

...a lot of Muslim people who came into the salon, and we didn't have a back room to be able to do their hair so I...went and did their hair at home...it was incredible because at the time I didn't really know that much about their religion and I said "would you mind if I asked you some questions, because I would really like to know" and they were so open and so lovely. (Participant # 10, lines 163-169)

Information about how clients experienced issues with *Mental health* was disclosed. Participants reported client disclosures of mental health problems and talked about struggling with various *Anxiety* conditions and the impact it had on them. Participants sometimes reported how anxious they were when entering a salon for the first time.

...that's one of the most common things these days, like everyone seems to suffer from depression or anxiety to a degree. (Participant #3, lines 65-66)

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Depression was a mental health topic that participants reported hearing about from their clients. Participants reported their clients reveal what it is like having depression and feeling bad about themselves on a daily basis.

...they are feeling down or a bit of depression, they say they get up in the morning and they don't feel so good about themselves. (Participant # 1, lines 124-125)

Participants reported how clients described the *Stress* they experienced. Many revealed being stressed regularly and noted that clients would often book an appointment at the hairdresser to make themselves feel better when they were feeling stressed out.

...oh, everybody talks about being stressed...that would be a key word we hear daily "oh, I'm so stressed". (Participant # 2, lines 170-172)

The last subtheme under *Mental health* was *Suicide* which related to client thoughts of suicide, and that some clients had suicided. Clients also talked about the impact on them when a loved one had taken their own life.

...she actually did take her life...she was very careful about how she did it and what she did...she sourced me out to be her hairdresser and sourced me out to be her mum's hairdresser, because she knew I would be able to talk to her mum...she had left notes all through her entire house...they would find notes saying "please don't cry, it was my time". (Participant #4, lines 275-281)

Participants revealed that clients disclosed information about *Women's health* which can be a taboo subject in society; but women often feel comfortable discussing women's health with their hairdresser. Although this situation usually involved female clients disclosing women's health topics, male participants also reported being involved in conversations with their clients about various women's health topics. Under this theme,

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Abortion was addressed whereby participants reported that pregnant clients have asked their hairdresser their opinion as to whether they should abort their pregnancy.

Well I had a client who was pregnant and was asking me if she should abort her pregnancy, so yeah that side of things. (Participant # 10, lines 15-16)

Participants reported that *Menopause* was discussed, and clients disclosed information about the changes they have experienced during menopause, especially symptoms of having hot flushes.

...in the salon we talk about menopause...hot flushes, we talk about everything, it's like we are a family. (Participant # 5, lines 99-101)

Disclosures around *Menstruation* occurred, and hairdressers reported it was commonplace for clients to discuss menstrual cycles and that clients book appointments during a period to help them to feel better. In some instances, hairdressers provided sanitary items in their salon bathroom for clients to use if they needed them.

I have clients who ring me up and say "I am having a really bad day" or "I have got my monthlies (menstrual cycle) so I am feeling like crap, is there a chance you could fit me in...anything you can do to make me feel better". (Participant #6, lines 240-243)

Information about clients who have experienced loss through *Miscarriage* was disclosed to participants who reported that clients revealed they have had one or more miscarriages and felt comfortable talking about this with their hairdresser.

...the more you talk about it the more you realise how many people have had the same thing but they just don't tell many people except in the salon, they always talk in

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the salon about it, like “oh yeah I had a miscarriage”, “oh I had one too!”, “yes I had 2 in between my children”. (Participant # 7, lines 150-154)

The final subtheme under *Women’s health* was *Pregnancy* where clients disclosed information about trying to get pregnant and the details of the pregnancies they have experienced.

...people trying to get pregnant and it is always very exciting when they come in and tell us they have good news that they are pregnant and some of them have told us before they have even told their family. (Participant #8, lines 172-174)

3.2 Research Question 2. ‘How do hairdressers respond to client disclosures’?

The results indicated that hairdressers respond to their clients’ disclosures in a number of ways. There were twelve themes generated in answering how hairdressers respond to client disclosures including, *Being client focused*, *By behaving like a therapist*, *By blurring boundaries*, *By providing a place of safety*, *By using physical contact*, *Providing advice*, *Refer on*, *They are cautious with giving advice*, *They listen*, *They read and monitor body language*, *They treat clients like family and friends*, and *Through maintaining confidentiality*. Each theme will be discussed respectively along with a representative quote to illustrate the theme.

Participants revealed that they responded by *Being client focused*. Hairdressers tried to make their client the centre of attention and to feel special. Participants reported that when clients disclosed information about themselves it was important to let the client talk about what they want or need to, and to keep the discussion focus on the client to make it a pleasant experience so the client left the salon feeling really good about themselves.

