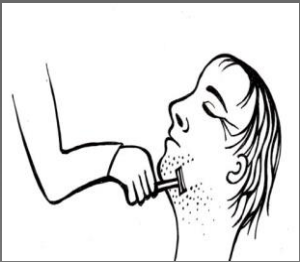


Appearance isn't only skin deep: embodiment, masculinity and everyday grooming practices in dementia care



Aims of this presentation

1. To focus on the shaving encounter and raise questions for how shaving activities are carried out.
2. To ask what a focus on this kind of every day care task might tell us about gender identity and gender relations in dementia care.
3. What meaning might this grooming routine hold for the man with dementia who is being shaved?



Ageing, masculinity and embodiment...

- Not an absence of men but an absense of critical analysis (Calasanti, 2003)
- 'Maintenance of masculinty and autonomy of later life' (Arber et al, 2003)
- Lack of research in how men experience their bodies, (Robinson and Hockey, 2011)

Male Shaving

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Fieldwork, participants & spaces

Fieldwork methods:

- Observations and filming
- Interviews including 'appearance biographies'

Fieldwork settings:

- Day centre
- Care homes
- Hospital wards



Resistant Bodies

“it [shaving] is very difficult. I think you have to assess what kind of mood they are in....”

Unpredictable Bodies

“there again I could go in with somebody one day, say a guy, and he will...he’ll be, he’ll give himself a wash anddo you want to wear this today? Yeah yeah yeah. Yet the next day I could go in and he could be completely different. He will be very difficult. He won’t let me wash, won’t let me shave him, and very difficult to dress. That’s how they are, so changeable.”

Gendered bodies

- “yeah well, because I’ve had that in the past when I was next door [referring to his previous work on a male only ward] we had one guy and he said ‘oh my god, at last someone...a proper shave’. He said ‘I’m not being funny but some of these women; they think they’re shaving their bloody legs’. And that’s it, he said ‘oh it’s nice to have a proper...oh that’s great that’. And it’s things like that you know’

Masculine Coping Strategies

Brigit says the razor is not fully charged and she says she will have to do the shave with the razor on charge, connected to the plug socket. The wire is reaching across Samuel's bed and his low arm chair has been moved so that it is very close to the bed. Brigit begins to pull at Samuel's skin, and asks Samuel to lift his head. He says he can't due to a neck injury and jokes "they tried to hang me"... Samuel lifts his head up and has his mouth shut but he is laughing from his joke so that his head is jiggling. Brigit tells him to stop it and Samuel makes the hum sound of the razor. He is making Brigit laugh, and she says she can't get to his whiskers and he says he can't get his chin any further back. Brigit says that she understands and Samuel says "have you done yet?". She finishes, but I notice that she hasn't done his top lip. I ask Samuel 'How does it feel?'. He says "it'll do" then he says "I haven't got a date tonight".

HCP05-2 Fieldnotes 06.01.12



The Makings of Social Man



“[shaving is] a culturally defined and refined process entirely devoted to converting the biological man into the social man....it can be linked to the very making of their masculinity”

(G. Bruce Retallack, 1999)



I

I ask him again what having a shave is like and he says “horrible, you want to get it out of the way quickly with as little discomfort as possible”. Then he said “you often don’t have a lot of time before work and then away you go”.

Inter-corporeal - bodies working together

Brigit puts a towel around Samuel's front and shoulders, she then sprays the smooth textured foam and rubs it across his face'....

Samuel says "don't chop away" and Brigit says "ok I'm trying not to" and begins to pull the razor for longer sweeps. ..she is on his chin now and the strokes are shorter, Samuel seems to move his face with the razor pulling his mouth up to push out his chin.

[Fieldnotes HCP05-2 29.10.11]



Embodied memories

Steven says right Larry you can shave now. He tells Larry to look in the mirror so he can see what to do. Larry looks intently into the mirror and shakily lifts the razor to his face, he places the razor on his left side burn and begins to shave, steadily and slowly looking in the mirror the whole time. He pushes his face out with his tongue to make his skin taut or sucks in depending on the area of his face, although hesitant at times, there is a naturalness to the motions, known motions to him.

Fieldnotes HCP03-3 date.

Conclusions to date

- What can every day care activities tell us about gender relations in care?
- Shaving is an activity steeped in symbolism that locates a man culturally and socially.
- What do the processes involved in every day tasks mean for men's gendered personhood?
- What opportunities are there for deeper considerations to embodiment.

