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Identityscapes of a Hair Salon: Work Identities and the Value of Visual Methods

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Abstract

This article considers how one group of workers, hairdressers, use aspects of their material landscape of work as important resources in the production and re-production of their work identities. It shows how the participants of the study use the spaces, objects and things in their workplaces to form a visual narrative of who they are. The article also considers the significance of visual methods in such identity research. It argues for encouraging participants using participant-led photography to choose how to view and arrange their photographs. Participants' preference for paper analogue prints rather than on-screen digital images allowed them to work with multiple images simultaneously, rather than consecutively, and enabled them to create richer accounts of career development by incorporating time and movement in their stories. The participants' construction of these 'identityscapes', it is argued, can be usefully understood in relation to the concept of 'photomontages' developed by the British artist David Hockney.

Keywords: Identity, Space, Objects, Visual, Identityscape, Time, Photography, Photomontage, Hairdressers

Introduction

1.1 This article explores the 'stories' workers tell through the display, use and/ or ownership of space, objects and things. Based on empirical research on hairdressers and their material landscape of work - the hair salon - the article looks at what visual narratives can contribute to our understanding of work identities. It also makes the case for recognising the ways that workers bring together their work identities and the spatial/ material landscape of work through the use of visual methods and the production of what I conceptualise as 'identityscapes'.

1.2 The existing literature on hairdressing employment examines a variety of issues, including the aesthetics of salons and the exploration of their materiality using Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Chugh and Hancock 2009); emotion management/ emotional labour in the employment relationships experienced by hairdressers and trainees (Cohen 2010; Parkinson 1991) and the gender and social class dimensions of the experiences of young hairdressers working in salons (Lindsay 2004). The research on which this article is based takes a different tack, seeking to deepen our appreciation of the relation between the construction of work identities and how workers use and experience space and objects. The use of visual methods played a central role in exploring this relation.

1.3 Hairdressing provides a particularly useful opportunity to explore the role of spaces and objects in the construction of workers' identities. One of the key drivers for the research was the focus on the experiences of people who work in shared work spaces where there is little autonomy over where individuals work. This contrasts with much research in this field of organisation/work studies, which typically considers corporate landscapes and is often centred on the office and 'desks' (for example, Elsbach 2003; Elsbach 2004; Warren 2006). Such studies appear to ignore the data-rich locations of those working in more 'fluid' and shared work spaces and neglects those working in, for example, vocational roles.

1.4 This fieldwork was conducted in 2008 in five hair salons in the UK and involved 42 men and women workers (ranging in age from 17 to 50), including stylists, colourists and junior trainees with different lengths of experience in the industry. This sample broadly resembles the demographics of the salons in

which the hairdressers worked, as well as of the industry as a whole, although it does not include mobile hairdressers or session hairdressers (those employed on location for film, television or magazine work).

1.5 The research design made extensive use of participant-led photography and photo-interviews. Analysis of the photo-interviews suggests the significance not only of what the participant hairdressers chose to photograph, but also of how they assembled their images of meaningful spaces and objects, usually grouping a number of printed images and discussing them together in order to illustrate the connections between elements of work identities. I argue that by arranging the images of their material work identities to create a photomontage, the workers were able to construct an 'identityscape' – multiple images viewed simultaneously, joined together by meaning, incorporating time and movement.

1.6 To help explore the 'work identity – visual narrative – visual method - identityscape' links, I draw on the work of both visual sociologists and the British artist David Hockney, namely the latter's 'photomontages' (Hockney 1983). Hockney suggests that viewing one photograph at a time cannot adequately incorporate time, memory or narrative (Hockney 1983; Hockney 1993). By using multiple photographs to represent something and by simultaneously juxtaposing multiple frames with each other, he argues, one can capture a clearer sense of time, movement and narrative – principal elements in identity construction.