...what counts is how you are making the clients feel, your skill set has to be good, but you have to put the client first not yourself first. (Participant #1, lines 443-444)

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Participants reported that they responded to clients *By behaving like a therapist*. Hairdressers reported that working closely with clients and hearing personal information about their clients' lives was a similar role to how a social worker or psychologist would respond to their clients. Hairdressers revealed that it was important to listen like a therapist would, e.g., not say much at all, and know when to offer a constructive non-judgmental opinion. Participants reported that there are even mechanisms by which clients reveal information to them.

...understanding you know when you can see subtleties in their behaviours and how that's kind of affecting them in this moment when they are talking to me whatever it is they need to talk about...I think that when someone is coming to their hairdresser, they want a friend as well, so it is like understanding how to be both of those things, so when to kind of give advice and when to shut up and listen, and when to say, "did you realise this", so it is a real mixture of professional, friend, psychologist.

(Participant # 10, lines 84-90)

Participants revealed that they responded *By blurring boundaries*. Hairdressers sometimes struggled to maintain a boundary with their clients due to being so closely involved in their clients' lives and hearing so much personal information. In some cases, hairdressers blurred the boundary between their role as professional hairdresser, customer and friend when responding. Examples of this included situations where hairdressers had helped clients outside the salon and in areas that were beyond their job description and these were actions that could put the hairdresser's safety at risk. It was reported that one participant had to move the salon location due to the repercussions of helping a client.

...some clients have told me that they love me, they say "I love coming here and I just love you". It is incredible, so yes, some people think we should have more of a

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boundary, but it is hard for hairdressers because we see them on such a regular basis, and you know everything about them. (Participant # 7, lines 345-349)

Hairdressers also responded *By providing a place of safety* for their clients. It was reported that participants responded to clients by providing a safe place to be able to be themselves and discuss anything they felt comfortable talking about, knowing that they would not be judged or dismissed.

I create a nice safe environment that my clients can come to...and if people feel so comfortable that they can share then I think that's really nice to make someone feel so secure with themselves...that moment when someone feels like they want to talk about suicide or something and if that's the case then that might be the little second that they get a bit of help. (Participant #4, lines 152-157)

Participants reported that hairdressers respond, *By using physical contact*.

Hairdressers reported that due to the intimate contact aspect of their job, having physical contact with clients helps to gain rapport with the client. It was reported that physical contact with a client is an everyday occurrence and major aspect of hairdressing. Moreover, hairdressers revealed that the physical contact extends to showing clients affection and hugging and kissing their clients. Participants reported that being affectionate and putting their hands on a client's shoulders was a way of reassuring the client when clients are disclosing personal information about themselves.

We are in an industry as you know we are touching them as well and there are not many places of work that you are physically touching a person, so that can be very reassuring too, just the way you do touch them, whether you rub their shoulder, when they leave you give them a hug, you know there are many other ways apart from doing their hair and touching them that you will be very sympathetic that I don't feel

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many other profession would have the opportunity to do that. (Participant #2, lines 282-288)

Participants revealed that hairdressers were *Providing advice* to their clients; it was reported that when clients disclose information, they often ask their hairdresser for advice. Participants reported that when responding to client disclosures they were willing to provide advice or offer their opinion to clients; however, it was noted that hairdressers can be wary when giving advice and that advice varies depending on what the clients have disclosed.

...they ask my advice and say, “so what are your thought on, um, whatever”. And I try to be honest when I respond, and if I feel like I can’t answer then I say, “well I really can’t answer that”. Um also I say stuff like “well it is up to you”, if I can’t answer a certain question. (Participant # 3, lines 187-190)

Hairdressers also *Refer on* to formal help when responding to client disclosures. Participants reported that they were not qualified to help their clients with many topics raised to them, and so they were referring their clients to the professionals they required.

...we are there to help. And if they need further help, we know which channels to go through, you know the help lines, domestic violence counselling unit...we have got a number of resources to direct them to. (Participant # 5, lines 77-79)

Participants reported that, *They are cautious with giving advice*. Participants indicated that they needed to be very cautious giving advice because they are only providing their opinion and perspective to their clients. It was noted that participants were wary of providing advice because giving the wrong advice could ruin the relationship they have built with their clients, and that it was often better to refrain from giving advice.

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I'm only a guide and have to be really careful with what I say, so I just listen and maybe occasionally give feedback...because you could lose a client over that.

(Participant # 9, lines 130-132)

Participants reported that *They listen* to their clients intently. Hairdressers reported that it was very important to listen, show empathy for what clients have revealed and to withhold any judgments. Participants described how clients would vent their frustrations and wanted to be genuinely listened to when they talk about personal topics that they may not feel comfortable discussing with their friends, family or formal health care professionals.

I will listen, I am a listener, and I will talk to them, when I feel it is necessary...we really care about our clients...so you listen and sometimes you give advice, you try not to give too much advice...if you give too much advice it isn't a good thing, because sometimes they don't want advice they just want someone to listen.

(Participant # 7, lines 40-47)

Participants reported that, *They read and monitor body language* when responding to clients. Participants revealed that reading clients' body language was an important skill when responding to client disclosures. It was also reported that hairdressers monitor their own body language when responding to clients.

...you have to read their body language, you can tell if they are stand offish, like sort of personalities, that you can't get to that deeper level with that sort of clientele. I tend to pick up vibes from people...I'm good at reading people and I know who I can and can't feel comfortable with. (Participant # 3, lines 166-169)

Participants expressed that *They treat clients like family and friends*. Hairdressers revealed that when they respond to clients' disclosures, they do this in the same way that they respond to their own family and friends. Participants reported that they spend time socialising

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with their clients; they hug and kiss their clients; and, have been invited to clients' private events and parties. It was reported that participants saw their clients regularly and clients revealed private information about themselves that they have not told members of their biological family.

...you feel so in tune with their emotions and you kind of feel like part of their family, especially if they have taken you to their weddings, their baby showers and stuff like that, you feel like a part of their life. (Participant #6, lines 110-113)

The last theme generated to answer how hairdressers respond to client disclosures was that hairdressers respond *Through maintaining confidentiality* of the things that clients have told them. It was reported that it was very important to keep conversations they have had with their clients private and confidential. Participants revealed that clients often know one another, and clients have revealed information about other clients they know. Moreover, maintaining confidentiality was imperative in maintaining the close relationship they have built with clients.

...we are not interested in repeating what somebody told us...you just don't share.

And when you live locally most of your clients are local probably 70% would be local and we know a lot about people in the area and they would die if they knew we knew.

(Participant # 2, lines 192-196)

3.3 Research Question 3. 'How do hairdressers feel about being a confidant and support'?

Results revealed how hairdressers were feeling about their role as a support and how this role affects them. Five themes were generated: *Feeling Emotionally drained; Perceptions of being undervalued; They feel there is more involved than just a hair service; They love*

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their job and love helping; and, *They need more support*. Each theme will be discussed with a corresponding quote.

Participants revealed that, sometimes they felt *Emotionally drained*. While participants reported that they love being a support for clients, it did have a down-side, by affecting the participants who sometimes felt emotionally drained after a long week working many hours and supporting their clients.

...you do find at the end of the week that it is very draining... people very much underestimate what we do, you do find at the end of the day you are physically tired, but people don't I think acknowledge mentally how tiring our job is, um which is very hard. (Participant # 2, lines 329-335)

Participants reported that they have had *Perceptions of being undervalued*. Participants expressed that they have felt undervalued as a profession and under acknowledged for the caregiving and support role they play. Hairdressers would like acknowledgement for the hard work they do to provide a great service for their clients, a service which encompasses a wide range of caregiving and support roles.

I think there definitely needs to be more exposure for us (hairdressers), in ways that we can help society but, to be paid for those things, because we are worth the money. And just to give people a different perception of hairdressers, like we're there to help, we are not people to be scared of. (Participant # 6, lines 349-352)

Participants revealed that *They feel there is more involved than just a hair service* when interacting with clients. It was reported that there was much more involved than a hair service in a hairdressing salon in that there are multiple ways that they care for their clients. Participants revealed that the emotional support they provide can be therapeutic for clients

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and that, while hairdressers helped their clients look better, they also helped them to feel better.

...that's the whole source of this relationship building that I love, and it is about being able to talk. Like I don't invite clients in to have a therapy session and then a little bit of hair happens it is a hairdressing salon but you know it is also we can offer so much more in terms of how we can make a person feel good you know. (Participant # 4, lines 204-208)

Participants revealed that *They love their job and love helping* and it was reported that they feel job satisfaction and enjoy supporting their clients and could not imagine doing any other job. Despite revealing they sometimes felt emotionally drained, participants reported they really enjoyed their role supporting their clients and really love their job.

...feel blessed that you have ears to listen and, a heart for compassion, and an opportunity to be the tiny light inside of someone's dark day! Because you can either be the person to showcase that light or you can be another person who blows out their candle again, and I much prefer to be the one to spark that light rather than blow their candle out. (Participant #4, lines 554-558)

Participants reported that *They need more support*. Participants reported that, while they love their job and love supporting clients, they have felt they would like support themselves. Participants wanted support in knowing how to better help their clients and also emotional support for themselves as hairdressers after hearing what clients disclose. It was also revealed that they did not have someone to "off load" what they are hearing from clients due to maintaining confidentiality.