1.7 This article begins by locating my research within the wider literature on the relationship between the construction of work identities, the significance of the temporal nature of identity and the spatial/ material landscape of work. Following this, the significance of using visual methods in work/identity research is discussed and a case is made for the value of using multiple images in such explorations, with particular reference to Hockney's (1983) photomontages. The data presented includes sets of images that demonstrate how six hairdressers arranged their photographs and told their stories – how they '-scaped' their identities. Finally, I discuss how identityscapes and photomontage contribute to research on work identities, particularly in relation to this field of employment.

Work identities and the spatial/ material landscape

2.1 The construction of identity is an ongoing dynamic process and is negotiated and renegotiated through interactions and relationships we experience in everyday life (Lawler 2008; Ricoeur 1980; Ybema et al. 2009). It is often through storytelling, narrative, talk, text and discursive acts that we construct who we are: 'we are what we talk' (Philips & Hardy 2002). However, as Philips and Hardy (2002) note, narratives can also include elements of the material world. Narratives are not just language-based but include material/ visual manifestations of identity too; the 'texts' we use to construct our identities can be the pictures, symbols, artefacts (Grant et al. 1998, cited by Fineman et al.2005) that populate everyday life.

2.2 This suggests that material landscapes of work may be used by workers to construct work identities. This identity-material nexus at work is discussed by Baldry (1999) and Warren (2006), who indicate that the use of objects in the workplace can help workers reassert control in response to managerial manipulations of space. For instance, Shortt (2010) highlights the role space and objects play in marking territory in hair salons, while Elsbach (2003, 2004) argues that 'physical identity markers' are important elements in the display of identity for office workers.

2.3 In addition, the texture of work identity narratives, visual and discursive, are finely engrained with elements of one's past experiences, nostalgia and emotions (Brown & Humphreys 2006), as well as present moments, identity work or current insecurities (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008) and anticipated futures or changing roles (Beech 2011; McAdams 1996). We weave time and a sense of movement into our visual biographies through the accumulated objects and possessions we might choose to display (Schultz Kleine et al. 1995), the depiction of the spaces we use and inhabit (Shortt 2010), and the memories and histories we recall in particular places (Brown & Humphreys 2006).

2.4 One of the objectives of this paper is to consider how these visual narratives of identity can contribute to our understanding of work identities and core to this is the appreciation of the temporal dimension of who we are. The interconnectedness of narrative and time not only adds to the complexity of work identities but also encourages us, as researchers, to be alert to how workers assemble their accounts of who they are and the multiple paths their visual biographies can take. Ricoeur (1980) reminds us that our stories do not always follow a chronological order and seemingly isolated elements from our lives are drawn together by our narratives. For instance, family photographs on one's desk, a mug from one's past university studies and recently awarded certificates might all go towards making up fragmented, detailed work identities, demonstrating that 'who we are' is continually subject to metamorphosis and movement.

2.5 Focusing on the construction of work identities, therefore, means that photographs of the spatial/material landscape of workplaces, such as those my participants produced of their salons, are not simply pictures that represent where hairdressers work, but rather operate more as intricate portraits of the ostensibly disconnected artefacts and spaces that comprise visual narratives of identity. Additionally, learning more about identity by focusing on the material landscape of those working in less autonomous, more shared work spaces tells us more about employment in specific occupations, such as hairdressing, and as such draws attention to key subjective aspects of work in salons and the individual hairdresser's daily experiences.

Visual methods and photographing identity

3.1 In exploring narrative identities, methodologically and conceptually, visual methodologies are a useful alternative to the usual reliance on the spoken word or written text. Typically, Alvesson et al. (2008) note only three approaches to researching identities: interviews, participant observation and reading texts. This reliance assumes participants (and perhaps the researcher), can already make sense of their

identities and can explain their 'selves' in words.

3.2 In contrast, removed from the narrative-centric approaches common to identity scholarship the visual world arguably offers a different '…text to be read giving clues about the cultures that produce it' (Warren 2005: 861). Prosser and Loxley (2008) remind us that such methodologies force us to re-think where we focus observations and how we can become more critical and insightful as researchers (see, for examples, Shortt 2010; Shortt & Warren 2012). Using visual methods places our engagement with the social world in a context that looks beyond what the visual illustrates and encourages us to construct knowledge from embodied, material and sensual aspects of everyday life (Gauntlett 2007; Halford & Knowles 2005; Harper 1984; Harper 1987; Rose 2001).