I don't think we are given enough credit, that we deserve, there is not enough resources out there when it comes to mental health for hairdressers, I know there are

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some states in Australia that do offer free or subsidised psychology sessions for hairdressers and also classes which can help hairdressers deal with a crisis situation, I think we should have that available here. (Participant #6, lines 256-260)

CHAPTER 4

Discussion: 'Not Just a Hairdresser'

4.1 Overview

This study examined three important Research Questions relating to hairdresser-client interactions. The first Research Question related to what things clients disclose to their hairdresser; the second related to how hairdressers responded; and the third to what effect this type of interaction had upon hairdressers. Each of the findings relating to these broad questions are discussed in turn.

In relation to question 1, the results indicated a strong theme relating to clients' *Family* with two particular subthemes relating to *Kinship* and *Partners*. These findings are generally in line with Anderson et al. (2010) who found that hairdressers often hear about family problems from older clientele such as relationship issues and marital problems. Sattler and Deane (2016) also found that marital problems were often discussed by clients and this was also reported by Cowen et al. (1979) and Cowen (1982). While these findings are consistent with previous research, the current study also captured disclosures around the subtheme of *Divorce*. Hairdressers further revealed that clients disclosed information about *Domestic violence* in this study. Some clients have discussed intimate partner violence and had asked their hairdresser to help them leave an abusive situation. Such findings are consistent with Sattler and Deane (2016) as well as Beebe et al. (2018) who examined the prevalence of intimate partner violence among hair salon clients. Another study by McLaren et al. (2010) conducted research that suggested domestic violence was a common topic of discussion and that hairdressers are receptive to training in domestic violence prevention. *Sexual abuse* was also disclosed in this present study and was reported as a disclosure in research by Sattler and Deane (2016) where sexual assault was reported in surveys from

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hairdressers who said this was discussed by clients; however, did not extend to sexual abuse in the family as was found in the present study.

Other personal issues discussed related to the theme of *Health* which is consistent with findings in Cowen et al. (1979), Cowen (1982) and, Sattler and Deane (2016), who found client disclosures were around physical health as well as *Alcoholism, Drug use and abuse* and *Sex-life*. Anderson et al. (2010) observed that *Ageing* was a topic discussed in their research with older clientele, with their research devoting a larger focus to topics such as self-neglect and signs of dementia. Hurd Clarke and Korotchenko (2010), McFarquhar and Lewis (2000) and Ward and Holland (2011) who discussed the symbolism of hair with ageing and the perceptions of society particularly on aging women with grey hair, was consistent with the present study. Other personal disclosures relating to *Financial problems* were also consistent with previous research (Anderson et al., 2010; Cowen et al., 1979; Cowen, 1982; Sattler & Deane, 2016). The theme *Mental health* which encompassed *Depression* and *Anxiety* were also consistent with previous research by Anderson et al. (2010), Cowen et al. (1979), Cowen (1982) and Sattler and Deane (2016). Such observations have led researchers such as McLaren et al. (2010) to argue that hairdressers would benefit from training in mental health.

In relation to question 2, relating to how hairdressers respond, the results indicated a range of themes. Hairdressers respond to client disclosures by *Providing advice, They listen, Refer on* to other professionals, *By behaving like a therapist* and *They treat clients like family and friends*. These findings are consistent with Anderson et al. (2010) and Garzaniti et al. (2011) who found hairdresser roles to be similar to those of family and friends. Anderson et al. (2010) also found that hairdressers gave advice, listened to clients' problems, referred clients on to other resources and, also played a counselling role to clients. Cowen et al. (1979) and Sattler and Deane (2016) found that hairdressers listen and gave advice, whereas

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Sattler and Deane (2016) also found that some hairdressers were trying to get their clients to talk to another professional such as a doctor.

Five themes emerged in response to question 3, which related to how hairdressers felt about being a confidant and support to clients. Some reported feelings of being *Emotionally drained* which is consistent with Cohen (2010), Lee et al. (2007) and Sharma and Black (2001) who found hairdressers and beauty therapists were likely to experience emotional burnout due to the emotional labour of their role. Cohen (2010) in particular found that emotional labour was reported to affect salon owners more so than employees and stated that a stressful situation arises when hairdressers are doing favours for clients and maintaining friendships with clients at the same time. Such interactions can negatively impact the hairdressers if they feel there is a lack of reciprocity and a demand to produce positive client feedback and bolster client self-esteem. The impact of emotional labour leading to burnout can negatively impact health outcomes for the caregiver by leading to depression and a lack of job satisfaction. For these reasons, it has been argued that there may be benefits in providing social support for the hairdressers to help buffer the psychological distress they may feel by being an informal caregiver and the impact the demands of emotional labour could potentially have on them. This is also consistent with wider research on emotional burnout due to emotional labour (Hochschild, 1993; Jeung, Kim, & Cheng, 2018; Pisaniello, Winefield, & Delfabbro, 2012; Wolkowitz, 2002). The present results that indicate that hairdressers feel *They need more support* was also consistent with earlier results in Cowen et al. (1979) who reported that hairdressers required more help and wanted more mental health services available to them. McLaren et al. (2010) found that providing training in mental health and domestic violence prevention to help support hairdressers and their clients indicated that such programs would be beneficial and that hairdressers are receptive to this. Sattler and Deane (2016) found that 67% of hairdressers reported having interest in training