3.3 Visuality offers a distinctive philosophical foundation from which we can observe the complexities associated with, for example, relationships, interactions, space, objects, self and identity (see for example, Knowles & Sweetman 2004; Pink 2007; Prosser 1998). The use of images is additionally enriched when participants themselves take photographs of their everyday lives, allowing them to articulate the often 'intangible' and 'unfamiliar' (Packard 2008; Warren 2002). Putting the camera in the participants' hands encourages a different perspective on what is 'seen', for instance, as studied here, across the landscape of work/ identity.

3.4 However, much research on identity that uses participant-led photography privileges the one-by-one process of viewing images during photo-interviews and analysis. For instance, Warren's (2002; 2006) research on the aesthetic experience of the workplace asked participants to capture sensory aspects of their everyday lives on camera. In her interviews, in which participants discussed their photographs in order to show her 'how it feels to work here', they focused on one image at a time. Similarly, in other visual research (for example Heisley & Levy 1991; Knowles & Sweetman 2004; Pink 2007), we see perhaps an over-reliance on the single image. It appears almost taken for granted that interviewees will address 'a' photograph; 'the photograph can play a number of roles…the photograph can sharpen their memories' (Parker 2009), and 'an' image can be inserted into the photo-interview.

3.5 Although not always directly researching the construction of identity, some studies do hint at the use of multiple images. Some scholars may draw together multiple images in order to gain a more 'holistic' understanding of the cultural meanings being investigated (Collier 1979; Pink 2007). Collier (1979: 164), for example, argues that a macro-analysis 'is an open-inquiry approach to studying prints, films, and videos "in order to respond to their holistic content"' (cited by Heisley & Levy 1991: 259). Nevertheless, these techniques and ways of seeing involve categorisation and manipulation by the researcher and significant links are made between images that are 'arranged' once removed from participants and/ or once away from the field.

3.6 However, other researchers go further, not only grouping multiple images as a method of analysis in order to explore themes and patterns and relationships but even creating 'composite images' in their photo-essays. For instance, Goopy and Lloyd (2005) arrange images already captured by participants and then, working with them, create montage pictures as representations of participants' identities and social experiences. Woven into the montage are text-based quotations taken from the participants' interviews. Other possibilities for producing new insights are through making time and movement more explicit in working with images. An example is the chronological ordering of a group of images, as demonstrated by Heisley and Levy (1991), who ask participants to arrange photographs in order of events, representing time and movement through the various life events. Chaplin's (2004) own visual diaries use multiple images to depict personal life events and changes in spaces, places and her everyday life. Of course the very nature of a diary (visual or otherwise) suggests some sense of documenting movement and time.

3.7 However, provocative as these studies are their construction of montages and groups of images are all at the behest of the researcher or produced by the researcher and, arguably, this assists in the construction of representations they wish to explore. There appears to be very little by way of empirical research that addresses how in participant-led photography images are viewed and arranged by participants themselves in order to convey how they construct a sense of identity. There are very few studies that seem to consider in depth and in detail why participants might choose to view their images in groups and why this is so significant in identity research.

Participants' 'grouping' of photographs

3.8 Giving participants the opportunity to arrange and address their images in whatever manner they choose can enhance opportunities for them to produce complex narratives, as compared to their looking at images consecutively, as is usually the case when digital images are viewed on screen. Viewing images on screen contrasts to the, in some ways, more flexible ways in which analogue prints used to be viewed.

3.9 In my study of hairdressers, participants had been given single-use analogue cameras and their images were then both printed out as paper copies and digitised and uploaded onto a laptop. In the interview that followed participants were given a choice between looking at their images on screen or as printed analogue photographs. This allowed participants the opportunity to view their images in a way that was most familiar and comfortable to them. All the participants chose to look at the printed photographs and manually moved them around, laying them next to each other and picking them up. This, from the researcher's perspective, was most surprising, and made it possible to explore the significance of how photographs were handled, touched, viewed and arranged by participants. This 'examination' and the 'materiality' of the photographs were especially significant and it was this somewhat accidental discovery that led to a certain type of discussion within the photo-interviews and the exposure of the value of 'photomontages' in the production of identity narratives.

3.10 The materiality of the traditional analogue photograph, Edwards and Hart (2004) suggest, is inherent to its meaning, which is shaped by the relationships people have with photographs as objects. They argue that the 'sensual, material qualities' of a photograph act as 'bridges' between 'mental and physical worlds' (2004: 6), whereas the electronic, digitised image can encourage different sense-making. Similarly, Sassoon (2004) argues that the experiences of viewing on-screen images are profoundly different from physically interacting with the photograph as a material object. The 'materiality, sources of meaning and contexts' are all altered by digitising images because it removes them from their original context and format (2004: 192). Edwards and Hart argue that the materiality of a photograph 'makes the act of viewing more complex' (2004: 14) and as such, we must be better attuned to subtleties in the process of viewing, arranging and handling photographs.

3.11 It seemed to be the case that my participants' experience of viewing printed snapshots and their physical interaction with the photographs fostered a form of meaning making and the production of narratives that incorporated complexities around their work identities. The majority of the hairdressers did not simply select one photograph at a time to discuss. Out of the 42 hairdressers approached to be involved in the research, 38 produced photographs, and only 7 viewed ***all*** their images one at a time. Although they occasionally picked out a single image for discussion, most of them did not take one individual fragment of their captured material surroundings as a symbol of static meaning or representation. Rather, they viewed and arranged many of their photographs in groups and used these combinations to express and examine a wide variety of ideas and impressions, such as relationships with other people (clients and workmates), spaces to hide in and to escape to, territories, objects of embarrassment, objects of pride and work-based aspirations.

3.12 Hence the hairdressers viewed their photographs as a 'montage' – a group of images joined together by their meaning, incorporating both time and movement. Since much of the research on visualising identity, as discussed previously, appears to report one-by-one methods of viewing or groups of images manipulated by researchers, it is helpful to turn to the work of British artist David Hockney and his photomontages or 'joiners' (Hockney 1983). His ideas offer further insight into why an arrangement of images produces more vivid, complex stories.

Hockney's photomontage

3.13 David Hockney's work offers useful reflections on why multiple images tell better stories. Hockney created a number of photomontages or 'joiners', as he referred to them – images joined by meaning (Hockney 1983). He drew on the work of early twentieth century Cubist artists like Picasso and Braque, who placed great significance on layers of space, time and narrative and often painted all dimensions of an object or scene, so that they incorporate these elements into an otherwise two-dimensional piece of artwork - a painting or collage (Antliff & Leighten 2001; Cox 2000). When Hockney used photography as a two-dimensional medium, he too wanted to show how many still images may better depict space, time and narrative.

3.14 Hockney captured numerous images of particular personal experiences and placed, arranged and grouped the images to form larger montages depicting multiple views and aspects of an event or landscape. For example, 'The Scrabble Game' (Hockney 1983) – depicted below in Figure 1 - tells the story of a game Hockney played with friends. Hockney (see Curtis 1994) said that he wanted to capture various 'looks, glances and expressions, all of which might synthesize into a living portrait of that person'. In his other works too, such as the *'Pearlblossom Highway'* (1986) and *'The Desk'* (1984), we see how these fragmented montages (made up of many Polaroid photographs) depict Hockney's objects and landscapes from many angles, rather than one static view. By choosing to arrange his multiple images together, Hockney argued he was able to create a clearer sense of narrative and context, a complex story made up of characters and experiences, and provide a way of incorporating a sense of movement, time and memories; he claimed that 'memory is part of vision' (see Curtis 1994).