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programs to better support clients as informal helpers, but it was noted that such training would need ethical oversight in relation to identifying risks to themselves and others and being aware of appropriate boundaries and hairdresser self-care strategies.

4.2 Contribution to Knowledge and Strengths of Present Research

This research generated themes that captured results that have not been generated in previous research. Although while relationship and marital problems were discussed in previous research this did not extent to disclosures around *Divorce* which was revealed to hairdressers in this study. Under the theme *Family*, results from this study captured subthemes related to clients disclosing information about being involved in *Affairs*, experiencing *Child abuse*, and discussions about *Foster care*, that have not been found in previous research. Furthermore, while previous research found that physical *Health* was discussed by clients, no published literature reported disclosures about *Cancer*, *Death* and *Medication* which this study captured. There were also new findings in this present study, capturing subthemes about clients disclosing personal information about *Identity* and experiencing *Homelessness*, being a part of the *LGBTQI+* community, and clients' personal views on *Politics* and *Religion*. While *Mental health* was a topic discussed in previous research this study was able to extend on this with results revealing that clients disclosed information about the *Stress* they experience and disclosures about clients having thoughts of *Suicide* and losing love ones to suicide. The theme of *Women's health* was also a new observation, this encompassed all subthemes that captured clients' disclosures of information about thinking about having an *Abortion*, experiencing symptoms of *Menopause*, discussions about *Menstruation*, experiencing loss through *Miscarriage*, and discussions about clients experiencing *Pregnancy*.

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Furthermore, this study generated new results regarding how hairdressers responded to their clients. Hairdressers revealed that they respond by *Being client focused*, whereby participants revealed they always put their clients' needs first and endeavour to make their clients feel good about themselves. Hairdressers responded to clients *By blurring boundaries*, where participants stated that they struggle with boundaries with clients due to the close nature in which they work and interact with clients. Sattler and Deane (2016) reported that if hairdressers were going to be involved in training to improve their role as caregivers, they would need to be aware of maintaining appropriate boundaries in order to protect themselves and their clients. This study indicated that boundary violations was something that needs to be further addressed with hairdressers when providing a caregiving and support role to clients. Other insights included the role that hairdressers play *By providing a place of safety* for clients to express themselves and openly discuss the issues they are facing without feeling judged about problems they have revealed to their hairdresser.

Although it is already known that hairdressers responded *By using physical contact* this study extended on this by capturing that hairdressers hug and kiss their clients and extend on the physical contact that the job requires by being affectionate with clients. Previous research found that hairdressers respond with giving advice, but it was found in this study that sometimes *They are cautious with giving advice*. Participants stated that giving direct advice was something to be very cautious about, due to the risk of giving the wrong advice and how that could potentially ruin a relationship with a client. Participants revealed that most clients wanted to be listened to rather than given advice on what they could do in a situation, even when clients have asked their hairdresser for such advice. Furthermore, hairdressers revealed that *They read and monitor body language* when responding to clients. Participants stated the importance of being skilled in reading a client's body language to gauge how to respond and this extended to hairdressers monitoring their own body language

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when responding to clients by maintaining appropriate body language. Participants revealed they responded *Through maintaining confidentiality*, this was captured by participants who stated that keeping clients' disclosures private and confidential was an extremely important role when clients disclose information that they did not want other people to know.

This study generated new results about how hairdressers feel about their role as a confidant and support to clients. Previous research suggested that hairdressing as an industry is deemed as undervalued and that hairdressing is perceived as a low skilled job (Cohen, 2010; Eayrs, 1993; Lee et al., 2007; Soulliere, 1997). This research confirms this inference with the participants themselves, by showing that participants had *Perceptions of being undervalued* and they would like more acknowledgment for their role as a caregiver and support to clients and that *They feel there is more involved than just a hair service*. Hairdressers stated that there was a lot more they could do to help their clients feel good about themselves besides the hair service they provided making their clients look good was the added bonus of their job rather than being the critical factor in visiting a hairdresser. Moreover, previous research has suggested that hairdressers are at risk of emotional burnout, and this current research captured that hairdressers were feeling emotionally drained, yet paradoxically, results extended on this by revealing that participants felt a great deal of job satisfaction where participants revealed that *They love their job and love helping*. Previous research had not reported good job satisfaction when enduring emotional labour or the paradox of experiencing both emotionally drained and good job satisfaction concurrently.

This study provides insight into a topic that had not previously gained much attention by using qualitative methods and purposive sampling to ensure the interviews included participants from various age groups, genders and a range of salon types. This method generated rich and deep data that was rigorous and trustworthy and successfully reached saturation of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Braun et al., 2019; Kvale & Brinkmann,

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2009; Kitto et al., 2008; Tracey, 2010). Participant validation added further rigour and trustworthiness of the current research, as did an audit trail documenting the research process. These steps added to a sound methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013; Braun et al., 2019; Elliott et al., 1999; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Kitto et al., 2008; Tracey, 2010). Other strengths of this research were providing insights into a topic that has sparse literature and generating new results in what hairdressers are hearing from clients, how hairdressers respond to client disclosures and how hairdressers feel about being confidants and supports to clients. Such results were the first to capture South Australian hairdressers' point of view on hairdresser-client interactions with qualitative methods that generated in-depth understandings.

4.3 Roles of Social Support and Social Support Theory Connection

The role of social support that hairdressers provided is consistent with the social support theory of psychological buffering as discussed in Taylor (2011). Hairdressers reported that they provide this social support in the form of, informational support (advice); hairdressers offered their opinion and advice to clients who asked, they provided referrals and information about further help and phone numbers for health care professionals. Hairdressers provided instrumental support (physical assistance), where maintaining physical appearance is a large part of the hairdressing service; hairdressers will also physically assist clients by sending hairdressers for home visits and also escorted elderly clientele to their transport. Emotional support was given (empathy and affection) and this category was one of the main points of social support. Hairdressers offer a safe space for clients to express themselves freely, and respond to their clients with empathy, compassion and affection; hairdressers reported they hug and kiss clients, send them flowers, call them on the phone, cry with clients and support them through difficult emotional times. Hairdressers provided support in the realm of companionship (a sense of belonging) whereby hairdressers formed

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friendships with their clients and had a focus on making clients feel good and provide a sense of belonging by making the salon a comfortable and relaxing environment that clients regularly rebook and continually return by maintain this sense of belonging. The results in this research indicated that hairdressers were supporting their clients in all four areas of social support as discussed in Taylor (2011).

The data gathered in the present study indicated that clients often book appointments with a hairdresser that is local to their area and return to the same hairdresser over long periods of time. Previous research indicates the social nature and physical contact between hairdresser and client help build rapport and encompasses a sense of friendship and neighbourhood and increases customer loyalty and satisfaction; this also extends to increase client quality of life (Barnes, 2001; Butcher, Sparks & O'Callaghan, 2002; Garzaniti et al., 2011).

Hairdressing is a profession that has the capacity to support clients in many ways other than hairstyling, yet the hairdressing industry is considered a low skilled and low paid job, whereby hairdressers are undervalued as a profession. The social support they have provided their clients provides an opportunity to lessen the distress clients may feel through the social support being offered from the hairdressers via helpful resources that clients are willing to accept. The buffering model of social support could help the clients feel good about themselves; clients have had the chance to express their feelings and life challenges to their hairdresser, someone they trust, who in turn responds with sincere compassion. The buffering model of social support emphasises how social support shields distress that people may experience; to help positively impact the functioning of a person's mental and physical health (Ditzen & Heinrichs, 2014; Kent de Grey et al., 2018; Stephens, 1990; Taylor, 2011). Therefore, while hairdressers are maintaining their client's physical appearance, they have

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been helping to maintain a client's psychological wellbeing via the social support, connection, and compassion they have for their clients.

In summary, the social support hairdresser provided to their clients may have a benefit to clients' health, by providing social support based on the interpersonal relationship the hairdresser and client has formed. The client experiences being part of a social network, the clients are cared for by their hairdresser, and discuss topics with their hairdresser that would be similar topics raised to a mental health care professional.

4.4 Implications

The broad implications of this study built upon the sparse research on hairdressers as confidants and social supports to clients. The results illustrate that hairdressers have been and are willing to continue to provide a caregiving role to clients; however, participants expressed they need more support themselves. This research has identified that when hairdressers informally support their clients, they have no governing body to gain information on how to safely and appropriately maintain boundaries when dealing with distressing content such as helping clients leave an abusive relationship and clients who are considering suicide. Further training on safety and repercussions of hairdressers providing a caregiving role could benefit from these considerations.