Figure 1. David Hockney *"The Scrabble Game Jan 1 1983"*, Photographic Collage

Figure 1: 39 x 58" Edition of 20 © David Hockney
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'These all go together…' - the '-scaping' of identity

4.1 I now turn to six sets of photographs assembled by participants, using them as examples of the '-scaping' of identity typical of hairdressers across the sample. Participants were asked to take photographs of spaces and objects that were 'most meaningful' to them and which said something about 'who you are at work'. As a guide, it was suggested that they each take up to twelve photographs over three days. The comments quoted below come from the face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that followed the production and development of the images.

4.2 The photographs and narratives below (taken from Shortt 2010) show a clear temporal dimension, with the hairdressers talking about current experiences, memories of the past, being inspired, aspirations with regards to career, growth as a professional and anticipations of the future. Their links with other workmates also show a clear spatial dimension. The links they make between images of objects (including people) and particular spaces in groups emerge from how they talk about how the images together say something about who they were, who they are and who they will be.

4.3 The links hairdressers made between the temporal stages in their careers and the people who influenced them crossed age groups and seniority, although there were also some individual differences. Tim[1] (a junior hairdresser still in training in London) made especially strong links between the sections of the salon where he worked and the individuals he had worked with in them by bringing particular pictures together. For instance, he picked up the two images in Figure 2 at the same time, laid them next to each other and said:

> *'These two… these go together, they are sections where I have worked and work in now. This is where Graham works*
> (points to the top left image in Figure 2, below)
> *…I helped him two years ago… he probably taught me everything I know, not on a technical side, just in a "what I need to know to do well", and gave me confidence as well. He, Leo, and Brian are the three main ones in the salon. If you wanna do well, you have to help one of them…'*

4.4 Tim then told me about a period of time in the salon where he was *'messing about a lot'* and *'getting into trouble'*. He continued his story about working with Graham (pictured in the top left image in Figure 2):

> *Me: Is there any significance in why you took this at this angle…?*
> *'That's how I always saw it, this is where I was…'cos I was always standing here, watching…*

he helped me, he helped me become better in the salon... I really enjoyed helping him...he's kind of like a father figure. This other one...this is where I am now (pointing to the bottom right image in Figure 2, below) *...that's where Nigel works...that's where Russ works, and Jim works here. Nigel is a cool guy...he does the bands...breaks all the rules and then Jim is successful...he's got a family and kids...that type of guy, and then Russ is like, a perfectionist, follows all the rules of hairdressing...'*
Me: Have you got an image or a 'type'?
'I feel like I'm nicking all of them, and making like a "super hairdresser", a "super- Tim" kinda thing! Like, taking all of their good points and putting them into one...'cos I wanna do better than all three of them (laughs)*...'*

Figure 2. Tim (junior hairdresser in London)

4.5 Within Tim's story there is a sense of progression and growth. By laying these images next to each other, he is able to describe his career development in terms of these spaces and people over a period of time. In addition, there is an element of eager ambition in Tim's words, and it is clear that his aspirations for his future career are an amalgamation of all his experiences in these spaces with his colleagues.

4.6 Another junior hairdresser, Maria, who works in Bath, also talked about her images in a way which emphasises their location in her individual time frame (Figure 3). Much like Tim, she arranged two pictures together, laying them out on the table in front of her to illustrate her anticipation about her future career.

Me: What does it make you think of, when you look at these pictures?
'My future... I do like to think of myself as a hairdresser but obviously I've got a little bit more to do... so the more and more I do of people in here, the more and more confident I feel in myself to do things...But I do like to think of myself as a hairdresser, when I do look at it, I do think, oh, I'm a hairdresser...I know I'm nearly there, and it's getting more exciting now 'cos I can't wait to be able to just go into the salon and be a stylist...'

4.7 As she viewed herself in these images, two taken by a colleague of her working and one she captured of her client, there seemed to be an element of excitement about what is still to come: when she looks at these pictures, she seems to see herself as something that she almost is (a fully qualified hairdresser), but is not yet; she sees her 'future self'. Halfway through her story, she picked up the bottom left image and placed it with the first two photographs. She told me she could see that her client had *'enjoyed the experience'*, that she felt that she had done a *'good job'*, and *'I didn't need any help'*.

Figure 3. Maria (junior hairdresser in Bath)

4.8 Even the more experienced hairdressers explained the development of their careers around individuals they pictured in their photographs. Nigel, an experienced hairdresser in London, grouped the three photographs below (Figure 4). He first spoke about the man in the far left image and then added the top right image to his story. Later, he again added another image, displayed in the bottom right. Nigel's story around all three images describes how a number of colleagues inspired him in the past and how others inspire him now.

Figure 4. Nigel (hairdresser in London)

'*I took a picture of Leo because he was one of the first people I helped as junior some years ago now. He made me into who I am today…*
(Leo is pictured in the far left photograph)…
Jim, who is another guy I helped…he's another inspirational person to me
(Jim is pictured in the top right photograph).
This is my area where I work now
(selects the bottom right image and places it next to the first two images)
…and I like working there 'cos I like the people in it and we all bounce off each other…that's a positive little pocket of the salon just there…'

4.9 Nigel uses all three images to help him tell his story; from past experiences during training through to now, all located within the space he shares with his colleagues. By creating this montage of images he is able to narrate a sense of self by incorporating temporal dimensions of his work life; looking back to claim his career identities based on past experiences, people and space.

4.10 Other hairdressers pictured their links to other people mainly through objects. Ali, an experienced hairdresser who works alone and runs her own small salon on the outskirts of the provincial city of Worcester, constructs her identity in relation to the meaningful objects scattered about the salon, many of which are connected to her loyal, longstanding clients. Unlike some of the hairdressers in larger salons, Ali did not talk about her work colleagues and instead created a montage of images (Figure 5 below) to convey her past and present relationships with clients. Several images picture gifts she had been given by her clients that she chooses to display in her salon: a toy monkey, a china ornament of a cat, a tomato plant. Ali first sifted through all her photographs and then selected the three below simultaneously. She set them out on her lap and began her story.

'I love all these! Look at his little face
(pointing to the toy monkey)…
Isn't he nice! Ah, he's so nice and it reminds me of Anna because she's so lovely…and there's my Cara plant
(pointing to the plant in the bottom left image – Ali refers to the plant as a 'Cara plant' because a client called Cara bought it for her)
She bought me that plant…bless her…she always brings me little plants'.
When I asked Ali why these were on display in the salon, she said, *'I'm not going to hide it out the back! I appreciate the things people give me…big time…'*.

Figure 5. Ali (hairdresser in Worcester)

4.11 Ali continued to talk about her relationships with clients and later pointed to a painting on the wall (which she did not photograph), telling me that it too was a gift, from a client who had died. Ali and others (particularly from the smaller salons) told me they liked to have familiar things around them that carry memories of old workplaces or clients. Ali said, *'I like to have memories of the shop I used to have'* since her clients were part of *'that past'* and many were still with her today. These findings echo other research

on hairstylists and their relationships with clients which discusses the emotions experienced by those working in such 'intimate' contexts (for example, Cohen 2010).

4.12 However, in picturing spaces that were important to them, hairdressers also looked outside their salon. Clara, a newly qualified hairdresser in London, spoke about her images of several doorways located on the street outside the salon, especially one of the doorways in Figure 6:

Figure 6. Clara (hairdresser in London)

> *'This is where I used to come and hang out when I was training and I still go there now! I think it's my favourite place…! It's a regular place to go…hang out…have a fag…we gossip here and people watch…it's important to be able to go here, to escape'*

4.13 Beth, an experienced hairdresser located at another salon in London, also took photographs in the cobbled side street next to her workplace, where she socialised with other workers:

Figure 7. Beth (hairdresser in London)

> *'Having a fag here…you always meet the same people, it's sociable and we all sit in the same place…and this* (pointing towards the bottom right image), *this is our smoking corner and this is my smoking buddy…that's where we go…outside the salon, cup of tea and a chat!'*

4.14 Conversations in these spaces turn to private lives: boyfriends, girlfriends, dates, house purchases and children. These hairdressers slip away from the salon and grab snippets of discussion and catch the next instalments of the stories being shared. The corners and streets outside the salon are frequented territories and are locations of privacy and escape where the hairdressers can remain unobserved for a few secluded moments of the working day and enjoy secret conversations with friends. Again, we see parallels here with other hairdressing employment related research, such as Lindsay (2004) who also emphasizes trainees' and young stylists' relationships and friendships with other staff and workmates. Furthermore, this resonates with Bolton et al. (2001), who explore young workers' photos of the places and spaces in which they find privacy at work through their everyday use and experience of back rooms, toilets and secluded corners.

4.15 These hairdressers' stories highlight several key points. The hairdressers draw attention to the interconnectedness of visual narratives of identity across different times and experiences and across the landscape of work. For example, images discussed by some more experienced hairdressers look back at past identities, past experiences and past relationships, whereas some junior hairdressers say more about their future careers and looking forward. They bring together multiple images at one time to help them convey temporal elements of their identities. We have seen here how some hairdressers use their landscapes to articulate their identities, for example Clara and Tim, and how others deliberately construct their landscapes to reflect their identities, such as Ali.

4.16 As a result, these landscapes of work, made up of spaces, objects and people, are not simply 'scenes' or backdrops to their identities or just illustrations of who they are, but are integral to the fabric and substance of their 'selves' at work. By arranging their images in this way they are essentially '-scaping' who they are and by drawing together what often appear to be disparate components of their working worlds, they create a landscape of identity, an identityscape. The production of these identityscapes were facilitated by the use of visual methods and the opportunity for the hairdressers to capture their own photographs and arrange their own montages of the spatial/ material worlds in which they work. Relying on words alone might not have produced such rich discussions and might have precluded the hairdressers from drawing out the complexities surrounding their sense of self at work.

Discussion

5.1 The stories above weave together temporal aspects of identity: past experiences, current moments and future aspirations. The meanings and stories that are associated with the captured images incorporate memories, inspirations, aspirations and a sense of growth. But what is special and striking is the way in which these meanings and stories have been constructed using the visual method adopted.

5.2 Through the use of photography, and most importantly, through the way in which the hairdressers actually arranged and placed their photographs – in montages – we can see how seemingly rather fragmented disconnected elements of their material worlds are in fact inherently connected by their role in the formation of identity; through the eyes of hairdressers portraying and projecting their identities in this way, we see how they construct an identityscape. These visual narratives, captured on photographic film, are carefully chosen, placed, grouped and connected and unite in their role of narrating work identities.

Nonetheless, these groups of images were not assembled together in a random sense. Instead, we see the hairdressers carefully choosing which images, out of the twelve (sometime twenty-four) exposures they made that are most helpful and relevant in terms of telling their stories.

5.3 What is clearly central to these workers is the ability to draw on different aspects of their lives, and use multiple viewpoints to incorporate a sense of time and movement. For example, Tim and Nigel chose to talk about several images at once that depict spaces in which they had worked in the past, and currently, and the people within them. They note how these spaces had been (and continue to be) important pockets of inspiration in their careers and play an important role in their construction of self.

5.4 This temporal aspect to identity construction is, as noted earlier, of vital significance when producing a narrative (Lawler 2008; Ricoeur 1980). Layers of self overlap and interconnect to form a complex colourful patchwork, stitched together with experiences, memories and time, allowing individuals to continually construct and reconstruct who they are; here, through work space, people, clients, gifts, friendships. Indeed, this speaks directly to the nature of hairdressing employment itself - for example, workers often move through apprenticeships and as such, 'training' is both a set of relationships with others and movement through time.

5.5 The hairdressers' creation of photomontages/ identityscapes like those discussed above exemplify key themes that David Hockney identifies; interconnecting shards and fragments of spatial/ material significance were brought together to help tell their stories. For the participants the singularity of images was not enough. For example, Maria discussed how she felt about her work today and how she also pictured herself in the future, and felt it necessary and essential to her story that she incorporate *three* images so that she might express her 'self' and the dynamic ongoing production of her identity.

5.6 The experience of viewing only one image at a time was something Hockney found wanting. He argued that viewing one image at a time was not sufficient and would have perhaps found limitations with such studies that privilege this way of 'viewing'. We are not 'one-eyed fixed people', Hockney (1983) contends, we have two eyes and our vision consistently incorporates narrative and time. His philosophy behind using photomontage allows for multiple viewpoints and the ability to convey the movement of events and occurrences. This is a belief also shared by John Berger, one of the key influences on visual studies in the UK, who eloquently states, 'We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself…' (1972: 9). Furthermore, we can connect with Berger's (1972) notion of 'seeing' as neither static nor stable, just as we understand identity as that which is not static or stable. As noted previously, individuals draw on multiple experiences, chronologically or not, in order to maintain and produce a sense of self.

5.7 Yet there are also differences between how Hockney uses photomontages and how the hairdressers construct theirs. In Hockney's montages we see time and narrative contained within particular events (such as a Scrabble game) or locations and, although he uses multiple images to help create a sense of movement, this is still within a specific period of time. His montages are more self-conscious in their production and are far more 'considered' in their arrangement – as viewers, we might see how and why these images have been joined together. The way in which the hairdressers arrange their identityscapes, however, is different from Hockney's in so far as their montages are less self-conscious and therefore more 'naturally' and instinctively produced and arranged. Moreover, their links between the images are not always clearly apparent and the meanings only constructed by the authors of the photographs themselves. Some hairdressers draw numerous periods of time together and capture movement and memories over much wider expanses of time, incorporating 'life' stories, from seemingly disconnected moments, rather than particular events.

5.8 Interestingly, we might also note that the hairdressers are able to create their identityscapes using far fewer images than Hockney, who uses hundreds of images to capture fragments of time and movement during an event or at a specific location. The hairdressers are able to construct a much more extensive 'story' using far fewer images. As visual identity researchers we must be attentive to the possibility that much can be gleaned from a small number of images, as participants may be able to convey complexities without the need for a copious collection of images.

5.9 Finally, the participants in this study conducted their '-scaping' with analogue images, rather than looking at them on screen, so they were able to physically arrange their images to create these montages. For visual researchers this is a key and relevant point, given that the use of digital media is often regarded as the most interactive, efficient and up-to-date approach to participant-led/ collaborative research, and that some consider digital media as crucial to the current popularity and adoption of visual methods in research. It is not the intention of this article to argue that we should only view images as 'original' printed objects or to advocate the analogue over the digital, but rather to call attention to how different ways of viewing images can both preclude and permit certain kinds of discussion. The participants' use of analogue images reminds us to consider again the benefits (and drawbacks) of all forms of images when using visual methodologies.

Conclusions

6.1 The purpose of this article is to contribute to our understanding of work identities in relation to the spatial/material landscape of work and to consider the role of visual methods and photomontage in the study of work identities, for instance those of the hairdressers I interviewed.

6.2 The data and discussion presented generates several overarching conclusions. Firstly, in capturing visual narratives of identity on photographic film, workers choose to capture elements of their past, present and future that are embedded in people, spaces and 'things'. Secondly, it highlights that in order to tell stories about who they are in relation to their material working worlds, workers draw on disparate

facets of their workplace landscape and although seemingly disconnected, when pulled together, form a picture of identity – an identityscape. Thirdly, this study has emphasised the complexities associated with viewing photographs in visual-based identity research and has interrogated the usefulness and meaning behind viewing multiple images at one time. Certainly in work identity/participant-led photographic research, workers find great relevance in arranging their images together, creating photomontages of images that help them tell stories about who they are at work. By arranging their images together they incorporate links and meanings between characters, objects and spaces and importantly, a sense of movement and time, looking both forward and back to claim career identities; as Hockney suggests, multiple viewpoints tell 'better' stories in greater context. It is a relational/ collective way of 'viewing' photographs (rather than absolute/ solitary) that allows these workers to construct identityscapes. This article underscores the relation between - even the inseparability of - identity and the visual/concept and method.

Notes

[1]These are pseudonyms but these hairdressers have consented to their images being published in academic work.

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