Hairdressing salons are a public space and intimate conversations between hairdressers and client could potentially be over-heard by other people therefore, further investigating how hairdresser-client confidentiality is maintained in a public space would be beneficial. The intimate contact industry also includes beauty therapists, massage therapists and barbers therefore, gathering data about client interactions with barbers, massage therapists and beauty therapists would gain further insight into whether similar interactions occur with their clientele. Training and education that is consistent and able to provide on-

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going support should be available in South Australia, this would be of benefit to both hairdressers and clients. Moreover, education in the early stages of training as a hairdresser at TAFE SA would benefit hairdressers and clients by offering modules in the Certificate III in hairdressing by providing information on basic mental health and domestic violence prevention as well as basic psychological theory and understandings of the biopsychosocial framework that dictates an individual's world view.

Further implications of this study may include that not all hairdressers are the same and while many provide a positive social support for clients, some hairdressers may cause harm by giving inappropriate advice due to them not being qualified counsellors. Not all visits to the hair salon will be based on social support due to differing approaches of hairdressers and inconsistency and lack of training programs. In addition, none of the hairdressers who participated in this study had been getting on-going support and none had been involved in training for hairdressers specifically for mental health or domestic violence prevention. However, one participant was an ambassador for a domestic violence organisation and one participant had done further training as a qualified counsellor. Future directions in research would benefit from implementing consistent training and support programs for hairdressers. Moreover, not all clients are the same, some clients may not feel comfortable in disclosing personal information to their hairdresser.

4.5 Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations of this study may include that this research investigated hairdressers' perspectives and did not gather data from the clients' perspective. Future directions would benefit from gathering data from clients to hear their perspective on what they tell their hairdresser and if they perceive having gained social support. Following this, recommendations to enhance the rigour and trustworthiness of results with triangulation of

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data sources and further method collections via incorporating surveys as well as interviews to strengthen analytical claims and capture multiple perspectives would be beneficial (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kitto et al., 2008; Tracey, 2010).

Hairdressers have been providing social support for the wellbeing of their clients; however, it may be putting the hairdressers at risk of emotional burnout due to the emotional labour of providing such support. While previous research has suggested emotional burnout can lead to a lack of job satisfaction (Cohen, 2010; Hochschild, 1993; Jeung, Kim, & Cheng, 2018; Lee et al, 2007; Pisaniello, Winefield, & Delfabbro, 2012; Sharma & Black, 2001; Wolkowitz, 2002) this study found that paradoxically, hairdressers are feeling emotional drained, yet this had not impacted on their job satisfaction. Further research could benefit in investigating why this was the case and if there are cognitive mechanisms that reduce hairdresser's perceptions of having a lack of job satisfaction when they are feeling emotionally drained, undervalued and in need of more support yet, concurrently reporting good job satisfaction.

Future research could benefit by investigating how hairdresser-client confidentiality is maintained in a public space. There is a high risk of other people overhearing private conversations between hairdresser and clientele, especially in busy salon where many clients are booked for appointments at the same time. Moreover, this study investigated South Australian hairdressers', future research regarding hairdresser-client interactions based on social support could be studied across different countries as the results of the present study may not be resonant to other places.

Recruitment of participants in future research would benefit by offer incentives, due to the difficulties in recruiting participants on a voluntary basis, offering an incentive may be beneficial to reimburse the participants for their time due to many participants heavy work

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schedules. Further questions arise from the data gathered in the present study whereby hairdressers discussed the mechanisms by which clients reveal personal information and would benefit from further investigation.

In terms of providing training and support for hairdressers, other countries have resources available with the Cut It Out movement in America (Professional Beauty Association, 2019). There is The Lions Barber Collective, (2019) who advocate for mental health and suicide prevention for men in barber shops in the United Kingdom. There are very few programs set up in Australia to train hairdressers in mental health and domestic violence prevention, such programs are relatively new and are often run by community organisations such as Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) HaiR-3R's (Recognise, Respond, and Refer) in Melbourne, Victoria providing free training in gender inequality and domestic violence prevention (EDVOS, 2019; Jackson, 2018). There is The Grapevine Association (2019) in Mackay, Queensland who has the Heart to Heart Hairdressers campaign with safeTALK suicide prevention and domestic violence prevention training. However, none of the training programs are mandatory and are not consistently rolled out to all hairdressing salons in all states of Australia, it is yet to be determined as to how the training is being offered effectively and consistently.

In conclusion this research has identified the sorts of disclosures that are raised to hairdressers, the ways that hairdressers respond and how hairdressers feel about the support role they have informally provided. Such insights display a need to support hairdressers in South Australia so that the support they provide can be implemented with appropriate training and consistency so that personal boundaries and safety are considered for both hairdressers and clients.

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Appendix A.



**INVITATION TO EXPERIENCED
HAIRDRESSERS TO BE INVOLVED IN
RESEARCH PROJECT**

(HREC approval number [REDACTED])

If you are a qualified hairdresser, we would like to invite you to participate in a study that is being conducted at the University of Adelaide in the School of Psychology.

What is the project about?

The project is looking at the important role that hairdressers play in providing emotional support for their clients. What types of things people talk about? What sorts of emotional issues arise? How do hairdressers balance their role as professional people and as confidants to their clients?

What do I have to do?

Participation would require approximately 1 hour of your time to participate in an interview.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact me...

Stacey Page [REDACTED]

Appendix



B.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: What do you tell your hairdresser? Hairdressers as a source of social support.

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: [REDACTED]

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Supervisor Professor Anna Chur-Hansen, Co-supervisor Professor Paul Delfabbro.

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Stacey Page

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

This research aims to use data collected from interviews to provide in-depth insight into the nature of hairdresser-client interactions. The project examines the important role hairdressers may play in their clients lives due to the particular connection hairdressers have with their clients; where clients disclose information about themselves, they may not disclose to other professional people.

Hairdressers have a certain level of trust from clients as hairdressers are permitted to physically touch their clients while doing their hair which is a feature only otherwise observed with health practitioners and their clients. The interviews will cover open-ended questions regarding what clients disclose to their hairdressers, from the hairdresser point of view.

The research question is, 'How do hairdressers deal with client stories?'

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Stacey Page. This research will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) at the University of Adelaide under the supervision of Professor Anna Chur-Hansen and Professor Paul Delfabbro.

Why am I being invited to participate?

You are being invited as you are a qualified Hairdresser aged above 18, who currently works in a hair salon and speaks fluent English.

What am I being invited to do?

You will be invited to take part in an interview where you are asked questions about what your clients disclose to you. Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?

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We kindly ask if you are willing to volunteer approximately 45 min to an hour of your time for the interview to take place.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

There are no risks foreseeable in participating in this study, hairdressers will not be asked personal information about themselves, and only relaying client stories. However, just in case of distress, support from phone counselling services (Lifeline, 13 11 14/ Beyond Blue, 1300224636/ 1800RESPECT, 1800 737732) will be offered.

What are the potential benefits of the research project?

The research may result in beneficial supporting evidence of the caregiving and confidant role hairdressers provide for clients and how the social support offered may help buffer psychological distress in clients who share private information.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

What will happen to my information?

Participant data will have undergone anonymisation and de-identification during the early stages of interview transcribing and prior to data analysis. Participants will be offered the chance to choose a pseudonym, or else be assigned one, for specific reference to their responses in the research report. No participant personal information will be presented in, or accessible through, any reporting of research results. A copy of the final transcripts will be kept on a USB and securely stored in the School of Psychology for seven years, after which time they will be deleted and destroyed. All other recordings and interview notes will be deleted and destroyed at the end of the research period, currently anticipated to be October, the deadline for thesis submission. This research will be published in Stacey Page's honours thesis, and possibly a Journal article and/or or conference presentation.

Access to interview transcripts can be made available to participants at request. A summary of the results will be made available to the participants at their request.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Subcommittee in the School of Psychology at the University of Adelaide (approval number HREC-19/33). This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018). If you have questions about the ethical conduct of the research then you

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should consult the Deputy Convener of the Subcommittee, Dr. Diana Dorsytn,
[REDACTED]

If I want to participate, what do I do?

Please contact Stacey Page via email or phone to arrange a time that suits for the interview to take place, consent forms will be sent and signed by participant before commencing the interview.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Stacey Page BPsychSci

Professor Anna Chur-Hansen

Professor Paul Delfabbro

Appendix C.

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)



CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the attached Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	What do you tell your hairdresser? Hairdressers as a source of social support.
Ethics Approval Number:	██████████

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, and the potential risks and burdens fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have about the project and my participation. My consent is given freely.
3. Although I understand the purpose of the research project, it has also been explained that my involvement may not be of any benefit to me.
4. I agree to participate in the activities outlined in the participant information sheet.
5. I agree to be:
Audio recorded Yes No
6. I understand that as my participation is anonymous, I can withdraw any time up until submission of the of the interview.
7. I have been informed that the information gained in the project may be published in a thesis and possibly journal article/ news article/ conferences/ presentations.
8. I have been informed that in the published materials I will not be identified and my personal results will not be divulged.
9. I understand my information will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except where disclosure is required by law.
10. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.

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11. I would like a copy of my transcript. Yes No

12. I would like a summary of the research findings. Yes No

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher/Witness to complete:

I have described the nature of the research
to

(print name of participant)

and in my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature: Position: Date: