Performing: A Grounded Theory of Employment Experiences of Room Attendants at Five Star Hotels on the Gold Coast of Queensland, Australia

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Abstract

My research makes visible the ‘employment experiences’ of female hotel room attendants working in 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast region of South East Queensland, Australia. I adopt a socialist feminist critical theory epistemological perspective predicated on removing invisibility of hotel room attendants. I perceive invisibility as non-recognition or non-acknowledgement of room attendants by hotel management and some hotel guests, despite room attendants’ conspicuous presence. Although a number of studies comment on the invisibility of hotel room attendants (Lars Onsøyen, Reidar Mykeltun & Trygve Steiro, 2009; Rachel Silvey, 2004; Kathi Weeks, 2004), the authors do not present room attendants’ experiences holistically from their perspectives. I aimed to fill this void in hospitality knowledge by investigating employment experiences of hotel room attendants from their perspectives. To investigate hotel room attendants’ perceived empirical invisibility and guided by my epistemological philosophy, I adopted a qualitative social constructionist grounded theory methodology. In following the original Glaserian tenets, my research was grounded in room attendants’ employment experiences without limitations imposed by assuming any a priori theory. Emerging from my study was the theory of Performing.

As a conceptual model, Performing represents a holistic understanding of room attendants’ employment experiences as they daily transform hotel rooms to required standards. Performing encompasses the social drama of human interactions within a hotel arising out of a co-performance by room attendants, other hotel employees and guests. The daily tasks form a basic social structural process (BSSP) of transforming rooms under intense time pressures and with hard physical labour while achieving prescribed 5 star hotels’ quality standards. Room attendants are employed within the basic social structural process (BSSP) of hotel hierarchical organisation, and are affected by basic social psychological processes (BSPP), associated with social status stratifications that arise during interactions with guests, management and other employees. The consequences of this employment shape a basic psychological process (BPP) of ‘self’,...
which seeks to find dignity in being a hotel room attendant. Performing as a theory is a socio-psychological process of defining self as a room attendant and finding dignity in the course of completing daily tasks and interacting with guests and other hotel employees as social actors on 5 star hotel stages. Upon these stages, room attendants are scripted into roles, which are undervalued, and under-recognised if not invisible. In these roles, they are exploited, marginalised and oppressed by the hegemonic, patriarchal and hierarchical perceptions of employment value within society and power structures endemic in the participating hotels, representative of developed world 5 star hotel settings.

The opulent environment of luxury 5 star hotel rooms is the main stage. Performing as a conceptual model represents room attendants’ shared construction of their reality through co-performance with guests and other hotel employees. Items such as room attendants’ uniforms, cleaning equipment and other paraphernalia are props to their act. Performing shows room attendants are involved in constructing the setting, and projecting an image (conscious and/or unconscious) as a performance for guests. While many aspects of their work and related roles were issues of concern, the women participating in my research revealed that a positive aspect to their work was finding dignity in their employment. My examination of invisibility of room attendants is intended to provide a deep understanding of this occupation, with practical consequences for hotel praxis. Such praxis would incorporate greater acknowledgement of room attendants’ value to the hotel, and recognise their potential as a community of knowledge to improve daily operations, and enhance guest interactions.
This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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Sandra L Kensbock
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Preface

I identified my epistemological approach as a socialist feminist critical theorist. My research is a constructionist study rather than being framed within post-positivistic epistemology. Inherent in a constructionist paradigm is a foundation of subjective values. Axiologically, these values include primacy of subject matter, emergence and portrayal, pluralism, rationality, serendipity, intuition, personal involvement and partiality (Thomas Schwandt, 1989). Based on my axiology, my research championed a minority/marginalised view, in this case, of female hotel room attendants. My study was focused exclusively on women’s experiences and women’s experiences only. I adopted this stance because the extant literature demonstrates that women’s voices have been omitted in many research agendas. In writing my thesis, I used the first person to provide an expression of myself as researcher and to acknowledge my situatedness. I have also identified the first names of cited authors (if I was able to obtain this information) the first time they appear in the text in order to recognise the writers’ embodied beings.

I dedicate my thesis to all women working as hotel room attendants with my greatest respect and admiration.
Acknowledgements

This thesis represents the finalisation of my PhD journey. I offer my sincere appreciation to the participating Gold Coast hotels and particularly the room attendants who spoke candidly about their employment experiences.

I am grateful to my supervisors for their editorial guidance and sage advice throughout my journey into research that challenges hegemonic social norms influencing the hospitality industry, and hospitality research. I particularly thank Adjunct Professor Gayle Jennings for her perseverance in guiding my intellectual development as a qualitative researcher, and sharing my PhD journey with great patience. I also offer my heartfelt appreciation to Associate Professor Janis Bailey and Dr Anoop Patiar, for their timely responses, constructive feedback and friendship as I prepared this thesis.

I also offer a special thank you to my PhD colleagues Mary-Anne Smith and Ulrike Kachel, my children Jasper and Janis and my good friend Louise Lawson, for their never-wavering support during my PhD journey.
Chapter One

Fundamentals

My research was axiologically framed by my previous experiences as a hotel room attendant and night auditor. In my own lived experience, I observed that hotel room attendants tended to be unnoticed or lacked acknowledgment by guests and staff as they performed their daily duties. Driving my research was a desire to understand which social actors and agents contributed to that invisibility, how it occurred, and why these women were treated in this manner. Given this axiological position my research was driven by a socialist feminist critical theory epistemology. (Sandie Kensbock, 2011).

We are the heart of the hotel.
(Catherine, Gold Coast hotel room attendant for 13 years).

Introduction

My research makes visible the employment experiences of female hotel room attendants working in international standard 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast of South East Queensland, Australia. My thesis is predicated on removing invisibility of hotel room attendants. I perceive invisibility as non-recognition or non-acknowledgement by the hotel’s management hierarchy and some guests, despite room attendants’ conspicuous presence. Invisibility is a symptom of gendered employment, which can be defined as the sexual division of work tasks in patriarchal social systems such as hotels (Soile Veijola, 2009). In this thesis, I explore the nature of room attendants’
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experience of *invisibility* and demonstrate the social processes that render these women invisible.

A foundation for my understanding of this *invisibility* was Simone de Beauvoir’s (1949/1972) influential view of the term *woman* as a socially constructed differentiation of ‘the other’. This ‘othering’ process provided a feminist perspective to consider women room attendants’ gendered socio-subordination, and others’ lack of appreciation of their value. Although there is much research on gender segmentation in the workplace and gendering of organisations, I have not located a study that thoroughly addresses the nature of hotel room attendants’ *invisibility*. While a number of studies comment on the invisibility of hotel room attendants (Lars Onsøyen, Reidar Mykeltun & Trygve Steiro, 2009; Silvey, 2004; Kathi Weeks, 2004; Robert Woods & Douglas Viehland, 2000), my thesis differs from them by holistically co-constructing the women’s employment experiences. Given this perceived gap in the literature, my study is exploratory, descriptive and explanatory in nature.

My research was exploratory due to a perceived lack of information available about room attendants’ subjective employment experiences. I provide a descriptive approach through detailed accounts of the daily employment experiences of room attendants. My research is explanatory because it explains social relations and advances knowledge about hotel organisational structure, room attendants’ labour processes and the nature of social interactions within hotels. The descriptive and explanatory perspectives support my exploratory approach to determine the causes of the hotel social structural phenomena and the consequences for room attendants. My thesis argues that hotels, with their patriarchal, hierarchical management styles, based on current sociocultural perceptions, fail to recognise the importance of room attendants. I particularly examine the largely unacknowledged (*invisible*) room attendants as a community of value within hotels.

In studying room attendants’ employment experiences I constructed a conceptual model of *Performing* to represent room attendants’ perceptions of their daily tasks and their human interactions within a hotel. *Performing* reflects a social drama of co-performance by room attendants, guests and other employees within
hotels. This social drama is represented by the term *Performing* and the thesis contains rich descriptions supported by theoretical insights. The findings have pragmatic implications for 5 star hotels in the settings I studied. *Performing* as a theory holds that room attendants engage in a socio-psychological process of defining self and finding dignity in the course of completing their daily responsibilities. Their job, and their identity as workers, is influenced by interaction with guests and other hotel employees as social actors on the stage of the 5 star hotels. Room attendants’ are scripted into roles on this stage, roles which are undervalued and under-recognised, if not *invisible*. In these roles, they are exploited, marginalised and oppressed by the hegemonic, patriarchal and hierarchical perceptions of employment value within contemporary society. *Performing* reveals the power structures endemic in 5 star hotel settings.

The contribution of *Performing* as a crystallised dramaturgical representation of room attendant employment attempts to appeal to multiple audiences. I hope that women employed as room attendants will recognise their embodied voices, and that management and supervisors will gain a richer understanding of the women who play a critical role in providing and maintaining high quality in servicing rooms. I do not offer quantified measurements, and my participants are not a representative sample as, from my social constructionist perspective, all meaning is intersubjective; that is, understanding and meaning are constructed and negotiated between people during social interactions. I strived to be thoroughly reflexive and was mindful of ethical imperatives in order to facilitate ‘voice’ for room attendants, recognising their marginalised existence. My approach in this thesis includes a constructionist grounded theory methodology, which to my knowledge has not been applied to any published research on room attendants. I am not aware of relevant unpublished works or other language texts.

Having set this context, the purpose of this chapter is to situate my research within the context of the Australian hospitality industry. I initially define key terminology including invisibility, marginalisation, exploitation, oppression and community of value. Following this I outline what is currently known about room attendants’ employment from prior research. This literature includes six prior studies of room attendants, and broader literature related to physical and psychological
implications of the tasks room attendants perform. I then indicate the hospitality industry’s economic significance and briefly consider inequities, such as low pay, inherently related to room attendants’ *invisibility*. I briefly examine the support room attendants receive from the relevant trade union. Finally, this chapter presents the significance and scope of my research. My study draws on the disciplines of sociology, psychology, philosophy, economics and ergonomics, and as a consequence seeks to provide a holistic and inter-disciplinary perspective of room attendants’ employment. Exploring hospitality practice across disciplines encourages the development of hospitality as an academic discipline (Lashley, 2000). Specifically, my study highlights the physical and social impacts, from room attendants’ perspectives, of their employment. Acknowledging these perspectives will encourage hotel management to focus on, and value, the human factors that play a sizeable role in the financial success of hotels.

**Clarification of Terminology**

Throughout this thesis I use a number of terms, which are clarified here. My use of the term *invisibility* is connected to terms marginalisation, exploitation and oppression. While not physically invisible, room attendants are often indiscernible or unnoticed by others, and their work is viewed as unimportant and commonplace (Onsøyen et al., 2009). When I use the term *invisible*, I am specifically referring to how room attendants were ignored both operationally and socially due to their low occupational and social status. I use ‘marginalisation’ to denote room attendants’ exclusion from organisational decision-making and their perceptions of lack of recognition by management. ‘Exploitation’ I use in the sense of hotel owners appropriating the effort of room attendants’ physical and emotional labour to benefit the organisation. I adopt Neil Thompson’s (1998) definition of ‘oppression’ as “degrading treatment of individuals...brought about by the dominance of one group over another; the negative and demeaning exercise of power” (p. 10). I apply all of these terms to describe conditions inherent in room attendants’ employment.
My reference to room attendants as a ‘community of value’ means an economically defined group with unrecognised and ignored knowledge or wisdom (Nancy Fraser, 1997). Many room attendants had years of practical experience in their occupation, resulting in an accumulation of knowledge amassed from practice at differing hotel settings, contexts and experiences. ‘Situated knowledge’ is the notion that knowledge originates from a particular perspective and is generated by the experiences one has (Cindi Katz, 2001). I use ‘gendering’ to describe systematic structuring behaviour and practices associated with women in society (Louis Althusser, 1971). This was evident in gendering of employment at the participating hotels, with room attendants mainly being women. My thesis is premised on the argument that patriarchy is a core organisational feature of capitalism. This patriarchy is founded on a social system of male domination, which oppresses women and keeps women in subservient gendered positions (Mary Jackman, 2001).

**Hospitality Industry**

Hotels are a major component of the hospitality industry. The ‘hospitality industry’ encompasses a range of commercial operations that provide travellers with accommodation, food and beverages (Peter Burns & Jo Anne Lester, 2005). The etymology of ‘hospitality’ is in the Latin *hospes*, formed from *hostis* meaning ‘stranger’, and evolving into ‘*hospitalitas*’, which means the entertainment of guests (Barbara Santich, 2007). Since the 1980s, the term ‘hospitality’ has been applied as a label to encompass commercial operations and also as a specialised field of academic research (Alison Morrison, 2002; Conrad Lashey, Paul Lynch & Morrison, 2007). The term ‘hotel’ derives from Roman categories of commercial establishments including hospita, stabula, tabernae, and popinae; hospita (hotels) that offer rooms for rent, and often food and beverages to overnight guests (Kevin O’Gorman, 2007).

**Room Attendants**

There are many labels for persons who clean hotel rooms. Common terms include maid, housemaid, chambermaid and floor housekeeper (John Lennon & Roy Wood,
The gendered nature of room attendant work is reflected in these titles, particularly the use of ‘maid’, which highlights the more traditional, historical aspects of the work of women employed in domestic service in private homes (Onsøyen et al., 2009). This language reflects attitudes which marginalise women, and incorporates euphemistic sexual references which relegate women to subservient functions, dependent and ‘other’ to men (Madelin Schneider, Georgina Tucker & Mary Scoviak, 1999). ‘Cleaning lady’ is a more colloquial term and, as Robin Lakoff (1973) observed, “the more demeaning the job, the more the person holding it (if female, of course) is likely to be described as a lady. Thus, the euphemism ‘cleaning lady’ is at least as common as cleaning woman” (p. 59). The more contemporary term, ‘room attendant’, is defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2000) as ‘someone who cleans hotels’. While the ILO uses this politically correct and non-sexist term, it also uses the term ‘chambermaid’. Dual use of these terms reveals a shallow understanding of or appreciation for the reasons for the politically correct term. The labels applied to women working as room attendants reflect the sexist assumptions of language (Dale Spender, 1980). In sum, the various labels for hotel room attendants demonstrate language used as a form of bias to reinforce a gendered social and workplace hierarchy (Margrit Eichler & Mary Anne Burke, 2006). The Australian and New Zealand Standard Occupation Classification (2006) defined a room attendant’s role as performing ‘cleaning and housekeeping duties in hotels’.

**Previous Research**

The exploratory nature of my research sought to provide ‘voice’ for room attendants, so I adopted a qualitative approach using grounded theory methodology. While I recognise that grounded theory methodology usually commences without any *a priori* literature search, this brief review of extant literature was conducted to demonstrate the uniqueness of my study. Further, although the *invisibility* of room attendants has been reported in extant literature, it has not been studied in any detailed, empirical way. ‘Back of house’ hotel employees, particularly room attendants, have been largely ignored by academic researchers. The main focus of research in hotels has been on financial performance and management styles
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(Onsøyen et al., 2009). A significant point to note is that despite the passage of time, and literature covering varying national contexts and differing management styles, little has changed in room attendants’ working conditions. Informative as existing studies are, they do not examine holistically room attendants’ employment experiences and *invisibility* – the focus of my research. Thus my research served to identify and eliminate this gap in the literature by using a grounded theory methodology. My appendices further demonstrate my knowledge of literature related to room attendants.

Room servicing has been largely ignored by researchers, with one study finding that “little may be gleaned from the literature about room attendants and the nature of their work” (Patricia Powell & Diane Watson, 2006, p. 298). The embodied experiences of housekeeping, despite being a defining component of hospitality, have been marginalised and regarded as operational and unimportant by researchers, in comparison with intellectual activity of hospitality management training (Roy Wood, 2000). Such marginalisation and lack of regard reinforces the *invisibility* of the occupation of room attending, as the process of knowledge production determines what is, and what is not, of interest. My literature search also revealed that while there has been some research into the physiological and psychological stressors endured by hotel room attendants, only six published studies, dating from the 1970s to the present, have focused on room attendants in hotels. These six studies are detailed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. *Extant Research on Hotel Room Attendants*

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<th>Authors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Onsøyen, Mykeltun &amp; Steiro</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>13 focus groups totalling 46 room attendants</td>
<td>4 hotels in Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sollund</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>25 interviews with immigrant room attendants</td>
<td>2 hotels in Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powell &amp; Watson</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>64 survey questionnaires and 6 interviews</td>
<td>12 hotels in Cardiff, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faulkner &amp; Patiar</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>54 survey questionnaires</td>
<td>4 hotels on the Gold Coast, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saunders &amp; Pullen</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>interview questionnaires</td>
<td>30 hotels in London, UK</td>
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All these studies reported room attending as a predominantly female occupation involving physically demanding and dirty work with uneven workloads, all of which resulted in health problems. Features of the work included high workload stress, low workplace status and low pay, with high turnover and few advancement opportunities (Bill Faulkner & Anoop Patiar, 1997; Powell & Watson, 2006). Some studies refer to room attendants’ perceptions of being invisible and servile, as well as feelings of being undervalued (Boas Shamir, 1975; Onsøyen et al., 2009; Powell & Watson, 2006; Saunders & Pullen, 1987). Researchers report some positive aspects of the job, such as close peer working relationships and hotel perks (for instance, accommodation discounts) (Onsøyen et al., 2009). Powell and Watson’s (2006) profile of room attendants in South Wales provided insights into the ways this work is organised, controlled and rewarded. Further to this, Onsøyen et al.’s (2009) research at four hotels in Norway reported room attendant work is generally considered ‘unskilled’ and the workers as ‘unseen’. Other research that mentioned room attendants perceived that their work was often regarded as low skilled, menial labour of low social status (Tim Davis, 1993). Further research noted that hotel room attendants were also required to perform emotional labour during interactions with guests to facilitate guest satisfaction within the hospitality experience (Glen Ross, 1995). As noted under ‘tasking’ (Chapter 4), emotional labour is the requirement for workers to demonstrate unfelt emotion in the workplace, particularly in service industries (Barbara Anderson, Chris Provis & Shirley Chappel, 2002). Such studies serve to reinforce the significance of my study by supporting my research focus in its aim of examining the employment experiences of room attendants and their invisibility while Performing their tasks.

The bulk of room attendant related research (see Appendix A, page 286) recognised the physiological and psychological stressors of room attendants’ jobs, including oppression, discrimination and stigmatisation. The importance of research into room attendants has been highlighted by studies including Faulkner and Patiar’s
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(1997) examination of workplace-induced stress of Australian hotel operational (line) staff.

**Physiological and Psychological Stressors**

A key element of room attendants’ experiences is the range of physical and psychological stressors to which they are subjected. Room attendants’ health status is worse than that of the general population (James Larkin, 1969; Pam Lee & Niklas Krause, 2002; Ana Seifert & Karen Messing, 2006). High injury rates amongst room attendants have been recorded. Musculoskeletal disorders are particularly common: over a 12-month period, 75 per cent of Las Vegas hotel room attendants experienced work-related pain (Teresa Scherzer, Reiner Rugulies & Niklas Krause, 2005). Corrosive cleaning agents have been found to trigger high rates of lung damage, and to induce adverse neurological, immunological, endocrine and physiological reactions, with potential negative links to central nervous system tolerance (Stanley Caress, Anne Steinemann & Caitlin Waddick, 2002; Katz, 2001). Even scents in air deodorizers have been reported as a source of chemical exposure (Dina Zemke & Stowe Shoemaker, 2008).

Other hazards include bed bug exposure. Bed bugs have been identified as an increasing threat worldwide, with a 5,000-fold increase in infestations in Australia since 1999 (Stephen Doggett, 2009). In addition, the synthetic pyrethroid chemicals used in Australia to exterminate these pests have high mammalian toxicities, including severe skin and eye irritation (Medent, 2011). Elizabeth Binning and Andrew Drummond (2011) report seven tourist deaths at a resort in Chiang Mai, Thailand, related to use of the chemical chlorphrifos in the bed bug exterminator *Lorsban*. Room attendants have potentially higher direct exposure to the effects of such chemical than guests. Finally, organophosphates, which are the basis of many insecticides, have been linked to an increased risk of dementia or Alzheimer’s disease in later life (Kathleen Hayden, Margaret Norton, Dennis Darcey, Truls Ostbye, Peter Zandi, John Breitner & Kathleen Welsh-Bohmer, 2010). In addition to these physiological stressors of physical
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

Psychological stress has also been identified as an occupational hazard for hotel room attendants (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). This stress is believed to be derived from hierarchical organisational structures (Dexter Choy, 1995); the demands of guests and role conflict (Kristopher Weatherly & David Tansik, 1993; Lauren Wright, 1993); and from treatment of employees as ‘instruments of labour’ in monotonous, repetitive work (Andrew Herod & Luis Aguiar, 2006). Further, psychological stress is caused from work of low social status (Peter Creed & Juanita Muller, 2006; Faulkner & Patiar, 1997; Maribel Sosa, 2006). A broader examination of literature identifying psychological and physiological stressors is presented in Appendix A, page 286. Other damaging hazards potentially facing room attendants include terrorism, violence, firearms and sexual harassment (ABC, 2010; Marc Burleigh, 2009). These are detailed in Appendix B, page 287. Despite the documentation of these negative impacts on hotel room attendants, I found little evidence of proactive management strategy to reduce the hazards. Such physical and psychological stressors impact on room attendants’ personal lives and performance at work.

**Economic Significance of Hotels**

Providing short-term accommodation for domestic and international visitors is the main function of hotels. This industry makes a significant economic contribution to most countries’ economies. At the time of writing, the most recent available statistics on the Australian hospitality show that, in 2011, there were 857 hotels in the country, comprising approximately 85,745 rooms and 222,561 beds (ABS, 2011). The accommodation industry employed 110,500 people and was estimated to be worth AUD$10,113 million (2009/10) to the Australian economy (Department of Resources, Energy & Tourism, 2010). The Queensland accommodation sector, where my study was situated, employs over 25,000 people and contributes $2,739m to the Queensland economy (Tourism Queensland, 2010). The use of dollar signs alone ($) refers to Australian dollars AUD$ in my thesis. In Table 1.2, I show the number of hotels in the
Gold Coast and Brisbane areas and their economic contribution, as well as those in Queensland and Australia overall. Although Brisbane and the Gold Coast represent only five per cent of Australian hotel venues, they generate 13 per cent of hotel revenue; thus the hotels in South East Queensland make a significant financial contribution to the Australian economy.

Table 1.2. *Hotel*¹ Accommodation Data Sheet Year Ending December, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Establishments</th>
<th>Available Room Nights</th>
<th>Av. Occupancy %</th>
<th>Revenue Generated $million</th>
<th>Av. Room Rate $</th>
<th>Yield $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>511,722</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>118.65</td>
<td>70.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1,463,212</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>129.96</td>
<td>85.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>6,936,470</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>115.86</td>
<td>69.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>31,644,889</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2,139</td>
<td>118.64</td>
<td>67.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Tourism Queensland, 2011).

The sale of rooms accounts for about 55 per cent of hotel revenue whereas food and beverage contributes 34 per cent, it is reported in the literature that room sales have the highest profit margin of all hotel departments (Onsøyen et al., 2009; Powell & Watson, 2006). Constructing and furnishing hotel rooms involves the largest dollar investment made by hotel owners and also accounts for the largest recurring expenditures, namely for supplies, including linen (Charles Steadmon, 1974). Operationally, a hotel is labour intensive and employment costs (including recruitment, wages, training, uniforms and taxes) can account for about 40 per cent of revenue (Satish Deshpande & Christina Stamper, 2004). Scherzer et al. (2005) identify ‘housekeeping’ as the second largest occupation in hotels, with room attendants comprising 26 per cent of all employees. Hotels in the South East Queensland (Brisbane and the Gold Coast) area employ approximately 8.1 full time housekeeping staff per 100 available rooms (Yu-Lei Hsu, 1995). Given this context, room attendants play a significant role in both hotel operations and the long-term financial success of hotels.

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¹ Establishments with 15 or more rooms, licensed to operate a public bar and providing ablution facilities in-room. These are the most recent figures available as at June, 2011 (ABS, 2011).
Research Setting

My research was conducted on the Gold Coast in the south eastern corner of the state of Queensland, Australia. The Gold Coast has 70 kilometres of sand beaches, and a hinterland, which includes seven World Heritage listed National Parks (Goldcoastinfo, 2011). The Gold Coast has several theme parks, a number of shopping centres and an extensive nightlife, and is one of Australia’s most popular holiday destinations (Tourism Queensland, 2011). In the year ended September 2010, there were 4,172,000 international and domestic overnight visitors to the Gold Coast, staying 13,898,000 nights (Tourism Queensland, 2010). The hotels where my participants worked were rated ‘5 star’ hotels. The Australian Automobile Association provides a quality standard certification scheme for accommodation; hotels rating 5 stars are considered ‘deluxe’, a four star ‘upscale’ and three stars a ‘mid-tier’ hotel (AAA Tourism, 2008). The Gold Coast has 14 hotels with a quality rating of 5 stars; these hotels predominantly cater to the ‘holiday’ market (RACQ, 2011). My research was carried out with cooperation from five ‘5 star’ hotels located on the coastal strip of the Gold Coast. These hotels ranged in size from 243 rooms to 593 rooms and contained a total of 1,805 rooms.

Hotel Room Attendants’ Pay and Conditions

Globally, hotels are part of a large international industry which has high labour costs and tight profit margins. As commercial entities, hotels are vulnerable to global externalities, such as the recent global financial crisis (2008/09) and the Fukushima nuclear incident (2011). Reflecting their tight profit margins, hotels in Australia (and globally) offer workers low pay rates (Patricia Adler & Peter Adler, 2001; Luis Aguiar, 2006; Bridget Anderson, 2002; Seonghee Cho & Misty Johanson, 2008). In an Australian context, there are legal minimum wage rates codified in ‘awards’. For room attendants, the Australian Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2010 or, for a few hotels, ‘enterprise bargaining agreements’, (EBAs) specify wage rates. In this Award room attendant work is classed as guest service grade 2 in the Award, defined as “an employee engaged in servicing accommodation areas and cleaning thereof” (workplaceauthority.gov.au, 2008).
At the time of writing, Fair Work Australia updated the Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2010 to set minimum rates of pay for hotel room attendants at AU$16.03 to AU$17.46 per hour (United Voice, 2011b). United Voice was formerly the Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers’ Union [LHMU]. The pay for room attendants in comparable developed countries is: Canada (CAD) $12.94 (AUD $12.48)\(^2\) and the United States of America (USD) $10.17 (AUD $9.95) (Statistics Canada, 2011; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). While these comparative figures are markedly different, Gerald Fernandez (2001) identifies a ‘tipping culture’ in the North American countries that augments room attendants’ home pay. The Australian hospitality industry often pays only the minimum award wage, and this was the case for the hotels participating in my study.

Both the award and the process of negotiating EBAs are seen as dominated by employer interests and they under-value women, particularly disadvantaging those with domestic responsibilities (Angela Knox, 2006). The low compensation for the physical effort expended by room attendants as well as the frequency of unpaid overtime was noted by the former State Premier of Victoria, Australia, Joan Kirner, at the launch of United Voice’s Heartbreak Hotels report. This report documented working conditions at Melbourne’s top hotels, where the common hotel rack rate (usual price without discounts applied) was $300 per night, however, the high daily room allocation at some hotels resulted in room attendants receiving as little as $5 to clean a room due to requirements to service three rooms per hour (Simon Lauder, 2010). Despite minimum pay levels, hotels have high expectations of room attendants’ skills. An internet scan of job vacancies for room attendants at 5 star hotels in Australia between 2009 and 2010 (Table 1.3) shows the various attributes sought by hotels.

\(^2\) (At the time of writing this document – on 10/12/2011 - the exchange rate was calculated using http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert).
Table 1.3. Room Attendants’ Position Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Attribute and Experience Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Team players, flexible to 7 day roster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Senior Certificate (yr 12), fluent written and spoken English, experience, flexible, customer service focus, attention to detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All areas</td>
<td>Enjoy practical work, neat personal appearance, good personal hygiene, honest and reliable, physically fit, able to stay calm in difficult situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingscliff</td>
<td>Self-motivated, work unsupervised, flexible to 7 day roster, knowledge and understanding of basic hygiene and safe working procedures, committed to extraordinary service, exceptional grooming standards, eye for detail and organisational skills, ability to work under pressure, experience, energy, sense of fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>6 months experience, attention to detail, positive, proactive approach, reliable transport, exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, professional presentation and confident, mature and personable manner, flexibility to work 7 days.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The criteria reveal that employer expectations include high standards of personal grooming, physical fitness, ‘exceptional’ interpersonal communication skills and participation in emotional labour with a ‘customer service focus’, as well as preparedness to work a seven day roster. The criteria reveal hotel managements’ high expectations of room attendants’ behaviour, skills and prior experience, which are recompensed by a pay rate of $16 per hour, only just above the general legal minimum wage rate of $15.51 per hour.

As indicated, room attendants are represented by the union ‘United Voice’, which covers a diverse range of workers, including those in hospitality. Little appears to have occurred over time to adequately address the physiological and psychological stress and low pay of room attendants (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). This reflects that Australian unions have been generally conservative, maintaining the social status quo, espousing for the most part patriarchal philosophies and taking an ‘institutional’ focus (Janis Bailey, 2000), although there are signs that this is changing as unions become more feminised in mentorship and leadership, and adopt more proactive strategies...
around addressing low pay (United Voice, 2011a). The labour law changes introduced in 2006, which significantly favoured employers against the low paid have been partly reversed by a new government, but low pay and casualisation are still endemic in parts of the labour market, particularly hospitality (Bailey, Fiona Macdonald & Gillian Whitehouse, 2011). Even when unions develop campaigns to assist such workers they encounter patriarchal assumptions and resistance from employers. Management discourse in hospitality continues to reflect beliefs that women are ‘content’ in their low-paid, segregated jobs (Susan Ainsworth, Janine O’Flynn & Angela Knox, 2010). These views reflect the traditional patriarchal structures found in the capitalist hospitality industry by Amina Mama (2007) in her examination of the nexus between feminism and hospitality. These patriarchal structures are evident in 5 star hotels operating on the Gold Coast, which have reportedly entrenched occupational segregation and low pay (Nils Timo & Mike Davidson, 2005), cementing women’s labour market disadvantage.

From my socialist feminist perspective, this lack of any tangible improvement is alienating for room attendants, isolating them and marginalising them as unimportant and invisible because the need for fair pay and better conditions remains unaddressed. The physiological stressors documented in literature reveal exploitation by appropriating the effort of room attendants’ labour to benefit the hotel owners. Room attendants are ignored both operationally and socially due to their low occupational and social status and this has been identified as causing psychological stress. There appears little research that considers hotel room attendants as a ‘community of value’ (identified earlier as an economically defined group with particular knowledge). In this thesis, I present Performing as a holistic understanding of room attendants’ employment experiences, reflecting their invisibility within western models of patriarchal hotel organisational structures. Performing as a conceptual model states that room attendants engage in a socio-psychological process of finding dignity in the course of completing their daily tasks of cleaning hotel rooms.
Research Aims

My examination of the employment experiences of hotel room attendants was intended to provide depth of understanding, with practical consequences for hotel praxis. Building on extant research, I aimed to fill a void in hospitality knowledge by investigating employment experiences of hotel room attendants from their perspectives. There appears little research that attempts to collect and systematise hotel room attendants’ situated knowledges. This researcher inattention further, in my view, reflects room attendant *invisibility* as this important employment has been overlooked. Therefore my research questions were:

1. What is the nature of room attendants’ daily job routines?
2. What are room attendants’ experiences of the employment relationship and of their role as service providers?
3. What are room attendants’ perceptions of their working conditions?
4. How do these women perceive their value within the hotel organisation?

In my study of hotel room attendants’ employment experiences, it was critical to identify why these women are treated as *invisible* by being ignored in both organisational and social contexts, due to their low occupational status. To understand room attendants’ participation in the social world, I examined room attendants’ embodiment as workers. Examining room attendants’ subjective perspectives had four advantages:

1. It enabled exploration of the social processes that influence room attendant employment.
2. It fostered discussion of topics that influence all housekeeping operations in a direct manner.
3. It provided potential to focus on pragmatic concerns that are not usually encompassed within management-focused studies.
4. It allowed freedom to question management’s normalising beliefs and actions that affect the work of room attendants.

To investigate room attendants’ perceptions of invisibility and collect and interpret their situated knowledges, I embraced a socialist-feminist critical-theory perspective. Critical theorists highlight people’s experiences of oppression in socio-political structures by seeking to create a more just society (Brian Fay, 1987). I elaborate my philosophical approach in chapter two. My use of constructionist grounded theory methodology to provide a holistic and grounded approach to the concerns of room attendants is discussed in chapter three.

Significance of My Study

My research has theoretical, methodological and practical significance. First, I aid the theoretical development of the academic field of hospitality, a need explicitly advocated by Amel Adib and Yvonne Guerrier (2003), through construction of the grounded theory of Performing. My epistemological approach contributes to feminist research on gendered employment, which academics believe is a neglected area of research (Gayle Jennings, 2001; Diana Mulinari & Kerstin Sandell, 1999; Yaniv Poria, 2008). My investigation provides insights into how power functions and operates in hotel contexts to foster room attendant invisibility. Issues of power have been linked to gendered employment (Kathryn Cook, Renea Henry & Joan Wallach Scott, 1997; Ella Kahu & Mandy Morgan, 2007). Second, my use of constructionist grounded theory enhances new methodological approaches in hospitality research. Finally, my research provides a voice for hotel room attendants to address their invisibility, and for hotels to engage with room attendants as a community of value.

Research Perspective and Frame

My epistemological philosophy and qualitative approach have led me to adopt a constructionist grounded theory methodology, while following the original Glaserian
method, in order to base my research in the room attendants’ employment experiences. As Nick Pidgeon and Karen Henwood (1997) state: “If researchers are to be able to understand people’s participation in the social world, they must engage in close inspection of how that world is perceived through the eyes of participants themselves” (p. 251). My focus on employment experiences is supported by Henry Giroux’s (1988) belief that advancement of knowledge is only possible through lived experience, which cannot be inferred from structural determinants such as economic modes of production. My thesis is the narrative of room attendants’ experiences and reflects “how that reality presents itself to consciousness” (Michael Crotty, 2003, p. 7): in this case, the consciousness of the room attendants. My approach follows the arguments of Rosanna Hertz (1997), who advocated the use of situated voices of both the participants and the researcher in conducting research.

In challenging the systematic undervaluation of room attendants and the appropriation of their labour as a source of profit, I identify hotel room attendants as a ‘community of value’ with unacknowledged situated knowledge. Building on the findings of the six identified studies of room attendants, I attempted to explore the systemic social invisibility of women engaged in this work in the hospitality industry. To seek a holistic understanding of perceptions of invisibility and to explain how room attendants articulate the consequences of this gendered alienation, I adopted a critical theory epistemology. Critical theory is the frame guiding my research. It enabled an exploration of the social processes marginalising female hotel room attendants. My critical theory approach examined and critiqued social influences within hotels. Adopting a critical study based on my epistemology and methodology fostered inter-discipline inquiry contributing to development of hospitality research. My approach puts into action Candice Harris, Erica Wilson and Irena Ateljevic’s (2007) call for a ‘critical turn’ in hospitality research to critique the dominant epistemology and methodology of hospitality studies. As Sharan Merriam et al. (2002) have written: “in critical inquiry the goal is to critique and challenge, to transform and empower” (p. 327). Hegemonic hierarchical social structures, such as those in hotels, are infused with power and result in marginalisation and oppression of employees such as room attendants; hence the need for a critical perspective.
My research may challenge the vested interests of hotels since, as Fay (1987) identifies, some view subjugation and authoritative social power as unquestionable features of modern organisations. Also, those in power may be unaware of, and/or deny the existence of any conflict or tension related to the use of power.

Dominant groups generally do not like to be told about or even quietly reminded of the existence of inequality. ‘Normally’ they can avoid awareness because their explanation of the relationship becomes so well integrated in other terms; they can even believe that both they and the subordinate group share the same interests and, to some extent, a common experience (Jean Miller, 1976, pp. 8-9).

In this way social power, like organisational power, is a central concept to my socialist feminist critical theory research.

**Scope**

There were boundaries to my research related to the scope and range of empirical materials.

1. I investigated only the employment experiences of hotel room attendant staff on the Gold Coast in the south east of the state of Queensland, Australia. I confined my research to employees working in hotels classed as 5 star quality (AAA Tourism, 2008), to encompass a typicality of establishment standards in the research context.

2. I ceased collecting empirical material when interpretive saturation of categories was achieved, in accordance with grounded theory methodology (discussed in chapter three) (Barney Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Anselm Strauss, 1967).
My research was bounded by the following:

1. A temporal dimension applied, as my research had a three year time deadline to satisfy Griffith University’s doctoral thesis submission requirements.

2. Financial constraints were addressed by restricting the research to the geographic area of the Gold Coast in South East Queensland (Australia), where I could actively engage in collection of empirical materials. This geographical limitation did not permit consideration of employees’ experiences in other regions of Queensland, other states or countries.

3. I identify myself as a socialist feminist critical theory researcher. The value of research from this perspective has long been respected for its intellectual value (Shirley Yee, 1997). I recognise that this perspective may be contested by researchers with a different theoretical perspective. However, it is my view that different perspectives may be achieved using different paradigmatic agendas, and different researcher genders.

4. My interpretations of hotel room attendants’ employment experiences are particular to the participating 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast of Australia.

**Conclusion**

Hotel room attendant employment is a vital component of the hospitality industry, which is of considerable economic importance. The work involves a difficult physiological and psychological environment, and is subject to marginalisation and low social status, with room attendants often regarded as invisible or being unacknowledged. This chapter has introduced the area of my research, its purpose and its focus within the Gold Coast 5 star hotel contexts. I outlined extant research and literature related to room attendants which provided the background and focus for my research. I further identified a gap in this literature regarding gender injustices and in particular the absence of research on women employed as hotel room attendants. This set the foundation for my key research questions and justified the significance of my
research. I identified the origin and purpose of my research, indicating the importance of room attendants’ work for hotels, and the limited coverage in research literature. As a relatively new topic of research, the everyday activity of room attendant work lacks theoretical grounded empirical material. I have stated that my findings will be useful to academic researchers both theoretically and methodologically, as well as for industry practice through greater understanding of room attendants’ value to hotels. I have identified the constructionist grounded theory methodology that I used to conceptualise room attendants’ employment experiences into a theoretical construct of Performing. Further to this, I addressed the boundedness (Jennings, forthcoming) of my study in relation to time and resources and the significance of my thesis. Table 1.4 displays the structure of my thesis and each chapter’s content in brief.

Table 1.4. Thesis Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Two</th>
<th>Chapter Three</th>
<th>Chapter Four</th>
<th>Chapter Five</th>
<th>Chapter Six</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Foundations</td>
<td>Theoretical Perspectives</td>
<td>Grounded Theory; Contextual Procedures; Interpretation; Research Trustworthiness; Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>Low Pay; Hours; Training; Uniforms; Employment Benefits</td>
<td>Hotel Hierarchy; Upward Communication; Floor Supervisor and Executive Housekeeper Interactions; Management Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socialist Feminist Critical Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hotel Inclusivity; Collegiality; Discrimination; Autonomy; Monotony; Family Influences</td>
<td>Guest Interactions; Social Status; Cultural Interactions; Sexual Harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Power and Invisibility; Reflections on Hierarchies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasking (BSSP)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard Work (Bed-Making, Bathroom Cleaning); Time Pressure (Room Allocation, Room Condition); Achieving Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Conditions (BSSP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interacting Socially (BSPP)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working in a Hotel Hierarchy (BSSP)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in a Social Hierarchy (BSPP)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter two — Philosophical Foundations — explains the theoretical perspectives informing my research. My research paradigm rests on a stance informed by both socialist feminist and critical theory philosophical stances, informed by Marxism. I explain how this frame engages with my topic. I explain my epistemological beliefs and my ontological perspective, and the assumptions inherent in critical theory. I establish why a socialist feminist critical theory approach was best suited to overcoming the current gap in hospitality literature that my research addresses. I further argue how my socialist feminist critical theory epistemology was an appropriate theoretical stance in terms of the constructionist grounded theory methodology I used to interpret empirical materials. Finally, I explain how my axiological assumptions, drawn from my personal experience, inspired and underpinned my research.

Chapter three — Methodology — details my constructionist grounded theory methodology based on the seminal Glaserian approach. I explain the participating cohort, my interpretation procedures and ethical issues.

Chapter four — Performing — introduces my conceptual model as a parsimonious substantive theory. Performing unifies the central concepts and core issues facing hotel room attendants and how they deal with these issues. The daily tasking involved issues of paramount concern, particularly the physicality of the work and the time pressures under which room attendants work.

Chapter five — Working Conditions and Social Influences — discusses the room attendants’ perceptions of their working conditions and how room attendants’ view the social aspects of their employment.
Chapter six — Working as a Room Attendant within Hotel and Social Hierarchies — offers a deconstruction of the organisational and social hierarchical aspects influencing room attendants’ employment, supported by extant literature.

Chapter seven — Finding Dignity in Employment — the penultimate interpretation chapter, presents the holistic subjective experience of room attendants’ work, and how they found dignity in their employment.

Chapter eight — offers a thesis summary of the Performing model I propose, grounded in the empirical material. I offer implications for equitable practice and fair acknowledgement of hotel room attendants at 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast of Queensland, Australia. I outline the contributions of my research to the body of knowledge in the field of hospitality, and offers suggestions for future research.
Chapter Two

Philosophical Foundations

The researcher’s perspective consists of more than philosophical stance, school of thought, and methodological strategies. It also consists of experiences, values, and priorities.

(Kathy Charmaz, 1994, p. 75).

This chapter presents the major philosophical and theoretical perspectives that informed and guided my research. I begin by explaining how my ontological and epistemological assumptions as a socialist feminist critical theorist influenced how I approached my research and how they informed my reflexive position. I also elaborate on my reflexive and axiological stance in investigating hotel room attendants’ employment experiences. Further to this, I explain why I adopted a social constructionist approach in implementing grounded theory methodology. These philosophical and theoretical perspectives influenced all phases of my research, namely my selection of research topic, the design of the research, the approach to collecting empirical material, and my construction of the Performing model. I commence with paradigmatic influences as shown in the chapter arrangement depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Thematic Structure of Chapter Two
Theoretical Perspectives

The philosophy guiding my research falls within a particular paradigm. Thomas Kuhn (1970) defined a paradigm as representing “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by the members of a given [academic] community” (p. 175). There are differing views in social sciences as to the number of paradigms, and early thought on this area identified only two, positivist and post-positivist (Patti Lather, 1992). Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1994) extended these paradigmatic perspectives by envisaging four, comprising positivism, post-positivism, constructivism and critical theory. More recently, Jennings (2009, 2010, forthcoming) identifies sociological theoretical paradigms as chaos and complexity theory orientation, critical theory, social constructivism, postmodernism, participatory and positivist perspectives. Jennings (2005a) has already identified debate as to whether all of these may be considered paradigms, and expanded on the incommensurability of the various paradigmatic views. The paradigms I adopt share commensurability and these commensurate views informed the collection and interpretation of empirical materials.

Jennings (2005a, p. 211) states that paradigms “have specific stances in regard to ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology” (either value free or value embedded). Ontology is “the study of being” or “what is” and relates to what empirical material is (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Traditional dominant scientific paradigms (post positivism) ontologically seek causal explanations and make predictions for an epistemologically objective external knowable world. Post-positivists assume immutable truths and carry out axiological value free research projects using mainly quantitative methods (Jennings, 2005a). However, many researchers now consider ontological objectivity as an unduly narrow scientific view, recognising that individual and social experiences influence how knowledge is generated (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). I therefore accepted Donna Haraway’s (2004) critique of traditional positivist views of ‘objectivity’ as threatening subjectivity, and viewed objectivity as a component of the hierarchical ordering of scientific knowledge tied to androcentrism. Androcentrism means taking masculinity as the norm, and women as the often excluded ‘other’.
To expand upon this important point regarding androcentrism, according to Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1983), a feminist perspective challenges and finds wanting hegemonic reductionist social science that incorporates sexism, bias, and inherent patriarchal values. Such reductionist social science is typically known as positivism. In this research, I challenge the power inherent in the social hierarchies of the academic research community that Eichler and Burke (2006) maintain shapes the conduct of research. The patriarchal or androcentric nature of this knowledge creation introduces biases and failings in knowledge creation. As a socialist feminist critical theorist, I rejected hegemonic scientific positivistic methodologies because, while they have a capacity to describe, they have limited value in understanding or explaining, as opposed to a qualitative critical theory approach (Mark Hoffman, 1994). In my research, therefore, I aligned with researchers who view traditional scientific paradigms as locked into capitalist systems of patriarchal domination that privilege positivistic traditions (Charmaz, 2006; Chris Cuomo, 2003; Jennings, 2001; Hilary Rose, 2004).

My ontological identification is constituted of multiple realities in my subjective interpretation of my experiences. I adopted socialist (Marxist) feminist critical theory and social constructionist theoretical paradigms. These paradigms share commensurabilities, particularly in understandings of multiple realities ontologically, and subjective epistemologies focused on understanding. Table 2.1 below outlines the parallel affinities of these paradigmatic influences.
Table 2.1. *Paradigmatic Influences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Critical Theory</th>
<th>Social Constructivism</th>
<th>Feminist Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Founded in human (social) sciences</td>
<td>Founded in human (social) sciences</td>
<td>Founded in human (social) sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Geisteswissenschaften)</em></td>
<td><em>(Geisteswissenschaften)</em></td>
<td><em>(Geisteswissenschaften)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonymous</td>
<td>A number of types: Marxist/socialist,</td>
<td>Phenomenology, interpretivism, constructionism</td>
<td>A number of types: Marxist/socialist, liberal,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post-positivist, postmodern critical theorists</td>
<td></td>
<td>postmodern, critical feminist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Understanding <em>(Verstehen)</em>, historical realism, perspectivism, interpretivism, intentionalism</td>
<td>Understanding <em>(Verstehen)</em>, relativism, perspectivism, interpretivism, intentionalism</td>
<td>Understanding <em>(Verstehen)</em>, relativism, perspectivism, interpretivism, intentionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Socio-historical multiple realities, realities reflective of power relations</td>
<td>Multiple perspectives/realities</td>
<td>Multiple realities mediated by gendered constructs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Subjective unless post-positivist critical theory <em>(Objective)</em></td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Subjective: participants and researcher/s as co-researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Qualitative, some quantitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Qualitative <em>(predominantly)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiology</td>
<td>Value laden: intrinsic focus of research project; political agendas, emancipatory, transformative</td>
<td>Value laden; intrinsic focus of the research project</td>
<td>Value laden; intrinsic focus of research project; political, emancipatory, transformative, educational</td>
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The theoretical paradigms of socialist feminism, critical theory and social constructivism all have transformative agendas, and share ontological and epistemological commonalities in how they construct social reality. Epistemology means “the theory of knowledge” or “how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Constructivist epistemology considers that human knowledge and meaning are
generated from interaction between experiences and ideas (John Searle, 1995). Jennings (2005a) states constructivism is synonymous with social constructionism in sharing underlying assumptions of reality, learning and knowledge. Social constructionism regards objects of consciousness or social constructs as the practice of a particular group with meaning developed through social convention and interaction (Searle, 1995). I adopted a subjective epistemology as a result of my belief that knowledge discovery is social, and because my interactions with room attendants involved a reciprocal exchange to create meaning and understanding.

My identification with multiple ontological and epistemological theoretical paradigms of socialist feminism, critical theory and social constructionism has been identified as an ‘intertwined epistemology’ (Barbara Ehrenreich & Arlie Hochschild, 2002). By intertwining these epistemologies I recognised the importance of social interests, which lead to domination, alongside axiological views that research ought to work towards alleviating the oppression of women in the workplace. To achieve a holistic reflective interpretation of a complex set of experiences (Tazim Jamal & Keith Hollinshead, 2001), such as my interpretation of room attendants’ employment experiences, I would argue that an intertwined epistemological approach is appropriate.

Some authors have had a particularly strong influence on my paradigm construction, particularly the philosophers Immanuel Kant (Arnulf Zweig, 1967), Karl Marx (1880/1977, 1973), Georg Hegel (1820/1979), and the early exponents of American pragmatism. Their writings, combined with my own subjugated female ‘Austrocentric’ experiences – namely, my experience as a woman within Antipodean post-colonial patriarchal social/political structures – have led to epistemological choices that reflected my fundamental perceptions of truth and situated or contextual knowledge. My research was concerned with the invisibility of women working as hotel room attendants in a developed capitalist country, women whom I viewed as being exploited and subject to fundamental injustices. This resulted in my adopting a research approach, which involved the convergence of a feminist perspective, with Marxism and critical theory. I adopted an overt ideological goal “to correct both the
invisibility and the distortion of female experience” (Patti Lather, 2003, p. 192). My approach was openly ideological as I sought to challenge the status quo in the hospitality industry. I adopted a transformative agenda because I aimed to understand the world from hotel room attendants’ perspectives. In this regard my research was ‘value-laden’ with an ‘intrinsically based axiology’ (Jennings, 2005, p. 213), which I discuss later in this chapter.

The next section presents my research approach by describing the underlying assumptions of socialist feminism and critical theory, and how these addressed the particular needs of my research. I also explain how my social constructionist epistemology led to choosing grounded theory as the appropriate research methodology. As stated earlier, my research was particularly focused on women’s experiences, as extant literature demonstrates women’s voices have tended to be omitted, or are only beginning to be heard (Jennings, 2001; Mulinari & Sandell, 1999; Poria, 2008).

Socialist Feminism

Feminism is a social movement, which seeks equity between women and men by opposing, theoretically and politically, masculine cultures that keep women servile through social imperialism and economic subjugation (Sandra Harding, 1998, 2006; Lorraine Ryan, 2006). Over two hundred years of ‘feminist’ writings may be coalesced into four major ‘waves’ to denote progressive attempts to challenge the social circumstances of women. The first wave covered writing related to social limitations, the suffrage movement, property rights and education equity from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century. The second wave encompassed literature from the 1960s to the 1980s, examining issues of identity, civil rights, abortion, pay equality, lesbian identity, equal opportunity, sex discrimination, affirmative action, the establishment of women’s health centres, refuges, fertility control, and child care needs. The third wave, from the 1980s to 2000s, challenged heteronormativity, and addressed issues related to migration, gender studies, genetic engineering, information and globalisation. The current fourth wave of literature examines issues
such as differentiation, male inclusion, global capitalism and patriarchy (for related literature see Appendix C, page 288). Across those four waves, the (sometimes overlapping) political philosophies that have informed feminist perspectives include socialist feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, post-modern feminism, postcolonial feminism and, more recently, eco-feminism and other variants (Margaret Henderson, 2006; Marilyn Porter, 2007). My socialist feminist perspective has its own ontological viewpoint, which offers a dualist theory, broadening Marx’s argument to achieve women’s liberation through a critique of both capitalism’s economic oppression and the socio-cultural oppression of women.

The extent of social and economic change in women’s circumstances in Australia over the past 100 years has been likened to a ‘genderquake’ (Joanne Baker, 2008). Women have achieved basic political, social and economic rights. Despite this, women are still largely invisible in Australian culture, and are often denied the status accorded to men (Anne Summers, 1975/2002). Hegemonic patriarchal political structures are also evident in Australian society, in both the private and public spheres, as women are often subjected to control via male power (Henderson, 2006). According to Summers (1975/2002) Australian society only pays lip-service to the concepts of women’s liberation in a culture of “misogynistic ockerism unassailed” (p. 71). Within the Australian hospitality industry most management roles, and hence power, are predominantly held by men (William Slonaker, Ann Wendt & Bud Baker, 2007).

My research holistically examines the employment experiences of Australian female hotel room attendants. Adopting a feminist approach humanised myself as researcher, and gave a ‘voice’ for room attendants. This makes my research a political act through talking back (giving voice) or ‘intentionally empowering’ the women involved (Herbert Rubin & Irene Rubin, 2005). As a socialist feminist, I adopt and broaden Marx’s critique of capitalism, seeking explanations of the way capitalism interacts with patriarchy to oppress women through systemic inequality. This inequality is intrinsic to an economic system where pay inequity is endemic (Denise Narcisse, 2011), despite the institutional safeguards of the Australian industrial relations system, including awards and legislated provisions regarding gender equity and anti-discrimination. My socialist views prompted me to challenge traditional social
and economic class distinctions, and argue for the recognition of room attendants as a community of value with unacknowledged knowledge within hotels, with the ultimate aim being to play a part in ‘end[ing] domination of patriarchal social structures’ (Fraser, 1997).

**Hospitality as Capitalist Paternalism**

Hotels are commercial entities, which aim to maximise profits within a capitalist system. Capitalism is an economic system that generates consumption, and thus hotels present an ‘enchantedised’ setting for consumers to enjoy accommodation and sustenance (George Ritzer, 1999). Hospitality in a capitalist system, as Marx (1880/1977) identified, is based on buying labour for low wages and selling this labour for high wages, creating surplus value. The luxurious consumption provided in 5 star hotels (such as those in my research) and the high cost of rooms, combined with the low pay of room attendants, provides private accumulation of surplus value in the form of capital (profit) (Judith Bessant & Rob Watts, 1999). Workers, dependent on selling their labour, have minimal influence on their pay and conditions, and so are vulnerable to oppression by others. As room attendants receive relatively low pay and are frequently unacknowledged despite working in sight of people, their *invisibility* may be associated with ‘alienation’ in their powerlessness and lack of fairness between work and pay. Alienation is one of the oldest concepts of social analysis, often being linked with gendered employment and patriarchal authoritarian agendas (Charles Derber & Magrass Yale, 2001; Lauren Langman, 2006), such as those faced by hotel room attendants. Alienation and powerlessness result in labour, such as room attendants, being seen as an expendable commodity, and thus workers are more likely to be exploited (Gilbert Meilaender, 2000).

In relation to this thesis, it is particularly important to stress that capitalism and patriarchy encompass both economic power and authority, and are based on the ‘traditional’ patriarchal family with a father at its head (Alda Facio, 2004). The concept of patriarchy is central to my research as the hierarchical organisational structure within hotels reflects stereotypical male dominance reflected in gendered labour
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

Gendered labour is a worldwide phenomenon, referring to workplace roles that are often based on traditional domestic duties, supported by patriarchal structures that enforce gender oppression (Cynthia Cockburn, 2009; Phillip Cohen, 2004; Candice Harris, 2010; Sandya Hewamanne, 2002; Zehra Arat, 2008). Such structures reinforce employers’ perceptions of women’s suitability for different types of work (Judy Wajcman, 2000). Hotel room attendant work in Australia is designated as ‘women’s work’ and, as argued above, is considered low status and low paying. Therefore, ontologically, as a socialist feminist critical theorist, I argue that the hospitality industry is constrained by patriarchal rules immersed in ‘overt and covert power structures’ that subjugate and subordinate women (Mats Alvesson & Kaj Skölberg, 2000).

Critical Theory

Critical theory is an umbrella term for a range of theories that have evolved from the diverse writings of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Lukacs, Gramsci, Habermas, Derrida, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Adorno, Foucault and recently Chomsky. These writers share an epistemological and theoretical tradition of critically questioning the sources of authoritarianism and power that subjugate individuals (Tom Bottomore, 1984; Jay Garcia, 2008). My research, as noted previously, aims to expose room attendants’ invisibility, oppression and exploitation. As a critical theorist, therefore, I recognise four central tenets that arise from the critical theory tradition, namely:

1. adopting a reflexive dimension between action (praxis), values and an ideological orientation opposing positivism;
2. focusing on political structural power and ideological dogma to instil permanence in political and economic structures;
3. taking an interdisciplinary style predicated on ethical concern for social relations of production; and
4. analysing social circumstances, the production of social systems, and institutional practice (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Steven Roach, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Many feminist theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Virginia Olesen (Joe Kincheloe & Peter McLaren, 2005), have linked social feminist perspectives with critical theory. Critical theory and socialist feminist epistemologies share the activist purpose of exposing unequal relations and promoting a change to structures and power systems in society (Sotirios Sarantakos, 1993). Feminist critical theory is an inherently self-reflexive method of social inquiry (Cuomo, 2003). My approach seeks to eliminate androcentric assumptions through application of ‘strong objectivity’ (Harding, 1998, 2004a, b, c, 2006). My use of ‘strong objectivity’ is not to be confused with the ‘weak objectivity’ of positivist or value-neutral research. Rather, strong objectivity describes research commencing from the experiences of those usually left out of knowledge production (Harding, 1991), such as the experiences of room attendants. My adoption of ‘strong objectivity’ (intense engagement) means that my critique of patriarchal capitalist hotel institutions is founded on my opposition to all forms of domination (Susan Hekman, 2004; Bart van Leeuwen, 2008; Sara Ruddick, 2004; Dorothy Smith, 1990). In my research I pursue strong objectivity by emphasising the embodied and situated subjectivities of women’s (room attendants’) experiences (Nancy Hartsock, 2004; Nancy McHugh, 2007). Hence, I grounded my approach in the lived experience of my participants, as suggested by Elisabeth Kelan (2007) and Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka (1983).

Virginia Olesen (2005) acknowledges that ‘experience’ may be problematic in replicating rather than criticising oppressive systems as experiences, such as the room attendants’, are already an interpretation. Harding (1998) argues that it is essential to study women’s situated experiences in order to adopt a marginalised standpoint view. A standpoint of strong objectivity, mentioned in the previous paragraph, also results in an ‘intersectionality’ of perceptions unavailable to dominant groups (Emily Greenman, 2008). Intersectionality embodies a commitment to the situatedness of knowledge (Kathy Davis, 2008). This means that the perceptions of the room attendants would
not be accessed or necessarily understood by hotel management. In this way my use of room attendants’ experiences uncovers the kind of knowledge that other approaches would not. An intersectional approach is also consistent with my valuing of room attendants as a community of knowledge. Room attendant employment appeared gendered, low paid, with low social status, and room attendants were treated as invisible. To address these issues, I adopted a socialist feminist critical theory epistemology.

In summary, my socialist feminist and critical theorist stance were essential to my purpose to provide ‘voice’ to empower room attendants. In providing the perspectives of room attendants I sought to change commonly held perceptions of these exploited women whom I perceived as being marginalised. Exploitation is an element of social power, a central concept in critical theory. This is particularly important in my research since, as noted by both Michel Foucault (1988) and Stuart Hall (1997), power and knowledge are linked to visibility and ‘being seen’. Literature on hospitality organisations neglects the concept of power, as its conception is problematic and not always obvious (Timothy Hinkin & Chester Schriesheim, 2004). My perspective also incorporated the view that knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed and contingent on human experience during interactions within a social context (Crotty, 2003). In these ways my socialist feminist critical theory perspective therefore adds to hospitality literature.

Social Constructionism

A third major epistemological influence on my research was ‘social constructionism’. I emphasise here the use of constructionism rather than constructivism. I reiterate my previous explanation, ‘constructivism’ focuses on the individual’s perceptions and learning, and ‘constructionism’ on social processes and shared intersubjective understanding and meaning creation (Schwandt, 1997). The ontology guiding a social constructionist paradigm holds that there is no single reality, but rather multiple understandings in multiple world settings; so all accounts are subjective, tentative and mutable (Jennings, 2005). Social constructionism assumes that people forge their
perception of reality from their understanding of their situated experiences, within a contextual and linguistic social process (Kenneth Gergen, 1985). My research involved establishing an understanding between myself and the participating room attendants from our accumulated and shared individual understandings. A social constructionist view meant the participants’ and my understandings of reality were shaped during our interactions, influenced by our emotions, and definitions of the situation, and our conceptualisations about ourselves (Charmaz, 1990). Social constructionism is further informed by symbolic interactionism.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective emerging from the social theoretical philosophy of the Chicago School of pragmatists of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century (David Loconto & Danielle Jones-Pruett, 2006). Pragmatist philosophers conceptualised human behaviour as ‘lived reality’, conceiving knowledge as an experiential process grounded in an individual’s own interpretation of particular experiences (Sarantakos, 1998). The essence of symbolic interactionism is contained in Herbert Blumer’s (1969) eight key premises:

1. The meanings things have for humans are the basis of their actions.
2. These meanings develop during the process of social interactions.
3. The self-reflection of individuals modifies these meanings.
4. Humans create their world of experiences.
5. The meanings of these experiences come from interaction.
6. Meanings are shaped during a complex interpretive process that is based in the individual’s culture creation process.
7. Self and social interaction is an iterative process.

By adopting a symbolic interactionist perspective, I assumed meanings were employed and changed during the negotiated, emergent and unpredictable interactions (Sarantakos, 1993) that I shared with the participating room attendants. I followed the advice of critical theorist Richard Lichtman (1970) and social
constructionist Kathy Charmaz (1980, 1990) who advocate a structurally based, humanistic sociology that merges Marxian and symbolic interactionist thought to link a critical posture to subjective consciousness. By merging these perspectives in my research I was able to aim for a holistic, socialist and critical perspective of the room attendants’ situation.

I conducted reflexive research consistent with my belief that I was co-constructing meaning with participants. Further, I adhered to a transformative feminist critical theory perspective to intertwine my three philosophical paradigms. These epistemological influences permeated my research process, underpinned by the view that all knowledge is socially constructed, evolving and situated. This included an axiological aim to advance transformational changes (Jennings, 2001; Shulamit Reinharz, 1992) in room attendants’ social circumstances. Underpinning my social constructionist respect for ‘multiplicity of meaning’ (Jaber Gubrium & James Holstein, 1997) was my belief in the importance of my reflection on my subjective interpretations and also awareness of values (axiology) that I brought to the interpretation.

**Axiology**

My personal values (axiology), experiences and intellectual subjectivity influenced my choice of *employment experiences of hotel room attendants* as my research topic. In using the term ‘axiology’ I am referring to the value based decisions (Norman Denzin, 1989) that were an important foundation in my research process. As identified by Tina Chanter (2006), values influence the researcher’s paradigmatic framework, such as my choice of grounded theory methodology. As a western socialist feminist, I was aware of ‘multiple subjectivities’ inherent in any research context (Ailbhe Smyth, 2005), so I acknowledge that my personal and cultural assumptions provided values which influenced my interpretations. My axiological positioning is reflected in my socialist feminist critical theorist political position and my interpretation of empirical material using social constructionist grounded theory.
I drew on an epistemology of ‘insiderness’ (Reinharz, 1992), which means linking my own personal history and experiences as a room attendant with my research. Reinharz (1992) views personal experience as a source of legitimacy, and thus I would argue my life experiences provided a social situatedness that influenced my study. This afforded an emic (or insider) insight into room attendants’ experiences, and helped to develop rapport with participants (Jennings, 2005). Having insider and outsider perspectives, I was thus linked to participants within interdependency as “knowing subjects in the process of generating knowledge” (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, p. 251). The italicised text below provides a brief overview of my insider experience.

My assumption of an emic perspective drew on my experiences during six months’ employment as a room attendant at a resort hotel on the Great Barrier Reef, and six months at a Motor Inn in Darwin, as well as several months at two different motels in New Zealand. I also reflected on casual conversations I have had with room attendants whilst I was working as a night auditor at a 4 star hotel on the Gold Coast of Australia, and many conversations with women from my socio-economic sphere who were employed as room attendants on the Gold Coast.

This experience provided a background to and informed my understanding of the participants’ employment context. Having been employed as a room attendant I had empathy with the role and associated tasks.

At the same time, my role as researcher was an etic (outsider) position, which raised questions of power, privilege and privacy I needed to consider in an ‘unequal educational’ power relationship (Kari Boyd McBride, 2006). I assumed my formal education was more extensive than that of most of the participants, so I made efforts to avoid any impressions of educational superiority. As Eva, a participating room attendant in her 20s, explained:

I don’t have an education but I think that your perception of yourself changes when you are trained.

I have sought to demonstrate a conscious approach to representing these room attendants as ‘other’ or external to myself, by reflecting on my own experiences. I was mindful of the advice of feminist critical theorists, such as Michelle Fine, Lois Weis,
Susan Weseen and Loonmun Wong (2005), not to speak for others and not to appropriate the voices of marginalised others for my own academic needs. As I championed a more equitable social order in hotels for those in lower levels of the workplace hierarchy, I aimed to make my research project an “ethical, moral, ideological and political activity” (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001, p. 74).

This thesis reflects my particular standpoint and is therefore, implicitly and explicitly, shaped by my “social, cultural, class and gendered location” (Haraway, 2004, p. 17). My awareness of myself as an “instrument for promoting a sociology for women” was as a tool to articulate “the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society” (Ann Oakley, 2003, p. 253). I acknowledged an interdependency between me as researcher, and the participants; and this interdependency was addressed by my thoroughly ‘reflexive’ approach (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997).

**Reflexivity**

I adopted a radical reflexive approach (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003) to develop my critical consciousness regarding my philosophical assumptions and how I represented room attendants. This reflexivity involved understanding my own biographical influences on my research. I engaged in a constant internal dialogue, which may be considered an interpretation of my own interpretations (Alvesson & Skölberg, 2000; Harris et al., 2007). By taking this reflexive approach towards my interpretations, I attempted to address the possible problem of “a lack of self-reflexivity in the empirical work ... within critical inquiry” (Lather, 2003, p. 188).

The core elements of reflexivity required me to be conscious of three issues: to be self-conscious regarding my assumptions in theorising; to recognise the inherent political dimensions in hegemonic positivist science traditions; and to acknowledge my role in the production of knowledge (Mark Neufeld, 1995). I was guided by Pidgeon and Henwood’s (1997) advice that subjectivity is facilitated by using a reflexive journal. I therefore used such a journal to acknowledge, reveal and label my attitudes and
values (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This journal also included the logistics of the study, my reflections on values, biases, assumptions, and methodological decisions (see example in Table 3.1 below). My adoption of a reflexive approach “tells a more complete account of the research process than is to be found in the customary sanitized versions of scientific report-writing” (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, p. 270).

Table 3.1. Reflexive Journal Exemplar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive Journal</th>
<th>01-09-2009</th>
<th>Progress reflection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis is going well and I am excited as I already have some very useful empirical material. I moved through all the transcriptions looking at each line and asking Glaser’s questions. I found this open coding moved fairly quickly and I tried to use a gerund term if there was a fit. This is the fun part. I was mindful of Glaser’s warning of ‘over coding’, but found that I had a code for just about every line.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I need to let the empirical material tell me what the concerns of the Room attendants are. I have reflected on the handling of empirical material and estimate that I would examine each piece of empirical material at least ten times from the initial recording, transcribing and then coding up to a core category! I have developed a management system of technological tools to manage the volume of empirical material. I have made Word documents for the original transcriptions but also Excel sheets to keep track of codes and maintain a trace for quotes. I found that I was able to sort the codes alphabetically and this greatly eased the comparison process. Very happy with progress.</td>
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Keeping a reflexive journal meant that I had a comprehensive account of my research processes, including daily schedules and logistical records. I also reflected on the role my values (axiology) and interests played in informing my methodological decisions. I engaged in self-critical clarification of any political-ideological context I encountered, and considered implicit or explicit meanings that arose during my collection of empirical material. These reflections were often related to the current literature I was reading, as shown in Table 3.2 below. The journal included my perceptions of how I handled representation of hotel room attendants. I was aware that I needed to take care in constructing a minority view that did not legitimate room attendants’ social inequality by taking for granted the hegemonic status quo in the
hospitality industry. I was aware of the danger – at odds with a committed feminist position – of erasing the differences between room attendants. I strove to recognise differences in cultures, beliefs, political stances and ethnicities amongst participants, while recognising emergent norms of shared employment and gender experiences, such as the frequent experience of predatory male hotel guest behaviour.

Table 3.2. Reflexive Journal Exemplar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive Journal</th>
<th>17-09-2008</th>
<th>Theoretical Stance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am finishing Shulamit Rienharz – absolutely fantastic, an enlightening opportunity to understand that feminist writing has a long history and many examples of the sadness I have felt in my life living in a patriarchal society. Have also been reading Sandra Harding. There is so much that is foundational and antecedent to the current state of affairs of women and working class. I feel I have a grasp of causes and conditions of the lot of women and enjoy the writing of someone like Sandra Harding who can articulate all of these precursors. I am becoming personally engaged with feminism. G sent over utube sites for bell hooks. What an articulate and gentle voice, inspiring. Issues of power and empowerment are complicated by historical influences of imperialism, post-colonialism, and transnational capitalism. I am preparing to treat the not-known creatively.</td>
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My reflexive approach also raised the methodological question of my own subjective influence, which encompasses my own social self and socio-economic experiences, making me an ‘instrument’ in my own research (Rahel Wasserfall, 1997). As knowledge is derived from experience, I sought room attendants’ understanding through developing empathy and sharing experiences. I also maintained a degree of distance to consider my tacit assumptions. This was not the “stance of objectivity and non-involvement” advocated within traditional positivist paradigms (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, p. 251). Rather, taking a reflexive stance enabled me to examine my subjective assumptions. I was aware of theoretical influences on my intertwining of inductive and deductive reasoning during implementation of my constructionist grounded theory methodology.
Philosophy Inspired Grounded Theory Methodology

In my research, I attempted to advance emancipatory theory building, by confronting the relationship between room attendants and corporate capitalism in the Australian hospitality industry. By intertwining the philosophical paradigms of socialist feminism, critical theory and social constructionism, I acknowledged epistemological surface affinities between these three paradigms. These affinities provided an avenue to express hotel room attendants’ feelings whilst acknowledging the contextual influences that perpetuate systems of oppression and dominance (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To incorporate this convergence across the paradigmatic continuum, I used a reflexive methodological approach that served my championing of room attendants as a ‘community of value’ using a value-laden axiology.

Feminist researchers call for reflexive methodologies to understand the creation of conceptual structures (a reality). By using a ‘bifurcated consciousness’ (outsider-within) perspective (Jennings, 2001), I developed insights into the experiences of oppression of a subjugated group, namely hotel room attendants. This was best served for the purposes of my research by a qualitative interpretative and inductive methodology, based on grounded theory, to access participants’ experiences (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006; Jennings, 2005). A qualitative grounded theory approach offered an opportunity for room attendants’ expression of opinion, emotions, and feelings. Grounded theory also helped me to express an empowered voice for room attendants, revealing how they manage and make sense of their daily lives. This research follows Gayle Jennings and Olga Junek’s (2007) arguments for the usefulness of grounded theory methodology within hospitality studies, specifically as an innovative alternative to hegemonic methodological praxis. Similarly, Charmaz (2006) holds that grounded theory methodology enables a better abstract theoretical understanding of experiences. In a like vein, Keith Hollinshead (2007) advocates that hospitality research should alter its focus from a prescriptive, managerial and insular approach, to a fresh recognition of operational praxis from a human and social perspective. My paradigmatic choices therefore required a flexible methodology to interpret room attendants’ lived employment experiences.
Methodology

Methodology is “a set of principles that provides a guiding framework for the design of research”; methods are “the tools used to gather and analyse data” (Jennings, 2005, p. 216). Rather than seeking statistical validation or universal generalisation (Robert Yin, 1994), my research aimed to explore patterns within the empirical material, and develop theory in order to better understand the employment experiences of hotel room attendants. I applied a social constructionist qualitative grounded theory methodology (detailed in the following chapter three) as an ontologically holistic inductive methodology that would support my epistemological stance. Grounded theory has been identified as being suited for real world contexts, and as an alternative to hegemonic positivistic scientific endeavours (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

There are as many variations of grounded theory as there are proponents of the method; taking a social constructionist perspective offers one path. In identifying my application of a ‘constructionist revision’ (Charmaz, 1990) of grounded theory, I acknowledge outcomes as derived from social interaction, social negotiation and power relationships in the field. My implementation of constructionist grounded theory was derived from a symbolic interactionist perspective framed by socialist (Marxist) feminism, and based on critical theory. I followed the central tenets of Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) seminal method. I used inter-disciplinary and theoretical perspectives to develop new ideas and construct theory through a rigorous and dense interpretation. Charmaz (1994, p. 71) identifies the strategies of grounded theory as:

1. [bringing] the researcher close to basic processes and issues that people experience, hence, theoretical constructs at once revealed and covered those realities; 2. provid[ing] a method for identifying, capturing and rendering processual rather than static analyses; 3. fostering a rigorous qualitative methodology with its own integrity and intrinsic values distinct from quantitative research; and 4. offer[ing] possibilities from moving qualitative research more definitively toward, dense, durable, substantive and formal theories.
This formulation also permitted my feminist commitment to scrutinise my own positionality (Laura Ellingson, 2009). Charmaz’s work provides support for my use of grounded theory in that “a greater attention to contemporary developments in Marxist and critical theory might foster closer connections between microscopic and macroscopic structures in grounded theory analyses” (Charmaz, 1994, p. 90). My use of grounded theory enabled me to challenge my prior conceptualisations, take an active researcher stance, and was influenced by my own philosophical tendencies and my biography. These personal influences have been identified as legitimate and appropriate reasons for selection of a grounded theory research approach (John Creswell, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

**In Conclusion**

This chapter has explained my ontological beliefs, based on my socialist perspective founded on Marxist conceptualisations of capitalism. My view of labour exploitation takes a feminist focus on female hotel room attendants as an unrecognised community of value. In challenging the *status quo* of room attendant *invisibility* and the social impact this has on room attendants, I also adopted a critical theory epistemology. This enabled me to express my humanitarian concern for the exploitation inherent in the gendered division of labour in hotels. A social constructionist perspective allowed me to create meaning through social interactions with room attendants. From these perspectives, I identified constructionist grounded theory methodology as suitable for examining how room attendants deal with their *invisibility* based on their lived employment experiences. This methodology was consistent with my reflexive approach and allowed simultaneous collection and interpretation of empirical material. The following chapter provides an explanation of my application of constructionist grounded theory methodology to the empirical material.
Chapter Three

Methodology

*Grounded theory is a set of rigorous procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. These concepts/categories are related to each other as a theoretical explanation of the action(s) that continually resolves the main concern of the participants in a substantive area.*

(Barney Glaser, 2011).

This chapter presents the constructionist grounded theory methodology I applied to collect and interpret empirical material for my thesis. Initially, I reaffirm as the foundation of my inquiry my philosophical approach as a socialist, feminist critical theorist. Following this, I briefly explain the development of ‘grounded theory’ and explain how my approach was both reflexive and constructionist. The remainder of the chapter details my interpretation and application of the methodological tenets of grounded theory. I describe all interaction methods I employed to collect empirical materials. Finally, I address the methodological issue of research trustworthiness, and ethical issues. This chapter has been arranged as depicted in *Figure 3.1* beginning with my philosophical approach.
Theoretical Framework

As explained in the previous chapter, my research methods incorporated several epistemological assumptions which influenced how I used grounded theory methodology. My intertwining of socialist feminism with critical theory and social constructionist philosophical stances provided sensitising theoretical concepts. These sensitising concepts are framed by shared commonalities between ontology and epistemology in the social construction of reality. My research was also influenced by my personal experiences and my axiological values, which aligned with the epistemology of critical theory. As already noted, the core tradition of critical theory is founded on a desire for radical social change. It is strongly influenced by Karl Marx’s socialist ideals. Further, critical theory critiques capitalism’s absorption of workers into hierarchal systems where they lose autonomy. Such tradition and critique is pertinent to my study because my focus is room attendant invisibility within hierarchical hotel organisations. As a socialist feminist critical theorist, I sought to expose an injustice of capitalism, namely its appropriation of surplus value through hegemonic practices within the hospitality industry, and in particular to redress the invisibility of women working as hotel room attendants. My critical stance required a rigorous interpretation focus to locate and interpret the subjective and collective experiences of hotel room attendants. The central tenets of grounded theory provided a thorough set of interpretation tools. I elaborate on my choice of grounded theory methodology in the following section.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an established, credible and flexible research methodology in which theory from across disciplines is used to explain basic social processes (Glaser, 1978). While grounded theory does not provide an explicit method or ‘formulaic rules’ of theory construction (Charmaz, 2006), the methodology provided me with general principles and systematic interpretation tools. The various approaches to grounded theory offered a range of strategies for sampling, collecting, and coding qualitative empirical material in a concurrent manner through constant comparison of concepts
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

(Wendy Holloway & Tony Jefferson, 2000). Bearing in mind the diversity of approaches to grounded theory, I was conscious of what Glaser (1978) had advocated as the central tenets of grounded theory method. These tenets are particularly relevant to exploring complex and contextual meanings, such as those of my participants as they constructed their world. Glaser’s (1978) tenets included:

1. collection of empirical material and ‘analysis’ proceed simultaneously,
2. processes and products are shaped by empirical material rather than by preconceived theoretical frameworks; and
3. grounded theorists do not adhere to the traditional quantitative canons of verification.

Grounded theory has strength as a methodology because it originates in contributions from fundamentally different sociological traditions (Sally Hutchinson, 1988).

Foundations of Grounded Theory

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss explained their methods for qualitative analysis in the seminal text: The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research (1967). Glaser and Strauss combined their distinct philosophical and methodological backgrounds motivated by their mutual realisation that a research methodology was needed that was firmly grounded in contextual realities (see Glaser & Strauss 1965, 1968; Strauss & Glaser, 1970). Contextual realities are the realities within a specific context or situation. Glaser’s research training occurred at Columbia University and followed a quantitative tradition under Paul Lazarsfeld, and this is apparent in Glaser’s efforts to codify qualitative procedures of theoretical coding and conceptual development of codes using constant comparative methods (Glaser 1992). Anselm Strauss trained under the University of Chicago’s theoretical tradition of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, within a qualitative sociological research tradition that used field observations and interviews extensively (Anselm Strauss, 1987). Strauss’s influence is particularly revealed in the concepts of empathy with participants and subjective contextualisation, as discussed by Charmaz (2006).
Subsequently, a bifurcation of grounded theory occurred, with each author publishing explanations of the methodology. Glaser’s *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978) elaborated on theory development; this was followed a decade later by Strauss’s *Qualitative Analysis for Social Sciences* (1987) which aimed to simplify abstract terminology. Strauss, in collaboration with Juliet Corbin, then published *Basics of Qualitative Research, Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (1990, 1998), which specified strategies for a grounded theory analysis. Glaser saw this as a betrayal of the founding precepts of the original grounded theory method, publishing a strong repudiation with *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (1992). This bifurcation of the original theoretical and methodological application of grounded theory has seen further interpretations, different terminologies, and adaptations in procedures over the past 40 years (Jennings & Junek, 2007). I accepted Charmaz’s (2005) view of the seminal conceptualisation of grounded theory as positivistic and therefore adopted a constructionist revision. Constructionist grounded theory recognises perspectivism – a belief that there is no definitive ‘truth’ (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001) – and advocates a reflexive stance, that is, recognition that all social activity, including research, is an ongoing accomplishment from within.

Charmaz (2000, 2005) positions herself within Glaser’s methodological tradition, and offers a social constructionist interpretation of grounded theory. My application of constructionist grounded theory incorporated my construction of conceptual categories during my theoretical interpretation of the empirical material. As noted by Charmaz (1994) “each researcher who adopts the approach likely develops his or her own variations of technique” (p. 112). Hence, the outcome is a constructed understanding of a reality rather than a seemingly objective report (Charmaz, 2005). My belief in constructed understanding and recognition of the researcher’s interpretation drove my consideration of constructionist grounded theory as an appropriate methodology.
Constructionist Grounded Theory

Constructionist grounded theory, like socialist feminist critical theory, holds that knowledge should transform social practice in order to contribute to a better world (Charmaz, 2006). My interpretation of ‘constructionist grounded theory’ followed the original methods described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2005) and Charmaz (2003, 2005, 2006), to develop an abstract conceptualisation of hotel room attendants’ employment experiences. Constructionist grounded theory involves adherence to the constant comparative method, theoretical memoing, theoretical sampling, and code saturation (also called informational isomorph, this occurs when properties or categories are fully explained), and sorting of memos (Jennings, 2010). As with classic Glaserian grounded theory, constructionist grounded theory methodology is non-linear and iterative, involving looped interactions between collection and coding of empirical material. My actions in this iterative process are depicted graphically in Figure 3.2 on page 51.

As a constructionist, I assumed that within my research process there developed an emergent reality shaped by social interaction. This view provided an open-ended, flexible method of studying interactive processes in the social structure of a hotel. In using a ‘constructionist revision’ (Charmaz, 1990, 1994) of grounded theory, I acknowledge that empirical material interpreted in this thesis was derived from active social interaction, and developed through social negotiation and power relationships in the field (Charmaz, 1994), rather than representing a ‘reality’ that was set in stone and inactively observed. I adhered to constructionist revisions by maintaining three core principles of the classic grounded theory method: theoretical sensitivity; theoretical sampling; and constant comparison of concepts using an inductive approach (Michael Clinton, Peter Totterdell & Stephen Wood, 2006). My qualitative approach to investigating marginalisation, exploitation and particularly the invisibility of hotel room attendants involved one-on-one interviews which required a flexible method of interpretation. My selection of grounded theory methodology has been partly explained in the preceding sections of this chapter. I now want to foreground my rationale for the use of grounded theory.
Rationale for Using Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a well-established and rigorous methodology for investigating and explaining behaviour in areas where few adequate theories exist (Sarantakos, 1998). Grounded theory has been recognised as being particularly useful in overly conceptualised fields, because the extant pre-conceptualisations often do not cover what is actually being experienced, so revealing new perspectives (Glaser, 2005). I would agree that hospitality study is such a conceptualised field, based on its ‘borrowing’ from a variety of fields of studies and disciplines. Grounded theory was therefore my preferred research methodology for the following reasons:

1. Grounded theory offered a systematic approach to the implicit process of interpreting complex empirical material. It involves an interaction of empirical material with emerging ideas (Charmaz, 2006). The methodological tools allowed freedom from the structure and rigour of other more forcing methodologies, while providing a fully documented, analytic process (Glaser, 1998).

2. The strength of grounded theory analysis is its open-endedness and flexibility (Charmaz, 1994). Grounded theory enabled consideration of multiple interrelated influences in a natural setting, thus generating theory from praxis.

3. Grounded theory allowed immersion in the empirical material, while constantly guarding against preconceptions and application of theory not grounded in the empirical material (Glaser, 1978).

4. The value of a grounded theory approach is the ability to inductively construct categories to explain social processes through procedures, which facilitate subjectivity in interpretation and creativity in the analysis process (Charmaz, 2003).

5. Grounded theory “stresses discovery and theory development rather than logical deductive reasoning which relies on prior theoretical frameworks” (Charmaz, 1994, p. 96). I therefore felt free and encouraged to incorporate theory from across a range of disciplinary literatures such as anthropology, geography, politics, psychology and sociology as advocated by Glaser (1978).
6. Grounded theory procedures provided an effective system for handling large amounts of empirical material.

7. My PhD research needed to conform to some agreed criteria in the interests of methodological rigour, and grounded theory is an established and credible methodology, which allowed focus on human behaviour.

8. As an inductive method, the generation of theory is derived from (or grounded in) the empirical material collected, so my preconceived notions were not forced onto the empirical material.

9. My grounded theory of Performing provided room attendants with conceptual ‘grab’ (immediate understanding) (Lather, 2003). This understanding was documented during ‘member checking’ where my interpretations and representations were checked with the participants.

I was able to adhere to the central tenets of grounded theory with guidance from my supervisors, extensive reading of the grounded theory literature, and participating in academic discussion groups at Griffith University. Also, I had developed skills in and sensitivity to grounded theory in my Honours dissertation. My application of grounded theory was not a sequence of discrete steps, but rather it involved overlapping, intersecting and mutually inclusive processes. Glaser (1998) explains that the process of grounded theory “happens sequentially, subsequently, simultaneously, serendipitously and scheduled” (p. 1). The model presented in Figure 3.2 portrays the processes associated with my development of a substantive model using grounded theory. These processes occurred alongside and were viewed through the lenses of my theoretical sensitivities.
Two tenets of grounded theory are theoretical sensitivity and theoretical sampling, which I now address.

**Theoretical Sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity is a cornerstone of grounded theory. Theoretical sensitivity means that the researcher enters the research setting with an open mind and few predetermined ideas (Glaser, 1978). Avoiding preconception did not, in my case, mean not using my knowledge; the broader one’s interdisciplinary knowledge the better to avoid predetermination of ideas. As Blumer (1969) explains:

> ...researchers who use grounded theory methods do so through the prism of their disciplinary assumptions and theoretical perspectives. Thus they already possess [an] asset of ‘sensitizing concepts’ (p. 319).

As a student in the disciplines of hospitality and tourism, my exposure to a wide range of literature gave me a thorough grounding in the fields of anthropology, geography, politics, psychology and sociology, thus providing theoretical sensitivity (Brent Ritchie, Peter Burns & Catherine Palmer, 2005). Concepts from my philosophical identification as a socialist feminist critical theorist were also theoretically sensitising. My search of the literature during theoretical coding (to be discussed later) relied on emergence of
concepts, and earned relevance of the substantive categories. Thus my literature search was purposive, as was the theoretical sampling technique.

**Theoretical Sampling**

‘Theoretical sampling’ means deliberately seeking empirical material that contributes developing conceptual categories identified during grounded theory processes (Charmaz, 2006). Glaser and Strauss have explained that “theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his [sic] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them” (1967, p. 45). Drawing on these two definitions, my theoretical sampling involved a ‘purposive’ (or highly selective) qualitative sampling method. I deliberately sought participants based on their potential ability to provide ‘rich information’. The room attendants’ knowledge (occupational experiences), attitudes (what they thought of the work), and motivations (reasons for them working) provided this information. This method produced an ideational sample that was framed by theoretical saturation (Michael Patton, 1990; Donald Polkinghorne, 2005).

I targeted 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast in Southeast Queensland as potential sources of room-attendants in order to encompass a broad typicality of context. I have not identified the participating hotels in my thesis to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality. These hotels are comparable in terms of room rate and clientele to most 5 star hotels in Australia and other developed countries. My focus was not on the establishment *per se*; rather, each establishment was used as a source of participants and comparison in order to enhance conceptual power and depth through considering the similarities and differences of room attendants’ experiences.

**Context**

Entering the field using grounded theory methodology means finding ways of collecting the accounts of participants in the substantive area to determine issues of concern to them. I initially contacted the General Manager of each of the participating...
multinational chain hotels by mail (see Appendix D, page. 290). I followed this letter up within a week with a telephone call to ascertain their willingness to allow their employees to participate. Making initial appointments involved approval of several hierarchical levels of gatekeepers (general managers, human resource managers and executive housekeepers). Whilst I did not personally meet any of the general managers, they facilitated my access. This greatly eased approval of other gatekeepers such as human resource managers, and subsequently executive housekeepers. Each Human Resource Manager was provided with a copy of the information sheets, and a sample of the questions I intended to ask the room attendants (see Appendices E & F, pages 287-289).

These management contacts secured access to the hotel and allowed arrangement of mutually suitable days/dates and times to meet with room attendants. At each hotel the executive housekeeper displayed a poster about my research and informed room attendants at their morning meetings of my wish to talk to them. Room attendants then came forward voluntarily to participate. The interview context differed at each establishment; some were conducted before and/or after working hours, while some hotels permitted interviews during working hours (see Table 3.3 below). The interviews were conducted over a period of fifteen months between September 2009 and December 2010. A log was maintained in Word documenting all contact with the participating establishments. This recorded the name of the hotel contact, date and type of contact (phone, email, letter), and action resulting or required. This document was password protected to ensure confidentiality.
Table 3.3. Participating Hotel Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Date of interviews</th>
<th>Empirical material collection context – from field notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17-07-09 to 30-07-09</td>
<td>Interviewed Human Resource Manager and Executive Housekeeper as well as Room Attendants. Room attendant interviews were conducted ‘on the run’. I would follow the room attendant around the hotel room while they worked. They would sometimes stop to answer questions. This was frantic for me as I did not wish to get underfoot or in the way. Having to hold onto the interview board and the recording device at a close enough distance was concerning, but worked really well. I feel that the room attendants were comfortable answering questions while they undertook their tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>02-11-09 to 03-11-09</td>
<td>Only room attendants were interviewed. These interviews were conducted in the reception area of the hotel in a fairly quiet location. Room attendants were brought to me, escorted by the Assistant Executive Housekeeper on a strictly 30 minute schedule. This enabled a run through of the questions and some follow-up of participant’s answers. Some restrictions may relate to the quality of some responses due to ‘properline’ perspective as there was camera surveillance of the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25-11-09 to 4-12-09</td>
<td>The Executive Housekeeper and room attendants were interviewed. Room attendant interviews were conducted in the canteen, which was subject to through traffic, also under camera surveillance. This setting was fairly relaxed as I could have coffee and be seen by other room attendants and interact with them to establish a rapport that I think resulted in more candid empirical material, although a little restrained still in some cases. I positioned the room attendants facing the through traffic so that they could monitor their own contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10-03-10 to 11-03-10</td>
<td>Room attendants only were interviewed. Interviews were conducted in Executive Housekeepers’ office. Room attendants took pleasure in sitting in the Executive Housekeeper’s chair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17-03-10 to 19-03-10</td>
<td>Interviews were conducted in the staff canteen. This large room had only a few occupants at the time so confidentiality was maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing member checking until December 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interactions

Interviews took place in a variety of settings (as indicated in Table 3.3 above). If not in a closed office, I made efforts to ensure room attendants felt confident that our conversation was private. I also ensured minimal interference from background noise
as the conversations were recorded on a small digital recorder. I interviewed 46 hotel room attendants, and two executive housekeepers and one human resource manager who made themselves available for interviews. The length of interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 75 minutes, with an average time of 30 minutes. These interviews were conducted at each hotel in temporal clusters, and this clustering was punctuated with time spent in coding and interpretive constructions of empirical material. Further interaction for confirmation of theoretical ‘fit’ with room attendants’ understandings (member checking) was conducted until the end of 2010.

I collected minimal descriptive biographical information from the room attendants, although I did seek some indication of their length of time in the industry. Most room attendants voluntarily provided their age and ethnic or national origin during the course of the conversations (see Table 3.4. below). Confidentiality was assured; ethical conduct is discussed later in this chapter. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 61 and were a mixture of nationalities, with 25 being of Australian or European extraction. Eighteen were from a Confucian heritage and/or South East Asian background, two from Papua New Guinea and one individual from Africa. These hotel employees reflect a multiplicity of ethnic and cultural origins.

Table 3.4. Participating Room Attendants’ Biographical Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Consideration</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Details</td>
<td>Average Ages</td>
<td>30 – 40 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged 20 to 29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged 30 to 39</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged 40 to 49</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged 50 to 59</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aged 60 +</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Longest length of experience</td>
<td>25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants with over 10 years’ experience</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total length of experience</td>
<td>317.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average length of occupation experience</td>
<td>6.9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>Consideration</td>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippina</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My choice of interviews, rather than focus groups, as the source of empirical material allowed participants freedom to discuss sensitive topics such as sexual harassment on a one-on-one basis. This was important as focus groups may lead to silence on sensitive matters as participants may be inhibited from divulging such experiences in a collective forum (Onsøyen et al., 2009). Further, interviews are argued to provide succinct meaning and understanding through the interaction process (Powell & Watson, 2006).

**Interview Procedures**

Participating room attendants were provided with an information sheet they could retain, which explained my research and included my contact details, and those of my supervisors and the Griffith University ethics office, should they need further information or clarification. Each participant was asked if they had any questions and were assured I would protect their confidentiality. I then gave them an informed consent form to sign (see Appendix F, page 293). Participants were also provided with an entry form for a draw for $100. This was an incentive to encourage participation (see Appendix G, page 294). Incentives may be perceived in a negative way as evidence that the research is of little worth, and hence requires an inducement, or payment (Peter Lynn, 2001). My motive in providing an incentive was positive: I appealed altruistically for room attendant participation and my offer of an entry into this draw was intended as a chance to demonstrate my deep appreciation for their time. These prizes were drawn by my principal supervisors and mailed to the general manager of
each hotel after the interviews ended, with a letter expressing my appreciation for the hotel’s participation. I also provided a box of chocolates whilst room attendants completed these formalities, which appeared to assist in fostering rapport.

Establishing rapport included telling participants what my research was about, and how my own room attendant experience informed my personal immersion in the research setting. Sharing a common language and frame of reference facilitated my involvement as an active and empathetic listener, and helped to guard against ‘proper-lining’ (participants saying what they think you want to hear, or taking the ‘organisation’ line) (Denzin, 1989). I have previously acknowledged that my sympathies and my research agenda were predicated on concerns regarding the exploitation of room attendants, and the aim of enhancing their visibility. In short, having an emic perspective based on my former employment and my current socio-economic status allowed me to express empathy for the room attendants’ experiences, which in turn reduced — although did not eliminate — the ‘unequal educational’ power relationship (Boyd McBride, 2006). As acknowledged above, my educational advantage had potential to form ‘barriers to communication’ by placing me ‘above’ the participants (Cheryl Elman & Angela O’Rand, 2006). I therefore sought to share my background, briefly, with participants, since “the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship” (Oakley, 2003, p. 232). I followed Charles Briggs’s (2003) suggestion to adopt a critical perspective, which avoids extending social inequality, by viewing the interviews as conversations. I thus approached fieldwork as an embodied practice in which I was of the same social group as the participants (Ellingson, 2009).

I used a form of ‘interactive interviewing’, which mirrors everyday real life conversations (Hertz, 1997) with self-disclosures on my side. It has been noted that feminist interviewing “requires openness, emotional engagement, and the development of a potentially long-term, trusting relationship” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 239). The room attendants’ positive attitude to my research, which I surmised sprang from my explanation that via the research they were communicating to a
broader audience, stimulated my intellectual involvement. So our construction of meaning was an interactional articulation of room attendant employment experiences, with an outcome I intended to be useful to these participants. As symbols — verbal and non-verbal — used to construct understanding are highly complex (Larry Samovar, Richard Porter & Edwin McDaniel, 2009), I took care to ensure my style of dress and manner of speech would put participants at ease. In dressing for the occasion, I would wear a business suit — in order to create credibility — to meet the human resource managers, and casual clothing (as non-authoritative) to interview the room attendants.

Field Notes

My contextual observations were recorded in interview field notes. These field notes were written in the reception area as I waited for my first meetings with hotel management, or while waiting for room attendants to become available. I recorded my observations of décor, housekeeping practices and observed interactions between room attendants and supervisors or other staff. Field notes were also written immediately after the interviews, and fostered my later reflections evaluating my research processes (see Field Note example in Table 3.5 below).
Table 3.5. Field Note Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time commenced: 07.15</th>
<th>Time finished: 07.50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Contact:** I arrived at 7.15. I was welcomed by a staff member in the laundry area, and shown to the canteen. I asked a room attendant for some milk and she asked me to accompany her to a cooler room outside the kitchen just around the corner from the canteen. “I just need a witness” she said as she slid open the door (coping strategy?) and took a 2L bottle of milk out. I commented that this was wise practice. Room attendants appeared happy to sit and appreciated that their back was to the wall so they could survey the canteen and structure their replies according to who was walking past. I feel I developed a good rapport with the room attendants — a box of wrapped chocolates helped break down the barriers. Initially they were hesitant to talk to me and EXHK asked if I needed her to give them a hurry-up but I told her that they must come to me voluntarily and they would once they realised that I was not going to hurt them.

**Venue:** Back of house was in stark contrast to the plush front of house image. The corridor walls back of house were paint chipped, with long lines of trolley marks. The service lift had the same crumpled carpet that was there 8 years ago when I worked there. I think this must be a safety issue.

**Reflection:** I felt a mental analysis is going on so I will have to catch up with the paperwork on the weekend. Participants appear reserved and a little nervous, they are all in uniform. Other room attendants appear relaxed, read the paper or watch television, some appear to ‘heat and eat’ a breakfast before starting work.

**Interview Protocol**

I developed interview protocols using an ‘interview guide’ (see Table 3.6), with broad questions that addressed issues to be explored during the interviews (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). I deliberately asked broad, non-directive ‘grand tour’ questions early in the interviews to encourage responses and allow further exploration by follow up probes (Jennings, 2005). I also followed Reinharz’s (1992) advice to keep questions simple to enable less articulate participants to answer without feeling inadequate. The guide was designed to explore the concerns of room attendants, and was not necessarily followed in a strict order, as the sequencing of questions was adjusted to suit the characteristics of each participant’s responses.
Table 3.6. Interview Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me how you came to be employed at this hotel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your employment experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the most challenging part of your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the best part of your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel about your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the most significant part of your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your interaction with hotel guests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel recognised and valued for your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do your family view your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your objectives or goals in life?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The flexible nature of grounded theory methodology permits a focus on what is important to the participants; these questions gave the room attendants an opportunity to speak of something they knew well. As advised by Rubin and Rubin (2005), I endeavoured to listen for and explore key words and themes. I used follow-up questions to encourage the interviewees to expand on issues important to them, or to elicit or seek clarification of the strategies they used to deal with particular issues, and any outcomes. These interviews were always conducted in an informal atmosphere. The room attendants appeared relaxed and only one appeared to demonstrate minor frustration at not being able to articulate as clearly as she wished, due to a reduced competence in her second language of English. I viewed the room attendants as co-constructors and, as advocated by Jennie Small (1999), I viewed the researcher–participant interview relationship as an interactive experience.

Recording Interviews

All interviews were recorded digitally and I was able to maintain transcription integrity as my presence at the interview meant I did not misconstrue wording. Using a
recording device meant I needed to ensure a relatively quiet situation and that I had installed new batteries. After gaining participants’ consent, I placed the recorder in an unobtrusive place. Glaser (1978) views full recording of interviews as unnecessary and likely to produce an over-accumulation of material. Despite this, I took few notes during the interviews, preferring to concentrate on the interaction, so recording these interviews enabled a full transcription for coding and as documented evidence.

Transcribing Interviews

The interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interviews (within 24 hours). This immediate transcription reaffirmed or clarified my initial impressions, and was the beginning of the interpretation process. Each interview was allocated a unique code for tracking excerpts and to ensure participant anonymity (e.g. 02GCRA01). This unique code identified the establishment, its location, the participant’s role and individual participant identification numbers, and these in turn were linked to the consent forms, which were kept secure. These verbatim transcriptions were formatted to two-thirds of the page column to allow a broad margin for manual writing of open codes and each line was numerically identified to allow excerpt tracking (for example, see Table 3.7). One recording was accidentally deleted during the transcription process; however, I had made reflective notes of that particular interview, which were coded. Each transcription was then printed to allow me to code manually.

Grounded Theory Implementation

The following sections provide details of the coding processes I used, from open to selective, and how I interpreted the empirical material leading to the formation of a grounded theory of Performing. Grounded theory is a process of fracturing the empirical material descriptively and reconstructing it conceptually by moving between inductive and deductive thinking. In a multi-task process style, I developed codes, their
properties and categories beginning with an iterative comparison of similar open codes.

Open Coding

Collection and coding of empirical material occurred concurrently. I initially examined the transcribed interviews to label lines of empirical material. These labels were open (or substantive) codes developed by considering each line to capture implied and explicit meanings as succinctly as possible. Open coding was a relatively fast process and guided by Glaser’s (1978) advice to ask regarding each sentence, line or word “What is this data a study of? What category does this incident indicate? What is actually happening in the data?” (p. 57). These open codes were usually in vivo words of the room attendants. This allowed familiarity with local interpretive meaning to make sense to room attendants in the substantive field of a hotel establishment. Following David Silverman’s (2001) advice, I often used gerund (non-finite verb) terms to reflect action or processes. In Table 3.7 below I provide an example of my open coding.

Table 3.7. Structure of Open Coding with Identification Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview statement</th>
<th>Open code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. S: Tell me how you would describe your employment experience?</td>
<td>Working hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. employment experience?</td>
<td>Doing best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 01RAGC08: Its hard .. you are working</td>
<td>Making beds difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. physically hard all day .. but now .. not like</td>
<td>Being pressured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. before .. with [new EXHK] it is easy to do your</td>
<td>Getting through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. best .. but it’s hard ..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. S: So what is the most difficult part?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 01RAGC08: Making beds .. and then too much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. pressure if the room is not ready for the guest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. .. because you have to get through them all ..</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. and you go upstairs and you are looking for things like missing linen or something.

My attention to action words was consistent with the assumptions of grounded theory, as I was interested in processes enacted and constructed by room attendants. My focus was on the properties (descriptive dimensions of a code or category) and consequences of those processes in order to give interpretive precision and assist in defining major issues. These line by line codes with relevant excerpts of empirical material were entered in an Excel spread sheet. This enabled an alphabetical sort that was a useful tool to collate the open codes for the initial constant comparison processes to occur. During the constant comparison process, many open codes were subsumed as properties of a more encompassing selective descriptive code of the substantive area. When no further expansion of the code was possible I assumed a tentative saturation (see Table 3.8 below for a full list of initial open codes).

Table 3.8. Initial Open Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Open Codes Continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Demanding Guests</td>
<td>Hygiene Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Guests</td>
<td>Ignoring Suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating Guests</td>
<td>Injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving Standards</td>
<td>Job Attitude Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Tasks</td>
<td>Judging Guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching Families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating Guests</td>
<td>Lacking Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating Rewards</td>
<td>Lacking Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating Rewards</td>
<td>Lacking Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating Rewards</td>
<td>Liking Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations</td>
<td>Long Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to Detail</td>
<td>Maintaining Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Pride</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Maintaining Service Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Making Bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding /Affording Day Care</td>
<td>Messy Guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Accosted</td>
<td>Monotony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Acknowledged</td>
<td>Non-supporting Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Bullied</td>
<td>Not Knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Exposed</td>
<td>Pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate Situations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Ignored</td>
<td>Performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Perks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Ignored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Unemployed</td>
<td>Physical Pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Victimized</td>
<td>Poor Guest Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Codes</td>
<td>Open Codes Continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Advancement</td>
<td>Poor Rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing Identity</td>
<td>Positive Job Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking Out</td>
<td>Pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Guests</td>
<td>Prior Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning Bathroom Importance</td>
<td>Pushing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues Belonging</td>
<td>Quality Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues Avoiding</td>
<td>Quality Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating Barriers</td>
<td>Quality Standards Complying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaining Guest</td>
<td>Reasons for Working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condescending Staff</td>
<td>Receiving Invitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condescending Guests</td>
<td>Receiving Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contradictory Expectations</td>
<td>Receiving Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience of Work</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covert Surveillance</td>
<td>Reporting Guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Attitudes Differing</td>
<td>Respecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Differences</td>
<td>Self-Depreciating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding Guests</td>
<td>Self-Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding Reception</td>
<td>Sex Equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciating</td>
<td>Sexual Advances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differing Guests</td>
<td>Sexual Harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretion</td>
<td>Sexual Vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminating</td>
<td>Social Stigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Socialising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Standard Operating Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising</td>
<td>Stigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Humour</td>
<td>Stocking Trolley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Supervisor Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Low</td>
<td>Supporting Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Undervalued</td>
<td>Supporting Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship of Colleagues</td>
<td>Taking Pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship of guests</td>
<td>Task Breakdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Guests</td>
<td>Time Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Provision</td>
<td>Time Limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Related</td>
<td>Time Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Hurt</td>
<td>Tipping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Job</td>
<td>Treating Poorly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Through</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Tips</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Interaction Gender difference</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Interaction Humour</td>
<td>Unrecognised Qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Interaction Universal code</td>
<td>Unsupporting Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>Withdrawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>Withholding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having Aspirations</td>
<td>Work Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having Experience</td>
<td>Work Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having Security</td>
<td>Work Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Work Routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy Being Ignored</td>
<td>Working Conditions Communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I documented all activities in ‘memos’ regarding my codes and category development (discussed later). I avoided using software analysis tools as some argue that they restrict sensitivity to the discovery of meaning in the empirical material, do not allow constant comparison, and inhibit theoretical sampling by building empty categories (Glaser, 2005; Silverman, 2001). A second more focused (selective) layer of coding subsumed earlier material to construct categories. The aim of this coding process was to generate theoretical properties of categories, including their dimensions, conditions, consequences and relationships to other categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Selective Coding**

The second process of my grounded theory procedure was selective coding, which subsumed the open codes into categories that were further constructed and clarified with property dimensions and description (see Table 3.9 of selective coding below). Some questions I considered during this part of my interpretation helped in defining and refining code properties, such as: “Under what conditions does this particular aspect or issue increase or decrease?” “How do supervisors’ actions affect this issue for room attendants?” “How do room attendants view a particular aspect?” “What responses from guests or other staff do the room attendant’s actions provoke”? “What is the effect of a particular incident on the attendant’s morale?” “Do any actions have direct effects on other departments?” “What are the consequences of all actions?” By asking these questions, I developed the selective codes, bearing in mind Blumer’s (1969) advice that “a satisfactory concept in empirical science must meet three simple requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Open Codes Continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Withholding Privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Internal Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Knowing Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Lowest rung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Lacking Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Maintaining Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest Work</td>
<td>Accused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Appreciation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

1. it must point clearly to the individual instances of the class of empirical objects to which it refers,
2. it must distinguish clearly this class of objects from other related classes of objects; and
3. it must enable the development of cumulative knowledge of the class of objects to which it refers” (p. 91).

Following this advice enabled me to delineate the codes. This focused coding was also developed by consulting the literature. This consultation with literature enabled me to examine and compare meanings and definitions to portray the particular contextual meanings assigned by the room attendants. This selective coding identified areas for further investigation. So the empirical material and my theoretical knowledge determined the issues to investigate further in later interviews with other room attendants.

Table 3.9. Selective Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Pre-Substantive codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>Working Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Return</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Necessity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Care</td>
<td>Hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Family Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working 10 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O H &amp; S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Food</td>
<td>Sustenance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining Weight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Uniforms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hot Fabric</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsuitable Design</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost Cutting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discounts</td>
<td>Gratuities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient Opportunities</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety Focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lacking Variety</td>
<td>Monotony</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating View</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Monitoring</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working in Pairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Service</td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inequity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Task Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Friends</td>
<td>Collegiality</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being Known</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining Distance</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Familiarity</td>
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<td>Congeniality</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Requirements</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
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<td>Heavy Beds</td>
<td>Equipment</td>
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<td>Two Queen per Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Super King Size</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doona Usage</td>
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<td>Pillows</td>
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<td>Linen Condition</td>
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<td>Linen Outsourcing</td>
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<td>Trolleys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disabled Facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entering Rooms</td>
<td>Room State</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Occupied</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimate Situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Untidy Dirty Rooms</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Demands</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Size Linen</td>
<td>Bed-Making</td>
<td><strong>Tasking</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
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<td>Body Waste</td>
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<td>Toilet Splashes</td>
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<td>Saliva</td>
<td>Body Waste</td>
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<td>Cooking in Bath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Condoms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleaning Products</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing Gloves</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacuum Cleaner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Paperwork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning Glasses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining Standards</td>
<td>Assessing Rooms</td>
<td><strong>Time Pressure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Time Estimation</td>
<td>Judging Guests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting Schedule</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying Guest Behaviour</td>
<td>Establishing Routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping Fit</td>
<td>Withholding Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying View</td>
<td>Taking Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Organised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing Gloves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Gloves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Hurt</td>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Work</td>
<td>High Turnover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gleaming Bathroom</td>
<td>Work Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecognised</td>
<td>Lacking Appreciation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Exhausted</td>
<td>Emotional Toll</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Room</td>
<td>Workload</td>
<td><strong>Pushing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Respite</td>
<td>Room Allocation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender &amp; Age</td>
<td>Time Allocation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement Between Rooms</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking Rooms</td>
<td>Rescheduling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisiting Rooms</td>
<td>Routine Establishment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Organised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Work Repetition</td>
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<td>Avoiding Family</td>
<td>Working Facilities</td>
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<td>Alternatives</td>
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<td>Keeping Occupied</td>
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<td>Unrecognised Qualifications</td>
<td>Views</td>
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<td>Paying Bills</td>
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<td>Honesty</td>
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<td>Doing Right Thing</td>
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<td>Attention to Detail</td>
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<td>Being Exposed</td>
<td>Guilt</td>
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<td>Complex Levels</td>
<td>Level Maintenance</td>
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<td>Knowing Manager</td>
<td>Supervisor Support</td>
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<td>Limited Recognition</td>
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<td>Condescension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited Recognition</td>
<td>Hierarchy Corruption</td>
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</table>

**Reasons for Working**

- Self-Qualities

**Self-Image**

**Job Satisfaction**

**Hotel Structure**

**Hierarchy**
Conflicting Message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abuses of Power</th>
<th>Power</th>
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<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
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<td>Feeling Low</td>
<td>Self-image consequences</td>
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<td>Feeling Degraded</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-deprecating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standing Up for Self</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Constant Comparison**

Constant comparison of empirical material was a rigorous, iterative process that I commenced when I began collecting empirical material. This was achieved by comparing incidents and concepts, and generating properties from the empirical material to achieve a succinct, parsimonious descriptor of a broad range of concepts (Glaser, 1978). So I would take one room attendant’s account of an experience and compare this with empirical material about another room attendant’s experience. I would look for similarities, differences, dimensions and consistent meaning to construct concept properties. In grounded theory, incidents or phenomena that appear to be conceptually similar in meaning are amalgamated under an abstract concept termed a ‘category’. Then I viewed conditions and consequences related to each of these categories in a holistic way to examine the interrelationships between them.

My experience reflects Glaser’s (1978) advice to tolerate confusion before the empirical material interpretation coalesces into categories. I was seeking variations and situations that would provide new properties or relationships between the concepts. Theoretical saturation resulted when codes and categories were fully described and no new information could be added, with a resultant sense of completeness or closure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Saturation was achieved through a constant comparative process involving two interpretation procedures, the first comparing incident to incident and then incident to concept, and then asking these questions: Firstly, “what is the chief concern or problem of the people in the substantive area, and what accounts for most of the variation in processing the problem? And secondly, what category or what property of what category does this
incident indicate?” (Glaser 1992, p. 39). This continual comparison process subsumed the open codes in my empirical material into concepts and their properties. This subsuming process permitted “two prime criteria of good scientific inducted theory: parsimony and scope” (Glaser, 1992, p. 18). For example, the open codes of ‘abuse of power’, ‘harassment’, ‘hierarchy corruption’ and ‘covert surveillance’ became properties or dimensions of the substantive code ‘power’. Theoretical coding wove these substantive codes, grounded in empirical material, together as a constructed conceptualisation of Performing.

Theoretical codes express the interrelationships between the substantive codes. I studied Glaser’s *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978) for guidance on coding processes, particularly on theoretical coding procedures, and as a fund of theoretical categories to consider (see Appendix H for broad identification of coding properties of some theoretical families, page 296). Glaser (1978) advises that theoretical codes are emergent and never absolute or mutually exclusive. Further, some aspects may be overlooked or relationships underemphasised, and other theoretical codes may be applicable. However, the researcher must “take a stand and try to theoretically render an empirical pattern” (p. 74). As the model began to take shape, I became committed to a theoretical schema and delimited the number of categories to search for a theoretical explanation of the room attendants’ experiences.

**Category Development**

Theoretical sensitivity to a range of coding families encouraged my creativity. Initially I felt I was pulled into the organisational processes, which were dominant in participants’ discourse. I reread Glaser’s (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity* to ensure that I remained open to indicators in the empirical material and avoided premature closure of categories. I tried to be open to change, based on acquisition of new empirical material, and often consulted with empathetic listeners, namely my three supervisors. As the substantive area involved people within an organisational process, there were numerous basic social processes (BSP), basic social structural processes (BSSP), basic
psychological processes (BPP) and basic social psychological processes (BSPP) occurring (see process explanations in Table 3.10 below).

Table 3.10. Social and Psychological Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Family</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub family</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>Basic Social Process</td>
<td>Causes</td>
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<td>Context - Ambience</td>
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<td>Conditions/qualifiers</td>
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<td>Contingencies</td>
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<td>Covariances</td>
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<td>Consequences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Causal subfamily - sources, reasons, explanations, accountings or anticipated consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consequence subfamily - outcomes, efforts, functions, predictions and anticipated or unanticipated consequences (consequential behaviour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSPP</td>
<td>Basic Social Structural Process</td>
<td>Organisations</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Centralisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSPP</td>
<td>Basic Social Psychological Process</td>
<td>Becoming</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Processes people go through</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning /becoming</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Functional requirements of society</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td>Basic Psychological Process</td>
<td>Self-image Family</td>
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<td>Development character</td>
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<td>formation</td>
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<td>May be political, cultural,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>historical or financial processes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


I tracked all processes and code development and emerging ideas in memos.

**Memos**

I have earlier referred to memo writing, which is a central tenet of grounded theory (Glaser, 1978). Memos were my written notes, which documented my development of codes and their properties. These memos also tracked ideas about the kinds of empirical material I should collect via theoretical sampling. The convergence of codes into categories and selective sampling of literature facilitated theoretical coding and
this process was documented in my memos for later sorting. Each memo was uniquely identified with a memo number, date, and the code or concepts pertinent to the content were listed as headings. I used the following layout to provide a methodical and efficient memo bank.

1. I titled each memo with the relevant category or property.

2. I used Word to make duplicate copies for sorting memos with two or more relevances.

3. I used Word also to maintain a copy of the original memos.

4. I structured each memo to allow potential cutting for sorting.

5. I kept the memos separate from empirical material with a reference to exemplars.

6. I interrupted coding to write a memo when an idea occurred.

7. I defined codes to start memo flow.

8. I modified memos as realisations occurred.

9. I kept a list of emergent codes handy for relationship reference.

10. If memos on different codes were similar, I collapsed the two into one.

11. I ensured the memo was distinct on grounded vs. conjecture content.

12. I maintained memoing until the thesis write-up stage.

13. I wrote conceptually about substantive codes rather than people.

14. I focused on one idea at a time.

15. I documented ‘saturation’ in memos.

16. I was flexible in memo techniques and formality.

17. I sorted memos freely “wherever they may fall” (Glaser, 1978, p. 87).
My use of Word to record all memos meant I was able to easily recall a particular code and related memos. I attached excerpts of direct quotes from empirical material that illustrated the code to each memo for later illustration as vignettes. My philosophical directive was to provide ‘voice’ for hotel room attendants, and therefore their voices needed primacy via verbatim quotes. It was necessary to track and access these exemplars throughout my constructionist grounded theory approach; this system offered efficient retrieval as the volume of empirical material expanded. The first memos were short and diverse in content, and mainly descriptive, with working definitions of the concepts. Later memo content related to synthesis of codes and theoretical deliberations; I provide an exemplar in Table 3.11 below. My memos sometimes contained diagrams or ‘mud maps’ constructed in various forms to clarify the conceptual categorical areas and the relationships between them. As interactional influences made the substantive area complex, using bubble diagrams helped me to conceptualise the categories and relationships that were pertinent to my research topic.

Table 3.11. Memo Examples

| 135.0 28-12-09 Hierarchy Internal division discrimination 01RAGC07-14: 02RAGC22-53: |

Within the ranks of room attendants there appears a culture of exclusion based on the opinions of those who have been longest in the job. Maybe long term employment is not the answer to a happy work environment. Fairness? Equity?? The internal divisions in the structure of hotel management place the room attendant at the lowest platform despite the criticality of their work to the hotel and the concept of hospitality. Room attendants feeling dejected and ostracized and of little worth. Room attendants have a general feeling that other departments and people in general have little appreciation for the physical workload and how this repetitive task is exacerbated by a continual temporal element. Feeling of frustration and acceptance that some days one can cope and someone cannot. Voice a need for staff from other departments to appreciate what is involved in room attendant work and how this cannot be done quickly or with short cuts. Recognition of a hierarchical structure that is not democratic results in relegation of room attendant to low echelon marked by their uniform. Total lack of comprehension by reception staff is only solvable by them having the experience of a room attendant. Also expressions of empathy with the reception based on realization that an understanding only comes from experience. Confession that prior to undertaking this type of work a room attendant gave no thought to the room attendant that cleaned their room.
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

245.0 07-01-2010  Self  02RAGC17-22: 01RAGC12-35: 01RAGC03-09:

Being discriminated against results in loss of ‘self’. Avoiding social interaction or withholding information about their occupation was a voluntary restriction to avoid devaluation of ‘self’. The way the room attendant is treated defines who they are and the greater the distance between self-perception and the guests’ value or organisational value the greater the identity is questioned by this disrespect. Others categorise self and possibly impacts future ‘self-loss’ of content threatens negative definition of self by others. Room attendant reflects on these interactions and questions or confirms ‘self’ assumptions.

247.0 14-01-2010  Task  time orientation  03RAGC24-54: 02RAGC15-19

Time is the currency of room attendant labour input and how this is spent is controlled by management in an instrumental orientation (or an operational/functional orientation?). Work – definition – The provision of physical, cognitive and emotional endeavour to supply services for hotel guests consumption. Work ethic = stable ideologies, orientation, attitude, motivations, satisfaction? Room attendant work is highly gendered.
Orientation concerns the room attendants “values, purpose, expectations and sentiments” brought to the hotel context.

My memos were sometimes written on notepaper and later transferred to a Word document for later printing and sorting and to maintain a permanent record. When the number of memos became unwieldy, I conducted an initial sort. This first sort enabled identification of clusters of related codes as emergent categories. The integration achieved through sorting memos revealed properties and links between the categories. I was guided by Glaser’s (1978) analytic rules for sorting memos (see Appendix I, page 301), as I sought to integrate the theoretical ideas emerging from sorting the memos. Some memos were double-coded as the empirical material had multiple fit, so a copy of each was put in the appropriate pile as shown in Table 3.12 below. A third sort identified the core category that accounted for resolving of the main concerns of room attendants: Performing. I used hand sorting which allowed conceptual flexibility and creativity on my part as I was already deeply immersed in the empirical material through the interview, transcription and coding processes.
Table 3.12. *Multiple Fit Memo*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>04-01-10</th>
<th>Withholding/Putting down</th>
<th>Role perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room attendant may avoid disclosure of occupation due to public perception and chooses to use title ‘housemaid’ rather than ‘room attendant’ based on aural aesthetics. What does this put down mean to the room attendant? Is it considered part of the role?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>03RAGC26: Cos of people’s perceptions of cleaners and the put downs ... I tell people I am a housemaid rather than a room attendant .. just sounds better ...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Memo writing continued throughout the interpretive process and was the foundation of the writing in this thesis. A central use of memos was to record avenues of literature I would explore to develop the theoretical links between categories and processes.

**Literature**

Grounded theory methodology uses literature in particular ways. Deferring consultation of literature until after field work is a key element of grounded theory as there is no way of specifying what literature and theory is relevant until after the substantive theory emerges. Indeed, an early examination of relevant literature may lead to a deductive approach, which inhibits the researcher’s creativity in generating concepts from empirical material (Charmaz, 2006). I was required to perform a pre-study literature search to fulfil PhD ‘confirmation’ requirements, and to demonstrate my focus was on an area where little previous study had been conducted (reviewed in Chapter one). Glaser specifically advises against a literature review: “There is a need not to review any of the literature in the substantive area under study” (Glaser, 1992, p. 31). I did consult extant literature when the theoretical codes were well formed as a source of comparison and to acquire sensitivity to the grounded concepts or categories.

Other literature informing my study were documents, such as newsletters from the Australian Professional Housekeepers Association, training manuals from accredited training institutions such as Technical and Further Education (TAFE), and
textbooks. I also consulted information publicly available from the relevant union, United Voice. News broadcasts were also collected as they depicted unsafe and particularly dangerous situations for hotel room attendants, such as hotel fires, bomb or terrorist activity, in-room murders or suicides (Previously identified in Appendix B, page 287). This material provided sensitising considerations of workplace conditions that may not have actually been experienced by the room attendants participating in my research.

**Performing**

The outcome of my research was that I constructed a basic social process (BSP) of Performing. The aim of my research was to account for action in the substantive hotel area from the point of view of the room attendants involved. Performing reflects a social drama of co-performance by the participating room attendants, guests and other hotel employees within a hotel. Performing encompasses many processes involved in room attendants’ lived employment experiences as they daily transform hotel rooms to required hotel standards. This model explains how hotel room attendants preserve their ‘selves’ and find dignity in employment through their performance. This performance involves room attendants ‘acting’ in often unfavourable contextual conditions in the basic social structural processes (BSSP) of their hotel employment. Both the hotel hierarchy and social forces affected the room attendants’ actions and behaviour. Performing is a clear and parsimonious grounded theory that was relevant to room attendants. Within Performing are many processes that have general implications or ‘fit’ to similar socio-economic arenas of life, such as some retail employees, who are placed at the lower levels of employment hierarchies and receive comparatively low pay. The specifics of the social process of Performing are the focus of Chapters four through to seven.
Research Trustworthiness

My philosophical position as a socialist feminist critical theorist is central to the construction of *Performing* as a flow of social action. I adopted Charmaz’s (2006) criteria for grounded theory studies in social justice inquiry as they involve a strong combination of credibility, originality and the possibility of offering new insights. I have attempted to achieve this through resonance with participants’ experiences, my personal employment experience (emic insiderness), and use of strong objectivity (robust reflexive practice and evaluation through member checking). My own experience contributed to an ‘emic’ (Dell Hymes, 1964) account which has relevance and authenticity. My values shaped my interpretations of empirical material, and included my assumptions and stocks of knowledge, and my social standing. Maintaining a reflexive journal enabled me to examine what I brought to the research context (see chapter two). Taking the perspectives of hotel room attendants permitted me to articulate their thoughts and the issues that they considered important. Glaser and Strauss (1967) state grounded theory should be judged by whether it firstly fits the substantive area in which it will be used. Second, it must be readily understandable by [laypersons] concerned with this area. Third, it must be sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations within the substantive area, not to just a specific type of situation. Fourth, it must allow the user partial control over the structure and process of daily situation as they change through time (p. 237).

I established methodological rigour by complying with the central tenets of grounded theory in conducting my research, as evidenced in this chapter by examples that demonstrate my research process.

*Performing*, as an outcome of my research, conceptualises the lived employment experiences of 46 hotel room attendants on the Gold Coast at this particular time. The quality of my study is reflected in a trustworthiness that I ascertained through member validation (member-checking: confirmation of findings with participants) and my preceding recognition of ideological and ethical issues. Member checking involved me re-contacting some of the participants to see whether
they recognised their experiences in the *Performing* model. They appeared to follow the components of *Performing* readily and demonstrated full understanding. Gwen, with 15 years’ experience, said: “That is exactly how it is”; and Nadine, with 13 years’ experience, exclaimed: “Oh god, yeah, the task’s the worst”. Guba and Lincoln (2005) explain that the criteria for judging the validity of research are based on a social agreement wherein knowledge is enmeshed with participant fairness. This leads to an authenticity and a balance of perspectives, incorporating ethics and epistemology in practice and self-reflexivity. This validity is achieved through crystallization (or multiple layering) by means of deep and partial understanding of a topic, at the same time realising there is always more to know, or other ‘facets’ of the crystal view (Laurel Richardson & Elizabeth St. Pierre, 2005). I accept these potential perspectives and also followed Guba and Lincoln’s identification of seven standards to assess authenticity:

1. **Positionality (standpoint) judgements.** Based on my emic experiences I adopted room attendants’ positionality and situatedness, taking their experiences and opinions as important.

2. **Specific discourse communities as arbiters of quality.** My investigation related to hotel room attendants as a ‘community of value’ with unrecognised knowledge and wisdom, who play a vital part in guest satisfaction. I sought participant feedback on my developing theory as a technique of ‘member checking’ by these contributors.

3. **Voice or extent of textual polyvocality.** I was informed by experiences of the room attendant participants and provide ample evidence with vignettes in the following chapters of this thesis.

4. **Critical subjectivity (intense self-reflexivity).** I undertook this process by maintaining a research journal to record reflections on my assumptions, and engage in a critical self-analysis of my research process. An example of a journal entry follows.

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**Reflexive Journal 19-08-2009**

The housekeeping job does not give women an opportunity to speak out or profess their ideas, their opinions do matter. So this is a personal growth process and I find that I have a genuine desire to listen to the opinions of the women of my study. However, in the process am I oppressing? Am I incorporating the influence of my own oppression on my research? – yes!
5. **Reciprocity of the research relationship.** I aimed to improve awareness of hotel room attendant worth and showed my commitment to this cause through this research act, as well as publication of this thesis.

6. **Sacred regard to human advancement.** I intend to assist awareness of hotel room attendants’ value within the hospitality industry and the broader community.

7. **Sharing privileges of academia.** I encourage all hotel room attendants to pursue further education and professional development as I have.

Dialogue was the foundation of gathering the empirical material for this research and was embedded in socially interactive processes of interviewing, making social meaning contingent on the situation. Grounded theory studies must demonstrate fit and relevance, and they must work. ‘Fit’ means that codes fit the empirical material and are not forced. I followed the central tenets of grounded theory to achieve this. ‘Relevance’ means that the research should explain what is happening in the substantive area and be recognisable by participants, which I established by member checking. My construction of *Performing* therefore provides a holistic model of room attendants’ employment experiences. ‘Must work’ relates to the application of the model to other social arenas where workers’ experiences are similar.

The rigour of grounded theory comes from the researcher developing a range of conceptual categories that are saturated in methodological thoroughness, which I claim to have achieved in this thesis. Documentation in electronic format (*Word* and *Excel*) contributed to a ‘paper-trail’ that tracks my creative and constructive processes. The derived account of *Performing* is recognisable to the room attendants who have provided the empirical material and is transferable (rather than generalisable) to similar contexts. Finally, a theory of *Performing* is persuasive in that it offers plausible reflections of how hotel room attendants view their work in the substantive arena of a 5 star hotels, as shown in the following chapters. Subsequently, a grounded theory of *Performing*:

1. Has the potential to identify strategies and anticipate consequences of room attendant action.
2. Expands the meaning of hotel room attendants’ work-based conditions by transcending particular empirical contexts.

3. Allows induction to minimum concepts based on multiple incidents, integrating a theory that increases knowledge capacity of the substantive area.

4. Fosters new theoretical knowledge, permitting increased expert power through transference to new situations.

5. Involves using theory that permits freedom from restrictions of the status quo by being open to change.

**Ethical Considerations**

My research was conducted with human subjects, so there are a number of ethical issues involved. My ethical considerations were guided and influenced by the intertwined epistemological theoretical framework that informed my research. Ethical conduct began at the conceptual stage and continued throughout my research project. My values, founded on ethical standards, aimed for an open and honest gathering of empirical material by addressing questions of confidentiality, informed consent, and researcher ‘power’ (Olesen, 2005). Embedded in the participant-researcher relationship was the concept of power imbalance. Efforts were made to diminish this power imbalance by establishing rapport with participants and communicating my goals, the need for the research and my own socio-economic situatedness.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity was a paramount concern, as was the quality of my relationship with participants, and the need for honest conduct on my part. Primary concerns related to collection, storage, interpretation and reporting of all empirical material. To this end, as noted above, I provided information to participants related to my research being part of a PhD project conducted at Griffith University. I assured the participating room attendants of confidentiality in that any response would not be disclosed to executive housekeepers, human resource managers, general managers and outsiders. I also promised that their responses would be recorded
anonymously. Participants were also advised their participation was voluntary and that they could freely withdraw at any time. The information sheets provided to every participant provided contact numbers for my supervisors and Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, if they sought further information or had any concerns (see Appendix D, E, F, and G, pages 286-294). To fulfil the above commitments I used participant identification codes rather than names or establishment identities, and transcripts were carefully edited to omit identifying words in the anecdotes that identified establishments to ensure anonymity. Recordings were immediately deleted upon transcription, and transcripts were coded with a key linked to participants kept secure in a locked Word document. University approval for my research was provided by Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: HSL/27/08/HREC).

**Summary**

Chapter Three has presented the constructionist grounded theory methodology I used to analyse my empirical material. This material was generated from one-on-one, in-depth interviews with 46 room attendants and three members of management employed at five, ‘5 star’ rated hotels on the Gold Coast. In this chapter, I initially reaffirmed my epistemological foundations as a socialist feminist critical theorist. This was followed with a brief overview of the foundations of grounded theory and my interpretation and use of constructionist grounded theory methodology. I provided details and exemplars of the analysis processes I followed. In particular I have described the methodological tools such as theoretical sampling, empirical material collection methods, and coding and memoing procedures. Chapter Four, which follows, presents the outcome of my grounded theory methodology as a model of Performing. Performing describes how room attendants resolve the main problems and issues in their employment. Performing is a model of social action, which simplifies the complex and diverse patterns of behaviour inherent in human action; in this case, as a hotel room attendant. I explain this model using existing theories to offer insights and to support the constructed categories.
Chapter Four

Performing

It’s like walking into the Tardis, it’s a completely different world. You transform yourself, you take off your clothes and put on the uniform, and that’s who you are for the day until you go home and walk out the door, then it’s over, don’t worry about it.

(Abbie, Gold Coast Hotel Room Attendant, 2010).

Performing offers a conceptual framework of room attendants’ lived employment experiences as they daily transform hotel rooms to required standards. Performing illustrates the physical demands placed on room attendants and how their interactions with other people are influenced by organisational and social hierarchies, which contribute to their invisibility. Performing reflects these human interactions in a social drama of co-performance by room attendants, guests and other employees in a luxurious 5 star hotel environment. The guest rooms of these hotels are the main stage, and items such as room attendants’ uniforms, cleaning equipment and other paraphernalia are props to their act. Performing shows room attendants, as actors on the central stage, are involved in construction of the setting, and shows how their actions create a projection of a hotel employee as a show for guests. Performing also reveals how room attendants found dignity in their employment by taking pride in their work and maintaining a positive attitude, despite the reported negative aspects of their job.

Human actions and relationships have a long history of being categorised sociologically as a ‘performance’. My model of Performing develops William Shakespeare’s (1600) adage “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players”, and particularly Erving Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical perspective of life as a staged performance (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Goffman (1986) says “all
the world is like a stage, we do strut and fret our hour on it, and that is all the time we have” (p. 124). Goffman (1959) never intended the term to mean a literal reference to life as a ‘staged play’ but rather used it to denote that role performance involves emotions and affects key concepts of an individual’s self-identity in the form of ‘social value’ perceptions.

In my study, the discourse of ‘staging’ was continually reflected in how room attendants described their actions and tasks. The grounded theory of Performing reinforces this staging discourse by incorporating the notion of seen and unseen action, and the social acknowledgement (or lack of it) of room attendants, which is related to their invisibility. Despite room attendants’ presence often being visible, invisibility was demonstrated by room attendants’ inconspicuousness on the hotel stage. Room attendants’ reported their invisibility as frequent non-acknowledgement by other staff and guests. The room attendants’ stories related in the following chapters have commonalities with David Boje’s (1991) analysis of organisations, which places emphasis on backstage processes. Boje presented workers’ stories as a sense-making exchange in the human relationships amongst internal and external organisational stakeholders. He used the ‘stage’ as a metaphor, and argued that the world is a stage with people as actors changing and adapting to different and multiple roles (Boje, 2001). Similarly, within the grounded theory of Performing, room attendants adapt their performance to fit perceptions of their role within the hotel. In Performing, room attendants assume differing roles and scripts depending on the circumstances and other attendants, other staff and guests as players/characters operating in the various dramas in which they are engaged.

The implications of Performing for room attendants are considerable. Upon hotel stages, room attendants are scripted into roles, which are undervalued and under-recognised and, I would argue, are treated as largely invisible. Room attendants’ invisibility is due to a lack of awareness of their work efforts where they are exploited through the physical demands of their work, marginalised by other departments’ hotel employees, and oppressed in their roles through the practices of guests. Such experiences reflect the hegemonic, patriarchal and hierarchical perceptions of their
employment value within society, and places room attendants at the lowest level socially and occupationally. These values are in turn reflected in the power structures of hotel settings, which undervalue the work of room attendants and their potential as a community of value for hotel operations. From a grounded theory perspective, \textit{Performing} is a socio-psychological process of finding dignity in employment despite exploitation, marginalisation, and oppression. It is a process of adopting and assuming multiple roles in order to define self while performing as a room attendant upon hotel stages, which at times renders them \textit{invisible}. The hotel stages are situated within five ‘5 star’ hotels on the Gold Coast, Australia. The grounded theory of \textit{Performing} is founded on the narratives of 46 room attendants who participated in this study. \textit{Performing} as a basic social process is presented as a graphic conceptualisation in \textit{Figure 4.1}.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure41.png}
\caption{Graphic Conceptualisation of Performing (BSP)}
\end{figure}

The interlinked nature of the processes is emphasised in \textit{Figure 4.1} by the use of two-way flow arrows. The acronyms used in my model of the social and psychological processes are further expanded in Table 4.1 below.
Table 4.1. **Social and Psychological Processes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BSP</th>
<th>Basic Social Process</th>
<th>BSP of being a room attendant in a 5 star hotel.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSSP</td>
<td>Basic Social Structural Process</td>
<td>BSSP of working as a room attendant in a 5 star hotel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSPP</td>
<td>Basic Social Psychological Process</td>
<td>BSPPs of having low social status, and being a multiple role social person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td>Basic Psychological Process</td>
<td>BPP of defining self as a room attendant and finding dignity in employment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The properties of the basic social process of *Performing* are not discrete concepts. They are, on the contrary, interlinked processes affected by all aspects of room attendants’ experiences. *Performing* as a basic social process of being a room attendant in a 5 star hotel encompasses the basic social structural process (BSSP) of *tasking*. Tasking is the daily process of transforming rooms under physical duress and intense time pressures while achieving the prescribed 5 star quality standards. Tasking comprises the properties of hard work, including bed-making and bathroom cleaning, as well as meeting time pressures and paying attention to fine details. The basic social structural process of the room attendants’ working conditions were evaluated by the participating room attendants as physically hard, dirty work; low pay rates; uncertainty of working hours; few training and development opportunities and other aspects such as the unsuitability of their uniforms. These tangible conditions related to tasking reify room attendants’ oppression due to their low level placement within the hotel hierarchical power positions and their low social hierarchical power compared to guests. Further, room attendants evaluated the organisational climate of the hotels as it affected them, including issues such as inclusivity and opportunities for collegiality. Finally room attendants’ appraised the broader social context in which they worked, and social influences from family and friends, which demonstrated their social marginalisation.
Room attendants’ work occurs within the basic social structural process (BSSP) of the hotel organisational hierarchy. This hierarchy formed a condition of Performing and influenced the room attendants’ employment experiences via aspects such as their perceptions of the isolation of the housekeeping department and the difficulties of communicating with management. Interactions with supervisors and management were often infused by unacknowledged but nevertheless pervasive managerial power. Further conditions influencing Performing were the basic social psychological processes (BSPP) that arose during room attendants’ shared construction of reality during exchanges with guests. Such encounters revealed the impacts of attendants’ low social status and of cultural differences; for example, room attendants reported the rooms of guests from some particular nationalities required significant more effort in servicing. Perhaps the most challenging encounters involved sexual harassment, which was a widespread and frequent experience for participants, that had become seemingly ‘normalised’ as part of their working conditions. A further basic social psychological process (BSPP) revealed how room attendants found both collegiality and discrimination within their peer group while enjoying the autonomy of their work and how family members’ views influenced their employment experiences. Finally, and most importantly, room attendants’ employment experiences led to a basic psychological process (BPP) of ‘self’, a search for dignity in being a hotel room attendant which incorporated discretion, honesty, pride in work and maintaining a positive attitude.

In this chapter I present the tasking required of room attendants to transform a hotel room into a quality product; this tasking includes the actions of bed-making and bathroom cleaning. Following this chapter, chapter five focuses on room attendants’ tangible working conditions, particularly their pay rate and training opportunities, and various intangible social influences, such as peer interactions. In chapter six, I show how the influences of organisational and social hierarchies affect room attendants’ work, particularly related to inequality, oppression and harassment. Finally, chapter seven shows how room attendants find dignity in their employment despite the aforementioned features that contribute to their invisibility or lack of recognition of their value. The major categories of each process are outlined in Table
4.2 These processes and categories have been used to structure the remaining chapters of my thesis.

Table 4.2. Thesis Structure of Thematic Categories of Performing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Four</th>
<th>Chapter Five</th>
<th>Chapter Six</th>
<th>Chapter Seven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tasking (BSSP)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Hard Work&lt;br&gt;Time Pressure&lt;br&gt;Meeting Quality</td>
<td><strong>Working Conditions (BSSP)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Low Pay&lt;br&gt;Hours&lt;br&gt;Training&lt;br&gt;Uniforms&lt;br&gt;Employment Benefits</td>
<td><strong>Working in a Hotel Hierarchy (BSSP)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Hotel Hierarchy&lt;br&gt;Upward Communication&lt;br&gt;Management Interactions</td>
<td><strong>Finding Dignity in Employment (BPP)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Social Inequity&lt;br&gt;Reasons for Working&lt;br&gt;Having Aspirations&lt;br&gt;Discretion&lt;br&gt;Honesty&lt;br&gt;Pride in Work&lt;br&gt;Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interacting Socially (BSPP)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Hotel Inclusivity&lt;br&gt;Collegiality&lt;br&gt;Discrimination&lt;br&gt;Autonomy&lt;br&gt;Monotony&lt;br&gt;Family Influences</td>
<td><strong>Working in a Social Hierarchy (BSPP)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Guest Interactions&lt;br&gt;Social Status&lt;br&gt;Sexual Harassment&lt;br&gt;Hierarchical Power and Invisibility</td>
<td></td>
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Returning to the purpose of this chapter, I intend to explain the room attendants’ views of the physical tasks they are required to complete and show how these form the causal properties of *Performing*. Tasking forms a basic social structural process (BSSP) incorporating the major categories of physical demands, and meeting time pressures and quality standards. These categories and their properties are demonstrated by verbatim quotes from the interviews to give ‘voice’ to room attendants, in line with my epistemological position of privileging them as the experts. I begin by presenting the physical tasks a room attendant performs on a daily basis to transform a hotel room into a 5 star quality commercial commodity. I do not provide a detailed job analysis, but rather present the room attendants’ view of the tasks they are required to complete.
Tasking

Room attendants’ work may be considered a basic social structural process (BSSP) in that their tasks are conducted within and as part of the daily routine of hotel functioning. From the moment I started to construct my grounded theory of Performing, the core concerns of the participating room attendants were the physical demands of hard work, meeting time pressures, and the challenges of maintaining quality standards. The process of ‘tasking’ ties together the physical actions of room attendants’ experiences within the primary functional processes of supplying and cleaning guest rooms. Maureen, aged in her 20s, describes her role, an account echoed in different ways by other participants:

*I’m the one that cleans and tidies the rooms when the guest is not there. I make it look good so when the guest comes in it looks great. You know, first impressions are really important, so you have to make sure that fine details are done.*

Maureen demonstrates the often physical invisibility of the majority of room attendant work, where the room is serviced and the guest sees the outcome and not the person who did the work. A room attendant’s standard operating procedure includes the essential tasks of making the bed and cleaning the bathroom for hotel guests. Consequently, the work is indispensible to an establishment’s good reputation and a key to achieving its economic goals (Hcareers, 2010). Table 4.3 identifies 36 steps to transform a hotel room occupied by guests. Counting associated subtasks, the 36 steps extend to a total of 54 tasks. Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that these 54 tasks are to be completed in 30 minutes (maximum of 40 minutes), up to 18 times every day, and usually with two king or super king sized beds in each room.

Table 4.3. Room Attendant Tasks Description

| “Three Dozen steps to making up a room. |
| PREPARE THE ROOM |
| 1. Check the pin for occupancy – knock. |
2. Leave the door open.
3. Turn on all lights, TV and air conditioner.
4. Open drapes and sliding doors.
5. Check for damage or missing equipment. i.e. cigarette burns, inoperable bulbs, note on report.
6. Hang clothing and stack magazines, etc.
7. Strip beds, Start with pillow and work to bottom.
8. Shake linens over bed. Look for things left.

CLEAN-UP
10. Carry soiled linen to cart and return with clean linen. Place on bureau.
11. Empty glasses and ice bucket in toilet. (No trash), Gather soiled bath linens.
12. Carry dirty glasses and bath linen to cart.
13. Carry in clean bath linens and glasses. Place on bureau.
14. Empty ash trays into waste basket with liners.
15. Empty waste baskets (both in liner).
16. Take all trash to cart and bring back cleaning supplies.
17. Place desk supplies per list.
18. Close drawers.
19. Wipe tray and place four glasses and ice bucket on tray.

THE BED
20. Make bed.
   a. Stand on one side and put on bottom sheet, tuck - then top sheet and blanket, one pillowcase.
   b. To foot and make hospital corner on sheets and blanket.
   c. Other side as in ‘a’.
   d. Put spread on and smooth.

NOW THE BATH
   a. Shower curtain.
   b. Test shower.
   c. Wipe window, if applicable.
   d. Wipe light.
   e. Wipe walls.
   f. Wipe door.
   g. Wipe mirrors.
   h. Wipe soap dish.
   i. Wipe glass rack, if applicable.
   j. Wash lavatory (no abrasive on chrome).
   k. Remove drain, clean and replace.
   l. Dry chrome with alcohol rag.
   m. Clean toilet all over, in and out, and flush.
n. Replace bathroom supplies (terry, soap, paper goods, glasses) per list.
o. Scrub floor – don’t use floor rages on fixtures.
p. Turn off lights in bath.

FINISH UP
22. Vacuum – daily with light [strokes], including drapes for smoke, weekly with heavy [strokes], including patio door track.
23. Dust whole room. Start at mural wall, check under bed, dust headboard and night stands.
24. Dust all around room – bureau, light fixtures, TV. Luggage racks, etc.
26. Clean patio furniture and air conditioning vents.
27. Close doors and lock screen and sliding doors.
28. Wipe finger prints from glass door and set drapes.
29. Closet – check bulb, coat hangers and dust shelf.
30. Check refrigerator, if applicable.

READY FOR THE GUEST?
31. Take last look to make sure nothing has been forgotten.
32. Spray aerosol, if smoke or odor evident.
33. Turn off lights and equipment.
34. Dust outside of door, and insure that door is locked.
35. Any special instructions from the housekeeper and manager.”


**Hard Work**

The list of room attendant tasks outlined in Table 4.3 offers only a superficial appreciation of the actual effort or time needed to complete each task. Based on the actual lived experiences of doing their jobs, the major physical side of room attendants’ tasking involved the four main components of making the bed, manoeuvring the supply trolley, cleaning the bathroom and vacuuming the floor. Completing tasking required constant physical exertion throughout the working day, and was unanimously described as ‘hard’ work, with recognised potential for causing injury. Bronwyn, in her 40s, expressed an opinion shared by most other room attendants:

*It’s very hard work, it’s very physically hard, very tiring, it is not easy that’s for sure because you’re making the equivalent of 32 beds a day, and they’re very heavy, and the covers are not easy because they have an insert in them so that takes time and is difficult.*
While the number of beds a room attendant made varied daily with room allocations, most reported having to make between 26 and 36 beds in a day. Other studies have confirmed room attendants’ perceptions of the physically demanding and intense nature of the workload (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997; Onsøyen et al., 2009; Powell & Watson, 2006; Saunders & Pullen, 1987; Shamir, 1975; Ragnhild Sollund, 2006). My research extends these findings by detailing what makes room attendants’ employment ‘hard’ work. I begin with the most physically challenging tasks identified by room attendants: bed-making, using the supply trolley, and bathroom cleaning. There were also intervening conditions that further intensified their hard work, such as room design and layout, the functionality of cleaning equipment, and the behaviour of some guests.

**Bed-Making**

The bed was recognised by room attendants as being the primary element of ‘5 star’ presentation to guests when they entered the hotel room. Room attendants also said that making the beds was the most physically challenging and time consuming activity. Kirsten, in her 50s, emphasised the importance of the bed as a finished hotel product, which set the guest room scene:

*When a guest walks into a room most guests look at the bed, if the guests come in there and see the bed nice and if there’s a little mistake that you might have forgot, they won’t worry about that because it’s nice and fresh looking.*

The task of making the bed involves changing the linen daily. This process incorporates an initial removal of used bed linen and taking this to the housekeeping trolley placed at the room entrance, and then returning with clean linen. The process of making a bed then involves many movements back and forth around the bed, adding and tucking-in layers of linen. A detailed hotel bed-making procedure is explained and illustrated in Appendix K, page 306. These layers involve smoothing the mattress protector, replacing the bottom sheet, adding a filled doona (duvet) cover and replacing up to six pillow cases. These bedding layers also require lifting mattresses – most are heavy, super king-sized mattresses – at least once all the way around. Care in doing all these tasks results in a product that satisfies 5 star hotel quality requirements.
of absolute ‘smoothness’ in a taut, wrinkle free bed (Karen Sogaard, Anne Blangsted, Andrew Herod & Lotte Finsen, 2006). Room attendants have to move the beds to check for lost property; to realign the base and mattress; and to restore the bed to the required position.

The numbers of beds that room attendants were required to make varied at these 5 star hotels; however, the average was 16 rooms a day for a full-time room attendant. Alison, in her 30s, explained the physicality of bed-making:

> These are heavy beds, how can we humanly do it? You’re lifting and pulling and bending over and squatting. If you’ve got a big day and you’ve got all twins, and you’ve got thirteen rooms, that’s twenty-six beds in a day, and you’re around the other end and back.

As noted previously, for most room attendants, the bed-making task was repeated from 26 to 36 times per day. The accumulated toll of bed-making is demonstrated by Eva, in her 20s:

> I just don’t think people realise how physical our job is, like you’ve really got to go, you can’t cut corners and you can’t just do it for a day, you have to do it for a week.

The task of making up to 36 beds, day after day, compounds into an enormous weekly (up to ten days without a break if employed as a casual), and monthly physical toll on these women. The room attendants identified the activity of bed-making as a leading contributor to their injuries. Alison, in her 60s, questioned current hotel expectations:

> I can’t understand why they push so hard, it’s very physically hard, why is this industry so demanding? And the physical pain is hard, girls are getting hurt.

Exhaustion results from a combination of the volume and physical stress of the bed-making task. This exhaustion is intensified by time pressure (discussed later in this chapter) dictated by the hotels’ expectations that a room attendant will complete up to 18 rooms (a mix of checkouts and stay on) in a working day of 7.5 hours. Recommendations to avoid injury are that the room attendant kneels or crouches to keep their back straight while making the bed (scif.com, 2009). Nevertheless, this also involves musculoskeletal stress, particularly to the knees, as the attendant lowers and then rises from a crouched position. Compounding the bed-making task was that some rooms lacked sufficient space between the bed and the wall, resulting in a tight area
for bending. Some forty years ago, the task of bed-making was identified as particularly challenging for the physiological capacities of room attendants in the workplace (Larkin, 1969). Such physiological challenges continue to remain an issue for room attendants and, with respect to the women in my study, do not appear to be addressed within their employment contexts.

Bed-making involves muscular and skeletal demands through stretching of arms and quick limb motions and requires awkward postures, physical exertion and repetitive movements of twisting and forward bending. Most participating room attendants reported working with caused by the bed-making component of their tasking. Catherine, in her 40s, clearly attributes her back pain to bed-making:

*It’s hard, I have a sore back, it’s the beds, they are really heavy.*

A further property of bed-making was the recent trend to ‘super king’ sized beds as an accepted industry standard in 5 star establishments. The majority of physical injuries and related pain experienced by participating room attendants was said to be caused by the making of these extra-large beds. Fiona, in her 50s, recounted taking personal measures to counteract potential spine and muscular damage:

*As far as looking after your back, you have to pull the beds out a little bit, and do that without hurting yourself. We pay attention to that in our training. I use a back brace and that makes all the difference.*

Working with a supporting back brace was an acknowledgement of the strain bed-making places on the human spine. Bed-making therefore presents a range of ergonomic challenges, of which having to move the bed was probably the heaviest task. A consequence of bed-making is the high risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), particularly pulling shoulder muscles, back strain and front hernia pain. Elsewhere it has been reported that Australian hotel room attendants’ are exposed to compression forces exceeding prescribed Australian ‘safe lifting’ limits in the bed-making task (Peter Milburn & Richard Barrett, 1999).

Research shows that room attendants have a very high rate of musculoskeletal injuries. While other hotel workers have reported a 6.4 per cent injury rate, hotel housekeeping staff incurred a 10.4 per cent injury rate (Eric Frumin, Joan Moriarty, Pamela Vossenas, John Halpin, Peter Orris, Niklas Krause & Laura Punnett, 2006).
Analysis of injuries amongst room attendants (n=3,272) in the USA hospitality industry found that hotels have one of the highest workplace injury rates of all service industries (Milburn & Barrett, 1999). Data on 3,716 room attendant injuries at hotels operated by Hilton, Hyatt, Intercontinental, Marriott and Starwood in the 2000-2004 period also confirms that room attendant injury is disproportionately high compared to other hotel employees (Frumin, et al., 2006). Despite a range of literature identifying the physical hazards of hotel room attendants’ tasks, there appears, judging by the empirical material I collected, to have been little change in practice.

All participating room attendants considered their work physically hard and considerably undervalued, as demonstrated by the low minimum pay rate of approximately $16 per hour. Room attendants were sometimes encouraged by management to ‘appreciate’ their heavy workload on the basis that ‘it could be worse’. Valerie, in her 50s, worked at an older hotel, which allocated 16 rooms per day. She explains how little empathy was demonstrated by hotel management:

*The other day the general manager said you girls have got to realise how lucky you are, some room attendants get 18 rooms, and I said yes some room attendants might get 18 rooms but they are in a new hotel and it’s very easy to clean.*

A range of 13 to 18 rooms were allocated per room attendant per day, with the most common being 16 rooms. The physical exertion needed depended on the age of the property, as well as mix of guests and the types of fittings. Current hotel management practices of maximising daily room allocation per room attendant increases surplus value of room attendants’ labour for the hotel owners. The work intensification exploits the physical endurance of room attendants and exposes them to the risk of injury. I reiterate my definition of exploitation in this study as having the efforts of room attendant’s labour appropriated to benefit hotel owners, rather than providing room attendants’ with adequate compensation for their physical efforts. While most paid labour results in appropriation of surplus value, the room attendants participating in this study felt they were exploited by the demands of the work and being paid at the minimum legal rate. The current situation of exploitation on the Gold Coast was similarly reflected in reports of excessive workloads imposed on room attendants working at luxury hotels in Melbourne (Alison Savage, 2010).
The Housekeeping Trolley

After bed-making, the second most challenging physical task for room attendants was using the housekeeping trolley. Room attendants were required to push a fully loaded housekeeping trolley from the basement (or other location of the housekeeping department/laundry) into lifts, along carpeted corridors and between rooms. The housekeeping trolley is a large plastic box-style container with varying shelves and compartments, on coaster wheels. The trolley’s purpose is to reduce room attendant cleaning time by having all requirements on hand and so achieve higher productivity and improved inventory control. These trolleys measure approximately 1.29m x 1.25m x 0.585m, and weigh over 70kg empty (scif.com, 2010). The compact design provides an efficient method of delivering linen and room cleaning requirements. Rachael, in her 40s, describes what can happen:

The trolleys are pretty heavy, we have got some little girls [room attendants] and I’ve seen them struggling, they are just about horizontal trying to move them and get them up the corridor. When I first started here I nearly tipped the trolley over because the wheels are unbalanced, it was very scary.

As a prop in the hotel scene, the trolley is meant to visually enhance the corridor experience for guests’ gaze by keeping the cleaning equipment tidy or concealed. Room attendants are required to ensure soiled linen is kept separate from clean linen, trash is separated into sections for items to be recycled, and these are to be kept from guests’ sight. The hotels in my study had trolleys of varying designs; however, there was a basic similarity, and all were reported as being very heavy to move.

By the end of the day, these trolleys were overloaded with wet towels, which increased the force required to push them around. The physical exertion needed to move the trolleys is compounded by the height of the trolley. Some of the shorter participants found that they had to twist their bodies to peer around the side of the trolley when they were pushing it from room to room. Rose, in her 60s, expressed an often-stated difficulty in manoeuvring the trolleys:

I think just to make fair if you have the roster to make, I think maybe four or five or six rooms in the one place. We go all over the hotel and have to walk a lot
with the trolley and I have trouble with the trolley, sometimes I have to look out the side [laughs] cos I can’t see.

Allocation of rooms on different floors greatly increased the daily physical demands of pushing the housekeeping trolley. The effort needed to push these trolleys was dependent on the age and state of the wheels (poorly inflated, bent casters), as well as on the state of the floor covering in the corridors of hotels and elevator thresholds, caused by uneven surfaces in ‘back of house’ areas. Room attendants at several hotels recounted having to use trolleys with faulty wheels or poorly designed trolleys with three wheels, which increased the likelihood of the trolley tipping over. Other researchers have also found that poor quality equipment negatively affected room attendants’ jobs (Onsøyen et al., 2009). Likewise, many room attendants reported straining to move the housekeeping trolleys and this activity resulted in physical injuries.

Further issues related to housekeeping trolleys involved replacing supplies for the next day’s performance. A common concern was expressed by Daja, in her 40s:

Well, I stock mine the night before, I do mine myself, but if I have had a day off then there is usually things missing, and for some reason they want to swap everything around so I have to rearrange it my way. If it’s not nailed down they will change it, so that’s the first thought in my head, what’s the trolley going to be like.

This frustration caused by replacement staff making changes to the trolley arrangement revealed Daja’s feeling of ownership of her tools, demonstrating an ethic of responsibility and pride which was somewhat hindered by the actions of others. Different compartments of the trolley are filled with the next day’s requirements including towels, linen, guest information literature, cleaning tools, chemicals, a vacuum cleaner and complimentary items, such as refreshment condiments, pamphlets and toiletries. Some of the complimentary items may include hair shampoo and conditioner, pens and paper, and toothbrushes, combs, and razors. These items need to be provided to meet quality service expectations, as Helen, in her 50s, stated:

They have new stuff and more stuff and because it’s 5 star everything has to be perfect.
This reflects the recent trends in hotel housekeeping, including an increase in room amenities as the star rating of the hotel rises (Kevin Baker & Jeremy Huyton, 2001). The many complimentary items that are provided in 5 star hotel rooms are props that set the stage of the service performance. They may be likened to product packaging, supplementing the core product of a bed and bathroom (Stephen Grove, Raymond Fisk & Mary Jo Bitner, 1992). Other objects used by room attendants in Performing were props such as linen trolleys, mops, buckets, vacuum cleaners, as well as uniforms and name badges. The props symbolically created the service image (Grove et al., 1992). These items are ‘non-psychological objects’ identified by Roger Barker (1978) as a component of fixed context where behaviour is transacted, such as the hotel room where Performing occurs.

Stocking the trolley and manoeuvring it between hotel rooms on different floors takes time that needs to be included in the 30 minutes allocated for each room’s service. As described above, this may not always be a straightforward task, and by imposing more physical demands, further demonstrates the exploitation of hotel room attendants, increasing the risk of physical injuries. The trolley also stored the vacuum cleaner, which was identified as another significant physical demand, requiring constant stretching forward with the hose and pulling the vacuum. In addition to vacuuming up to 18 rooms, room attendants are also expected to vacuum a small area outside each room in the hallways. Frustrations resulting from inadequate equipment, such as housekeeping trolleys, have been reported by room attendants in other studies (Powell & Watson, 2006; Saunders & Pullen, 1987; Shamir, 1975). This is a concern of room attendants that has persisted across many decades. Failure to address this issue is a further demonstration of room attendants’ invisibility through lack of attention to remedying these concerns, and exploitation through continuance of excessive physical demands and appropriation of their efforts, without a fair return. The housekeeping trolley also provided the cleaning equipment for the third identified major physical challenge, the bathroom.
The Bathroom

Room attendants viewed bathroom cleaning as their most important task performed on the guest room stage. Miranda, in her 50s, clearly stated that the bathroom task was a key performance indicator for the guest:

*Hygiene is what we are employed for and that is what the guest expects. If the bed is not made well they could just pull it up, but the bathroom is important, the hygiene side of it.*

The task of bathroom cleaning includes picking up towels off the floor, wiping the counter and cleaning and sanitising the mirror, hand basin, shower stalls, bathtubs and toilets, as well as replacing towels and toiletries (Hcareers, 2010). To achieve a hygienic bathroom, repetitive broad arm movements are needed to wipe walls and screens, and working on knees to clean the bath and shower floors. Cleaning all of these fittings requires forceful wrist movements. Attendants described alternating between left and right hands as a coping mechanism to reduce the stress on their arms, shoulders and back muscles. Kirsten’s statement reflected a common view amongst the room attendants:

*The bathroom is physically hard work and it’s quite demanding on your body.*

Many participating room attendants reported elbow, wrist, neck, shoulder and back strain injuries caused by bathroom cleaning. Janice, in her 20s, identified a condition that several other room attendants described:

*I have what is called ‘golfers elbow’, it’s on the opposite side of the elbow from tennis elbow, it’s on the bottom and just caused by repetitive making beds and scrubbing all the time, there’s always someone [here] on WorkCover* [A compensation scheme for employees who suffer workplace injuries; employers are required to contribute to WorkCover based on their numbers of employees and their industry].

Many room attendants reported working with pain on a daily basis, resulting from the physical demands of tasking, which led to high rates of injury and compensation claims. Alison, in her 30s, identified the occupational hazards of room servicing:

*There are so many girls here on compo it’s not funny, having operations left right and centre. I get pain in my elbow and I can only lift my arm here* [shows
about head height] so scrubbing the shower walls is very hard, and also pain sometimes in my back and my neck.

At one hotel that I visited, five women working as room attendants had undergone wrist surgery in the past two years for injuries, which were attributed to constant use of spray bottles with trigger applicators. Valerie, in her 30s, describes a paradox in the hotel’s efforts to minimise this injury:

They’ve changed to pour on sprays, but you know if you pour it on you’ve got to work that much harder with the rag, so it’s much easier to spray and get everything covered and get it off.

Some reduction of muscular and skeletal distress may be provided with long handled tools and a small footstool to reach higher surfaces. Nevertheless, climbing up and down from a step may not be a sound practice on a wet bathroom floor, and the footstool imposes additional weight on the trolley. The physical actions involved in cleaning the bathroom have been identified as the second highest risk of task injury after bed-making (Frumin, et al., 2006). In one study, repetitive strain injuries to back, shoulders, hips and hands were documented in up to 52 per cent of room attendants (Savage, 2010). Luxury hotels have been identified as having the highest female workplace injury rates in Australia (United Voice, 2011). The huge physical toll on room attendants’ extracted by their work is supported by research showing that hotel room attendants have similar injury rates to construction workers, around 10 per cent (Nicole Cohen, 2006).

Further occupational risks to which room attendants were exposed included the chemicals used for cleaning, and exposure to pathogens in bathrooms. Chemicals used in cleaning the hotel rooms were reported, in a few instances, to result in skin rashes. There was a general feeling that the cleaning products were heavily diluted as a cost cutting measure, and this minimised their impact as Eva, in her 20s, believed:

The cleaners are pretty good, you’ve pretty much gotta use what you’ve been given, and I find they do work quite well, and they’re quite diluted so they’re not strong effect.

As pathogenic bacteria have been found to be common on hotel surfaces (Fairuz Lalla & Peter Dingle, 2004), the practice of diluting the cleaning products, while posing less of a threat from chemical exposure, naturally increases possible exposure to
pathogens. In the hotels in my study, bleach was rarely used due to guests’ potential allergies, and also because of the damage splashes of bleach caused to the dark uniforms worn at some establishments. There was some evidence that room attendants discussed their concerns about certain products with each other. Nevertheless, there appeared to be little consultation with room attendants by management decision-makers, and reinforces their invisibility as a community of value with in-depth knowledge of their tasking, as reported as Glenda, in her 50s:

*It’s the finance department who decides what product we use, and they just choose the cheapest with no idea whether it works or not.*

While few room attendants related negative effects of exposure to chemicals, studies report that room attendants are believed to be exposed to:

as much as 400 grams of typical dust per square metre (known to contain hormone disrupting pesticide residues); solvents and petrol additives including heavy metals and cancer causing agents. Dust mites, as many as 1000 per gram of dust, and dust mite excrement (up to 200 times the body weight of each mite is produced in excrement). Also sand; varieties of mould; fungal spores; pet allergens and insect debris, as well as traces of human proteins and body fluids: semen, blood, urine, faeces and skin cells (Niczson White, 2009, p. 38).

Hence, hotel rooms contain many potentially harmful pathogens and chemical residues, and these factors contribute to the exploitation of room attendants as working with these factors is not compensated (refer to literature identified in Appendix A, page 286).

Many room attendants found cleaning bathrooms a repulsive challenge, and many expressed fears of contracting diseases, particularly from cleaning toilets. Ivy, in her 40s, identified potential threats and suggested solutions:

*Cleaning toilets is the worst, I’m always scared of splashes and flicks of water in my face. We wear gloves and I always buy my own, I find the ones they provide here are poor quality and you can’t work in them. I think we should have a toilet brush in every room; that would be a lot cleaner and, you never know, the guests might use them* [laughs].

All participating room attendants said they wore gloves to clean the bathroom and also adhered to strict cloth-use protocols in relation to hygiene in the bathroom. Current
industry expectations are that separate cloths will be used for wiping the toilet (Hcareers, 2010). Room attendants expressed abhorrence to some body fluids that they were expected to clean which caused physical reactions for some. Several room attendants described what they said were the common habits of one ethnic group as disgusting. This behaviour was explained by Elisabeth, in her 30s:

_The [Ethnic Nationality] spit in the hand basin and leave it there, it can be quite thick sometimes and that makes you dry retch._

This is one example of many in-room tasks that the room attendants described as ‘dirty’. These dirty tasks involved dealing with human bodily fluids. Literature documents room attendants’ tasks as ‘dirty’ (Powell & Watson, 2006; Saunders & Pullen, 1987) and this is further identified as the “often unpleasant nature of the work” (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997, p. 102). Studies have identified these dirty tasks as exposing room attendants to pathogenic bacteria, as well as the potential dangers from incorrect chemical use (Larkin, 1969; Lee & Krause, 2002; Seifert & Messing, 2006; Jack Clark & Richard Penner, 1976; Sogaard, et al., 2006; Milburn & Barrett, 1999). The social perception of the nature of room attendants’ work continues to be perceived as ‘dirty’ work, reinforced by the nature of bodily secretions. Cleaning the guest bathroom further demonstrates the exploitation of room attendants through exposure to possible injuries and their oppression through requirements to undertake degrading tasks.

The physical tasks of bed-making, trolley pushing and bathroom cleaning capture the majority of experiences associated with the descriptor ‘hard work’. Inherent in this hard work, is the exploitation of room attendants through overwork and injury risk, without recognition of the dirty work of tasking, or fair return for encountering these risks. In this way the room attendants’ physicality is appropriated for higher returns to the hotel through paying minimum legal wages that do not compensate for the hard work or dirty aspects incorporated in their performance. This hard work was exacerbated by intervening conditions, such as flawed linen supply, the layout of hotel rooms, guests’ late departures and the state of vacated rooms.
Linen Supply

The hotels’ choice of linen, such as the number of pillows or style of doona (duvet) cover, affected how easy or difficult it was to make beds. The room attendants’ workload was increased when linen supplies were held up, which was usually due to the hotel outsourcing the laundry process. This often resulted in shortages of sheets and covers. Clare, in her 20s, identified the size of the problem:

> The last room I had three sheets, one was ripped and two were stained, and because we have semi-closed the laundry they all get sent away now up to Brisbane and we get a lot of rejects.

In addition, difficulties accessing linen in good condition delayed the room attendants’ schedules because finding replacements involved many minutes, so room attendants had to work faster to achieve timely completion of their allocated rooms. This increased pace of action also contributed to an increase in the risk of injury. Clare’s difficulties were echoed by Maureen, in her 20s, working at a hotel which had contracted laundry outsourced from other hotels:

> We have a big problem with our laundry, they have picked up five other hotels’ laundry and ours gets done last, and we are always short, someone has told me it’s the biggest commercial laundry in a hotel in Queensland, and now I think it’s too much cos we just can’t get the linen we need, it’s real frustrating.

Prioritising other hotels’ laundry to meet contractual commitments compromised this hotel’s internal service, led to delays in cleaning rooms, increased the workload of room attendants, and caused stress. The layout of the hotel room as well as the age of the establishment also influenced the efficiency and effectiveness of room cleaning.

Room Layout

The layout of the rooms and age of the hotel, not necessarily considered by hotel management in allocating cleaning times, increased room attendants’ workloads. Eva, in her 20s, identified her difficulties with the layout of some rooms:
I have one big disabled room and they have extra space and rails and stuff like that, and they have got a bath and a shower, and it’s a bigger floor to clean and it shouldn’t be any harder, but for me it’s difficult.

Eva found the layout of rooms for the disabled people required different treatment from her normal room routine. Room variations, such as the larger area provided for guests with disabilities, combined with the extra fittings, required cognitive reframing of the room cleaning routine to ensure all features were done thoroughly. In addition, the age of the establishment was a strong determinant of effort required in cleaning. Valerie, in her 50s, related how a hotel’s age affected her work:

In a new hotel it’s very easy to clean, we’ve got a 20 year old hotel that hasn’t been refurbished, and we wouldn’t be able to do 18 rooms.

Most of the 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast were built in the late 1980s or early 1990s and have not been refurbished. Only this year have four major hotels implemented major refurbishment programs (Gold Coast Bulletin, 2011). Cleaning 5 star-rated rooms takes time due to the functional arrangements and fittings in the rooms. If these fittings are old then greater vigour is needed to remove accumulated staining.

Other tasks that formed part of the room attendants’ act involved dealing with guest requests for dry cleaning, shoe cleaning or clothing repairs, as well as maintaining guest security, reporting left items, and restocking housekeeping storerooms on each floor. Room attendants also had a responsibility to report missing or damaged items from the room’s lengthy inventory of furnishings and fittings, and to ensure correct functioning of appliances such as televisions, telephones and air conditioners (Hcareers, 2010). All these activities add to the physical demand, take time, and placed an unrecognised cognitive demand on room attendants. Room attendants were also expected to monitor and report on the actual number of people occupying a room. The physical tasks and additional duties made it very difficult to clean room in 30 minutes. Hence, the state a guest left the room was often a factor delaying completion of the allocated rooms.
Messy Rooms

The messy condition of some hotel rooms was identified as demoralising for room attendants. A very untidy and dirty room took longer to clean and further increased time pressures on room attendants, as Rebecca, in her 50s, asserted:

*The state of some of the rooms, the guests don’t seem to have any respect for us. I think what gets me mainly is people are unaware of just putting trash in the bin, like why can’t they just put it in the bin? Sometimes the bin is empty and all the rubbish is on the floor, you’ve just got to gnash your teeth and do it.*

Room attendants often viewed such behaviour as a lack of respect for them, reflected in the condition of some vacated rooms. Room attendants often commented that they had little redress against poor guest behaviour. Such guest behaviour is presented in chapter six in relation to guest interactions, however, guest behaviour is also discussed here as the state in which guests leave the room contributes to the physical demands and time pressures that room attendants endure. There were reports of some international guests using portable stoves to cook in the hotel rooms, which required further cleaning efforts. At some hotels, these guests were charged an extra cleaning fee (AUD$45-75) for leaving the hotel room in a ‘trashed’ (very messy) state. In addition, some hotels reportedly maintained records of such behaviour for future monitoring or exclusion. None of my participants, however, indicated receiving any additional payment for cleaning messy rooms, although in some hotels their workload might be reduced, subject to the availability of other staff. This help was often not available due to management cost reduction strategies that minimised the number of room attendants allocated for the day. Sarina, in her 30s, explains the difficulty:

*We can ask for help, but everyone else is busy too, like we have 35 minutes [per room] and it might take one hour.*

Common instigators of particularly messy rooms reported by the room attendants in this study were rooms that had been occupied by very young guests, teenagers, and certain sporting teams.
Young Guests

Child guests (aged under 12 years) were often confined to the hotel room with little to occupy them, so they engaged in activities such as drawing, which often resulted in pencils and crayons scattered over the floor. The room attendant would need to bend and pick up each item prior to vacuuming. Children also tended to have higher towel usage as Daja, in her 40s, related:

*Well, I don’t understand why they bring them to this hotel, there’s nothing here for children really. The kids do make extra work, they make the job harder. We get the children in January, there is nothing for them to do, and we have to keep a lookout for them; mothers saying ‘our towels haven’t been changed’; and we get baths clogged and bathroom floors awash.*

Room attendants were in consensus that family groups which included children required much more physical effort, particularly as there was often a roll-out bed installed in the room which made access difficult. Helen, in her 50s, explained:

*We have family rooms that are all the same size with a king bed in one room and two queens in the other, but they cram five and sometimes six people in them with a rollout bed as well, and it makes it really hard to clean the rooms. You have the two queen and a rollaway in the middle and then the kids’ toys are everywhere.*

A consequence of crowded rooms and young guests was that the room attendants needed longer times in these rooms to negotiate the extra furniture, and to pick up toys and other paraphernalia. These crowded rooms also constituted an occupational health and safety problem. The participating hotels all fell within the Gold Coast ‘schoolies’ precinct, introducing another age group that room attendants reported added significant stress to the doing/completing of tasks.

Teenage Guests

Poor guest behaviour was particularly noted by room attendants during an annual festival called ‘schoolies’. For a fortnight in November, over 35,000 teenagers from around Australia who have finished their secondary schooling celebrate in Surfers Paradise and surrounds (goldcoast.com.au, 2011). These ‘Schoolies’ are excluded from
many hotels due to previous experiences of bad behaviour, often induced by overconsumption of alcohol, and the poor condition of vacated rooms. This ban on accepting ‘schoolies’ may be circumvented by using VIP parents to reserve rooms, as Danielle, in her 30s, explained:

*The schoolies aren’t really supposed to stay here but if their parents are on the board they stay here, and some of the rooms I’ve had to clean were just terrible, one left a poo outside his mate’s door for him to wake up to.*

This extreme case exemplifies other types of behaviour that contributed to delays in room attendants’ room cleaning schedules. Other guests whose behaviour caused delays due to the state of vacated rooms were male sports teams who celebrated the end of their playing season on the Gold Coast.

**Male Sports Teams**

Most room attendants identified cleaning of rooms occupied by male sports team members as particularly problematic. Male sports teams on their ‘end of season holiday’ are frequent visitors to the Gold Coast. These guest rooms were identified as particularly negative experiences due to the requirement to remove body waste produced by these generally young men. Kate, in her 50s, explained what she considered the worst task, reflecting an often-stated view by room attendants generally:

*Oh picking up used Frenchies [condoms] that’s disgusting, they are lying on the floor, we use gloves but it is not nice.*

It appears many of these men use the hotel room for casual sexual encounters as Ivy, in her 40s, stated:

*The [male team ball] players are the worst, there’s used condoms everywhere, it’s disgusting.*

As room attendants enter the personal space of the guest they witness intimate actions (sleep and self-cleaning). They are also exposed to offensive odours as Gwen, in her 40s, explained:

*It’s hard work and one thing I don’t like is the body odour in some rooms, but the worst part is cleaning up people’s spew.*
Room attendants’ involvement in ‘dirty’ tasks is dependent on the hotel, as some hotels use ‘housemen’ (who may be female) to undertake particular cleaning, such as vomit. There appears no provision of extra financial rewards as ‘dirt money’ for the room attendants who actually undertake the ‘dirty’ tasks. In failing to consider delaying incidents such as poor linen supply, difficult room layout, and particularly the messy rooms of certain guests, management are exploiting room attendants by failing to recognise these difficulties or compensate them for their efforts.

Assessing Rooms

Room attendants engage in strategies to cope with potential messy rooms. Room attendants may make a preliminary assessment of expectations based on their observations during the guests’ stay. Guests occupying a particular floor of one hotel might be messier than others, as Eva, in her 20s, explained:

> I’ve got set rooms and they are always trashed, I don’t know what it always is about them but they are always a mess on the eighth floor, it’s the smoking floor too, and they seem to let the same type in there, so that’s the kind of people that stay here sometimes, pretty shit.

Room attendants sometimes applied socio-economic assumptions that the messiest guests occupied the rooms with the lowest tariffs. Nevertheless, assumptions based on guests’ occupation or appearances were not always correct, as shown in the reflection by Elisabeth, in her 30s:

> People that you would think would mess up the rooms are the cleanest people, like we have one couple and he is a bikie and we just thought this is going to be a mess, but it was spotless, it’s the old saying you can’t pick people.

Variation in the state of vacated rooms was also reported in research from Europe (Onsøyen et al., 2009; Powell & Watson, 2006), who found certain guests left hotel rooms in particularly messy states. The unpredictability of this was a source of stress for room attendants.

> The physical workload of room attendants is highly demanding and many different situations caused delays, such as linen supply, room layout and messy rooms.
All the room attendants I spoke to called for the number of rooms allocated to be reduced. Jamie, in her 20s, depicted the importance of even a few minutes to room attendants in completing hard work:

_Sometimes the rooms are messy and they can take longer. I think if you have that extra five or 10 minutes then you can do a little bit more in a room._

The hard work of tasking shows that room attendants were exploited by the physical expectations of hotel management. The room attendants’ labour was appropriated through requirements for hard work, dirty work and risk of injury, without fair return to themselves. The room attendants’ labour is vital to the hotels financial success and reputation, and continuing lack of recognition and fair return shows their efforts were appropriated for the hotels’ economic advantage.

**Effects of Hard Work**

The meaning and consequences of ‘hard work’ identified in this chapter were influenced by the physical context of Performing. As reported by the room attendants, the physical effort required in completion of the allocated daily tasks, and the identified risks of injury or illness are considerable, especially taking into account the pay rate of $16 per hour. The consequence of the exploitative hard work due to the demands of tasking, was women who were physically and mentally drained and demoralised. Valerie, in her 50s, demonstrated this as she explained her feelings at the end of the day:

_We sit in here [locker room] exhausted, you can only do so many rooms._

Hotel room attendants who participated in this study reported giving their all to their performance each day. The excessive demands of hard work led to burnout, defined as becoming “exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” (Courtney Fichter & John Cipolla, 2010, p. 159). Ivy, in her 40s, provided insights into the pervasive toll such hard work took on hotel room attendants:

_The work worries me, after two days off I don’t sleep the night before I go to work, I’m up and down all night, I feel that I don’t want to come in, it’s a chore._

The worry or stress expressed by Ivy reveals emotional exhaustion and the psychosomatic symptoms of insomnia. These conditions have been identified as resulting from ‘being overextended’, and results in emotional and physical depletion.
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

(Fichter & Cipolla, 2010). The physical demands of being a room attendant were believed to be the cause of the high staff turnover experienced at most establishments, as Valerie, in her 50s, argued:

_The room attendants are exhausted so they have a high staff turnover. There are a few that stay 10 or 12 years, but the majority of it is a turnover of six to eight months._

The union representing room attendants, United Voice (ex-LHMU) (2011a) reports that luxury hotels have the highest turnover rates (48 per cent annually) of any industry in Australia. The doing/completing of tasking presented particular challenges for room attendants, specifically the physical demands of making the bed, moving the trolley and cleaning the bathroom. Burnout caused by physical exertion at the workplace, in turn increases turnover, absenteeism and low morale (Anat Rafaeli, 1993), which are explained in the following section.

**Health and Safety**

Room attendants believed that high staff turnover and high absenteeism were consequences of the demands of the hard work. Work studies have been applied to housekeeping and have identified that the forces exerted cause injury. These injuries often result from the equipment used to perform room attendants’ tasking, and this includes the bed, the trolley and the paraphernalia used to clean the bathroom. Room attendants’ median days away from work through injury are twice that of all other hotel employees (Frumin, et al., 2006). Scherzer et al.’s (2005) survey of hotel room attendant injuries in Las Vegas found that 75 per cent experienced work related pain during previous 12 months. As nearly all the room attendants participating in my study reported working with pain, others’ results may under-state the true situation. The employment experiences related under doing/completing tasking revealed many reports of safety hazards and spinal and joint injuries to the room attendants. These types of injuries have been identified as being caused by lifting heavy beds, moving trolleys and repeated bending (Milburn & Barrett, 1999; Powell & Watson, 2006). Despite injuries being common, Scherzer et al. (2005) found few room attendants reported them to management due to psychological stressors including job insecurity.
and concerns about punitive reactions from management, so contributing to their own *invisibility*. In my study of room attendants, the tasking and equipment were reported as ergonomically challenging, and these tasks performed by room attendants have been identified as testing the capacities and health of the human body (Larkin, 1969). All room attendants reported tasking as hard work and many struggled to perform the physical demands of tasking, particularly bed-making.

Room attendant employment as an exchange of labour for money may be regarded as consensual and without a conflict of interest, as they agree to conditions when commencing employment. Nevertheless, conflict occurs when a room attendant is forced to behave in a manner which is contrary to her physical and psychological well-being. This conflict of interests has been identified in previous studies related to housekeeping, such as the hard work of tasking, which is physically detrimental (Paul Kirwin, 1990). The consensual exchange of labour is subject to the power inherent in employers’ or management demands, where options for the employees are minimal (Steven Lukes, 1974, 2004). Psychological stresses were exacerbated by cleaning employees’ experiences as ‘instruments of labour’ by being pushed to their physical limits (Herod & Aguiar, 2006). While injury resulting from room attendant employment is well documented, the Australian hospitality industry appears to add to room attendants’ *invisibility*, specifically through failure to acknowledge and address the detrimental physical and psychological impacts. Ms Kirner, the former premier of the state of Victoria in Australia, believes the hospitality industry in Melbourne is ‘closing its eyes’ to injuries amongst hotel room attendants whose work is vital to the city’s events industry (Savage, 2010). As demonstrated by the statements of the room attendants, physical and psychological exploitation is exacerbated when hotel management regimes require increased performance in a context where the attendant is simply unable to perform more effectively.

The remaining sections in this chapter present the categories of tasking related to room attendants’ views of the time hotels allocated to cleaning the rooms and their endeavours to achieve quality. Specifically, time pressure stress is caused by the high
number of rooms allocated daily to each room attendant, by delays caused by late departures and unavailable rooms as well as the condition of vacated rooms.

**Time Pressure**

The time constraints related to the number of rooms allocated and time allowed for cleaning each room imposed constant pressure on room attendants, who struggled to complete their daily schedule. The room attendants were engaged in physical, cognitive and emotional endeavours to supply services related to hotel guests’ consumption (mainly hygiene assurance), within an allocated time frame. The time pressures were described by room attendants as ‘stretched’, ‘tight’ and ‘difficult’. The physical feasibility of accomplishing all tasking within time limits was affected by the allocation of rooms per shift, the availability of the rooms when room attendants arrived to clean them, and the condition of the vacated rooms. Time pressure was identified as so intense that even a few minutes was important, as Pamela, in her 30s, explained:

*In housekeeping if you are behind 10 or 15 minutes you are gonna be behind all day and that’s why you have to do something, have a strategy of how to cope, even five minutes is really important, and you have to decide to do something. You swap rooms with the other girl in the rooms next to you. You look around, check the doors and you can’t start and minutes is going by and you are gonna be behind.*

Pamela demonstrates the frantic action she had to undertake to remedy a situation of just few minutes’ delay to her cleaning schedule. The number of rooms that were allocated to each daily shift profoundly affected the intensity of time pressures and subsequent room attendant (re)actions.

**Room Allocation**

As indicated above, all participating room attendants felt that the number of rooms allocated daily prevented them from completing their tasks to desired 5 star standards.
Bianca, in her 40s, demonstrated the feeling of being exploited when describing her biggest challenge:

The workload, the amount of rooms we have to get done and the work we are expected to do daily, you don’t have time.

As already noted, the number of rooms the attendants were required to clean varied between hotels, with an average of 16 rooms per day per room attendant. An ‘industry norm’ allocation of 18 rooms per room attendant was adopted by three of the five participating hotels. Two of the hotels had allocations of 12 or 13 rooms. The consequence of the lower room allocation was not a lighter workload, as the room attendants at these hotels were given less working hours to complete the lower number of rooms. Minor variations in room allocation were due to different management styles, with one hotel seeking to reduce room attendant injuries. This effort to reduce the workload of room attendants by reducing room allocations was also observed at some hotels participating in a study of room attendants in Norway (Onsøyen et al., 2009). In my study, the average allocation of 16 rooms a day allowed only 28.12 minutes per room. This scheduling further demonstrates invisibility as it did not acknowledge constraints to the room attendants’ routine such as pre-task preparations, pushing the trolley between rooms, more than usually messy rooms, or delays caused by guests who still occupied rooms.

Room attendants’ perceived that there appeared to be pressure on the housekeeping department to minimise costs. This minimisation was reflected in the continual reduction of the time allowed to clean rooms, as explained by Rachel, in her 40s:

They keep cutting the targets, it’s ridiculous and that means you get more rooms per day. I know it is financial but they could give us more time, and there’d be fewer complaints, there’d be fewer injuries. The girls are just killing themselves to do it.

Allowing insufficient time to clean each room placed enormous demands on hotel room attendants’ physical task performance by requiring faster movements. Bronwyn, in her 40s, explains the difficulty of minimal room time allocation:

I actually say you’re under pressure all the time because you have to work within the time frame. A room attendant is given half an hour to do one
checkout, and if the rooms nice and they haven’t used every single compliment item and towel and coffee cup and glass and thrown the bed apart and messed the bathroom, then half an hour is fine, but to do a proper job, the way they want it done is probably 40 to 45 minutes, it’s a real challenge.

The room attendants generally estimated servicing a hotel room typically takes about 40-50 minutes, yet room attendants are expected to service between 12-18 rooms in a standard 7.5 hour shift (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). Since the Faulkner and Patiar (1997) study 14 years ago, there has been no change to the number of rooms that attendants clean. As mentioned previously, some Gold Coast hotels are almost 20 years old, and rooms with older fittings and decor required more time to make them presentable. The room attendant’s time is her currency (rate of pay). The room attendants’ time is controlled by operational management within the hotels. Skimming a few minutes off room servicing-time can save thousands of dollars in labour costs over months, and thus has potential to increase surplus value for the hotel. By not recognising the time input required room attendants were further rendered invisible. The recent global financial crisis (GFC) has been reported to result in a downturn in the tourism (and hence hospitality) industry, which led to increased actions to reduce expenses, housekeeping being a major area that was targeted for cutbacks (Graham Vercoe, 2009). The outcome of cutbacks was the further exploitation of room attendants through increased appropriation of their efforts. Compounding the stress of insufficient time allocation to thoroughly clean each room was the impeded access to rooms due to the delayed departure of guests, which disrupted scheduling and hindered the room attendants’ act.

**Late Departures**

This section shows further impacts on the room attendants’ time when access to the rooms was delayed. The extent of time pressure was also dependent on the number of departures and the requirement for some rooms to be ready at an earlier time. Eva, in her 20s, described the problem she found with front office failing to recognise the importance of timing in her tasks:
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If they have been cleaned they can check them in early, but I find they’re not really on top of things, like guests check out at eleven o’clock and yet people don’t get out until 11.30 or 12, and you got to constantly reschedule your rooms, it’s frustrating. Some people check in at nine or ten in the morning, check in time is two o’clock. It happens all the time and it makes the job difficult.

A particular situation that greatly exacerbated physical workloads and increased attendants’ stress arose when guests delayed their departure from the rooms after settling their account. Valerie, in her 50s, explains her feeling of frustration at the consequences of such delays:

If the room is occupied its annoying because you got to go back and have to work faster then. Like you might have several rooms on your list and they are not vacant so you are running up three floors and you’ve got one down that end and the other up the other, and you get down there and it’s got people in and you are backtracking and then you are under pressure to work faster and harder.

Front office requests for early servicing of rooms created time pressures, which have been identified as contributing to time pressure stress for room attendants (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). Room attendants in my study adopted strategies to cope with time pressures such as continual rearrangement of their tasking schedules. Checkouts were completed first to allow rooms to be ready for arriving guests, as Bronwyn, in her 40s, indicated:

You have to prioritise the work and if they want a rush room then go there first.

At the beginning of each shift, room attendants are given a list of rooms requiring service or check out procedures (Hcareers, 2010). Despite guest departure lists from front office that inform the housekeeping department of vacated rooms, many guests remained in their rooms for some time after paying their account. My participants prioritised their actions by assessing the occupancy status of the allocated rooms, then developing a cognitive schedule to synchronise the tasking to ensure efficient use of time. Also, room attendants kept track of guest stay duration, with longer room occupations assumed to indicate potentially longer cleaning times. Accordingly room attendants used their time as effectively as they could by continually engaging in strategic rescheduling of their room allocation on the basis of room availability and the
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priority of checkouts. The constant reallocation of work process demonstrates room attendant *invisibility* to hotel management in regards to attendants’ undertaking high level tasks such as time optimisation. These types of delays cause intense pressure and stress for room attendants, who have to exert themselves physically to finish the allocated rooms within the allotted time.

**Occupied Rooms**

In addition to the delays of late departures, room attendants often faced delays in servicing rooms. Guests may be asleep and undetected by the room attendant and this may lead to embarrassment for the room attendant (and the guest) if the attendant enters at an inappropriate time. Clare, in her 20s, described the guest room entry procedure that was relatively standard across all five hotels:

> Supposedly we knock three times and call out ‘housekeeping’ and if I don’t get an answer I’ll put my key in the door, and just open it ajar and if no one answers I’ll go in, but usually the rooms are empty.

Despite such procedures, entry may unwittingly interrupt guest activities, and these activities caused further delays. There were many related incidents of room attendants witnessing personal interactions of a sexual nature between guests as Angela, in her 40s, recounted:

> I knocked and no one was answering so I open the door and they were on the bed doing it and I said ‘sorry’ and run out.

This type of situation was a common experience for room attendants who expressed intense embarrassment at these incidents. (The pressures on them to act discretely are further detailed in chapter seven). Such incidents interlink with tasking, as they cause changes in room cleaning schedules, and consequent delays to attendants’ work. Other incidents that caused delays for room attendants did not appear to be considered in the process of allocating rooms and generating room cleaning schedules.

> ‘Do not disturb’ signs, establishment-prescribed guest contact procedures, and guest demands caused stress, as explained by Gwen, in her 40s, as she tried to complete set tasks and perform well within the tight time frame:
Guests leave the PR [privacy respected] signs out and you can’t get in we have to wait until 2 o’clock and then we have to knock on the door and that means you can’t ring them. So sometimes we still have to leave them longer while they get dressed or go out and they go ‘oh, can’t you wait?’ It’s very hard because I finish at three and it does not leave much time for the room and I start panicking because I am not a fast person, and I stress that I would not finish or not do the job properly and that’s the rushing part.

A further consequence of this time pressure is that the room attendants cannot afford to lose even a few minutes talking to guests. Wendy, in her 40s, explained the dilemma:

I greet the guests, say ‘good morning’, but I can’t talk because it takes three, four, five minutes and then I get behind.

Room attendants were torn between completing their tasks and fulfilling hotel requirements that they should greet guests. Room attendants were expected to engage in friendly interaction with guests, and this is a hotel prescribed activity to ensure guests feel warmly greeted (Hcareers, 2010). The greeting is part of the emotional labour expected by hotel management under Performing. That is, an unwritten script is required by management from attendants regarding initiating any interaction with guests. Other studies have identified that room attendant stress is caused by pressure due time lost in interaction with guests (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). The lack of time that room attendants had for guest interaction has been identified as a component of negative customer satisfaction which can be detrimental to hotels (Marit Gundersen, Morten Heide & Uff Olsson, 1996). The full extent of exploitation through time pressures were revealed when a matter of a few minutes was noted as critical to room attendants’ completing task goal achievement. The delays to room attendants’ achieving goal achievement were further exacerbated by the challenges of messy rooms identified earlier in the previous section.

Room Condition

As already stated, the condition of each hotel room is unknown until the room attendant enters. This uncertainty was contributed to room attendants’ stress. Room
attendants factor in this uncertainty as they constantly reschedule their room priorities as Angela, in her 40s, stated:

*You don’t know what to expect, this one may be all right, but I don’t know what the next room will be, so it’s stressful, the uncertainty. It’s different every day. You can’t tell till you open that door. Sometimes you want to close it again, can I do it? I’m so scared.*

Room attendants needed to constantly monitor the readiness of rooms and reschedule them to optimise their time utilisation. This involved a self-checking process to ensure the work is done thoroughly and details were not forgotten by establishing a methodical routine for each room. Elaine, in her 20s, described how she ensured all tasks were done quickly:

*I have a set routine so I find if I follow that I cover most everything, I do the 19th floor and I have a quick look around, start on the first one and basically make the bed first, it makes more sense to me to do that first, then I get rid of all the rubbish and then get down to the bathroom and then check the cupboards and drawers if it’s a checkout, check the safe is unlocked and nothing in it. It’s all in my head and I pretty much do everything the same in every room, it saves time for me rather than kurfuffling away.*

The components of tasking required room attendants to have confidence in their own abilities. They had to apply knowledge gained through experience to assess the effort required and time required to complete their allocated rooms. The time pressure and the room attendants’ personality and/or work ethic were focused on doing the job as efficiently as possible, and this was best achieved by having a routine. Routines are shaped by individual memory and are sequenced actions facilitating performance in order to provide efficiency in standard operating procedures (Michael Cohen & Paul Bacdayan, 1994). The room attendants often mentioned a need to ‘be organised’ due to the time pressures, which all felt was a major issue in their daily working lives.

**Time Pressure Consequences**

Physical and psychological stress resulted from time pressure. Time pressure added a further level of exploitation by increasing physical demands on the room attendants so
they could complete their tasking on time. Room attendants felt that their efforts were not acknowledged by management, and that the time pressure was a constant negative in their daily experience of their work. Valerie, in her 50s, revealed how room attendants had little choice other than sustain physical injury to keep to time allocation:

The other day we were told to straighten the bed bases, which means you hurt yourself as they are king size beds, but by the time the supervisor gets there to help you will already have done it to keep to the time schedule.

Valerie revealed that in order to meet allocated schedules, room attendants were exposed to further exploitation by virtue of the fact that they had to forgo rest entitlements:

If you take time for smoko [short break such as morning or afternoon tea/coffee] it takes you five minutes to get in and get out, and that’s why some girls don’t take their smoko because you can’t waste 10 minutes getting to and from the staff canteen.

The perceived inability to take legally designated breaks underlined the level of exploitation of these women. The hotels’ appropriation of every minute of room attendants’ employment time did not allow sufficient rest time from the intense physical demands. Time stress was the second major concern of tasking (after the physical demands of hard work) for the participating room attendants. The toll of time pressure was revealed by Sarah, in her 30s:

I put the radio on, cos in here we are always busy so no time to watch TV, sometimes I forget to drink and I finish the room and I think ‘Oh I need a drink of water’.

Sarah reveals dehydration was a possible consequence of the time pressures, which made the work unpleasant and affected their physiological well-being. The above examples demonstrate the physical effects of not having enough time to complete tasking in a safe manner or to take assigned breaks. Continuous pressure of the physical workload under intense time pressures was linked to illness in other studies of room attendants (Powell & Watson, 2006; Onsøyen et al., 2009), who found these pressures resulted in absences from work and contributed to high staff turnover.
Participants often referred to psychological stress as a consequence of time pressure. There was a frantic fear of forgetting to do something in the rush, as expressed by Susan, in her 30s:

You are busy and you get paranoid ‘Did I do that? Did I do this?’ Maybe they will ask me to come back, I always worry.

Susan’s statement reveals time pressure impacted on her mental health by causing her to worry excessively. The time pressures, combined with the workload and the desire to complete the task to meet quality standards, resulted in some room attendants working in their own time. Lack of compassion from management was also demonstrated in examples of superiors’ accusations of not working hard enough, or even of deliberately wasting time, further demonstrates the exploitation of room attendants. Nicole, in her 20s, voiced that management should consider the delays that impact on task completion times instead of perceiving worker slackness:

They [management] need to reflect on that not just say oh you must be playing around or something.

Lack of acknowledgement from management of time pressures demonstrates the invisibility of room attendants. Room attendants reported little effort by management to reduce time pressure by reducing room allocation or by treating their claims as valid, hence ignoring them as a community of value. Key to performance is the organisation of time, and there is a trade-off between speed and quality. Clare, in her 20s, explained the stress that this incongruity causes:

We are really stressed. The last executive housekeeper we had was a man and he made us finish on time. This executive housekeeper is not like that she would rather we do the job properly, that’s probably the most challenging part, the time pressure.

Time pressure was generated by unrealistic management demands, leading to room attendants ‘cutting corners’ to meet room-time reductions. Cutting corners meant quality is likely fall and slipping standards have potential to ruin 5 star reputations and create guest dissatisfaction (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). As stated previously, an allocation of 16 rooms a day allows 28.12 minutes per room. Room attendants stated that a checkout room requires 40 to 45 minutes, yet no establishment participating in this research allowed this amount of time. Current check out room cleaning time allocation of 30 minutes was reportedly not physically feasible on many occasions. So
the room attendants reported that they often have to reduce the time for servicing rooms from 20 to 10 minutes to cover the shortfall in time for check-out cleaning. This ‘cutting corners’ also allowed no extra time for contingencies such as finding replacement linen, or making up for time lost due to rooms being unavailable, or engaging with guests. The failure by hotel management to acknowledge the time pressures placed on room attendants emphasised their invisibility and exploitation.

The hard physical workload and the stress caused by time pressures are believed to be a strong contributor to staff turnover rates (Rafaeli, 1993). Time pressures accelerated the speed of room attendants’ physical actions in order to complete the full workload to required standards, and these demands were reported to contribute to women leaving this occupation. Time pressure was a major issue, particularly for casual room attendants who may work for ten days without a day off. Intense time demands combined with the physical toll of task completion led to injuries and increased sick leave. Valerie’s perceptions reflected many room attendants’ view of managements’ approach to time pressures:

_They only think numbers, and the room attendants are exhausted, so they have a high staff turnover._

Time pressures had negative impacts on room attendants’ working and personal lives, and possible negative impacts on the establishment regarding staff complaints, injuries and staff turnover due to the unsustainability of the labour process. The hospitality industry has been identified as having high staff turnover, although there is little documentation of turnover rates and the resultant cost to establishments (Lashley, 2002). From the room attendants’ perspective, time pressures demonstrated the failure by hotel management to acknowledge the problem of their heavy workloads and mental stress, and shows that room attendants’ plight was invisible to management. This invisibility is due to non-acknowledgement or lack of importance placed on the time pressures room attendants’ contend with by authoritative hierarchical hotel management.

The room attendants’ experiences of time pressure identified in this chapter accords with the findings of Faulkner and Patiar’s (1997) study of workplace induced stress amongst Australian hotel operational staff. These authors identified that the
main source of stress amongst housekeeping staff was the volume of work. They found that time pressure increased the physical demands through continuous hard work, and contributed to making “the work situation potentially very stressful” (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997, p. 99). As demonstrated under the heading ‘Hard Work’, interruptions to linen supply, guests vacating the rooms late and particularly the messy rooms demanding readjustment of room attendants’ schedules, all made compliance with allocated times difficult. All room attendants reported physical and mental exhaustion after their daily performances on the hotel stage.

From a Marxist perspective, the time pressures were an indication of room attendants’ exploitation through appropriation of the surplus value of their work effort, while not recognising the physical and psychological costs to attendants. As a member of the working class, room attendants receive a smaller share of the profits for a larger burden of the work (Marx, 1880/1977). This capitalist rent of room attendants’ efforts is similar to the views of critical theorist Noam Chomsky (2007) regarding surplus value appropriation, amounting to slavery and an infringement of basic human rights. As room attendants have no voice in the conditions of their employment and are expected to endure exploitation, their employment reduces their access to fair working conditions. Tasking undertaken by the participating room attendants caused pain, injury and stress and these were increased by time pressures to perform quickly. These issues presented challenges for meeting prescribed quality standards.

**Achieving Quality**

Achieving quality was the final component of room attendants’ performance of tasking. The focus here was on the perceptions of guests as audience towards the outcome of room attendants’ performance. From the participating room attendants’ perspective, achieving ‘quality’ was hindered by the hard physical work load and time pressures related above. Meeting quality in *Performing* conveys the expectations of guests, as a participating audience, who judge and appreciate ‘quality’ as the outcome of the room attendants’ act. To meet quality and hence guest expectations, the room
attendants’ aspired to be quality performers within the luxurious 5 star hotel physical stage by taking pride in their performance. Pursuit of quality provided room attendants with task satisfaction as Rachel, in her 40s, disclosed:

It’s a thrill to see the room gleaming and I can’t leave until it is like that, sometimes it takes me ages, some people would just do the basics that the guest will see, but I just stay there until it’s done, and if the guest is at reception they just wait until I’m through, because I don’t want them to walk in and see something that should have been done, and because I was rushing I missed something and they complain. I’d rather they wait a little longer until I get the room immaculate.

This tasking satisfaction revealed a strong work ethic and the quality-focused ideology of room attendants, as further demonstrated by Adrianne, in her 40s:

I just love doing it, and doing it well.

In attempting to complete tasking well room attendants demonstrate a strong work ethic to meet quality standards. This commitment to perform well has also been found in other studies that illustrate room attendants’ pursuit of perfection as central to transforming a guest’s room (Powell & Watson, 2006; Savage, 2010). This strong work ethic is discussed further under ‘positive attitude’ and ‘pride in work’ in chapter seven. A strong work ethic refers to room attendants’ awareness of the necessity for service quality to “encompass both customers’ perceptions and expectations” (Valarie Zeithaml, Peter Capezio & Debra Morehouse, 1993, p. 240). The participating room attendants tried to achieve expected standards, and were disappointed when they failed to meet standards.

According to participants, quality equated to providing the expected standards for guests. This required room attendants to be certain of their own abilities. Maureen, in her 30s, explained her view of achieving quality:

Quality is more important than quantity, cos you are doing the right thing, the guests want to come in and see that spotless room, and you’ve gotta make sure you have everything there.

Maureen’s and others’ perspectives show room attendants believe that guest satisfaction was a prime gauge of quality. Guest satisfaction may be considered the “degree to which a product or service meets the customer’s expectations” (Abraham
Pizam & Judy Holcome, 2008, p. 66). Other studies confirm that room attendants’ efforts to reach quality standards were central to hotel guest satisfaction (Powell & Watson, 2006). Nevertheless, the time pressures imposed on room attendants allowed little time for ‘fixing’ defects and highlighted the need to achieve quality through “doing the right thing first time and aiming for zero defects” (Philip Crosby, 1967, 1996). The participating room attendants’ statements revealed efforts to meet the two dimensions of quality identified by A Parasuraman, Valerie Zeithaml and Leonard Berry’s (1988) seminal proposition of the SERVQUAL, now called the customer satisfaction expectancy disconfirmation and performance model. The two dimensions were reliability in performance of expected service, and demonstrably meeting the guests’ expectations of a visually, and in other respects appealing room (Gundersen et al., 1996). The hotels’ 5 star commitment on the one hand, and guests’ expectations of 5 star hotels on the other, required dedication from room attendants to perform at a high standard and under physical pressures in order to achieve quality within time limits.

Room attendants identified their main quality responsibility was a holistic and faultless achievement of hygiene standards. Eva, in her 20s, explained some measures taken to ensure hygiene:

*Cleanliness is the most important, like cleaning the toilets you’ve got to make sure that the rag you use on the toilet is not the same as using it on anything else like you’ve gotta make sure about that stuff.*

This commitment is also revealed by Sara, in her 30s, who explained the need for a comprehensive coverage of all aspects of hotel room cleaning:

*For me all is important, because you can’t just do one thing, you need to do it all. If the guest leaves food in bin and you don’t take it out then the whole room stinks and it gets in the carpet and you know if the room is shut and then you come in it can really stink so it is all important.*

At the participating hotels I observed some evidence of paper-based hygiene protocols. These included general instructions – verbal and visual – that were posted on staff noticeboards, illustrating desired quality outcomes. Such hygiene protocols are defined by each establishment, and supervisors are appointed primarily to monitor and maintain these standards (Hcareers, 2010). These room attendants’ belief in the
imperative of hygiene is congruent with recent reports of increased traveller preference for high hygiene standards (White, 2009). Moreover, the tangibility of cleanliness has long been identified as a key component of service work (Grove et al., 1992). Concepts of service quality and guest satisfaction have received a great deal of academic and management attention in recent years, with employees being seen as a key determinant of quality in any services experience (see Appendix K, page 306). Some researchers identify employee contact as a key component of guest satisfaction, and others identify a requirement for emotional labour in service delivery. The participating room attendants made every effort to perform emotional labour and provide guest satisfaction through an outstanding performance to meet quality expectations. Emotional labour is the requirement for demonstration of unfelt emotion in the workplace, particularly in service industries (Anderson et al., 2002). The emotional labour produced during guest interactions is discussed in chapter six.

In Performing, the hotel rooms and related areas such as corridors and lifts provide the tangible stage whereupon the room attendants’ acts occur. To complete the scene and create an image of perfection, room attendants paid attention to detail such as ensuring the bed was taut and wrinkle free, and that the bathroom was ‘shining’. Room attendants internalised quality standards in the same way as exhorted by the tenets of Total Quality Management (TQM), such as the tenet of continuous operational error-minimisation perspectives to achieve customer satisfaction (see Gundersen et al., 1996). The aforementioned physical demands of hard work and time pressures increased the risk of quality failure. Features such as the poorly maintained trolleys frustrated room attendants, caused stress and compromised quality service.

Early proponents of business success promoted adoption of a quality focus and identified autocratic management as a problem (William Edwards Deming 1986, 2000). Room attendants believed hotel managements’ focus on minimising staff numbers compromised quality and particularly the hygiene of rooms. It has been found that hygiene failures are pervasive in the hotel industry, including dangerous bacteria on surfaces, putrid toilets and mattresses caked with dead skin (Channel Nine, 2011). Hygiene failure was a consequence of the nature of hard work and the time pressures, which inhibited thorough cleaning. Room attendants can only achieve quality if they
are allowed to time to perform at the required standard. By not allowing time for room attendants to fulfil their tasking, their workload was unacknowledged, so room attendants were exploited and this component of their *invisibility* impacted on hotel service quality.

**Tasking Summary**

Tasking is an inductively derived theoretical concept explaining the operational functions of room attendants as a causal category in the basic social process of *Performing*. The luxury rooms of these hotels set the predominant stage, and such items as room attendants’ uniforms and cleaning equipment were props to their act. The discourse of ‘staging’ was reflected in how room attendants described their actions and tasks, which incorporated the notion of seen and unseen action. The room attendants’ believed their efforts lacked acknowledgement by management, which was related to their *invisibility*, specifically with regard to the physical effort required and time restrictions due to the number of rooms allocated. Room attendants were exploited within the three most physically challenging tasks identified as: bed-making, using the supply trolley, and bathroom cleaning, due to the physical demands these tasks entailed. Exploitation was further revealed by high injury rates and psychological stresses exacerbated by room attendants’ experiences as ‘instruments of labour’ by the physical demands of making 26 to 32 king sized beds daily.

The physical feasibility of accomplishing all tasking within time limits was affected by the allocation of rooms per shift, the availability of the rooms when room attendants arrived to clean them, and the condition of the vacated rooms. *Performing* the physical activities and workload within the allocated time, and the subsequent injuries this generated echoed the findings of prior research on room attendant work. These issues presented challenges for meeting prescribed quality standards. The consequence of the exploitative hard work identified in this chapter on tasking, was women who were physically and mentally drained and demoralised through the hotels lack of acknowledgement of their workload reflecting their *invisibility*. 
The physical challenges, time pressures and quality implications identified by the room attendants revealed a situation that appeared unsustainable and exploitative for these women. Under the current hegemonic capitalist system, management of these hotels focus on ‘scientific’ management concepts of economic efficiency and cost cutting. The focus on cost reduction was seen by room attendants as imposed through high allocation of rooms which incurred time pressures. The *invisibility* of room attendants appeared to conceal their physical exhaustion from managements’ awareness, and from a Marxist perspective meant that the room attendants were exploited through appropriation of their surplus labour for hotel profits.

The next chapter further advances the concept of room attendant *invisibility* arising from the conditions they work under, particularly the tangible aspects of low pay, their working hours, the training and the uniform they were given. Following this the latter section of the chapter sets out the intangible aspects of room attendant employment in a basic social psychological process (BSPP), which included both collegiality and discrimination amongst the cohort of room attendants. While room attendants endured the monotony of their work, at the same time they relished their autonomy. Finally, I present the varying levels of support they received from their families regarding their choice of occupation.
Chapter Five

Working Conditions and Social Influences

_The pay check is pretty shitty, it seems like you work your arse off and you look at your pay slip at the end of the week and you think ‘I only get that much?’_ (Ivy, Gold Coast Room Attendant, 2010).

This chapter focuses on working conditions, and on the effects of the views and actions of peers and family on room attendants’ employment experiences. Firstly, the chapter describes the tangible or physical working conditions including consideration of what participating room attendants thought about their wages, their working hours, the training and development opportunities and the uniform they wore. Most room attendants considered all these conditions needed improving, and that their lack of voice and recognition for their efforts in tasking increased their perceptions of invisibility upon the hotel stage. Secondly, despite the previously identified negative physical and psychological aspects of tasking discussed in the previous chapter, and the desired improvements to their working conditions described in this chapter, attendants also expressed appreciation for the more intangible ‘benefits’ of working in a hotel. These benefits generally revolved around social interaction and opportunities for meaningful social interaction, and friendships within the housekeeping department. Other intangible aspects influencing the room attendants’ experiences were the autonomy they experienced as positive and the monotony of tasking, which was generally seen as a negative aspect. Thirdly, the chapter explores the types of support attendants received from family members regarding their choice of occupation.

The working conditions of room attendants form a basic social structural process (BSSP) that represents the compensation for their effort on the hotel stage, and their responses to the training preparation that the hotels provided to enable
them to perform. Attendants felt that their wages particularly did not compensate them adequately for their efforts, contributing to feelings of exploitation and marginalisation because their efforts were appropriated or unrecognised by the hotels. Room attendants expressed strong concerns about insufficient working hours, due to increasing casualisation of the hotel workforce. The time pressures identified under ‘tasking’ in the previous chapter relate to insufficient time to complete the tasks, here the work hours relate to the uncertain availability of weekly work. Further, room attendants were concerned that few training and development opportunities other than on occupational health and safety were offered to them. Another issues of concern related to the unsuitability of the uniforms as a costume to meet tasking requirements. In this chapter, the discussion relates to the appropriateness of room attendants’ uniforms as functional garments, in the following chapter six the uniforms are further identified as sexualising room attendants.

The latter part of this chapter sets out the intangible aspects of room attendant employment in a basic social psychological process (BSPP) of social influences. The aspects of Performing room attendants valued were the hotels’ efforts to create a friendly work culture within the housekeeping department through inclusivity functions. Of particular significance for room attendants was the collegiality fostered amongst their peers, as fellow actors on the hotel stage. Collegiality refers to the relationship between room attendants who were united in a common purpose of servicing hotel rooms, and enjoying the relationships and mutual support that developed as a result. Nevertheless, within the peer interactions there were some experiences of discrimination or lack of respect, both within the housekeeping department and outside of it. The intangible conditions of room attendant work included enduring the daily monotony of repetitive tasking. This was counteracted by common indications of relishing the autonomy of their work in hotel rooms away from the public’s (and most other staffs’) eyes. The final part of this chapter describes how room attendants were affected by the varying levels of support they received from their families regarding their choice of occupation.

Many of these working conditions and influences contributed to room attendants’ stress and, within the hotel labour processes, reflected the agency (or
rather lack of) they had in Performing their roles. Agency in the social psychological literature relates to philosophical concerns of human free will. My application of this term relates to the ability room attendants had to change the conditions under which they worked and the social influences on their performance. This chapter is presented as shown in Figure 5.1 below. Each of the working conditions is presented in their order of importance for the room attendants.

![Figure 5.1. Chapter Five Structure – Working Conditions and Social Influences](image)

**Working Conditions**

In the Performing model, ‘working conditions’ arise from the physical working environment of room attendants. Working conditions are a basic social structural process (BSSP), and include the wages as rewards for their performance, allocation of their time on the hotel stage, the support they receive in the form of on the job training, and the props – such as their uniform - they are given to perform their daily acts. While working conditions were consistent at the 5 star establishments participating in my research, there was no set standard across the industry (Knox, 2006). The rate of pay met minimum legal requirements; however, in my study, room
attendants’ experiences showed a general shared dissatisfaction with their pay. The room attendants’ views with respect to the hours of work offered was mixed. The daytime hours worked were considered an advantage, particularly for women with family commitments. Conversely, the fluctuating hours offered as part of their casual employment caused uncertainty for many because there was little consistency in weekly hours, making it difficult for workers to plan their household expenditure. Room attendants expressed appreciation for some working conditions, such as provision of locker rooms, clean uniforms, free meals (at some hotels) and a few training opportunities to further develop their careers. The various working conditions are discussed in turn below.

**Low Pay**

Nearly all participating room attendants felt that they received inadequate compensation for their physical efforts. They also perceived that their wages had little correlation with the room rate guests were charged for the amenity of a hotel room. Helen, from Sweden, expressed her opinion:

We get sixteen dollars [per hour] during the week and twenty-eight on the weekend. I think sixteen dollars is pretty poor, especially when you are only allowed half an hour to clean, so that’s the guest room for eight dollars. It’s not fair, the pay is just the pits for the hard work you do.

Rachel, from New Zealand, supported Helen’s view:

The work we do and what we give and what we receive back is extremely unbalanced, the work we do is not recognised, like pay wise or rewards.

Alison, born in Australia, expanded further with regard to pay, the non-continuing nature of her employment contract, and importance of the room attendants’ roles in the success of 5 star hotels’ performance:

We are a necessity and yet we are not well paid, and casual on top of it.

Miranda, born in Australia, also stressed the importance of room attendants’ work for hotels’ successful performance:

We have the ongoing problem of pay but the union is fighting it, we are the main people in the hotel, without us there would be some pretty cranky guests.
Room attendants in all hotels studied were being paid the legal minimum rate of pay in Australia as determined by the relevant award. As noted in chapter one, at the time of preparation of my thesis, the Hospitality Industry (General) Award (2010) sets minimum rate of pay for hotel room attendants at AU$16.03 per hour (United Voice, 2011b). The purpose of these awards is to provide a ‘safety net’ of minimum wages that employers can legally pay. What needs to be noted is that the minimum wage was designed as a ‘safety net’ and has been adopted by the hospitality industry as standard (Alison Barnes & Diane Fieldes, 2000). From most of the room attendants’ perspectives, they were inadequately being compensated for their labours of tasking (recounted in chapter four). For example, the physical and psychological stressors identified in chapters one and four provided empirical evidence of high injury rates from Performing the room attendants’ tasking. A Marxist socialist feminist interpretation of the room attendants’ perspectives is that the efforts of these women were appropriated by the hotel owners as surplus value, rather than fair compensation for the physicality of tasking. In this way the pay was another example of room attendants’ exploitation through lack of acknowledgement of their hard physical effort by the hotel as a player within the hegemonic patriarchal capitalist system.

While the majority of room attendants felt they were not adequately compensated for their efforts, a few were content with their pay rate. While recognising that her work involved hard labour, Kate, from Papua New Guinea, also saw her employment as providing income:

*It is hard, it is very easy to pull a nerve in your neck, but other than that time flies and you get some money.*

Danielle, born in Australia, was also satisfied with her pay rate:

*Well, I know it is a good place, I’ve been here four years, they look after their employees, you get the proper money and public holidays and penalty rates on the weekends.*

For some, like Alison, her wage supplemented her family income:

*I came to this job purely for extra money to pay the mortgage. It’s that steady wage coming in, and every day you do something hard but we have a beautiful view.*
As hotels operate on a 24 hour basis and because of the seasonality and unpredictable demand patterns of the industry, they have to rely on cost minimisation strategies, which include paying low wages (Timo & Davidson, 2005; Dinah Payne & Frederic Dimanche, 1996). Within the hospitality industry, low rates of pay have been linked to high rates of absenteeism and frequency of general grievances (Knox, 2006). Room attendants’ low income, combined with their low employment status, are two features that are believed to decrease workers’ sense of efficacy and increase their powerlessness (Viktor Gecas, 1989) and sense of exploitation. Exploitation is illustrated by the physical demands placed on room attendants, without compensation, so their labour was subordinated to the hotels’ profit focus.

On one occasion it appears that a hotel used the room attendants’ lack of knowledge and bargaining power to keep their wages lower than they might otherwise have been. One room attendant stated her belief that in anticipation of the introduction of the Hospitality Industry (General) Award (2010) with higher rates of pay than the old award, the hotel at which she worked coerced room attendants into long term ‘certified agreements’. According to the attendant, these agreements locked-in the rate of pay for five years. Valerie, born in Australia, explained her understanding of this process prior to the new rates of pay being implemented:

> That’s a major bone of contention here and we were sort of pushing for more and they’ve just put us to a new three year deal before the Federal Government changed things, and you couldn’t get through to half the people here, don’t get locked into it, don’t vote for it, because the Federal Government was bringing one out that would have aided us, especially in housekeeping. But they wouldn’t go with it, they had a big push by one of the managers to tell these girls that if you don’t go with this well you won’t get any work, and they said this in the lunch room in front of the lot of us, we heard it, but they didn’t care about that because that was what management wanted.

This practice restricted the room attendants to a lower rate of pay than they might otherwise have achieved, resulting in a lower payroll cost for the hotel. The federal Secretary of United Voice, Louise Tarrant (2009), has noted that many establishments rushed through Australian Workplace Agreements or non-union certified agreements prior to the new Fair Work Act that led to the introduction of the current awards. By
using pressure tactics to exclude hotel staff from the benefits of the new ‘Fair Work’ legislation for a period, the hotel would have been able to pay room attendants less than the current minimum Award pay rate for a period and increase hotel profits. The hotel where Valerie worked exploited and marginalised room attendants through pressure exerted to maintain the status quo in relation to the wage rates under the threat of possibly losing their jobs. Blocking room attendants’ opportunity to challenge the actions the hotel marginalised them, underlining their unimportance (David McLellan, 1971), and hence contributing to the invisibility of room attendants. From a socialist feminist perspective, the pressure tactics reportedly used at one hotel revealed that, as a capitalist institution, the hotel had the power to set the conditions, which exploited the room attendants. This exploitation means the participating hotels were using room attendants as a resource, with less compensation than was equivalent to the efforts room attendants expended in tasking, so creating surplus value. The extent of surplus value created within the hospitality industry has resulted in calls for productivity initiatives and pay reflecting recognition of employee contributions to hotel profitability (Tarrant, 2009). Failure to recognise and adequately compensate the ‘value’ of room attendants, from their perspective, underscored their invisibility from managements’ perspective and contributed to their feeling of lack of worth.

While the hotels’ operational and social hierarchies placed room attendants at a low socio-economic status level, there was evidence of room attendants’ willingness to challenge the status quo in relation to pay. Glenda, from England, recognised the power of solidarity:

*I’m very much a socialist, but the girls these days are very independent, and you see with our age we thought if we all band together we can do anything, but these days it’s all about ‘me’. These young girls are all different, they don’t see the discrimination, they have no idea, they will learn.*

Glenda identifies generational differences that have been analysed in the literature, which emphasises increasing individualism in generations X, Y and cyber (Kaylene Williams, Robert Page, Alfred Petrosky & Edward Hernandez, 2010). Even in current feminism there are generational divides, nevertheless there are continuities in the fight for women’s rights (Kathleen Laughlin, Julie Gallagher, Dorothy Cobble, Eileen
Boris, Premilla Nadasen, Stephanie Gilmore & Leandra Zarnow, 2010). Unions like United Voice seek improvements in pay and conditions; at the same time, many argue that improvements in employment conditions for the low paid are usually won by legislative reform rather than collective bargaining (Susan Durbin & Hazel Conley, 2010). As with the room attendants in this study, this is due to the lack of voice and power amongst low paid workers who are forced to sell their labour in a competitive labour market to procure the necessities of life (Marx, 1880/1977). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) states that working class women have a low value on the labour market and “do not set sufficient value on their trouble and their time, the only things they can spend” (p. 380). Labour for the hotel industry is apparently in abundant supply and is infinitely ‘flexible’, and therefore workers have little power to change employment conditions (Timo & Davidson, 2005). Many of the room attendants interviewed felt they had no capacity to challenge the status quo regarding rewards for their labour. In comparing the physical efforts of tasking for room attendants to the minimum pay, an economic dispossession of the room attendants’ worth was identified, particularly the cultural capital of their practical ‘tacit know-how’ as a community of value (Bourdieu, 1984). In my study, this reflected the links between capitalism and patriarchy in that the gendered character of room attendant employment obscured the value of their efforts and resulted in their lack of voice.

Room attendants’ lack of voice or power to change their employment conditions, resulted in lack of recognition of their physical effort, and their low pay. This is consistent with the social culture in Australia at the time of this study. A culture that means it is usually women who do the low paid work related to women’s domestic role as gendered home makers (Alice Eagly, 1986; Wajcman, 2000), such as room attendants. Abbie, from Europe, explained the lack of understanding or appreciation by a male manager of the tasks undertaken by room attendants:

*He is a man and they do not understand cleaning or what is involved in organising the level of cleaning that we do here.*

In making such statements, Abbie reifies the distinction of the male/female divide of work, especially in relations to work roles traditionally associated with the domestic sphere, in this case, cleaning. As a social actor in *Performing*, Abbie, whether consciously or not, seemed to accept the gendered nature of work roles and
responsibilities in identifying women’s superior skills. Within the patriarchal nature of
gendered hotel work, the room attendants’ material exploitation was intertwined with
oppression based on biological differences inherent in traditional housekeeping roles.
These traditional roles are believed to enable the domination of women (Lindsey
German, 2007). Issues of women’s work have been examined such as sex segregation
in work and pay, with women still measured against the male universal standard and
hence women are the ‘gendered’ ones who are different or ‘other’ (Jeremy Reynolds,
2006). The room attendants low wages and, from their perspective, inferior conditions,
located room attendants as alienated or ‘other’ and exploited within the capitalist
system.

Related to the gendered nature of room attendant work, there was evidence of
a patriarchal gaze in that some attendants believed that hotels employed staff based
on youth and appearance rather than ability and experience. Older attendants argued
that younger women lacked thoroughness and the strong work ethic of more mature
workers. Glenda, from England, hints at this ageist discrimination in appointment of
room attendants:

You need an older woman to do the job but they keep hiring the little pretty
girls. I think they just want the staff to look good but they don’t last.
In Glenda’s view, ‘aesthetic labour’, or looking appealing to the patriarchal gaze, was
another aspect of room attendant employment. Many of the more mature room
attendants felt that the employment of younger staff was to satisfy the voyeuristic
gaze of male guests. The practice of employing younger staff based on the criterion of
desirable ‘looked-at-ness’ is a ‘sexual objectification’ of room attendants (Laura
Mulvey, 1989). While it is illegal in Australia to engage in employment discrimination
on the basis of gender, the perceptions of sexual objectification were evident in the
many comments similar to Glenda’s. The exploitation of room attendants revealed in
the low pay rates is due to a flexible (or oversupplied) labour market. This oversupply
creates invisibility for room attendants as their labour is easily replaced so they have
no ‘voice’. The room attendants’ lack of voice in relation to their pay rate was also
demonstrated by room attendants feeling they had little redress regarding the hours
of employment the hotels offered.
Hours

‘Hours’ relates to the weekly working time of the majority of participating room attendants who were not employed as full time workers, and required to work weekends, whether as full-time or casual employees. Most room attendants were without permanent tenure, being employed as ‘casual’ labour (that is, essentially on an hour by hour contract, although many were ‘regular casuals’). As casual labour the room attendants were offered work dependent on the hotel’s occupancy rates. Valerie, born in Australia, explained the disadvantages of casual employment:

As casuals we don’t get 15 an hour; we are paid at $17 an hour, but it still doesn’t make up for penalty rates on the weekend because most of our shifts are on Saturdays and Sundays. I’m houseman [even though female] I get two Saturdays and Sundays off in six weeks but some girls don’t get that. I’m only classed as casual, which amounts to a way of cutting you out of things you are entitled to.

Room attendants employed as casual labour were aware that is was a cost saving measure for the hotel. By relying on casual labour, the hotel remunerated only the hours the room attendant is actually employed. Hence, hours can be allocated on an irregular basis entirely for the hotels’ requirements in order to control labour costs, which is a common practice in Australian hotels (Timo & Davidson, 2005). High casualisation of the hotel workforce has been a response to the volatility in demand, and applies to up to 70 per cent of the workforce in hospitality establishments in Australia (Jeremy Buultjens & Grant Cairncross, 2004). Room attendants were also aware of the disadvantages for themselves, such as foregoing extra payment for weekend work (penalty rates), lack of certainty of employment, and further uncertainty in the hours that would be available each week. The ongoing reduction of penalty rates, which were originally introduced to compensate for unconventional working hours, has reduced hospitality workers’ quality of life (Barnes & Fieldes, 2000) by requiring them to work more hours for the same pay. Room attendants made many comments in relation to the uncertainty of casual employment, and felt they had no ability to change this employment feature. Casual staffing was a feature of room attendant employment at all the establishments participating in my study, and was
reported as a major concern for room attendants as they continually had a fluctuating income.

Many room attendants said that a major reason for their choice to work as room attendants was the starting times of 8 am to 9 am, which suited the women with school age children. One establishment was particularly considerate of room attendants’ needs as Louise, from the Philippines, described:

*My son has cancer so we were struggling to do our finance and I have to find a job that will suit me. Housekeeping suits me because I am working in the school hours and they understand when I say I cannot work that particular day because I have to look after my son. I told the executive housekeeper that for me sometimes I am Ok and sometimes I am not, sometimes I have to take off to go to the hospital and he goes in to the Royal Children Hospital in Brisbane.*

Two of the room attendants I spoke to had children who had been diagnosed with cancer, which made it very hard for these women to maintain consistent work availability. The hotel accommodated their needs and this was a rare example of a hotel recognising room attendants’ value.

Generally there appeared little employer compromise in regard to working hours reported by room attendants. Nevertheless, as noted in chapter four, one hotel reduced the number of hours allocated to room attendants to reduce the *tasking* injury rates. Natalie, from New Zealand, explained that while this strategy of reducing hours (through reduction in room allocation) may reduce injuries, it also challenged the economic viability from her perspective:

*Here we only get twelve rooms and it’s not enough, they cut back rooms to make a smaller workload and I come in from [northern suburb] and it takes half an hour to get here, and the petrol, and we only get six hours, and I have to pay the household bills, it’s difficult and we can’t do anything about it, you can’t win either way.*

This particular hotel had reduced room allocations (from the norm of 16 rooms per day to 12 rooms) in order to reduce repetitive strain injuries, and as a result had reduced the working hours on the hotel stage. As no change was made to the time permitted for completion of each room (30 minutes), the room attendants still had to work as
physically hard. The outcome for room attendants was fewer hours’ employment, unchanged physical stress, albeit shorter duration of physical demands, and a reduction in their income. Valerie, born in Australia, explained that there was also pressure on ‘easy’ days to finish early:

If we do have a down day and the rooms are a little bit easier with conferences, then the pressure is why haven’t you gone home? I’m like well hang on, I am rostered on for eight hours and this is my easy day, when the rosters are on heavy days you didn’t send anybody to help me and I busted myself to get the rooms done, so why can’t I take it a bit easy today?

The allocation of hours to room attendants offered little relief from the physical demands and time pressures of tasking. The number of rooms allocated each day usually meant a heavy workload for participants in my study. This demonstrates the physicality of tasking challenges on an hourly basis for room attendants’ physical capabilities. A heavy workload, such as undertaken by room attendants, has been identified as exacerbating stress and resulting in injuries and sick leave absences (Jari Lahti, Mikko Laaksonen, Eero Lahelma & Ossi Rahkonen, 2009).

Other pressures related to ‘hours’ were linked to room attendants’ perceptions of cost minimisation strategies in these hotels, such as the practice of ‘forced annual leave’. Many room attendants reported having little choice in the timing of their holidays as these were allocated depending on guest bookings. This practice affected the room attendants’ home lives as they could not fit in with other family members’ preferences. Valerie explains this practice:

We’re coming into what they call a ‘quiet period’, and the latest is we all have got to take holidays now, which means all us part timers have got letters to say you have got to take all the holidays you’ve got.

Forced holidays did not allow for easy scheduling with respect to school holidays or other family commitments, and created role stress, defined as “the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult” (Weatherly & Tansik, 1993, p. 280). Room attendants reported that they often experienced tension in work-family priorities and obligations. Holidays often offered little respite because they could not be scheduled times to meet family and other needs. Holidays have also been identified
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as of particular value to working class women due to the disruption from their daily grind (David Maume, 2006). Hence, having no choice of timing of a valued employment right of holiday time was another aspect of the oppression of room attendants. They were coerced into unsuitable times from family obligation perspectives and also denied their need for timely respite from physical exhaustion caused by tasking.

As noted above, all room attendants were required to work on weekends, a general feature of employment in the hospitality industry. Kirsten, from Wales in the UK, explained her feelings about working on the weekends as a casual employee:

*Working all weekend, when you don’t get penalty rates, you just wanna be home with your husband, but you come to this place, it makes it really hard if you want to be with your family cos most people don’t have weekdays off they only have weekends, so you’ve got to work around your partner.*

The strains of family-work commitments noted earlier are largely caused by the hotels’ requirements for weekend availability. Working on weekends has been identified as causing stress through an inextricable intertwining of home and work pressures (Sarah Tracy, 2000). These work-home pressures were particularly evident in room attendants who had young families, yet needed to work to meet financial needs. Bronwyn, from the Philippines, explained:

*Well when you work in a hotel especially if you are casual your work depends on the occupancy rate. If it’s busy they want you, and sometimes if its shift work it’s a little bit hard if you have kids.*

The combined work-home pressures that room attendants experienced is an aspect of the employment of women in general (Tanja Van der Lippe, Annet Jager & Yvonne Kops, 2006). It is a further indication room attendants were undervalued because many room attendants’ orientation as prime family carers meant their wage-labour power was diminished. Women’s constant need to balance home and work demands is reflected in feminist theory which identifies that the “capitalist labour market is itself fundamentally structured by patriarchal relations within the family” (Wajcman, 2000. p. 194). The ‘norm’ of full time work is consistent with men’s roles in the public and private spheres, and in this way the hospitality labour market has been identified as polarised. Women preferred working times that accommodated their family commitments, whereas men favour block working hours to maximise their leisure time.
activities (Timo & Davidson, 2005). The requirement to work weekends thus denied room attendants’ time with their children during the formative childhood years, and leisure time with their partner. A feature of the five hotels was denial of regular employment on the one hand, and demanding weekend availability on the other, for the hotels’ convenience and profit motives.

The concerns of hours also encompassed whether room attendants could avail themselves of workplace rights such as sick leave. At one establishment, room attendants were warned not to take sick leave without a medical certificate on days with a high checkout rate. Valerie, from Australia, described the pressure to go to work when sick:

\textit{On Sunday we had 184 out and 174 in, and everyone was told that if they were rostered on that Sunday and had a sick day off they had better have a medical certificate. Which is a pressure put on people straight away, I mean anybody could be sick but to have that pressure put on you saying you can’t be sick because we are flat out.}

The demand for documentation for sick leave was the hotel’s right, however room attendants construed the manner of these requests as intimidation and bullying threats, which would force room attendants to visit a doctor on a Sunday or face loss of pay. Attendants working for larger establishments had less pressure on them to work when sick as Danielle, from Australia, explained:

\textit{There are plenty of other girls so if you can’t make it one day there are plenty of others to take your place. It’s not like other places where there’s not a large staff and there’s only one or two of ya then they depend on you to turn up, but there’s always the casuals and there’s always plenty of backup, its good like that.}

Thus, according to one room attendant, the establishment size had an effect on issues like sick leave utilisation, with larger hotels having more staff to cover absent room attendants.

Various features of attendants’ ‘hours’, including compulsory weekend work, allocation of less hours of work and high levels of casualisation were accepted parts of the working conditions. Nevertheless, many room attendants believed they received
limited recognition of their concerns related to the hours of work available. The award covering room attendants specifies minimum part time employment of 40-48 hours per 4 weeks to 128-152 hours maximum, so the only certainty of hours is within this range. At a national level, the Australian Council of Trade Unions has expressed concern about the increasing casualisation of the Australian workforce, which has resulted in unequitable distribution of the benefits of productivity and economic growth (Knox, 2006). In Australia few hotels offer permanent part-time work, which has the advantage of security for workers, combined with the benefits of shorter hours for work-life balance (Knox, 2006). From a socialist feminist perspective, casualisation of room attendant work provides a capitalist tool to further increase the surplus value of room attendants’ work for hotels, while reducing the job security, incomes, and life-work satisfaction for room attendants.

Statistics show that casualisation is a gendered phenomenon in the hospitality industry. In the hospitality industry 47 per cent of employees are casual workers compared to the national average of 24 per cent (Barnes & Fieldes, 2000). Within the hospitality industry males occupy more permanent full time positions than women, partly due to gendered occupational divisions that lead to more men in management and more women in relatively unskilled roles (Ainsworth et al., 2010), with casual and part-time hours, such as room attendants. Offering room attendants’ regularity of working hours such as permanent part-time employment would result in improved financial stability for these employees. Regularity of employee hours, as an employment model, has benefits for hotels as well, such as increasing staff commitment, lowering staff turnover and improved service quality (Paul Edwards, 2010). Casualisation, for the participating room attendants, contributed to psychological, physiological, familial and economic stress in their employment. A related issue was that, room attendants felt insufficient time was devoted to training.

Training and Career Development

Many room attendants felt that they received little initial training in relation to the activities of tasking, and varying levels of training in relation to occupational health and
safety. At the 5 star hotels included in this study, poor task training or skill development was reported as being the norm. Helen, from Sweden, stated:

*It’s pretty heavy hard work physically, and a lot of pressure, you have to perform even though you are not really trained. At the moment we only get three days training when you start, and I would say we need more than that. We should have a full weeks training and then have somebody following you around, and then extra training over a couple of months.*

The importance of knowledge gained from experience to fill such training shortfalls reinforced the value of room attendants’ prior experience as Glenda, from England, believed:

*I think they rely on your past experience, I worked in central Queensland in motels for 17 years but they don’t pay you for that.*

The room attendant job advertisements usually required prior experience (see Table 1.3, page 14), and this accumulated skill of room attendants removes the need for the hotel to give basic training in cleaning processes so providing a cost cutting measure for the hotels. In requiring ‘experienced’ room attendants, the hotel acknowledges room attendants as skilled performers, yet places little value in these skills reflected in the low pay. Employment criteria for room attendant jobs that include ‘experience’ acknowledges that skill is required for the job, contradicting generally held perceptions that room attendants possess low skills and that their work does not involve any particular knowledge (Knox, 2006). For the hotel, avoiding training costs decreases labour costs while attracting skilled employees, and hence increases the profitability for the hotel (Terry Lam, Ada Lo & Jimmy Chan, 2002). Decreasing the hotels’ labour costs in this manner is a further example of exploitation of room attendants through appropriation of their skills and experience. The hospitality industry in Australia is recognised as offering little training and few career development opportunities (Doug Davies, Ruth Taylor & Lawson Savery, 2001). Cleaning as a skilled endeavour is improved by experience, and some effort to train room attendants to 5 star standards and required hygiene processes requires thorough training.

Most training appeared to be conducted ‘on the job’ by spending a few days assisting a fellow room attendant as Pamela, from Indonesia, revealed:
They train me five days and then after that I am on my own, it’s scary, I wanted to cry because I don’t know if I am going to finish it or not.

Pamela was intimidated by the responsibility despite working with another room attendant for a week. Such minimal training did not appear to prepare Pamela to confidently complete her tasking within the time allocation. There appeared to generally an inherent trial and error learning process rather than a formal skills development program. It should be noted that the practice described by the room attendants in this study seems to by an industry wide method of conducting training on the job, under the guidance of an experienced housekeeping staff member (Connexions, 2010). As expressed by Pamela, this training method adds stress to room attendants’ working lives due to unpreparedness for the pressures of completing allocated rooms on time. In the long term, this may be detrimental to the hotel, as it is believed that a hospitality worker’s “initial experience influences the development of employee’s commitment” (Lam et al., 2002, p. 219). The physical effort required as a result of tasking and time pressures is considerable, and skill in tasking takes time to develop into a routine to meet the demands explained under ‘tasking’ in chapter four.

Most of the more mature room attendants saw a need for training of younger staff in particular, due to their lack of experience. Younger room attendants were thought by older workers, to be not as thorough in tasking, and lacking care by not taking ownership of the rooms. Rebecca, born in Australia, describes her experience of younger staff:

I started with three other young girls and after one week one left and the next week another and then the third. It’s a tough job, the young ones find it a bit hard, but I think they don’t really want to do it either, or don’t really care they are just doing it until they move on to a better job. It does make me annoyed, the work is hard and we have huge time pressures, and after a day off you really have to check your rooms because some of the young ones are not as thorough and you find they haven’t checked behind the beds or something.

The large number of younger staff employed added to mature room attendants’ workload as they had to work slower and explain tasking to the new room attendants more thoroughly. The demands placed on more mature room attendants to complete tasking while acting as trainers demonstrates a lack of understanding of room attendants’ roles, and placed an unrecognised and uncompensated requirement on
these room attendants. The lack of appreciation demonstrates room attendant *invisibility* as training new staff was expected and norm, so this aspect of their skill and experience was unacknowledged.

The training that was offered was reported to have a strong focus in the area of occupational health and safety. Nevertheless, at two of the hotels there were some guest interaction protocols and appearance guidance offered, as Valerie, born in Australia, explained:

*We do have a lot of training in OH & S issues, manual handling training, we have grooming training, we have customer service training. I can’t fault that, they have spent a lot of time on safety issues, whether it’s ever gonna be enough I don’t know.*

This shows industry recognises room attendant work as physically demanding and potentially hazardous. These appearance requirements were an implicit component of the employment contract, yet were not recognised or remunerated due to perceptions that it is what women ‘do’ or how society expects them to ‘look’ (Wajcman, 2000). In *Performing* the inclusion of training on personal grooming and self-presentation reified the gendered nature of room attendant work, and provided opportunities for satisfaction of the voyeuristic gaze of some male guests. The sexualisation of room attendants is addressed in chapter six.

There were two reports of supervisors encouraging room attendants to be involved in training. This improved the room attendant’s employability and also provided the hotel with a multi-skilled individual. Cara, from the Philippines, provided her experience:

*The Executive Housekeeper pushed me so I work hard. She told me that she would train me because here she wants one person who can do everything, multi-skilled, so gradually she trained me to be a room attendant, and after that she trained me as a houseperson, then she put me in the laundry, so I’ve been doing three jobs, and if someone wants to go for a holiday, I can be the one to fill in.*

Multi-skilling offered job rotation for this room attendant. This training meant variety, which is believed to be motivational (Reynolds, 2006). Room attendants appeared to
view all training positively as a personal growth opportunity, and while generally there appeared to be limited training offered, one hotel did provide some training that could potentially result in career progression. Fiona, born in Australia, explained the benefits she received from a hotel training course:

*After you have been here eight or nine months you can get some free training. I've just finished a training course last week in management and that has given me a lot of confidence. I can feel it and hear it when I am speaking. I feel it was a real positive thing for me, and it was free, the hotel pays for it and its recognised Australia wide, it's a good hotel to work for.*

Fiona’s appreciation is supported by literature, which shows that an opportunity to learn new skills contributes to job satisfaction and the facilitation of aspirations in the human desire for growth (Abraham Maslow, 1943). Providing staff with personal development opportunities is also believed to lessen staff turnover rates (Davies et al., 2001). The hospitality industry in 2008 had a 48 per cent annual staff turnover, the highest of any industry in Australia (Tarrant, 2008). This high employee turnover is expensive, lowers morale of remaining staff and reduces service quality for hotel guests (Indira Kandasamy & Sreekumar Ancheri, 2008). Any training opportunity was viewed as a positive aspect of their working conditions by the participating room attendants, and all commented that they would like more training. There were other conditions that were generally considered to be an advantage of hotel employment, such as the provision of clean uniforms, free meals and hotel discounts.

**Uniforms**

All hotels included in this study provided clean uniforms for their room attendants. These uniforms were distinctive clothing that ensured consistency of appearance and distinguished the role of the women as room attendants. This section focuses on attendants’ perceptions of the uniforms’ functionality for tasking. While the daily provision of clean uniforms was appreciated, many room attendants reported that garments were designed poorly and did not allow sufficient movement for effective physical ‘tasking’. Of particular concern was the use of synthetic fibres, which meant increased body temperature. Glenda, from England, explained the difficulty of synthetic fibres to tasking fulfilment:
They gave us these uniforms about a year and a half ago and I don’t know why the hell they did, polyester is so hot, it’s nasty and cheap. We have dresses and we put in a petition and we are going to get skirts now. They will be down to the knees so discreet, but they won’t allow shorts here.

Hotel room attendants work indoors and are usually in air conditioning within the hotel rooms; however, back of house is often warmer because of constant through traffic, which stirs up the air from access areas such as loading docks and lifts, and the proximity of kitchens. The use of polyester in hospitality workers’ uniforms ensures durability and an ironing free fabric for operational efficiency (Leah Odgers, 2009), so maximising value and lowering costs of these garments for the hotel. However, the physical demands of ‘tasking’ in a synthetic uniform posed particular difficulties during the hot summers of the Gold Coast climate (Average 30 °C; BOM, 2011). Only one hotel used cotton fabric for their room attendants’ uniforms. There were many statements related to the unsuitability of the fabric and further concerns were expressed about the style of clothing provided.

The room attendants’ uniforms provided a façade in the service delivery process of Performing as a costume on the hotel stage. The design of the uniforms offered symbolic representations to guests by creating first impressions of room attendants’ position within the hotel by offering clear distinctions from other hierarchical levels and employees from other departments. The room attendants’ uniforms also established behavioural schemas of their role, which shaped how guests interpreted the service encounter. Ivy, born in Australia, expressed her perceptions about how the design of her uniform was interpreted by guests:

I don’t like these dresses either. Especially when you are in a room and there is men in there and you feel like they’re staring at you. You feel like an old fashioned parlour maid in these uniforms.

Room attendants could not generally wear trousers, which are traditionally viewed as male apparel. One hotel permitted wearing trousers, others rejected room attendants’ common requests for a more comfortable and suitable uniform, so appearance – as dictated by the hotel – appeared to win over functionality needed by the tasking processes and the climate. Further, the uniforms were considered as having negative
effects by sexualising them through design. By banning trousers and mandating ‘maids’ uniforms or dresses, some hotels sexualised room attendants through the style of their uniform. De Beauvoir (1949/1972) theorised the ways in which overt and covert restrictions are placed on behaviour through the artifice of dress. Many room attendants were unable to perform tasking efficiently, and were made vulnerable by the mandated costume, which conformed to social expectations of appropriate dress for their position. Most room attendants expressed dissatisfaction with their uniforms, so while provision of a clean uniform was considered a positive aspect of employment, it also was contentious in fabric choice and design. The reported frequency of requests for a more suitable uniform and lack of action demonstrates the concerns of room attendants were invisible to decision makers. Further (positive) aspects of room attendant employment were directly related to employment benefits of hotel employment.

**Employment Benefits**

Room attendants said that a major benefit of working in a hotel was the accommodation discounts available to staff. Clare, born in Australia, explained her appreciation of the benefits of hospitality work:

> Working in a [chain] hotel you get discounts at all the hotels around the country, and around the world, which is really good because I like to travel, and we go back to [Mediterranean nation] every year so it is really handy, I use it a lot.

The employment benefits available to all hotel employees, such as the international accommodation available to staff working for a multinational chain hotel, were treasured. The inclusion of meals and beverages were valued and perceived as some demonstration of appreciation by the hotels. Four of the five hotels provided free lunches for room attendants. Helen, from Sweden, explained her hotel’s arrangements:

> We have a canteen here, which we can have free lunch and coffee. Although I must say that after nine years the food hasn’t changed much, we tend to get
curries, and English shepherd’s pie and it would be nice to have a salad, you don’t feel like meat in the heat of the day.

Nonetheless, some room attendants supplied their own lunch, due to hotels reportedly usually only supplying heavy meat meals like casseroles, which were not appealing after performing hard physical tasking in hot polyester uniforms and under intense time pressures. Other benefits were offered to room attendants in some hotels as motivation tools. These included movie tickets, vouchers for $50, and responsibility for a higher floor. Some of these were not considered particularly motivating, as reported by Daja, with four years’ experience:

People who work hard get lolly vouchers, but I don’t think they really get a morale boost, they just give you a couple of chocolates and you do need recognition, without us this place wouldn’t function.

Since room attendants said that most incentives were of little value, the conclusion is that the trivial nature of many incentives further underlined the room attendants’ lack of importance, reflected in the minimal gratitude they expressed. The room attendants’ invisibility had a gender dimension here as meaningful incentives are believed to be less common in female dominated work (Reynolds, 2006). While appreciation was expressed by all room attendants for some of their working conditions, most viewed the minor incentives described above as providing little recognition of their vital contribution to the hotel’s operation. These types of incentives have been criticised as poor practice with rewards only given to ‘stars’, and warnings and criticism to low performers, with the middle missing out. Further, problems inherent in incentives are biased assessments by managers, due to their lack of time to monitor and evaluate quality service (Fred Luthans & Robert Waldersee, 1992).

In sum, room attendants had concerns about their working conditions related to application of the low minimum legal rates of pay, required weekend work, and uncertainty due to casual employment. These conditions generally reflected a minimal appreciation of the efforts and difficulties of tasking, and reinforced organisation and social hierarchies. The room attendants’ inability to improve the tangible conditions through their lack of ‘voice’ to influence management decisions, perpetuated
disadvantages and difficulties in the work environment. The tangible working conditions of low pay, uncertain hours, unsuitable uniforms the hotels made room attendants feel like “empty vessels, stripped of thought and made to act like machines” (Carol Wolkowitz & Chris Warhurst, 2010, p. 225). It is believed that most hospitality workers are afraid to challenge their working conditions due to their being easily replaced (Savage, 2010). In 2008 a leading 5 star hotel on the Gold Coast of Australia threatened to discipline staff members who talked to the media, unions or government officials about the establishment’s staff shortages and practices. Such bans on communication included demands staff sign a ‘global media policy’ requiring all industrial matters be referred to the human resources manager (Tarrant, 2008). This practice, by one leading Gold Coast hotel, provided little hope for improving the negligible ‘voice’ of room attendants at this establishment, and contributed to the invisibility of room attendants by failing to provide an avenue for dissent or challenge to operating praxis. The remainder of this chapter presents the intangible aspects of Performing, namely social interactions with other players, and room attendants reported these dimensions as mainly positive, offering affective benefits such as inclusivity and collegiality.

Social Influences

The social context of their jobs offered room attendants considerable intrinsic rewards, which they valued highly. These intrinsic rewards incorporated the more intangible conditions incorporated the social influences such as the hotel managements’ efforts to create a culture of inclusivity within the housekeeping department. Opportunities for social interaction with other room attendants leading to the development of friendships with these peers was highly valued, despite some experiences of racial discrimination. Nearly all room attendants expressed the appeal of mainly working autonomously in the hotel rooms. The room attendants’ experiences were further impacted by their family’s perception of their work. The first condition I will consider is the hotels’ efforts to provide social occasions for staff, to foster inclusivity within the housekeeping department.
Hotel Inclusivity

The provision of opportunities for social celebration was an important aspect of their employment for many room attendants. Fiona, with five years’ experience, shares her delight in these activities:

\[\text{In our department we are a little bit spoilt too, we share lollies and we have celebrations like birthdays, Halloween or anything like that to make a social atmosphere for us. We have a section downstairs where we can actually decorate as it’s closed off to other staff, and we can be a bit nutty in the mornings before we start. We can have lunch together and we get free food here and it’s all pretty good down there, we’ve got a big cafeteria, and we time our break so we can have lunch together and chat.}\]

The hotels’ allowing some time for social interaction showed some level of recognition and how these were considered positive aspects of room attendants’ employment experiences. Social activities have long been identified as efforts to boost workplace morale, particularly the inclusion of personal aspects, such as acknowledging birthdays or offering special food (Cornell University, 1974). Gwen, with three years’ experience, expressed her appreciation of her hotel’s efforts to recognise the work of her and her colleagues:

\[\text{We have staff meetings every three months, they pay us to go to that meeting, and they supply us with a lot of goodies, and every three months you get a nominee [for best performing room attendant] and some of us have had movie tickets, and we have a draw where one wins a fifty dollar voucher.}\]

Some establishments made occasional special efforts to acknowledge room attendants and provide social opportunities as Fiona, with five years’ experience, related:

\[\text{We have gone up to the penthouse and the big bosses come and we were praised for our work and there was lucky door prizes and safety and security was there and you know we shared food and a nice cup of tea, coffee, cordial, and it was just a social half hour to an hour. We did a quick clean up and went off back to work. We just had a nice time.}\]

The efforts by the hotel to provide a social platform within the workplace show some effort to enhance the ‘psychological contract’ between the hotel and room attendants in relation to organisational life (Davila Gomez, Ana Maria, Crowther, David.Aldershot.
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

The effect of these activities for room attendants were an enrichment of the room attendants’ working experience. Such events were not common however the hotel’s efforts at social inclusivity were greatly enhanced by the collegiality developed amongst room attendants as peers.

Collegiality

Collegiality with other staff and particularly with other housekeeping department staff was an important aspect of room attendants’ working lives, and was often provided as a particularly important reason for staying in the job. A sense of belonging was fostered by familiarity and congenial relations with other staff as Maureen, with one year’s experience, explained:

_They are a really good group of people. I love coming to work every day, cos I know like I’m gonna have a good time like even when I’m working. We all work together as a team and most of the time we get on really well._

The collegiality developed amongst the room attendants was viewed as a positive in their employment. The camaraderie and commonality of purpose cemented social bonds between staff and established a reciprocal support system. Staff felt the human warmth inherent in these relationships, as Jamie, with nine years’ experience, described:

_Everybody uses this canteen so everybody knows everybody. There are so many nice people here, and we are all here for the same reason so there is a common thread and that makes up for everything._

As room attendants mainly worked alone in the hotel rooms, there was little opportunity for lengthy interactions with other room attendants during tasking. Hence, socialising during meal breaks was important to many room attendants. These workplace friendships sometimes developed into social relationships outside the hotel involving outings and socialising in each other’s homes. Common bonds were fostered by similar age related interests, as Danielle, with four years’ experience, narrated:

_I have my little group of friends, and we have our social parties and we have outings, so I keep a distance from the younger ones. Because I am up the top with a lot of the older women we talk about work a lot, and the younger girls..._
talk about other things, but there’s quite a few older women, some of them have been here for twenty years, and sometimes we whinge about things, must be an age thing [laughs].

Exchanging and sharing experiences developed room attendants as a community of knowledge. This knowledge was partly acquired through peer socialisation opportunities, which facilitated information exchange related to their work experiences and expertise. This participation enabled room attendants to learn about the organisation’s informal rules and share narratives about the workplace. This sharing revealed the co-creation of meaning through social interaction (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Collegiality occurred between room attendants of similar ages who shared common bonds because “the need to affiliate, to feel part of a group is universal” (Alexander Hamilton Institute, 1988, p. 1). The comradeship developed at work reduces absenteeism, and improves morale and motivation, which have been identified as generating cost savings and improving the establishment’s cultural spirit (Alexander Hamilton Institute, 1988). Generally the importance of being known and knowing others provided a sense of belonging for the room attendants. The collegiality also enabled a reciprocal relationship with other staff to support each other with the tasking workload.

Conversely, social relationships at work were sometimes excluding, based on various factors, which inhibited collegiality. Danielle explained her experience of exclusion within one hotel as based on tenure in the job:

There’s a lot of ‘who you know’ around here and there are certain people who have been here for that long that if they don’t like somebody then that person will be pretty much on the outer from the word go.

In-groups can develop, leading to difficulties in the workplace. Personal friendships can lead to a falling-out with colleagues. Maureen, born in Australia, related her experiences and how this changed her interactions with other staff.

I have learnt a couple of lessons, like I think it’s best to keep friends and work kinda separate, there was this one girl I got close with and then it got too involved and it’s all exploded now and we are not even friends which I feel really awful about. So now I be very careful. Just friends at work but outside I don’t really see anyone. Like we have bowling nights and get to see everyone out of
work occasionally which is really good, but if they are friends you have to see them every day both inside work and out of work.

This experience revealed limitations on the depth of some friendships experienced at the hotels. Within *Performing* there were boundaries to action and inclusion evidenced by presence or participation on and off the hotel stage.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination is an active construction of beliefs and perceptions that differentiate one person from another in a negative manner, and here relates to discriminatory judgements from peers. Catherine, with 13 years’ experience, described her experiences of discriminatory interactions with some work colleagues:

*Some people are racist, because I am Indonesian I do my job like 150 per cent, and some people here* [indicates another room attendant of Chinese extraction] *don’t do a very good job and yet treat you like dirt because of your nationality. Because I am Indonesian they treat me like they are better, but most are really nice, the Australian girls are nice.*

Very few attendants reported experiences of racial discrimination from their peers. It was more a question of room attendants believing that cultural differences led to communication difficulties and sometimes to interpersonal conflict, thus affecting behavioural dynamics and in-group cohesion. Nicole, with five years’ experience, related her experience:

*Sometimes they can be a little clique-y and for some it’s difficult to penetrate the barriers of those little cliques. They’ve either been here a long time or come from the same countries, same nationality. For me I am the only black person, I’ve actually been inside the [African nation] industry and I know you can do worse.*

The racially-predicated social disconnects identified by Catherine and Nicole result in less organisational effectiveness, as racial ostracism hampers social integration and work satisfaction for the affected employees. Racial classification is noted in mainstream discourse as remnants of bias or domination based in traditional social power that excludes or marginalises difference (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1995b). Crenshaw (1995b) identifies ‘intersectionality’ as framing multiple subordinations and
marginalisation in interactions related to race and gender. As these room attendants reported, their situation of being ‘different’ was race related, the differences involved perceptions of inequality resulting in an ‘us’ and ‘them’ perspective (Althusser, 1971). The racist exclusionary behaviour, such as the room attendants experienced on the hotel stage, is believed to be predicated on the need for ‘private psychological gain’ to feel superior (Goffman, 1959). While reports of peer-to-peer racial discrimination were rare in this study, no room attendant reported openly challenging the experiences mentioned by Nicole or Catherine. Experiences of discrimination from work colleagues tempered the positive aspects of hotel inclusivity and collegiality and these positive aspects were further diminished by the often stated perceptions of the monotony of the tasking.

Monotony

To recall the central organising concept of this thesis, Performing was presented in chapter four as a basic social process (BSP), with a causal process of tasking, involving servicing up to eighteen hotel rooms each day. All tasking involved in room attendants repeat physical movements including bending, twisting, lifting, pulling, pushing, and carrying with forceful hand movements. This repetition of tasking, by lacking variety, resulted in a tedious and wearisome routine. Alison, with four years’ experience, explained the outcome of the monotony of room attendant tasks:

*The worst is that by lunchtime it can drag and nothing changes, every day is the same. I’ve seen girls actually fallen apart you know, physically and mentally, they just can’t do it.*

Most room attendants stated that the repetitive nature of the manual tasking was sometimes insufficient to engage their full cognitive capacities. Room attendants reported a number of strategies they used to deal with the monotony of the repetition of tasking up to 18 times a day. These include distraction, focusing on the task and reflective behaviour. Glenda, with three years’ experience, stated her two coping strategies of distraction:

*It’s monotony on a grand scale, you are on your own. Sometimes I turn the radio on, but I just get stuck into it, and every room has a view and that’s nice.*
Miranda, with ten years’ experience, similarly used public media available in the hotel rooms to distract her from the monotony of tasking:

\[\text{When I am in vacant rooms I put the music on and that helps occupy my mind, it is monotonous but it does not bother me, I plod along, it’s how you perceive it, you are constantly thinking about things in your life.}\]

For some, the tedium of tasking and its inherent monotony was not always negative. Bonnie, with 11 years’ experience, perceived monotony as an advantage in her working life:

\[\text{That’s another thing why I took this job because I didn’t have to think. I could come here and I could close the door at home. I don’t want a job that’s high pressure, where I have to think too much, I come here and I’m a robot.}\]

Due to the physical labour and time pressures related to tasking completion, there was a degree of cognitive engagement required to perform satisfactorily, particularly related to the constant need to reschedule their room priority. Despite this, in the main, room attendants perceived that *Performing* tasking incorporated many perfunctory activities, not involving high cognitive engagement. To counter this, some room attendants established routines to ensure all tasking was completed – paying attention to minor details – within a tight time frames, ensuring efficient use of time and energy. On the other hand, adopting unchanging procedures, such as routines, diminishes creative thinking and does not always fit diverse situations such as a particularly messy room (Cornelia Niessen & Judith Volmer, 2010). In the midst of the pressures of tasking room attendants expressed unanimous appreciation of the autonomy of working alone in the hotel room context.

**Autonomy**

Autonomy is defined as “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures used” (Richard Hackman & Greg Oldham, 1975. p. 162). For room attendants, autonomy, related to the personal freedom to act independently and to work on their own. The autonomous situation of working alone was highly valued, and without exception, mentioned as a positive aspect of their work. Room
attendants experienced autonomy in tasking and/or routines, as well as the ability to usually work without close supervision. Caitlin, with four years’ experience, expressed her enjoyment of her autonomy:

_No one annoys me, I work by myself and I like that._

Feeling independent from direct supervision was important to the room attendants, and they enjoyed additional responsibilities such as checking their own work as Catherine, with 13 years’ experience, clarified:

_I like the rooms because you are on your own and there is no boss watching you, and I check my own rooms but with that comes a big responsibility._

Coupled with the pressures of time and tasking, however, there was, as Daja, with four years’ experience, identified, a down-side to having autonomy:

_I’ve got my own rooms, I have my worksheet to work off and I just go and do it on my own. There’s no one breathing down my neck and I’m not disturbed, but sometimes it is bad because it puts a bit more pressure on you._

Autonomy consisted of enjoyment in working alone and even avoiding other people as Natalie, with three years’ experience:

_I like being on my own, and sometimes I just cannot face people, I can get up there and be on my own._

Autonomy was thus valued because it gave relief from social pressures and offered solitude for attendants’ performance. Autonomy was an important aspect of the experience of room attendants, comprising ‘scheduling’ autonomy (deciding which rooms to clean and when) and ‘methods’ autonomy (utilisation of cleaning procedures based on their experience). Autonomy is strongly correlated with positive work attitudes (Niessen & Volmer, 2010), and this was reflected in the room attendants’ views.

Only one of the five hotels participating in my research had room attendants working in pairs, and this was implemented occasionally when the hotel had a very high occupancy. Attendants who had worked in pairs were often critical of this staffing method. Daja explained the inequities of paired work:

_If you are working in pairs and people are not pulling their weight then that’s difficult, that can drag you down, but they don’t do that here at all, it’s fair._
Some hotels have pairs and I couldn’t do that, because you have your own system.

Autonomy was expressed in terms of ‘ownership’ of rooms, lack of direct supervision, and the opportunity to work without interruption. Other studies of room attendants indicate that housekeeping workplaces often offer independent and autonomous work that requires initiative (Powell & Watson, 2006) and autonomy with respect to quality control (Randy Hodson, 2001). Self-efficacy has been found to be strongly linked to responsibility and autonomy (Hsu, 1995) and thus autonomy can lead to a greater sense of agency or opportunity for choice regarding work procedures and routines in cleaning a room. In Performing, the solo performance was the preferred action of room attendants as the unseen nature of working alone in a hotel room hid the room attendants’ occupation from general view and largely distanced them from constant supervisory scrutiny. In preferring to work alone room attendants contributed to their own invisibility. Further influences on the room attendants’ reasons for engaging (or disengaging) in this employment related to the level of support they received from their family members.

Family Influences

Some room attendants had supportive families, whilst others had family members who derided their occupation and adopted attitudes of superiority. It was believed by the room attendants that the attitudes of superiority experienced from some family members were based at times on feeling of shame related to social perceptions of room attendants’ low occupational status. This resulted in room attendants’ withholding disclosure of their occupation. Elaine, with five years’ experience, assessed a family member’s attitude to her work:

My parents are all right, they wish I had a better job, but my sister makes me feel crap about it, she thinks she is better she always makes me feel I should be studying or should have a better job, a proper career rather than clean up after people. She’s an interior designer so thinks she is better and is a snob, she’s not qualified but thinks she is superior.
Helen, with seven years’ experience, also identified family member resistance to her occupation:

_They don’t want me cleaning at all because of the social stigma of it. I think my daughter is ashamed of me, she says ‘um you can do better than that and it’s hard work’. She is right, especially with her going to university and that._

Occupational shame sometimes resulted in attendants concealing their occupation from family members as Catherine, with 13 years’ experience, indicated:

_They don’t know about it. My husband does, but my family in Indonesia, I can’t tell them because I have a degree in economics, but I can’t use it here. They would be very ashamed if they knew, they just think I work in an office somewhere._

The occupational shame of being a room attendant was compounded by the physicality of this employment as Ivy, with four years’ experience, further elaborated:

_My husband said it’s a job, but that I should look for something else. My daughter she’s nineteen and she came and worked with me for a week, hoping she would get a job and she said ‘Mum I don’t know how you do this’ and I said make sure you don’t do it._

Avoiding disclosure was thus used as a strategy with some family members as well as with the general public. The aim was to nullify anticipated negative reactions and avoid being stereotyped as socially inferior. Parents and siblings were reference groups and constituted some component of social capital as sources of support and also as instigators of stress if they disapproved (Colleen Heflin & Mary Pattillo, 2004).

_Initial resentment and feelings of shame were replaced by family member acceptance if the work was seen to be suitable and result in less stress for both the attendant and her family. Glenda, with three years’ experience, explained her husband’s changed opinion:_

_Well, I’ve always been an executive secretary so he thinks it is a bit of a come down, but now that he sees how much I can do at home, and I don’t bring home any problems, he’s had a total change of view._

The work was at times justified as ‘honest’ work by attendants, despite its low status. Janice, while not holding a job commensurate with her educational achievements,
justified her work by placing it above other ‘gendered’ occupations, and sought validation for her honest toil:

I don’t think they are particularly happy, but it’s a job, it pays the bills. I’m not stripping or a working girl, so it’s a silly job, but an honest job.

The hard physical work undertaken by room attendants was made more difficult by uncompromising social attitudes towards cleaning as a demeaning occupation. Feeling shamed means people seek ways of bolstering their self-esteem. This coping strategy is designed to enhance self-worth and self-efficacy (Viktor Gecas & Monica Seff, 1990) in the context of a low-paid, low status occupation. Gwen, with 15 years’ experience, explained how the hard tasking drained her energies as she tries to fulfil the role of wife as soon as she arrived home:

I think he likes me to work, but I work very hard so sometimes I don’t have the energy when I get home, but he is very good. I like to be independent and have my own money, and I don’t have to ask, but first thing when I get home is to have a shower and make myself presentable.

While she had performed a full day’s work in her role as a room attendant, Gwen adopted a different role as wife, with the shower acting as a break between her roles.

The competing time claims between paid work and the household identified by room attendants caused role stress, and this stress is believed to be shaped by gendered societal cultures and family arrangements (Van der Lippe et al., 2006). In Performing the final situational feature presented was the opinions and level of support room attendants felt they received from their families. Family members’ opinions of their work were diverse. While appreciation of the hard nature of their work was expressed by family members, there were commentaries relating to the social ‘stigma’ of being employed as cleaners.

Working Conditions and Social Influences: Concluding Reflections

This chapter has presented Performing from the participating room attendants’ perspective of their working conditions and their view of social situational features. Working conditions in Performing showed room attendants’ belief that they were
underpaid for their physical effort, and that in this lack of value and compensation they were exploited. Further concerns were expressed in dissatisfaction with the hours of employment available each week. These concerns largely related to their experiences of being employed as casual workers, which diminished their financial return and provided uncertainty in employment. These working conditions were expressed as frustrations as the room attendants felt they had little voice in seeking redress or improvement. Minimal provision of tasking training and very few professional development opportunities were reported as being available to room attendants. The majority of training provided was focussed on occupational health and safety issues. Further concerns were expressed about the room attendants’ uniforms, which were deemed to be largely unsuitable in design and fabric choice for the requirements of the tasking. The uniforms also served to reify the low socio-economic status and domestic sphere realm of room attendants’ labour. All of these concerns contributed to the formation of the basic social structural process (BSSP) of working conditions. These working conditions of Performing demonstrated room attendants’ lack of voice or partial invisibility through not having their concerns acknowledged or addressed.

The latter part of this chapter identified situational features of the hotel stage. The basic social psychological process (BSPP) of social influences of Performing included situational features involving other players – colleagues, supervisors, and managers. Efforts by the supervisors to foster inclusivity within the housekeeping department and the much appreciated collegiality experienced with other room attendants provided a positive aspect to the experiences. Collegiality was highly valued, and firm friendships were established amongst room attendants. This was not a universal concept as there were also experiences of discrimination founded on racist beliefs, providing evidence of discrimination of room attendants by room attendants. Despite the monotony of many of the tasks these women performed daily, one of the most valued features of room attendants’ employment experiences was autonomy of their performance. This autonomy was offered by the general context of working in the privacy of the hotel rooms, and having discretion in the routine and methods they applied.
The exploitation experienced by room attendants through their working conditions, particularly the low pay, was an aspect of Performing resulting from the hierarchical operational and social context of the hotel. Hierarchy is the focus of the next chapter, which attempts to explain how these women were subjected to inequality, oppression and harassment through operational and social hierarchies, and how these affect their performance.
Chapter Six

Working as a Room Attendant within Hotel and Social Hierarchies

We have a manager, and we have an assistant, and we have a roster person, and we have an ordering person on the phone all the time, and the executive manager is responsible for everything, the laundry, concierge, public cleaning, so there are that many chiefs, we have a lot of people loitering downstairs, it’s huge.

(Danielle, Gold Coast Hotel Room Attendant, 2010).

You are looked down upon by the guests.

(Daja, Gold Coast Hotel Room Attendant, 2010).

Chapter six presents two central features of room attendants’ employment experiences: their interactions with the various levels of management under which they work, and interactions with guests. The basic social process of Performing demonstrates how these interactions are interlinked concepts of ‘hierarchy’, which place room attendants at the lower level during their time on the hotel stage. Hotels, as commercial businesses, have an organisational hierarchy of various levels of management, with room attendants situated in the lower levels. The room attendants’ status in the organisational hierarchy was mirrored in interactions with guests. In these interactions, room attendants were placed as subservient to guests, which reinforced room attendants’ inferior socio-economic status. Positioned at the lower levels of both organisational and social hierarchies, the room attendants’ experiences in both spheres together underpinned their invisibility, as their low position rendered them indiscernible, as part of the scenery and of little value.

Performing reveals that room attendants were at a low level within both the organisation and social hierarchies, and were subjected to unequal power
relationships in both contexts. Consistent with my epistemology, my research offers a view of hierarchy from below, that is, room attendants’ perspectives. These perspectives, as noted by Graham Allison (1971), demonstrate that “where you sit affects what you see”. To that end, Performing offers room attendants’ experiences as a consequence of the organisational and social hierarchies ‘staged’ in 5 star hotel contexts. These hierarchies served to reinforce the invisibility of room attendants as they were ‘othered’ by guests failing to acknowledge them as people and co-performers due to their low social position on the public stage of the hotel operations. The staff interactions related to the hotel’s organisational hierarchy further demonstrated failure to acknowledge the importance of room attendants’ work to hotel operations through practices such as front office demands for room cleaning regardless of whether the rooms had actually been vacated.

Initially, I present room attendants’ experiences of employment within the hierarchical organisational structure of the hotel. These experiences reveal attendants’ occupational invisibility through their perceptions that their value was less than employees from other departments. Their feelings of inferiority were further perceived to be reinforced by being ignored or harassed by staff from other departments and managements’ actions. The hierarchical layers above the housekeeping department contributed to room attendants believing they were isolated, unrecognised and having no input into operational decisions due to their invisibility forming barriers to upward communication. Room attendants’ interactions with supervisors, executive housekeepers and particularly higher management were often negative or non-existent providing little positive feedback in many instances. The limited interactions with higher hierarchal positions further reinforced the invisibility of room attendants as unimportant.

Following this, I illustrate room attendants’ experiences of the social hierarchy with respect to interactions with guests. Such interactions occurred when room attendants greeted guests on entering the rooms and performed emotional labour alongside their tasking. Emotional labour caused an estrangement between the true room attendant self and the outer visible act, as in any service related role. In performing emotional labour room attendants were required to maintain a happy
countenance during guest interactions as per their scripted roles, regardless of their own feelings or emotions. The room attendants’ experiences reflected the broader hierarchical social structure of contemporary Australian society, and service workplaces in particular, where inherent patriarchal expectations are for those of lower socio-economic standing to adopt subservient actions. In recounting their experiences, the room attendants expressed perceptions of humiliation, oppression and harassment as a result of guests’ stereotyping and prejudices. These experiences led to the attendants’ saying they felt they were of little worth.

In overview, Performing purports that the basic role of room attendant behaviour is an act, and the hotels’ hierarchical organisational workplace sets the stage. As a contextual basic social structural process (BSSP) the levels of hotel hierarchy, from the room attendants’ perspectives, were delineated by manifestations of power, inequality and oppression related to their role designation. Guest interactions frame a contingent code of Performing, by forming a basic social psychological process (BSPP). These interactions comprised room attendants’ experiences of ostracism and frequently experienced sexual harassment within the hotel. The presentation of the room attendants’ experiences of the organisational and social hierarchies is shown in Figure 6.1.
**Hotel Hierarchy**

The employment context of *Performing* is the 5 star hotel, which is a commercial organisation within capitalism. To achieve profit goals, the hotels are functionally organised in a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities, with ascending levels of power. The term, ‘hierarchy’, derives from the Greek *hierarchia* and is a system of status or authority with power rankings of one above the other (Bruce Moore, 2004). The hierarchical structure fills a significant human need by delivering practical order to functional processes, such as operating a hotel (Harold Leavitt, 2003). Hotel hierarchies are complex, with layers within each department contributing to the functioning of the whole establishment through ‘department focused systems’ (Alex Bennet, 2006). For room attendants in this study, the housekeeping department complexity was reflected in varying interactions with staff from other departments, the housekeeping supervisors, the executive housekeeper and higher management positions. These interactions and relationships demonstrated how room attendants were required to act as subordinates. In this role they were looked down on and in this way their oppression was acted out. A hotel housekeeping department hierarchical structure is depicted in Table 6.1 overleaf. This generic hotel housekeeping department structure, adapted from Baker and Huyton (2001), was very similar to the organisational hierarchy of the Gold Coast hotels that participated in my research.
Room attendants’ placement within the housekeeping department and at the lower level formed the basis of interactions with other hotel staff. Whilst the performance of room attendants’ roles are of paramount importance to hotel operations and success, the room attendants felt they were often considered a ‘small part’ – even being perceived as invisible players on the hotel stage. Valerie, with 25 years’ experience, reflected on room attendants’ position within the foundations of hotel operations:

*There’s always the hotel hierarchy to contend with. In a large hotel like this the pressure is put back on the bottom of the chain, and the bottom of the chain is room attendants.*

The focus of hotel management on profit generation, rather than the interests of room attendants, was demonstrated by the observation of Maureen, who had one year’s experience:

*I guess with every big company there’s a hierarchy but if things don’t get done it comes down to us at the bottom. It comes down to profit at the end of the day and I guess the company is more focused on where they make their money, like staff cuts, budget cuts, it can be very challenging sometimes.*

Elisabeth, with five years’ experience, also commented on management’s perceptions of her and her co-workers:
We are at the bottom of the staff and no one thinks we have any mental capacity for anything, so no one asks us anything, we are cleaners, we are treated as the lesser workers.

Some staff from other departments and staff who are placed at slightly higher positions in the hotel hierarchy were also considered condescending, as Jamie, with nine years’ experience, explained:

Some staff from other departments are a bit standoffish, you can see in their eyes that they won’t talk to me because I am in housekeeping, and it’s not as important as their job.

Such reflections generated feelings of inequality and humiliation amongst room attendants. In particular, Jamie’s views exposed her perception that interactions with staff from other departments were based on a higher status of these departments within the hotel. The room attendants’ allocation of status due to department function has been identified within organisations as department status representations (Grove et al., 1992). For room attendants their tasking was perceived as low skilled and hence their position low status. It has been observed that the status assigned within a hierarchical management structure compels specific use of skills and provides a method to control for efficacy through power invested in high status (Paul Thompson & Steve Vincent, 2010). For the room attendants, their low status position within housekeeping and in relation to other departments made them feel unimportant, humiliated and powerless.

Room attendants believed they were viewed as the lowest workers by most management and many staff from other departments, and keenly felt the effects of such distancing as aloofness and reserve from others. The feelings expressed by Catherine, with 13 years’ experience as a room attendant, were emblematic of others’ views:

I feel some of the other departments look down on housekeeping, and it’s really very annoying because I believe that housekeeping is the heart of the hotel.

A further example of isolation from other staff was expressed by Daja, who had four years’ experience working as a room attendant:
Well a lot of staff from other departments don’t talk to you. I don’t mind because everybody has to do a job. If I wasn’t doing that job then nobody would clean it, but some people do not say anything to you, they just ignore you.

In being ignored by staff, room attendants’ position at the lowest hierarchical level was emphasised. This lower position placement generated feelings they were rejected as not having as much worth as other employees. The felt rejection resulted in feeling isolated by not having the opportunity to engage with other hotel staff equally on a social level. The hotel hierarchical levels elevated the status of those immediately above (Xavier Dreze & Joseph Nunes, 2009) and, also status between the hotel departments. The status levels within hotel hierarchies have noted that room attendants are often spurned by other employees (Wood, 1992). The invisibility room attendants felt as they identified as being less important workers in the hotel hierarchy, reflected broader societal views of the worth of low-paid service workers. In this lack of recognition room attendants were treated as the ‘other’, and this was reflected in their low status gendered employment. This inherent gendering has been identified as a measure of socio-subordination (de Beauvoir, 1949/1972). Department status meant that room attendants felt they were less important than staff from other departments and this was most keenly felt during interactions with the front office staff.

The hotels’ hierarchical stratification fostered room attendants’ perceptions that front office held a special or higher position in the hotel’s hierarchical structure. The room attendants participating in my research reported that their experiences with front office staff often involved condescension, and even harassment associated with requests to comply with their demands for room service completion. These demands were a cause of daily tension and stress for room attendants, and as identified under tasking in chapter four, required changes to their room cleaning schedules and increased the time pressures on them. Daja, with four years’ experience, expounded a commonly held view of interactions with staff from front office:

Without us this place wouldn’t function, like reception are always demanding rooms and you think well come up and help us get them ready! They don’t seem
to get the concept that if people arrive early and their room is not ready, give them a drink or food voucher, and we will do our best. Just say I’m really sorry, you arrived early and your room is not ready yet, but here is a voucher in the meantime. But they come up and say we want that room and that room and that room, and they are all over the hallway, that’s the worst part.

Room attendants’ accounts of interactions with front office staff concerning room availability showed that different hotel departments had conflicting priorities. Many of the staff from the hotel front office were perceived to lack understanding of the physical difficulties of room attendants’ tasking or the time pressures these tasks imposed. This lack of understanding was often experienced as condescending behaviour from front office staff. They believed these attitudes were based on commonly held perceptions of the function and role of room attendants as cleaners and at a lower hierarchal level. Bianca, with two years’ experience, recounted her experiences of interaction with front office staff:

*You get the ones that think they’re just awesome and you’re just a stupid old room attendant.*

A perceived superior and authoritarian approach by front office staff was related by room attendants as being associated with the role of front office job role having more authority than the room attendants. The perceptions that the front office staff have higher value than room attendants within the hotel demonstrates the front office departments’ locus of power as being higher within the hotel hierarchy (Betsy Stevens & Jim Hisle, 1996). The higher placing of front office staff was believed by room attendants to be related to perceptions of reception staff as ‘front line employees’ in regard to guest contact time. However, front office staff may have less contact with guests than room attendants, since “a typical customer spends less than 10 minutes interacting with a reception clerk at a hotel”, including check-in and check-out interactions (Anat Rafaeli, 1993, p. 208). The room attendants reported often spending far longer than 10 minutes interacting with guests over the duration of their stay as most guests stayed several days, and room attendants often had daily contact with them.
Both front office and housekeeping departments are interdependent due to the nature of hotels’ services, and both are complex work environments, so workers suffer time pressures and resultant stress due to operational focus and priorities of each department (Lokman Mia & Anoop Patiar, 2002; Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). The higher importance of front office is reported in literature, which identifies management’s traditional focus on income generating departments, rather than housekeeping (David Crouch, 2005). Room attendants’ experiences of stress generated by inter-department interactions were related to the dominating behaviour, reinforced by front office staff’s superiority in the hotel hierarchy. The hierarchy, which places room attendants as of lesser worth than front office staff contributed to room attendants’ oppression. Lack of recognition of this oppression added to room attendants’ *invisibility*.

Room attendants sometimes reported receiving different (that is, lesser) recognition from management, underlining their lower value and their inferiority compared to other employees. For example, Bianca, with two years’ experience, recounted:

*There’s a definite hierarchy. Christmas time is a good example of that because all the food and beverage were given a bottle of [expensive champagne], the room attendants got a bottle of the crap champagne they use in banquets, and it’s just like a home brand product. A [low priced carbonated brand] would have been nicer.*

This example illustrated inequitable rewards for different employees’ contributions, reinforcing the lesser value management placed on room attendants vis-a-vis other hotel workers, and ‘othering’ them. Bianca’s example echoes a common iteration by room attendants that their work received little respect from hotel management. This lack of due respect for those working in the housekeeping department has been noted in other studies, which have observed that housekeeping “enjoys little status in the eyes of management and other employees” (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997, p. 102). Room attendants expressed a common experience of having their work viewed as unimportant and their value within the hotel being unacknowledged. In this way room attendants were denied respect, and this evidenced their oppression and *invisibility*. 
The patriarchal management perspective of public and private/domestic sphere organisation of work clearly positioned room attendants’ work in the private/domestic sphere. These separations of work between public and private sphere orientations served to distinguish room attendants from other hotel employees based on their task function of domestic duties. Room attendants’ tasking functions were identified as cleaning, that is ‘women’s work’, and of less importance than work performed by other hotel employees. In this way their work defines and determines the value of room attendants through their functional utility (Patrick Primaeaux & John Beckley, 1999). The physical effort expended to perform the tasking of a hotel room has already been identified, and the importance to the economic functioning of a hotel established in my thesis introduction. Despite these key contributions, participants perceived that their contributions were undervalued and that other employees looked down on them.

These perceptions are founded on the placement of room attendants at the lower level of the hotel hierarchy and hence of low status, not worthy of attention and hence invisible. The greater defining aspect of the organisational consequences of room attendants’ subordinate status was the maintenance of hegemonic hierarchical domination. Their position at the lowest level of the hotel hierarchy, along with their role performances, resulted in room attendants feeling that they were silenced by lack of voice to counter their low hierarchical standing, which required them to be submissive to others. This silencing was demonstrated in Performing by room attendants’ roles, which created barriers to upward communication between themselves and various levels of management. The barrier to communication marginalised room attendants as a community of value, reinforced their invisibility in a role others considered unimportant. So room attendants lacked opportunity to voice their own value and contribute to operational efficiencies.

Upward Communication
The room attendants considered that the hierarchical structure of hotels created communication barriers to any upward flow of information. Such a perceived lack of voice was observed by Helen, with seven years’ experience as a hotel room attendant:

*If we have a get together with the whole hotel, whatever it takes we don’t seem to have any input. If you say something to someone higher up it doesn’t seem to have any impact, they don’t really listen. We are the lowest rung here they just don’t seem to think we are important, even though the rooms ‘are’ the hotel.*

Maureen, with one year’s experience, expounded on the nature of one way communication flows from hotel management:

*Management always wants things done a certain way and they always get their way they never listen to us. When we suggest something they say it will cost too much or you can’t do this, and you can’t do that, and then they are giving you the big ‘keep the customer happy’ talk. But little things would make a big difference to our work and they don’t listen. Like sometimes they don’t allow enough time to clean the rooms or provide enough ironing boards or they keep having budget cuts and you can only do so much.*

In constructing the emergent theory of *Performing*, I noted that many room attendants wished to be providers of knowledge to improve operational efficiency as fully contributing actors within the hotel; however, they felt they were denied such roles. While the levels of organisational hierarchy ought enable channels of communication both upwards and downwards (Susan Jackson & Randall Schuler, 1992), my study revealed that there was predominantly a one-way downward flow of communication in the participating hotels. As in my study, powerful individuals, such as the hotels’ higher management, have been observed to neglect contributions from subordinates, and this failure labels the subordinate’s knowledge as of little consequence (Ana Guinote, Guillermo Willis & Cristiana Martellotta, 2009). Exclusion of low status employees (such as room attendants) serves as a basis for differentiation, as well as exclusion from decision making processes, and this exclusion determines whose interests prevail (William Faunce, 2003). In this study many room attendants reported hotel management’s failure to recognise the cohort of room attendants as a ‘community of value’ or seek their knowledge gained from practice in cleaning. This in turn reinforced to room attendants their *invisibility* through denial of an opportunity to have voice, or input into decision-making.
Further, room attendants’ knowledge related to their work processes was not accessed and therefore not used to the hotel’s advantage. Room attendants’ knowledge cannot contribute to operational efficiencies if this ‘community of value’ is excluded and ignored. Some of the room attendants had outlasted five general managers, and with up to 20 years’ experience possessed a storehouse of knowledge about the hotel’s history and development. Rachael, with 10 years’ experience, when describing her work, specified the knowledge required by room attendants, which was held in their practical knowledge and experiences:

*I would say something that does not require a lot of knowledge, extra ordinary knowledge, yeah, and that anyone can do? Well they can’t do this, have you ever seen a man clean?*

Rachel thought that cleaning requires specific knowledge and abilities that she considers men have not developed. Women’s skills, knowledge and experience gained within the private/domestic sphere are acquired over many years. Yet room attendants’ accumulated knowledge was disregarded by hotel management. Such disregard was directly related to the maintenance of hierarchical levels in hotels, which directly inhibited free upward communication. It has been found that the hierarchical position within organisational structures determines the concerns that receive attention (Richard Cyert & James March, 1963/1992). Limited communication with room attendants was further evidenced by Clare, with four years’ experience, who related how room attendants bear the consequences of management’s failure to communicate effectively:

*The last executive housekeeper was a guy and he didn’t really care about anything, he just sat in his office and perved on the chicks. It was just ‘do your job and shut the f..k up’, you would do your rooms and there was no communication between them and us and then we get roused at and chastised and it’s just chaos.*

Such humiliating and oppressive behaviour as described by Clare demonstrated how management power was used to silence some room attendants. Similar autocratic and inflexible business cultures have been identified in hotels in Norway (Onsøyen et al., 2009; Slonaker et al., 2007). The hotels denial of room attendants’ entitlement to respectful treatment assaults their dignity and Clare’s experience reflects “bullying and
harassment” (Andrew Sayer, 2007. p. 566). Further, as Egon Bittner (1965) posits, hierarchical structures give rise to discriminatory power imbalances between people in that hierarchical positions are held by ‘right’ (such as the concept of ‘managerial prerogative’). As Clare found, her low place in the hotel hierarchy was perpetuated via unprofessional managerial behaviour, demanding obedience and deference.

Participants reported that the hotels’ hierarchical structures inhibited their capacity to address challenges effectively, as they lacked voice because of their low position in the hierarchy. This lack of voice and consultation was also noted in other studies, particularly in relation to selection of furniture, fittings and placement of hotel rooms to facilitate tasking (Onsøyen et al., 2009; Sollund, 2006). Valuable worker knowledge is often subjugated or supressed in hegemonic leadership and management philosophies, which separate organisational planning from the actual employees (Giroux, 1988). The hotel hierarchy ignored room attendants and their focus of knowledge based on daily tasking. Many room attendants, stated they had many suggestions for operational efficiency, and questioned some operational practices yet felt there was no avenue of advancement for their knowledge.

The room attendants’ lack of ability to impact and improve hotel organisational practice was related to their position at the lower level. Hierarchical stratification, as practiced in Gold Coast hotels (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997), diminished the influence and increased the ‘sense of exclusion’ of room attendants (David Maines, 1977). The room attendants’ level of influence on operational decision-making was directly placed at their position within the hotel hierarchy. Employees’ contributions are mediated by their position within a hierarchy (Primaeaux & Beckley, 1999). Room attendant invisibility was framed by this lack of voice, meaning there was little consultation with room attendants by management. Elsewhere it is reported that this lack of consultation can lead to a narrow perspective that restricts innovation with respect to service quality in hotels (Jacques Scott & Richard Wright, 2010). The layers of hierarchy at hotels participating in my study created an invisibility of room attendants’ knowledge and hindered innovative practice, due to their placement at the lowest
level. Most hierarchical interaction for room attendants occurred with immediate supervisors and with the executive housekeeper.

**Floor Supervisor and Executive Housekeeper Interactions**

Room attendants were divided in their opinions of their floor supervisors; at one end of the continuum, some viewed their supervisors as approachable and understanding, and at the other as dictatorial and condescending. Elisabeth, with five years’ experience, succinctly expressed the extremes of supervision she had experienced:

*Some of them are lovely and some of them are awful, there is no in-between; they are either really nice or arrogant.*

Room attendants’ main daily interactions were with their immediate floor supervisors, and at least once a day with the higher level of executive housekeeper. Floor supervisors often had positive supervisory styles, according to room attendants, particularly when support and understanding for personal problems was sought. Supportive supervisors usually had experience working as room attendants, giving them an appreciation of the physical challenges and time pressures involved in the tasking. Susan, with four years’ experience, related:

*Most important part is to feel like you are appreciated, what you do, not only with the guest but with the supervisor seeing you as a good worker, judging the outcome of your work. I have a new supervisor and she understands that we work hard.*

A supervisor who had climbed through the ranks appeared better able to understand tasking, as this first-hand experience enabled empathy with the demands of hard work and time pressures. These supervisors were able to inspire additional effort through their acknowledgment and recognition of tasking requirements. This shared knowledge of tasking developed reciprocal trust between room attendants and supervisors. Trust from supervisors was cemented partly by room attendants’ consistent high performance. This trust was evidenced by allocation of rooms on a higher floor with better views and less monitoring by supervisors. Daja, with five years’ experience, had achieved this status:

*The supervisors learn the standards of each room attendant and know what weaknesses they have. If you’re one of the cleaner people they will check briefly,*
just to make sure your standards are still there, but they focus on the lower floors where the newer staff are or the younger ones, they lack the experience of cleaning.

Hotels rely on the experience and skill of room attendants to perform tasking. When room attendants perform consistently at a high standard they are trusted and this provides them with a modicum of agency. Social psychological literature related to agency includes motivational theories and cognitive conceptualisations of expectancy and control focusing on human self-determination and competence (Viktor Gecas, 1989). Agency in this case was relevant to the choices room attendants had regarding their performance and demonstrations of competence, with the outcome of greater trust and a measure of self-determination. Fostering trust and individualising responsibility is an approach describing the best supervisors (Edwards, 2010).

In trusting room attendants, these supervisors’ efforts appeared to reflect a contingency approach to employee empowerment (David Bowen & Edward Lawler, 1992). Empowerment has many interpretations and applications; however the success of empowerment initiatives is determined by the experience of those empowered (Lashley, 1999). Many attendants reported enjoying the degree of discretion in their work tasking, and found the trust this empowerment gave them, motivational. Conversely, there are tensions in the notion of ‘empowerment’. Critical industrial relations scholars, for instance, see it as a management efficiency tool rather than a genuine form of employee voice. The lack of voice in an empowerment approach has been identified as having negative impacts on women in low paid jobs where cost reduction is paramount (Wajcman, 2000). The empowerment of these room attendants was a form of subordination through room attendants engaging in self-surveillance by checking their own work. Engaging staff in self-surveillance improves productivity for organisations (Michael Burawoy, 1985). The self-surveillance through empowerment at these hotels shows exploitation through failure to acknowledge or compensate room attendants’ effort expended by practising agency in checking their own work and applying learnt methods of work optimisation.
The respect secured by a supervisor resulted in room attendants striving to perform at their best despite the physical and time challenges. One executive housekeeper’s expressions of appreciation were highly valued, as Angela, with 11 years’ experience, explained:

*The first day this executive housekeeper came here she would say ‘oh you’ve done a good job’ or ‘good morning’ and we need people we can talk to. If we have a problem we can go to her, and she listens, that’s why she’s very good, it is easy to do your best.*

This respect fostered trust and loyalty, and these influences have been identified as supporting the power of those above (Pierre Bourdieu, 1998). Loyalty and support for the supervisors was demonstrated by a few room attendants who terminated their employment with one establishment to follow the executive housekeeper to another hotel. As Susan, with four years’ experience explained, the consequences of a hotel lowering its standards were not acceptable to one executive housekeeper and resulted in two staff leaving:

*They changed the standard in [leading Gold Coast hotel] and my manager left and came here so I did too.*

The result of this room attendant’s loyalty to her supervisors was directly related to the mutual respect established between them where Susan preferred to work with someone who did not exercise oppression. While rare this loyalty contributed to the mobility of staff between establishments in hospitality and this rotation between establishments has been called a ‘cannibalistic’ (from competitors) recruitment style (Onsøyen et al., 2009). The mobility of staff is part of the widespread rotation of staff creating localised disruptions to the hospitality labour market.

While some attendants reported very positive interactions with supervisors, many reported negative interactions. While bullying is mentioned previously as a result of the hierarchical structure of hotels, many experiences of bullying by immediate supervisors in the work environment were recounted. One supervisor’s behaviour was recounted by Elaine, with five years’ experience:

*If you have to take three days off in a row and you get back and it’s like they are angry at you. You haven’t been here for three days but you’ve been sick, so it’s like high school. If there is something the executive housekeeper or supervisor...*
doesn’t like then they will treat you like shit for a while, until they forget about it. They almost overreact so if you do call in sick a lot, they take it out on you.

The reaction from supervisors appeared to discourage behaviour that led to an inconvenience for the hotel’s scheduling. More routine, verbal recognition of room attendants’ efforts was often deemed lacking or inadequate in relation to the hard work, time pressures and low pay. Ivy, with four years’ experience, commented on the importance of recognition from supervisors in particular:

*When you get praise, you go out of your way to do things, but they see you do it but they don’t give you any praise for it.*

Some room attendants also perceived that they were under excessive surveillance and subjected to snap inspections. Elisabeth, with five years’ experience, relates her interpretation of supervisor behaviour:

*There’s one supervisor I can’t stand, I think she is a bitch, so haughty and superior, she seems to sneak up on us and check all the time. You are watched, but she is over the top, I don’t give her the time of day.*

Such close surveillance, viewed by room attendants, as a lack of trust by supervisors, was noted in a study of room attendants in Norway (Onsøyen et al., 2009). In the Norwegian study the researchers found that close supervision resulted in attendants feeling harassed. Power was also displayed at many establishments participating in this study through close surveillance such as the snap inspections, LAN tracking networks and CCTV. Some antipathy to this was expressed by Glenda, with three years’ experience:

*We work under the cameras all the time. They can watch how long we are in a room, I don’t like it.*

Foucault (1977) identified close surveillance as a disciplinary technique to create intimate control. This surveillance was reported in my study as being highly invasive, as the room attendants were never sure when, or if, they were being watched. Constant surveillance was an invasion of privacy demonstrating lack of trust and respect for their moral reasoning or ability to do the right thing in their tasking. This close surveillance diminished their dignity and is likened to Sayer’s (2007) belief that surveillance underestimates the “capacity for virtuous autonomous action” (p. 571). There was also evidence of further surveillance activities in the participating hotels, such as wireless local area networks, which allowed supervisors to track room
attendants’ movements. This close supervision has been identified as increasing employee stress levels (Annabel Wharton, 2007) and reinforced hierarchical power imbalances by micro-surveillance (see Foucault’s 1977, 1980, 1988). Foucault’s conceptualisation of power as a dispersed process rather than a possession is relevant here. Surveillance – both physical and technological – indicates a disciplinary power that creates intimate control and a lack of trust. I will return to the issue of power later. It is noted here because room attendants reported surveillance as one of the measures exercised by immediate supervisors as a mechanism for control.

Some supervisors’ measures of control were, in the room attendants’ views, misplaced, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the tasking demands of Performing. Daja, with four years’ experience, shared one such instance:

*If you do something wrong the supervisors come down on you like a ton of bricks, they hand you a sheet with all the check outs and expect you to do it.*

Room attendants spoke of some supervisors who drove a fast work pace to meet establishment deadlines. Some were reported to use threats to allocate less hours, demands to redo work and oral abuse to accomplish this. Oral threats and abuse were used to enforce hierarchical superiority and such coercive power displays included denigrating staff verbally, and assigning particularly dirty tasks to secure compliance. Hierarchies secure compliance by affecting the conduct of others by means of the power wielded by those in authority (Lukes, 1974). The organisational hierarchy of the hotels in my study contained such positions of power through control by close monitoring of room attendant action. Room attendants could clearly identify the punishment systems used in the hotels to enforce hierarchical compliance. Room attendants, at the lower level of the hierarchy, had little power and therefore little agency in all of this.

Room attendants at times chose to exercise agency by challenging coercive demonstrations of power from supervisors and managers within the hierarchy. Angela, with 11 years’ experience, related one interaction:

*Well one time the executive housekeeper, tells me I talk too much, so I tell her what do you want? Quality or quantity? And she tell me ‘Oh boy you have got*
attitude’ and she give it to me and I didn’t cry and I just tell her is this a threat? I thought if I go down to her level I lose, I know how to handle myself.

Challenging this supervisor demonstrated Angela’s voice in the face of what she perceived as illegitimate use of power to force her silence through authority. In challenging the authority of the supervisor, Angela displays her need to maintain her dignity and self-esteem. Some room attendants said others used their social skills to establish a rapport with supervisors as a recognised means of climbing the hierarchical ladder more quickly, even though they may not be better workers, as Elizabeth, with five years’ experience, related:

*It seems the useless ones are the ones that get ahead, they brown nose to the managers, yet we are the workers with our heads down and bums up.*

Reports by room attendants on their peers indicated that some room attendants tried to improve their employment status through ingratiating behaviour. Such expressions of compliant behaviour have been recognised as winning favour of the powerful in work situations (Jayne Bisman, 2007). The consequences of this for room attendants, with regard to power, are the need to comply and acquiesce to get ahead. Alternatively, while being depreciating of some of her peers, Elisabeth’s opinion indicates an expression of a desire to appear capable through downward comparisons (Dreze & Nunes, 2009), which further served to enable her to maintain a positive self-image and dignity.

The division of labour within the hierarchical hotel structure primarily restricted interaction between levels of the hotel hierarchy. Fiona, with five years’ experience, chose to withdraw from close interaction with her peers as a precursor to career advancement:

*That’s another reason why I am being selected to be a supervisor because you don’t mix with the crowd too much or let friendship override your loyalty to the company.*

Fiona has worked out the rules of the hotel hierarchy and identified a path to higher levels. In turn, these levels created the role conduct that guided the action and interaction (Goffman, 1986) of room attendants and other hotel employees. Such behaviour, resting on a hierarchical dependence on authority, discourages inter-group informality (Leavitt, 2003). Discouraging inter-group informality maintains status due
to a fear of status loss through casualness (Hyun-Jung Lee & Riccardo Peccei, 2007). Nicolaj Siggelkow and Daniel Levinthal (2003) examined inter-level interactions within hierarchies and relating their findings to hotels’ hierarchical organisation reveals minimal inter-level interaction. This minimal inter-level interaction limited the hotels’ environmental outlook and diminished productivity due to reduced information received by management. The levels of hierarchy in the participating hotels restricted inter-level interaction resulting in room attendants’ knowledge of optimal practices or their concerns not reaching higher management. The resulting lack of voice rendered room attendants less worthy by being dismissed as unimportant and invisible. This is further evidence that these Gold Coast hotels were failing to recognise the room attendants as a community of value. Notwithstanding the many layers in the hotel hierarchy, many room attendants viewed the executive housekeeper as the highest level in the hierarchy to which they had regular contact and were answerable. This was an inherently limiting exclusion, and this exclusion has been identified as resulting from hierarchical organisational structures (Jacobides, 2007). The room attendants’ experiences shown in the previous sections, revealed department isolation, lack of upward communication, and enactment of control measures, framing the invisibility they experienced. Room attendants’ invisibility was further reflected in minimal contact with higher management.

Higher Management Interactions

A common perception amongst room attendants was that they had no meaningful interaction with higher management. For example, referring to her general manager, Elaine, with five years’ experience, stated:

The last one left a few months ago but I don’t know who the new one is, I’ve seen him once at a staff meeting and that was it. It’s such a big hotel and management structure that you just never see him.

Higher levels of management were rarely seen by room attendants, and thus this literal physical invisibility of management to room attendants mirrored room attendants’ invisibility to management as unseen and unheard. As management were largely unseen, some room attendants assumed managements’ focus was on other
Bonnie, with 11 years’ experience, expressed her understanding of her hotel’s management focus:

A huge difference I think in the way management perceive an income generating department than one that is just there to do a service, they don’t think that ‘rooms’ makes them money. Like the general manager said to me the other day ‘where are you working?’ and I have been looking after the VIPs for about 8 years, so he has no idea of where we are or what we do.

Bonnie’s perception was that the manager had no conception of her role, despite its significance and her long service. She perceived that management’s focus was on the hotel’s income stream, rather than on operational contexts. This is explained because the in-house guests have already been secured and the money is (usually) assured, so that much of management’s focus was directed elsewhere. This helps explain the disconnection between room attendants’ perceptions of their value to the hotel, and how they view managements’ words or behaviour, which room attendants interpreted as meaning they are of little consequence. In being inconsequential and little noticed, room attendants were made to feel invisible. In one smaller hotel where the manager was seen regularly, he reportedly rarely expressed his appreciation of attendants, as reflected in the view of Kirsten, with eight years’ experience:

We need more training for the manager to respect women because he is dreadful. He comes to our briefing and like it’s all negative, negative, negative. There’s no ‘thanks girls you did a great job’, it’s all negative, and I think that is why the girls leave and why some give up on cleaning or trying to do a good job.

The views of Kirsten, and similar opinions expressed by other attendants, is consistent with the low positive feedback to room attendants recorded by Sollund (2006). This phenomenon has been called ‘destructive leadership’ (Onsøyen et al., 2009) and, in union publications, ‘hegemonic management’ (Louise Tarrant 2009). Tarrant, the national secretary of United Voice, identified hegemonic management as hindering growth in the Australian hospitality industry by increasing employee turnover and reducing employee satisfaction (Carl Borchgrevink & Alex Susskind, 1996). Room attendants in my study felt some hegemonic management styles failed to acknowledge their worth, and only focused on control through chastisement. Human resource management literature identifies management’s focus on the ‘control’ of labour, which is often viewed as a difficult resource to manage and ought not to be
commodified (Lashley, 1998). Labour has a human factor, which requires different treatment than other resources such as buildings and equipment. In the five participating 5 star hotels, room attendants continually expressed feelings of being undervalued through low pay, their lack of voice and ignored knowledge. Room attendants felt they received little social respect, as most management rarely provided positive feedback. With little positive reciprocal interaction between attendants and management, room attendants’ lack of worth and invisibility were further highlighted.

Compounding the room attendants feeling of lack of voice was their belief that the focus of human resource (HR) departments was employee control. Many room attendants considered HR to be generally unsympathetic and unsupportive towards them. Difficulties with the human resources department were related by Bianca, with two years’ experience:

*The snobby Human Resources woman, it’s like being sent to the headmistress, a very condescending attitude. I think ‘you are here to do your job, you are no better than me’.*

The forerunners of the modern concept of ‘human resources’, such as personnel management and welfarism, were initiated as employee-focused approaches to improve management outcomes. The high ‘management’ positioning of human resources within the hotel hierarchy has served to widen the gap between management and employees due to the lack of inter-level interaction (Leavitt, 2003). A manifestation of this gap was often expressed by room attendant participants as feelings that HR was unapproachable. Many felt that any issues they had with executive housekeepers would not be resolved by appealing to this higher authority. Ivy, with four years’ experience, found that she did not receive useful assistance from the human resources department:

*Stay away from Human Resources, if we have a problem we can’t go to Human Resources here because there’s no separation so if you go to Human Resources and hope it will be sorted it won’t, and then if she [Executive Housekeeper] finds out you’ve done it she gets really shitty and that makes it harder, we do put up with a lot of shit.*

Many room attendants’ at all hotels expressed reluctance to approach the HR department. This reluctance was based on their perceptions of not receiving an
Empathetic hearing of their concerns. These room attendants’ subordinate position in the hotel was entrenched perceptions that this HR was unapproachable. The maintenance of hotel hierarchies through minimal level-interaction indicates that power and injustice was at the structural core of the hotel hierarchy. Many room attendants believed that they were unable to obtain fair treatment from any level of the hotel hierarchy and this contributed to their feeling exploited. As previously noted, a hotel’s hierarchical management structure is based on control via the use of power, meaning that room attendants, as a lower occupational standing were less important on the hotel stage, and therefore disregarded or generally unacknowledged and invisible.

The negative management approaches explored above were lack of attention, minimal encouragement, chastisement, control, and often unsympathetic and unsupportive from room attendants’ perspectives. These approaches highlighted the ideological exclusion of room attendants via lack of recognition of their efforts, and lack of approachability and, further, had a gender dimension. Exclusion (through lack of approachability as a component of marginalisation) has been identified as a method used to reinforce male gender power (Wajcman, 2000). This gender dimension was task designated for room attendants as their tasking reflected women’s traditional roles of ‘keeping the house in order’. This biological determination is a feature of the patriarchal ideology of most societies (Gillian Rose, 2003, 1993). Room attendants’ role identification as ‘cleaners’ mirrors the social expressions of inferiority of women as merely looking after the house (Davis, 1972). These stereotypical views of roles justify the status quo system as fair and legitimate because of the low value of women’s household work. The low value of women’s work is a social perspective of contemporary society reflected in paternalistic treatment of women and continues the subjugation of women (Aaron Kay, et al., 2009). As demonstrated in chapter one, room attendants are key performers with respect to hotels’ profit capabilities; and providers of basic guest expectations. Despite this key role in Performing, room attendants felt their gender inhibited inclusivity, equality or acknowledgement in the hotels’ hierarchical context.
Room attendants struggled physically to perform their tasking and often felt undervalued, humiliated and oppressed due to the behaviour inherent in the different levels of hotels’ hierarchical structures. Room attendants felt their position at the lower levels resulted in management not valuing their input. The hotel hierarchy, reflected in low pay, inadequate conditions, displays of power and authority were reflected in the inequalities of oppression in room attendants’ role. The hotel hierarchical structure resulted in a lack of acknowledgement of room attendants as a community of value. The room attendants’ subordinate position within the hotel hierarchy was mirrored and reinforced by interactions with hotel guests. The next part of this chapter moves on to consider how the marginalisation, oppression and exploitation of room attendants within the hotel hierarchy was also expressed in room attendants’ interactions with guests.

Social Hierarchy Reflected within Hotels

I use the phrase ‘social hierarchy’ to classify the nature of room attendant - guest interactions. The participating hotels were social institutions reflecting the broader social and occupational stratification in Australian society. The room attendants’ placement at a low operational level was reflected in social views of this occupation. Social perceptions place cleaners at the bottom of occupational standing and these views greatly determined social status as Rose, with 11 years’ experience, explained:

There is status with a job, you don’t have dignity of labour. Guests look down at people who work in a lower job.

Status is defined as ‘one’s position’ in society, so a person with high status is socially recognised as holding prestige, power and entitlement (Dreze & Nunes, 2009). For room attendants their low placement on the hotel social stage reinforced their lack of value. As a person’s self-concept is embedded in the social context (Viktor Gecas & Monica Seff, 1990), room attendants’ low social position was significant for their self-image as people of little worth in society and this challenged their sense of dignity.
Social Status

The low status of room attendants in the hotel hierarchy was paralleled in their social standing during interactions with guests. Valerie, with 25 years’ experience, identified her perceptions of guests’ views of the social status of room attendants:

In what is termed a ‘posh’ hotel the majority of the time you are the worker and you are a lower class.

The guests’ visit was symbolic of a range of social markers, which placed the room attendant occupation as subservient to guests and at a low social status. The guests at a 5 star hotel are enjoying a lifestyle of prestigious consumption generated from superior earning capacity that is commonly associated with a higher social status (Nick Hayes, 2009). Further demonstration of the perceived low social evaluation of room attendants by some guests is related by Clare, with two years’ experience:

They think because they are paying a certain price that they can treat you however they like, they think we are here to pick up after them, and we’re not.

In servicing a hotel room, direct contact is made between guests and room attendants, in a context where the room attendant is constantly reminded of their lower position on the social stage. The lower status felt by room attendants is consistent with the theory of conspicuous consumption, which argues that the motivation to consume goods and services is the basis of distinctions amongst people (Thorstein Veblen 1899/1994). This distinction is applicable to 5 star hotels, as patronage leads to higher status for guests predicated on establishing differences through ‘symbolic consumption’ (Bourdieu, 1984). A component of this ‘symbolic consumption’ at 5 star hotels was some guests adopting superior and commanding conduct, which denigrated the room attendants’ sense of dignity or self-worth. The guests’ higher status requires inherently servile behaviour of room attendants and positions them as ‘other’ in a subservient relationship. As ‘other’ with lesser importance than the ‘guest’, this further contributed to room attendants’ oppression and marginalisation through an emphasis of the polarity of their social standing (Colin Sherringham & Pheroza Daruwalla, 2007).

Further examples show that the higher social status of guests influenced the interactions with room attendants. Ostracism was a commonly felt experience, as Ivy, with four years’ experience, explained:
Ivy’s description of how information about her occupation was received by her husband’s employer shows how social distinctions relating to her job placed Ivy on a lower socio-economic status. This was despite the fact that as Ivy had helped organise a discount for her husband’s superior, her husband’s employer should have felt indebted to her, rather than ostracising her. Subsequently, Ivy’s low social status, founded on her occupation, reduced her ability to mix socially. This exclusion based on low social status reproduces existing inequalities (Scott & Wright, 2010). The ostracism of Ivy by her husband’s employer shows that social status is reflected in the power associated with capitalist wealth, authority, and preserving social image (Shalom Schwartz, 1992). Ivy’s experience reveals how she was ‘othered’ and marginalised due to her occupation status, which designated her as of little value. The related inherent superior attitude of higher social levels, such as experienced by room attendants at these 5 star hotels, is an under-researched sociological phenomenon (Wood, 2000). In the hotel context, guest perceptions of room attendants are based on economic, linguistic, gender and cultural structures identified as 'class'. Class “is a large grouping of people who share common economic interests, experiences and lifestyles” (Althusser, 1971, p. 21). Class structure is generally viewed as composed of categories such as poor, working class, middle class and upper (or ruling) class, each with particular life experiences (Colleen Heflin & Mary Pattillo, 2004). Room attendants are working class and their social status is derived from the occupational roles and status positions, which guide this social class categorisation (Allison, 1971). The occupation of room attendant as a working class occupation has low social standing.

In Performing some room attendants felt the low social standing of their occupation was reflected in their uniform, which categorised them as having low status. Rebecca, with three years’ experience, shared her experiences:

Some people are snobs, if they see me in my uniform you can see the look on their face like ‘oh you’re down there’, but I try to not let that worry me, I own my own home and we are ok.
Rebecca, offended by the social categorisation she experienced based on the social cue her uniform provided, reframed her socio-economic status. Rebecca engaged in self-allocation of socio-economic status by emphasising her financial independence. This strategy, to assert her own self-reliance, is consistent with seeing socio-economic status as resulting from capital investments made by the individual (Heflin & Pattillo, 2004). The room attendants’ uniforms can be seen in various ways: as a costume to indicate organisational role, as a means of social control by physical representation of behaviour expectations, and a means of exclusion by identifying room attendants as ‘other’ or of less importance (Wood, 2000). Symbols, such as uniforms, have meanings, which form collective stereotypes (Crotty, 2003). Being stereotyped as coming from a lower social level affected these room attendants’ lived experiences through stigmatised representations, which assumed they were of low socio-economic status. In this way the uniform echoes power imbalances and inequalities endured by lower classes (Leavitt, 2003). Lower classes have long performed the most wearisome, dirty and degrading functions in a servile manner for leisure classes (Marx, 1880/1977). Room attendants’ tasking involved monotonous and dirty work and they were required to adopt subordinate stance to guests during performance of these tasks.

The stigmatisation through occupation resulted in many room attendants not disclosing their occupation at social events. Elisabeth, with five years’ experience, related how she avoided revealing she worked as a room attendant in social situations:

*Some days I don’t like it. I think most of us are treated poorly, like if you are out and people ask what you do. I don’t say oh I’m a cleaner, if you do, they say ‘Are you?’ and that’s usually it, they go and talk to someone else! So you try to avoid telling people what you do for a job, and it makes you angry like I say to my husband I own my own home and pay my bills and I’ve brought up three great kids, but they make you feel cheap and useless.*

Like Rebecca, Elisabeth also engaged in reframing her socio-economic status by emphasising her financial independence. As occupations are the mainstay of social status stratification systems (Cohen, 2004), hotel room attendants experienced a ‘stigma’ because of social hostility towards their occupation (Goffman, 1990), which categorised them into the lowest social order. However, room attendants like Rebecca and Elisabeth challenged the process of being stigmatised, and resisted others’
determination of their self-worth (Jeffrey Pfeffer, 1977). The room attendants’ experience of social power, which pervasively ranks people and creates subservient relationships, is found commonly in many contexts of social life (Max Weber, 1947). That one’s success and respectability are judged according to one’s economic and social environment (Bisman, 2007) is borne out by measures of occupational status. Harry Ganzeboom, Paul De Graaf and Donald Treiman (1992) constructed an international socio-economic index of occupational status based on education, occupation and income in 16 countries. They found that the status of maids and related housekeeping service workers among the lowest. Social stratification is a process of transmuting difference into a hierarchy, and in my study room attendants are situated lower socially than the guests. This is played out in Performing as room attendants act deferentially to guests and adopt roles demonstrating subservient behaviour.

Hotels have an unwritten code of behaviour that room attendants follow in approaching guests with a suitably subservient and formal manner. Clare, with four years’ experience, explained the need to deny her normal persona:

*You’ve just gotta know how to talk to them, like I’ve learnt customer service so I know what to do. I try to be ‘sir’ and the rest of it, and try to stop being Australian and go ‘gidday mate’, ‘no worries’. We had to do luxury training, and learn exactly what luxury was and so my biggest thing is to stop being so Australian.*

This shows subservience through denial of ‘self’ and personal identity to meet guests’ expectations of subordinate workers. The hotel protocols denied national identity because social expectations pattern room attendant behaviour through attempting to script staff-guest interactions. This patterning of behaviour, enacted daily, was socially constructed and expressed via body language, gesture, speech and dress (Hugo Gorringe & Irene Rafanell, 2007). Through their behaviour room attendants subjugate themselves by suppressing their self to portray a class position, which makes the guest feel they are of higher status (Goffman, 1959). This explains Performing from a Foucauldian perspective, with the room attendant being directed and coached in an effort to inculcate static rules regarding guest interactions. The operation of social status with respect to room attendants was evidenced through requirements of
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submission in guest interactions, and this is likened to various forms of control (Erik De Kwaadsteniet, 2009). The differing status between room attendants and guests created an inequality, which required room attendants to sanction rude behaviour and criticism from guests. In this way room attendants sacrificed their dignity, which ostracised and relegated room attendants invisible by perpetuating differences in social status structure and contributing to their systematic exclusion as being of little worth.

Despite this, room attendants also engaged in social stratification, viewing their occupational position higher than others. Eva, with three years’ experience, recounted:

This might sound daft but I look at facility cleaning as worse, the cleaners of all the toilets and out here in the lobby. That’s worse than my job, I don’t know why, probably because I think it’s more degrading than my job is. They clean in the public eye.

Thus, while room attendants would prefer not to be ‘othered’ (raised in chapter one) they also engage in ‘othering’ practices by giving lower status to other cleaning jobs. Room attendants, as with all humans, have an often unconscious need to compare themselves with others in order to assess their life satisfaction. Positive comparisons with others provide perceptions of superiority, which makes one feel better (Xavier Dreze & Joseph Nunes, 2009). In general, this comparison behaviour helps maintain social stratification (Viktor Gecas, 1989). Upward comparisons are generally believed to aid self-evaluation whereas, as noted previously, downward comparisons are used for self-enhancing and reaffirming one’s status (Dreze & Nunes, 2009). In my study, therefore, some hotel room attendants attempted to gain positive self-evaluation of self through downward comparisons.

Performing identifies that room attendants’ roles during guest interactions required certain behaviours, including submission that reflected their social status. For room attendants, these coexisting low social and occupational identities caused stress (echoing other studies; for example Antonio Pastrana (2010) found that when intersectionality of roles was present, social identities contributed to role strain). Performing shows room attendants navigate their social interactions to present
expected occupational position behaviour within the hotel during guest interactions, while privately justifying their own worth by the economic assets they hold.

**Guest Interactions**

As previously identified, the low level placement of room attendants in both occupational and social contexts exposed them to exclusion, which had negative psychological consequences. Room attendants at all establishments were required to initiate greetings when encountering guests. Generally, room attendants commented that guests recognised them and were polite; however, bad guest behaviour was a relatively common daily experience. Glenda, with three years’ experience, explains establishment protocol for guest interaction and common reactions from guests:

*We have to say hello to the guests first, but some guests are particularly rude, and the women are the worst, they’re actually worse than men, because you don’t expect it, and all you can do is turn and walk away.*

In being unable to challenge the demeaning attitude of guests, room attendants sacrifice their dignity to perform their occupational role. Room attendants were required to engage in socially interactive behaviour, such as personalising their encounters with guests using small talk (Lalita Manrai, 1993). Many room attendants, however, experienced rebuffs from guests as they tried to engage in interactive discourse with guests. By having no redress for poor guest behaviour, room attendants were required to exhibit subservient behaviour during guest interactions. Some guest behaviour was described as rude, which room attendants’ believed to be due to the guests’ higher social status than themselves. Elaine, with five years’ experience, offered such a scenario and stated how this made her feel:

*I feel really low sometimes, like you’re the bottom of the pile, they make you feel like dirt, that’s got to be the worst part. I think about twenty per cent [of guests] are lovely the rest are rude. It makes me more aware of how I behave.*

The conduct of some guests caused room attendants to reflect on their own self-awareness. Certain modes of performance are an explicit demand from hotel management and these acts set the scene for unequal social exchanges in service encounters (Bolton, 2010). For example room attendants were required to defer to the
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guests in interactions, and the negative guest encounters often included perfunctory
greetings to meet courtesy standards while engaging in body language that implied
guests were too busy to extend the interaction. Maureen, with one year’s experience,
explains:

_The majority of the guests ignore you or they might say hello and that’s all, they
are looking at their watch and are a bit cranky so I guess they are busy._

As in Maureen’s example, the customer’s mood was identified as affecting her delivery
of social behaviour. While room attendants are too busy to engage in prolonged
interactions with guests, they reported many guests appeared to prefer completely
avoiding contact with room attendants, and this was often conveyed through body
language. Room attendants believed their occupation was perceived by guests as
“confirming the status of those who do it” (Sayer, 2007, p. 577). Guests’ avoidance of
contact was believed by room attendants to be due to the latter’s low hierarchical
standing both occupationally and socially and this avoidance made the room
attendants feel _invisible_. Room attendants did not have scripts to cover the diverse
guest interactions, so they used their prior experience and knowledge to script their
role behaviour to achieve ‘service effectiveness’ (Ronald Humphrey & Blake Ashforth,
1994). Most interactions were polite, albeit cursory; however, the room attendants’
scripting was underpinned by their performance of emotional labour.

An important component of room attendants’ work, as previously mentioned,
is ‘emotional labour’, whereby their emotions are controlled by guest expectations
(Susan Durbin & Hazel Conley, 2010). The phrase ‘emotional labour’ was coined by
Hochschild (1998) in 1983 to describe the commodification of feelings requiring service
employees to ignore personal instinctive reactions and display incongruent emotions.
Using emotional labour, the room attendant hides their true feelings in a difficult or
upsetting situation, and assumes a pleasant and happy disposition for the guests.
Broader application of emotional labour considers the denial of other issues such as
home problems or not feeling well, to assume a mask hiding felt emotions and
assuming mood fabrications. The estrangement or dissonance caused by performing
emotional labour has a negative effect on psychological well-being as social cognition
links to social structure and reflects social standing (David Morgan & Michael
Schwalbe, 1990; Sarah Tracy & Angela Trethewey, 2005).
Emotional labour has been linked with guests’ perceptions of quality of service and guest satisfaction in the hospitality industry (Ross, 1995). Room attendants’ work drained their physiological reserves as they engaged in tasking discussed in chapter four, and further to this physical labour, the hotel expected performance of emotional labour by demonstrating good interpersonal skills and by hiding felt emotions. In dealing with the less than courteous guests, the room attendants found performance of emotional labour in the hotel context was undignified, and from a socialist perspective was uncompensated “pecuniary emotion management” (Sayer, 2007, p. 573). The hotels exploited room attendants by including these demanding aspects of their performance in their $16.03 per hour pay. Put somewhat differently, room attendants, as front line service employees, are expected to have competencies in emotional intelligence to cope effectively with guest demands and rudeness (Abraham Carmeli, 2003; Ronald Humphrey, Jeffrey Pollack & Thomas Hawver, 2008). This argument has gendered aspects as women are expected by traditional gender roles to be self-sacrificing (Julie Kmec & Elizabeth Gorman, 2010), and this is an aspect of the participating female room attendants’ employment experiences as they deferred to guests. Further, some authors argue that organisations deliberately choose women to perform ‘emotional labour’ as they are considered better than men at managing a complex range of emotions in a service environment (Misty Johanson & Robert Woods, 2008; Jacobus Pienaar & Sharron Willemse, 2008; Ritzer, 2007). In this way female room attendants are employed due to their experience and skill at cleaning functions, as well as their ability to serve guests through emotional labour.

Emotional labour not only has consequences for workers, it provides a valuable return for employers, particularly those in service industries. Emotional labour increases capital returns by creating surplus value through a management scripted labour process. Inherent in this process is that feelings and interactions belong to the hotel, with this commodification of emotions providing exchange value in addition to employees’ physical labour (Bolton, 2010). Having employees perform emotional labour is thus profit driven and the hotels’ profit is identified in Marxian theory as surplus value. Room attendants provide surplus value through performances of unpaid emotional labour, which formed the economic rent of capitalism for the hotel. Seen
from a socialist perspective, the guest could also be said to be exploited by the hotel and the wider capitalist system in which it is enmeshed. That is, the guest is encouraged to return by hotel staff developing a sanitised, homogenised, and false relationship that offers little in the way of genuine human interaction, but serves to flatter the guest through servility (Ritzer, 1999). In the experiences of room attendants, their emotions became standardised and subject to the hotels’ profit focus through their performance of emotional labour. There was evidence of room attendants’ challenging this requirement in some circumstances when guests were particularly rude.

**Challenge, Compliance and Complaints**

Total avoidance of guest interaction, where it was perceived to be oppressive or degrading, was one coping strategy practiced by room attendants, as reported by Adriane, with 18 years’ experience:

*Some people treat you like dirt you know, but I know which rooms and I do them when they are out.*

The efforts at avoidance show the service experience for guests was influenced by room attendants in both tangible aspects (cleaning the room) and intangible aspects (making any encounter pleasant) (Rafaeli, 1993). Many of the room attendants in this study challenged oppression as a result of their lower social status by withholding service from guests who attendants thought were disrespectful. Withholding service in this way somewhat empowered room attendants, despite their low autonomy relative to guests. Conscious of fulfilling their scripted role as room attendants, some room attendants chose to complete only the bare level of tasks in response to disrespectful behaviour by guests. Elisabeth, with five years’ experience, provided a cogent example:

*We have a lot of clout, we might clean your room but we have a lot of choice, like if it’s a messy room we only do what we have to and then I don’t go the extra mile at all.*

Elisabeth’s withholding of additional services indicated she could choose at times to apply varying levels of quality, dependent on the guest’s interaction. ‘Going the extra mile’ is a discretionary activity that goes beyond expected task obligations and
expectations of the employer or guests, and may be interpreted as a demonstration of respect (Kmec & Gorman, 2010). Elisabeth’s behaviour may be interpreted as a form of retaliation; and a specific action that was underpinned by power (albeit minimal) held by room attendants.

Room attendants often found they had to ignore their instinctive reactions to comply with their hotel scripted roles as room attendants with respect to particularly demanding guests. Ivy, with four years’ experience, explained the difficulty:

*I had one room, which was a linen change, which I had done, and about two hours later they rang down for a sheet change. They had been at the day spa and then expect us to go back and change their sheets again and I’m trying to say to them it’s already been done. It’s frustrating, trying to handle their complaints, especially when it’s really busy and there is a DNS sign on the door.*

Further, she elaborated that she had few options in how she responded to demanding guests:

*You have to be accommodating, sometimes you feel like telling them off but you know you can’t, you just have to be nice to them.*

Ivy reveals that her performance of emotional labour, as described in the preceding section, required denying felt emotions. This was related to the room attendants’ lower social standing and the inherent subservience of their position to guests. These room attendants’ experiences of the condescending nature of many guest interactions combined with their inability to largely challenge guests was also an example of oppression. Oppression here meaning room attendants had little recourse to the domination of guests. Such oppression is believed to be more forceful when accepted as “necessary or inevitable” (Crotty, 1998, p. 158). Room attendants felt they had to be subservient to avoid guest complaints and supervisor reprimands.

Room attendants viewed many guest complaints as driven by ulterior motives. Glenda, with three years’ experience, evaluated guest complaints, which are usually received by front office, in the following way:

*There are a couple of the guests that have genuine complaints but most are just doing it because they want something free, an upgrade or meal voucher, really
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petty things like a crinkled sheet or the slightest speck in the bathroom, some are serial complainers.

This need to prevent complaints by keeping guests satisfied results in an empty performance called ‘surface acting’ or alienation from true self (Hochschild, 2001). Surface acting has been shown to result in experience detachment and burnout, which leads to deterioration in the quality of service and contributes to job turnover, absenteeism and low morale (Anderson et al., 2002). The interactions related above reveal constant social negotiation with performance of emotional labour, level of tasking commitment, and surface acting by room attendants. Conversely, interactions with guests also involved positive and friendly experiences for room attendants.

**Recognition by Guests**

Guest behaviour ranged along a broad continuum and the scant and often rude behaviour by guests identified above was counteracted by constructive guest interactions, which were also reported by attendants. Enjoyable guest interactions added interest to room attendants’ lives, and symbols of guest appreciation (tipping), although not common, were received gratefully as some recognition of their efforts. The enjoyable social dimension of guest interactions was explained by Alison, with four years’ experience:

> It’s fun when you meet a lot of people. When you get a nice compliment from a guest like a tip or something then you feel really great. You know you’ve done your job, and they’ve been really happy with you.

Gratuities (tips), while rare, were received as evidence of guest appreciation for tasking and service provided. Recognition and assertion of worth – including by gestures and compliments – helped to lessen the invisibility of room attendants. All room attendants identified the motivating aspect of guests’ tipping. Aileen, with five years’ experience, explained how tips affected her:

> Oh the good ones, they have paid for the bed but still leave a tip. If I get one I think I’m having a good day, it helps you get through the day.

A verbal statement or even a small gratuity created feelings of euphoria that lasted for hours. Receiving financial tips provided a highlight in the physical grind of the working
day, however this practice was rare and nationality related, so the quantity of gratuities left by guests depended on the target market of the hotel. Whilst tipping was not considered necessary by room attendants, some recognition for the physical effort room attendants expended was appreciated. Maureen, with one year’s experience, explained her appreciation for guest acknowledgement of her performance:

*I mean even if they just say thank you very much we had a wonderful stay, and might leave us a five dollar note or a two dollar coin. It makes you feel really good, it lights up your day.*

Kirsten, with eight years’ experience, reinforced the positive benefits gained from guest recognition:

*The rewarding part I guess is you’ve been recognised that you did a good job, like I get upset sometimes when the guests don’t write nice comments, we really need that, compliments help us do the job properly, its hard work. When they don’t leave any tips it gets a bit disappointing.*

Room attendants view demonstrations of appreciation as recognition and confirmation of their abilities, and as acknowledgement of their performance as a ‘self-esteem maintenance strategy’ (Ethan Zell & Mark Alicke, 2010), and this lessens their perceptions of *invisibility* in the eyes of guests. Guest tipping also reaffirms the status of room attendants as the guest has rated their performance according to their particular status and expected performance of that status (Goffman, 1951). Despite low organisational and social hierarchy classification, room attendants display high levels of trust, demonstrated in the intimate context of a hotel room, which revealed an insight into guests’ private lives.

**Intimate Exposure**

There is an intimate side to room attendant - guest relations. Guest interactions during hotel room cleaning provided room attendants with insight into the personal lives of guests with a view hidden from other members of the public. The hotel room context revealed the intimate nature of guest’s lives that is usually only available to close family members. In this way the guest unconsciously places trust in the discretion of
the room attendant. Angela, with 11 years’ experience, explains the thrills of interactions and the voyeuristic insights to which room attendants are privy:

*It’s fun and excitement, you talk with the guests and you see things that you may not be meant to, private stuff and sometimes you may have important people, everything is there, so I think gee this is how she lives, you see it all and that is the excitement of it.*

The thrill of voyeurism offered a small highlight in the physical grind of tasking. This has been described as ‘natural curiosity’, which provides intrigue to the room attendants’ daily life, rather than prying into the intimate aspects of guests’ lives (Verne Gay, 2000).

Not all the intimate encounters were pleasant, as some guests resented the intrusion of room attendants into what they saw as their private domain. A recurring theme throughout these room attendants’ narratives was a sense of frustration that they could not express their values if they viewed behaviour they regarded as offensive. In particular, attendants felt constrained by being unable to comment on the lack of decency by some guests. Hayley, with seven years’ experience, recounted one demanding guest’s behaviour and rudeness:

*I was just vacuuming the floor in the hallway and this woman comes stark naked and said ‘I’d like some peace and quiet thank you’. And I said ‘I’m very sorry but I have to do my job, if you have a complaint you have to go to the manager because I have to do this’.*

This guest perceived there was no need for modesty. While they may be shocked, room attendants feel unable to challenge what they consider inappropriate guest behaviour as the guest, higher in social hierarchy, has much greater power. In this case, Hayley did challenge the guest’s power using the argument that she was simply doing her job. The example also shows that room attendants could experience the private aspects of guests’ lives that no other employee in a hotel encounters.

Viewing guests in a semi-naked state was a common experience and accepted by guests as normal, as Angela, with 11 years’ experience, considers:

*One time when I was here a man had only a towel on and the funniest thing is they don’t think it strange.*
In order to conform to the hotels’ expectations, room attendants often found they had to ignore behaviour of a sexual nature amongst guests. Abbie, with 14 years’ experience, explained the conundrum of personally knowing a married guest who was bringing prostitutes to the hotel:

*You’ve got to be discreet and say nothing, no matter how much you know, you know nothing!*

Some guests’ behaviour reflected the negative aspects of human nature and room attendants needed to demonstrate discretion in personal judgments of these guests. The examples provided above reveal that room attendants denied or submerged their own moral values in some guest interactions, unable to display their true feelings in their act. The choice not to disclose indiscretions, such as that made by Abbie, illustrates how room attendants collaborate in concealing negative aspects of guest behaviour (Goffman, 1959). The room attendants’ discretion in the face of intimate interactions meets the guests’ expectations. This reminds us, too, that guest and room attendant co-produce a myriad of interactions within the hotel, resulting in an end product of a performance (Bernard Booms & Mary Jo Bitner, 1980; Christian Grönroos, 1993). One issue that needs to be highlighted separately is that many room attendants had particular perceptions of behaviour by certain international guests.

**Multicultural Interactions**

Room attendants expressed strong views about the behaviour of particular nationalities that they found offensive. A number of behaviours were identified as causing emotional stress. Abbie, with 14 years’ experience, stated:

*We get a lot of the [particular nationality] guests who are very very stressful, because they are so rude. We had [this particular nationality guests] come in with a couple of children and a maid, and they have made their maid sleep on the floor on a blanket between the two queen beds. Mother and Father would be next door in the King room. You’ve got the two kids here and you’ve got a blanket on the floor for the maid, it’s wrong. They take advantage of the room attendants, they take things off their trolleys or make huge mess in the rooms and it’s very stressful.*
Many room attendants identified cultural background in the behaviour of guests that from their perspective were not acceptable. Some room attendants were particularly critical of the behaviour of certain international guests whom they described as ‘dirty’. Kate, with three years’ experience, explained that cultural backgrounds were an issue:

_There are some who are different, because of their background or religious culture. Like the [particular religion] guests we find their rooms very messy, they are quite grotty._

Ivy, with four years’ experience, related her impressions of impatience from guests from another culture:

_The [particular nationality] are the worst they expect everything to be done now, that’s what they’re like._

Room attendants develop perceptions of differing cultures from these guest behaviours. They accepted that the guest’s home culture and attitude towards servants affected how they treated room attendants on the Gold Coast in Australia. The nationalities mentioned came from rigid patriarchal cultures. It must be recognised that cultures “are unique and must be evaluated according to their own values and standards” (Madeleine Leininger, 1995, p. 60), nevertheless individuals develop _a priori_ images or make pre-judgments of certain cultures. These ‘learned cultural impressions’ affected room attendant - guest interactions and hence the performance of emotional labour (Anette Therkelsen, 1999). Room attendants were less inclined to ‘go the extra mile’ for guests they perceived from ethnicities they had found offensive in the past. Perceptions of ethnicity have been shown in other research as affecting the level of emotional labour provided in the tourism industry (Minghua Zhao, 2002). It was not only male behaviour that was judged at fault; the women of some cultures were considered by some room attendants to engage in poor behaviour, having rude attitudes and excessively untidy habits, as Catherine, with 13 years’ experience, explained:

_The women are worse they insist I pick up things that they have thrown down. They just want a servant, not me! They are rude, but mainly [particular nationality] are very rude, and they leave a very messy room._

Thus some cultural behaviour was judged by Australian standards and considered demeaning, as demonstrated from Elisabeth’s perspective:
The [two particular nationalities] are much more demanding, they are arrogant. Mostly they come from overseas and the housekeeping staff they have in their homes are completely different from the housekeeping staff here.

Guests from nations that were considered particularly troublesome by the room attendants, echoes other research showing women in these countries have low social status compared to women in Australia (Ester Gutiérrez & Sebastián Lozano, 2008). The room attendants’ perceptions of particularly negative culturally-driven guest behaviour identified existing imbalances with inequality and discrimination against women clearly visible.

Some Australian guests also expressed racist views, as described by Abbie, with 14 years’ experience:

He saw one of our supervisors behind me and he said ‘What’s going on here” and I said ‘Oh she’s one of our supervisors’ and he said ‘Bloody [Race] come over here and take your job from you’ and you can’t comment but they can be rude, he gave me thirty dollars.

The comment above shows that racism against employees may be sustained with the (often unwilling) complicity of room attendants. Racism has been linked to attempts to confer dominance or superiority (Jenny Tannoch-Bland, 1998). Room attendants cannot respond or reject racist statements about their co-workers, as exemplified in the incident related by Abbie, as they do not have the power to challenge guests. There was a level of racism demonstrated by the room attendants’ beliefs that differences in guest behaviour were entirely due to their race. Further racism was evident in the hotel context from guests’ as shown in Abbie’s exemplar of guest attitude to staff. There are a complex set of tensions within such expressed views and resultant behaviours.

To explain this point more fully, mainstream discourse treats identity categories of race as remnants of bias or domination in traditional patriarchal societies where the power held by certain individuals excludes or marginalises difference (Crenshaw, 1995a). Intersectional identity encompasses multiple grounds of identity where women may be disadvantaged in several identities in construction of their social worlds (Crenshaw, 1995b). For some room attendants, race, class and gender intersect
in compounding oppression in interactions. Geert Hofstede (2001) argues that cultural difference is based on six dimensions of values: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, temporal orientation, and individualism. The nationalities criticised most often by room attendants may be characterised by a high masculinity and unequal power orientation. While Hofstede’s work does much to explain the attitudes encountered by room attendants, his framework does not take gender differences into consideration. Room attendants’ reactions to different cultures needs to be viewed in the context of the gender differentiation and history in regard to women within the guests’ particular nations (Hofstede, 2001). Guest behaviour that appeared to cross all cultures was the sexual harassment of room attendants.

**Sexual Harassment**

Another major concern with respect to guest interactions involved approaches from male guests seeking sexual gratification of some kind. Of the 46 participants, only two had not experienced requests for sexual favours from a male guest. Those who reported no experience of sexual harassment were employed in a family-oriented, resort style hotel. When I mentioned the high rate of sexual harassment to two HR managers they said they had no knowledge of it. This demonstrates the previously identified disconnect in communication within the hierarchal levels of hotels. The lack of upward communication to inform management of ‘on the floor’ experiences demonstrates the room attendants’ contribution and inability to change their invisibility. Common styles of guests’ approach were described by Elaine, aged in her twenties:

> I get offers often, it’s like oh what are you doing tonight? Do you want to come back here? I’ll take you out. I hate it. Some are nice but most of the time they are old.

While HR managers did not appear aware of the problem of sexual harassment for room attendants, there appeared some establishment procedures in place to deal with these issues, mainly reporting to supervisors. In the workplace, financially vulnerable women (such as many room attendants) are the most likely to experience sexual harassment (MacKinnon, 1979). Most scholarly definitions of sexual harassment are
founded on Catherine MacKinnon’s (1979, p. 1) description as “the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power.” This conduct is unwelcome and unsolicited, and it is both pervasive and varying in workplaces across all age groups (Christopher Uggen & Amy Blackstone, 2004). Scholars in this field mainly research colleague and supervisor predatory behaviour; there is much less focus on customer or ‘guest’ sexual harassment.

The guest making an advance would often indicate that there was money available or attempt to shut the door while the room attendant was cleaning. Maureen, aged in her 20s, had such an experience:

When I went there he shut the door and I thought ‘oh oh’ and I opened the door, and he said ‘Oh you don’t close the door when you are cleaning?’ and I said ‘Yes sir the door must be open it is hotel policy’ and he said ‘Just close that door and you can have the money on the table’ and I said ‘I’m sorry sir we are not allowed to close the door when we are working. I said I am very sorry’, and I went to the bathroom and started there because he was sitting on the bed, and then he undressed and went inside the bed and I grabbed my bucket and I ran, and then I went to the office and I said this man is approaching me.

The fact that the attendants’ workplace is also the guest’s bedroom (and therefore an intimate, personal space) meant that room attendants were particularly vulnerable to inappropriate guest behaviour. They often have a heightened awareness of their vulnerability. Clare, aged in her 20s, explained this instinct:

You do get the dirty men who just like looking you up and down. I think you can tell, you know you can feel danger.

Many attendants spoke of relying on their instincts to gauge sexual threats, and these instincts provided a method to preserve their basic physiological need for safety (Abraham Maslow, 1943). The isolation of working alone in a hotel room and the low social status of room attendants makes them vulnerable to sexual harassment. The prevalence of sexual harassment reveals the unequal power relationships within the social structure of hotels, and is consistent with the finding of others that sexual harassment is more likely to occur in highly structured and stratified hierarchies (Sergio Herzog, 2007; Remus Ilies, Nancy Hauserman, Susan Schwochau & John Stibal,
Sexual harassment studies in the field of employment relations have identified it as widespread in organisations and in other social contexts (Lashley, 1998).

As previously noted, the low social status of room attendants was symbolised by the uniforms they wore. These uniforms did not appear to suit the ages of many room attendants (28 participants were aged over forty) or to be appropriate for the tasking they had to perform. Further, their uniforms were viewed as sexualising symbols. Bianca, in her 40s, explains the unsuitability of her uniform:

*The supervisors wear pants, and we’re the ones bending over, heads down and bum up. It makes you sort of jumpy, woman, bedroom, they don’t think beyond that, and this stupid uniform doesn’t help, I’m 43 and five foot ten and I have to wear a dress that doesn’t even cover my knees, I wanted to wear pants but I’m not allowed to.*

There was a perception that the dresses most establishments provided as a uniform contributed to attendants’ sexualisation and thus exacerbated their vulnerability to sexual advances from guests. This objectification of women through dress maintained room attendants’ social subordination (Wajcman, 2000) within the hotel.

Some room attendants found their own, or other attendants’ ethnicity exposed them to higher levels of harassment, as Helen, aged in her 50s recounts:

*The younger staff, especially the Asians, have a lot of problems with the men trying to pick them up and chat them up and I think they find it pretty distressing.*

The room attendants identified cultural influences in these male guests’ sexual predatory behaviour. Some guests physically touched room attendants, as Kate, in her 50s, related how her dark skin colour was an attraction for one guest:

*One old Japanese man he said to me he wants a girl, in his very funny Japanese while he stroked my arm ‘Please I want a girl, I want a black girl’ and I laughed.*

While sexual harassment is viewed in many Western countries as an offence punishable under law, it is not so in many other countries. So some guests’ behaviour needs to be viewed as a social manifestation of traditional patriarchal systems, which are influenced by cultural ideologies of social gender relations (Herzog, 2007). Leininger (1995) defined culture as the shared beliefs, values and lifestyle of a
particular group, which influence actions. The room attendants often identified certain ethnicities as particularly forthcoming with invitations, however men in general were perceived to proffer these requests. Fiona, in her 50s, relates her consideration of the focus of men:

Oh they have a one-track mind, they ask me out. Mostly I just laugh and tell them I am just here to work. I find they are usually foreign, that’s how men are.

Australian society takes a ‘multicultural’ perspective that there are many different cultures represented within it, and that these differences and similarities need to be valued and understood. As many of the propositions for sexual favours were reported to be from males visiting Australia, it may be that globalisation (including travel and tourism) has destabilised social identities, such that men are not constrained by their cultural norms when away from their homes (Kevin Gosine, 2008). Feminist theorists argue that sexual harassment is based on gender inequalities. Privileges based on gender underpin culturally prescribed understandings of sexuality (Robert Connell, 1987; 2002) and may explain some guests’ perceptions of sexual harassment. Notions of room attendant availability for sex may also be a result of cultural socialisation of guests (Kmec & Gorman, 2010). For example the BBC television drama ‘Hotel Babylon’ (aired from 19th January 2006 to 14th August 2009; BBC, 2011) portrays a social perception which denigrates and sexualises housekeeping staff (Candice Harris, Helen Tregidga & David Williamson, 2011). Whilst the instigating reasons for male guests to engage in this behaviour in the hotel is beyond the boundedness of this study, sexual requests were reported as common by the room attendants.

Room attendants stated they received little training in procedures to meet guests’ sexual requests, other than to ‘report it’ when these incidents occurred. Bianca, aged in her 40s, identified her hotel’s protocol for reporting sexual harassment:

I felt scared I was sexually harassed by a guest, and I followed procedure, I went down and did the right thing. And he and his mates had this room and the next door room. I was given a radio should anything go wrong. I complained and the new supervisor said ‘oh if anything should happen just shut the connecting door and ring down’. Well really how do they think you can do that, I just get raped and then ring you after, no worries, so I cracked a shit over that one.
The supervisor in this incident was not skilled enough to recognise a serious situation and was possibly in breach of hotel procedure, illustrating why sexual harassment was endemic in the participating hotels. The commonness of these incidents and the failure of this supervisor to take the issue seriously, indicates that the room attendant’s experience of harassment is 'normalised'. While attendants in my study reported no hesitation in reporting such incidents, research in Wales revealed room attendants felt powerless and embarrassed to report incidents of sexual harassment (Powell & Watson, 2006). This is supported further by a meta-analysis of sexual harassment incidence from 86,578 respondents in the United States of America, which found only 24 per cent of victims reported sexual harassment at work (Ilies et al., 2003). In Performing room attendants were subjected to oppression through the nuisance actions of some male guests.

Room attendants found their action to confront guests engaging in sexual harassment resulted in retaliatory feedback, such as negative room servicing evaluations. Elaine, aged in her 20s, recounted that while her employing establishment regarded sexual harassment seriously, a guest engaged in retaliatory action:

*I went downstairs and I told the executive housekeeper straight away and they came up with the duty manager and security and he said ‘No I just asked her to have a cigarette’, but he wrote some angry comments on the guest survey card.*

As a means of coping with sexual harassment, some room attendants were able to engage in dialogue with front office as an unofficial warning system where information was exchanged about potential negative guest behaviour. Abbie, aged in her 40s, relates an example where the front office showed cooperation and sensitivity to these situations:

*I’ll talk to the girls from the front office and they say this person is in room whatever and warn us to watch out.*

A Norwegian study also reports some levels of sexual harassment in hotels; while not identified as a major problem in that study, it resulted in some room attendants being afraid to work alone (Onsøyen et al., 2009). Room attendants described strategies they used to fend off this unlawful and unwanted behaviour by male guests. They relied on their personal life experiences to guide their behaviour. Danielle, aged in her 30s, explained:
If they are in the bed naked and I just throw in the towels and leave. It depends on how they react as well, some girls come here straight out of school and they don’t know how to handle certain men or situations, it comes with age and experience.

More mature room attendants felt that they could handle sexual advances from male guests due to their accumulated life experiences. Rebecca, aged in her 50s, reflected:

*The young ones are very emotional and don’t handle the difficult guests, some of the men can be a handful if they are drunk.*

The women’s life experiences appeared to be critical in how the situation evolved. Here, I relate several examples of guest approaches to room attendants to convey the commonality of this issue and how room attendants responded. There was evidence that some room attendants tolerated these advances as ‘typical male behaviour’. The most common strategy adopted to cope with unwanted male guest advances was to resort to humour as Caitlin, aged in her 50s, revealed:

*I am still smiling, you know because if you will be aggressive then the trouble will come. The young girls have to be aware for dealing with that, just don’t be aggressive. If they will approach you just say ‘oh no sir I’m sorry we are not doing the monkey business here’.*

Analysis of empirical material revealed that most attendants believed that the best response to unpleasant and unsought invitations by male guests was with humour, in a demonstration of emotional labour. To cope with such unsolicited requests, room attendants needed to strategise to avoid contact and to avoid giving offence, and this required capacities and strengths not related to their jobs. Helen, also in her 50s, stated:

*They ask me out, mostly I just laugh and tell them I am just here to work, but sometimes they say come and sit down and talk to me, and I say sorry I can’t do that, and they say “Oh well we can go out after you finish work?” I laugh and I make it into a joke, so I don’t hurt their feelings because they are pretty old themselves and most not very attractive.*

The compassion exhibited was a demonstration of sympathetic emotional labour. Maintaining harmonious guest interactions required the room attendant to convey an impression of tolerance. This shows emotional labour, which required “sophisticated social intelligence” in order to perform and defer the guest without giving offence
In most instances, room attendants made an effort to refuse such guests’ requests in a gentle manner instead of a strongly assertive ‘No means no’ manner. Many room attendants spoke of having to reject a guest’s invitations several times. Hotel norms oblige room attendants to address guests politely as part of emotional labour performance, however, this may give some men the impression that the room attendant is offering something other than mere courtesy. Eva, aged in her 20s, explained:

*I think with guys you just have to talk to them nicely and they think they are in with a chance, and I’ve got to be nice as its part of my job. But it’s like don’t take this the wrong way, there’s a fine line.*

Based on room attendants’ perspectives, the hotels expected room attendants to perform pleasant interactions, which involved acting in a subservient manner, and at times this emotional labour was misinterpreted by guests. Sexual harassment was a powerful act perpetrated by male guests against these women room attendants and ranged from verbal explicit propositions to touching.

The boundedness of my research into the employment experiences of room attendants does not permit detailed investigation of the macro-level relationships between power and sexual harassment. However, there was some evidence of association between financial power of the guests and the frequency of sexual harassment in Performing. Room attendants learned through experience to adopt a joking approach rather than an aggressive manner when rejecting guests’ advances, to ensure no offence was given and that respect was still offered to the guest. Room attendants act in Performing requires engaging in emotional labour to deflect some male guests’ narrow vision of room attendants as sexual objects. Guest objectification of room attendants was facilitated by oppression evident in perceptions of managements’ unawareness of sexual harassment, the coercive behaviour of some male guests, the uniform design and cultural perceptions. Some room attendants reported that mishandling of these sexual offers could have consequences via retaliatory negative surveys from rejected guests. The potential for negative guest surveys shows that guests’ opinions could be a source of considerable social power vis a vis attendants.
Power and Invisibility

The organisational and social hierarchies presented in this chapter subordinated room attendants to such an extent that they were subject to a range of different forms of power and oppressive behaviour, which intersected and reinforced each other. The power exerted in the organisation appeared coercive and controlling, whilst the social power experiences related to social perceptions of occupation and related social status and financial assets. Such power behaviour arose within the organisational hierarchy, and as part of the wider social structure within hotels related to room attendants’ interaction with guests. My research was based on critical theory, aimed at exposing the hegemonic forces that create injustice for room attendants, particularly their invisibility. In Performing, the management use of the power of ‘command authority’ (Goffman, 1959) ensured that room attendants conformed to social norms. This authority subjugated room attendants via a network of created management and supervisory positions.

As defined in the introduction, oppression, inequality and harassment are founded on the dominance of one group over another. Room attendants experienced the hierarchical management structure of hotels as organised around dominance and the exercise of control. Within the hotel institution, power was endowed in individuals through their positional authority, leading to ‘social consent’, which indicated that autocratic management styles predominated as the accepted norm (Biung-Ghi Ju, 2010). Social systems – as are commonly found in service industries such as hospitality – further serve to suppress workers’ interests. These beliefs encourage servitude based on beliefs of others ‘rightfully’ controlling power (Lukes, 1974), which is a form of false consciousness. False consciousness is the Marxist thesis that workers are misled or unaware of institutional processes of ideological control, which are antithetical to their interests. Some room attendants’ statements revealed they were aware of efforts to control them, yet often felt powerless to challenge due to the power of management. Other studies of room attendants have reported that inflexible and autocratic hotel management styles are typical, entrenching within the hotel a
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

culture that relies on power positions (Onsøyen et al, 2009; Sollund, 2006). In this study the predominant hotel culture at the five hotels mirrored autocratic management styles. How an individual room attendant related to those in establishment hierarchy depended upon organisational culture, with the room attendants believing this was largely based on chastisement and coercion.

Contextual displays of power were evident in the exercise of control through position power. Helen, with seven years’ experience, explained boundaries of attendants’ action:

*You have to keep in line and if you don’t you are in trouble.*

Room attendants related many occasions where they experienced coercive power (with punishment potential). A hierarchical structure demands that subordinates adopt the characteristics of submissiveness, passivity and dependency in order to be considered ‘well adjusted’ (Oakley, 2003). Some room attendants related some resistance strategies in certain contexts such as intense surveillance by floor supervisors. At the same time room attendants consented to practices and managerial styles that they found repressive, for instance the expectations of management in relation to their physical tasking and lack of voice. In this connection, Foucault (1977) has explained the concepts of discipline and punishment, identifying organisational and administrative mechanisms which enforce control and provide a means to exploit cheap labour. Foucault (1980, 1988) argued that power, which placed constraints upon a person’s freedom to act and also influences her or his self-perception. Foucault envisioned a number of mini cages of constraints of smaller worlds locked into larger constraining systems. For a room attendant these cages of constraints are formed by the layers of organisational hierarchy reflected in lack of acknowledgement, the conditions of their employment and the requirement to defer to guests. The constraints of the hotel are locked into the broader social system, which confines room attendants, through their occupation, to the lower levels.

Linking back to my central notion of *Performing*, the subjective perceptions of hierarchy and power held by room attendants were constructed through their interactions as social actors on the hotel stage. Room attendants questioned their organisational and social level positioning. This positioning was revealed in their
oppression, inequality and harassment by staff and guests. Being largely unacknowledged and unrecognised or considered of little worth resulted in room attendants’ invisibility. Room attendants appeared complicit in allowing this power by accepting employment under the aforementioned conditions, albeit they may have little other options due to ageism, lack of other skills or financial necessity. This meant that room attendants’ function was to provide services, while offering compliance to others higher in the hotel and social hierarchies. The hotels were in this respect highly patriarchal, requiring female room attendant submission to the power of management and guests. It has long been recognised that the workplace is connected to broader social narratives (Harry Braverman, 1974; Tina Besley, 2009). In this case, the broader social structure impacted room attendant experiences as reported in this chapter through interactions with other people in the hotel operational and social hierarchies. Interactions, such as experienced by room attendants within the organisational and social hierarchies, as well as cultural norms, which influenced some guest behaviour, have some impact on making of the self (Anthony Elliot, 2001). There is broad belief that hierarchical organisational structures and autocratic patriarchal management styles (such as exists in many hotels) lead to disrespect for and an undervaluing of employees in a context of servility and oppression (Judith Howard, 2001; Belinda Leach, 2005; Margaret Power, 2008; Mark Testa, 2001). The characteristics of gender and occupation are believed to reinforce and legitimise occupational and social hierarchies (Donald Bergh, David Ketchen, Brian Boyd & Julianne Bergh, 2010). These characteristics of gender and occupation differentiated room attendants as low within status hierarchy and developed performance expectations and shaped their behaviour in Performing on the hotel stage.

Reflections on Occupational and Social Hierarchies

Room attendants’ experiences of occupational and social hierarchies revealed their inequality, and experiences of humiliation, marginalisation and harassment, which contributed to their invisibility. Immersed in the hotel and social hierarchies were symbols of status, which placed room attendants at the lower level. Room attendants’ low level placement within hotels organisational hierarchies and their low pay did not
reflect the high performance expectations identified in tasking. The hotel hierarchy was used as a means of control, and this control kept room attendants in place, exploited and continued their general *invisibility*. More often than not, demonstrations of power were authoritarian and often patriarchal, and were destructive from room attendants’ perspectives. Foucault conceived that the power and surveillance expressed by employers harnessed bodily features including face, dress, and voice, and this was evident in the room attendants’ employment experiences, specifically their uniform and the requirements for emotional labour. The visible embodiment of labour was deeply ingrained, and this was an aspect that is considered difficult to identify or quantify (Carol Wolkowitz & Chris Warhurst, 2010). Nevertheless, the room attendants’ lack of voice and general non-recognition as a community of value revealed lack of respect, and contributed to their *invisibility* through oppression and inequalities.

Immediate supervisors, varied widely in their treatment of attendants. Some supervisors revealed their understanding of tasking impositions on room attendants. Negligible contact between the general managers and room attendants was reported, with limited effective interactions with human resource departments. In this study, these traditional hierarchical hotel structures were oppressive by preventing upward communication and condoning condescending treatment of room attendants, revealing that institutional discrimination was inherent in gendered work relations. This gendered discrimination was based on antecedent socio-cultural female subjugation. Discrimination was further perpetuated in the hotels, as agents of social control, requiring certain behaviour from room attendants and their subservience to guests. Room attendants were typecast at ‘the bottom’ from a socio-economic status designation perspective because of their occupation, resulting in their inequality and marginalisation. Room attendants’ *invisibility* was further mirrored in the interactions with some of the guests and the broader public showing avoidance of disclosure of their occupation. The room attendants demonstrated their experiences of being at a low social status level as exasperation, sadness, regret, offence and indignation. Considering the identified physical acts and hierarchical context, *Performing* shows room attendants were involved in construction of the setting in their projection of a hotel employee deferring to guests. The major issues in interactions with guests from
the room attendants’ lower social level related to differing cultural perceptions of their role and widespread gender based sexual harassment.

The complex subtleties of hotel organisational structures created unequal power relationships that inhibited democratic fairness for room attendants. The hierarchical structure of hotels affected room attendants’ sense of status and provided an understanding of what it means to be ‘at the bottom’, which impacted their self-esteem. The room attendants’ employment experiences revealed issues of power within the hierarchical organisational and social conditions within hotels that contributed to room attendant invisibility. The psychological effect of being designated at low levels both occupationally and socially are difficult to determine. Despite their low status the room attendants found dignity in their employment and this is the area of focus of the following chapter. Chapter seven is the final interpretation chapter and focuses on the room attendant ‘self’ and how these room attendants found ‘dignity in their employment’. Room attendants found dignity despite the physical difficulties identified in tasking in chapter four, the working conditions and social influences described in chapter five, and the organisational and social hierarchical experiences related in this chapter.
Chapter Seven

Finding Dignity in Employment

Well I’m happy, I find it is a very different job, I like it, I do my best in here.
(Susan, Gold Coast Hotel Room Attendant, 2010).

This chapter presents the final process of my conceptual model: Performing. Finding dignity in employment forms a basic psychological process (BPP) of how room attendants integrated the complexities of their work. The main challenges for room attendants were the hard work of tasking and intense time pressures, low pay, and casualisation of their employment, few opportunities for training and unsuitable uniforms. These conditions of their employment were impacted by experiences of being at the lowest level of organisational and social hierarchies. All of these aspects revealed exploitation, marginalisation and oppression, which affected their room attendant ‘self’. The room attendant ‘self’ is their psychological assessment of their being as humans. As a consequence of Performing, to enable reinforcement of a ‘self’ at the hotel workplace, room attendants found dignity in their employment through a suite of different masks adopted on the hotel stage. As self-respect depends on how others treat us, the room attendants in this study appeared to engage certain qualities that formed a social psychological reflection of ‘self’ to manage these situations. The room attendants revealed how they found dignity in their employment through ‘self’ qualities such as personal inclinations, dispositions, capabilities and affective domain qualities. While the concept of ‘self’ qualities and distinguishing between them remains controversial, I found some predominant attitudes and behaviour that was engaged by room attendants to contend with their daily performance.

Dignity in employment relates how room attendants generated a positive outlook to their employment experiences. By assuming different masks room attendants were able to deal with the negative aspects of their physical exploitation of tasking, their hierarchical marginalisation with resultant lack of voice, and the
oppressive social perceptions of their occupation. The personal qualities, dispositions, and capabilities were demonstrated through room attendants’ performance of discretion in relation to guest behaviour, honesty in relation to guest property and adopting a positive attitude to take pride in their work. All of these character qualities provided the hotel with some measure of achieving profit margins through exploitation, marginalisation and oppression by appropriating room attendants’ labour as surplus value. *Performing* as a theory attests to room attendants’ *invisibility* despite their value as employees in 5 star hotel settings. Dignity in employment, as the final process represents the right positioned component of the conceptual model of *Performing*, as shown below in Figure 7.1.

![Figure 7.1. Chapter Seven Structure – Dignity in Employment](image)

The theory of *Performing* serves to give ‘voice’ to room attendants to make known their employment experiences of working in 5 star hotels, and detailing and uncovering the constant challenges they experienced, particularly with regard to their exploitation by the hotels. Exploitation was revealed through the physiological demands of tasking, long identified in hospitality or hotel study literature, which continue due to lack of recognition, acknowledgement or room attendants’ *invisibility*. Further, *Performing* illustrated how room attendants perceived that their financial recognition was not commensurate with their labour; and that their contribution to hotel operations was marginalised. The room attendants’ marginalisation was a result of room attendants’ low placement within the hotel and social hierarchies, which gave
them little voice and treated them as invisible. Room attendants’ oppression was related to the condescending autocratic behaviour by some supervisors and higher management and mirrored in the social hierarchy played out during guest interaction within hotels. The room attendants’ experiences of social hierarchy revealed imposition of low social status on these women, and revealed common experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace. Despite an exploitative, marginalising and oppressive working context, this chapter expounds a basic psychological process (BPP) of how room attendants found dignity in their employment through a suite of different masks they adopted in their roles. The masking enabled room attendants to contend with perceptions of their occupation. The room attendants’ experiences of exploitation, marginalisation, oppression and appropriation of their labour contributed to room attendants’ symbiosis of ‘self’ within the hotel context.

The room attendants’ employment experiences presented a range of circumstances within the instrumental context of 5 star hotels, which denied dignity. Dignity involves the aspects of “integrity, respect, pride, recognition, worth and standing or status”, and is eroded by “shame, stigma, humiliation, lack of recognition, or being mistrusted or taken for granted” (Sayer, 2007 p. 565, 567). In the room attendants’ view, their working experiences provided few positive aspects to establish dignity, while on a daily basis their dignity was eroded. In particular the implications of organisational and social inequity provided an impetus to room attendant masking which was justified through their reasons for working, and aspirations they held. While room attendants’ experiences of inequity within organisational and social hierarchies were shown in the previous chapter, the implications for the room attendant ‘self’ are now presented.

Social Inequity

At the lowest level of the hotel operational and social hierarchies, room attendants recognised the public perceptions of their low occupation classification, and this impacted on their self-esteem, or subjective opinions of themselves. Room attendants felt of little worth due to the stigmatisation of a submissive role where it was difficult
to be assertive. This general feeling was demonstrated by Isabella, with 13 years’ experience:

*We are on the end of it, the bottom rung, you feel that what we do here is not that important, even though you know that your work is key to the hotel, the rooms are the hotel, but we feel that everyone else considers us a minor detail.*

Consequences of these perceptions for the room attendants were feelings of frustration at the injustice in the lack of recognition of their contribution to the hotels. Public perceptions forced some to use an occupation title that they believed to be aurally aesthetic. Jamie, with nine years’ experience tells how she prefers a politically incorrect title:

*Because of people’s perceptions of cleaners and the put downs, I tell people I am a housemaid rather than a room attendant, just sounds better.*

Here Jamie adopted ‘maid’ due to her perceptions of a more flattering descriptor than the subservient connotations of ‘attendant’. One’s occupation is viewed as the third most important source of identity after family and nationality (Michael Emmison & Mark Western, 1990). The social aversion to the task of cleaning, and extrapolation to those who do it, left room attendants in a position of having to avoid disclosure of their occupations, or select terminology that they considered less demeaning based on their social experiences. Natalie, with three years’ experience, was fervent in her opinion of how the attitudes of others made her feel:

*I hate being a room attendant, because you are looked down upon by everybody else, you feel like a piece of shit, its degrading.*

Perceived attitudes of others resulted in feelings of self-shame. There was common use of scatological metaphors by room attendants to describe their feelings of low social status. This swearing was an emotional release and displayed the intensity of emotions in feeling demeaned and humiliated in their employment. Pamela, with five years’ experience, described her feelings:

*It feels like you’re a bottom feeder, just crap.*

Such examples of perceived inferior status were a source of stress for the room attendants. Being placed at lower levels room attendants had little power or ‘voice’ to demand recognition of their value. Lack of appreciation of room attendants’ work was based on considerations of their work as dirty and beneath the attention of superiors, and this has been noted in a previous study (Powell & Watson, 2006). The lack of
appreciation of room attendants’ work, which was performed largely unseen and anonymously, in the main rendered room attendants invisible. Performing, grounded in employment experiences, reveals room attendants hid their humiliation and undervaluation by adopting a mask while acting out emotional labour to maintain social distance.

Room attendant work lacks status and involves a servile relationship to others. Aspects of low status and stigma within the workplace are believed to cause low esteem at the workplace (Helga Hallfrimsdottir, Rachel Phillips, Cecilia Benoit & Kevin Walby, 2008; Mark Snyder, 2001; Paul Thompson & Chris Smith, 2010). Individuals are believed to apportion themselves as belonging to social ranks based on their occupation as part of wider identity creation class consciousness (Thompson & Smith, 2010). The room attendant, as the low organisational and social one, was rendered invisible through avoidance behaviour, and lack of recognition. Social stereotypes were displayed when the guests, as audience, assumed all there was to the room attendant was the ‘mask of submissiveness’ the hotel hierarchy demanded (Goffman, 1959). The avoidance behaviours reported by guests in chapter six, such as looking at their watches to indicate they did not have time to engage with room attendants, showed guest complicity with social and organisational norms, thus co-creating the room attendants’ low status. Lack of recognition of subordinates as ‘human’ in many fields has been noted in literature (Luthans & Waldersee, 1992). There was also some disclosure of how room attendants managed social cognitive impressions of their work which located them as socially downcast, to find dignity in their employment by placing themselves above others.

This ‘othering’ process was demonstrated in cognitive impressions created by comparisons to reinforce self-worth. Gwen, with 15 years’ experience, explained how she differentiated occupations:

_We offer personalised service whereas the cleaners of public areas are just cleaners._

This shows an internalisation of social expectations congruent with prescribed social hierarchy roles in which people categorise others into social groups that contributes to their ‘self’ (Deborah Kidder, 2002). Supporting these assumptions of how women
working as room attendants were categorised is that individual psychology is shaped by social hierarchical structure. The feelings, thoughts and behaviours of room attendants were encompassed by the premise of social psychology: “that group life is the setting inside of which individual experience takes place, and that such group life exerts a decisive influence on such experience” (Blumer, 1969, p. 102). The inequality felt by room attendants was based on their experiences of exclusion, marginalisation and restriction, and literature identifies these types of experiences as reflecting fundamental inequalities of women (Arat, 2008).

Many room attendants spoke of how they attempted to challenge their loss of dignity and minimise denigration of their ‘self’ through efforts to show their occupation was worthy. Caitlin, with four years’ experience, explained how she believed her own behaviour and attitude would alter the opinions of others:

*If you look down on the job then other people look down on the job. But if you do your job properly and you have this high regard for your work then they will too.*

Caitlin’s belief in co-construction of the attitudes and values of society was a proactive measure to address others’ perceptions of room attendants’ low occupational and social status. This is further illustrated by Eva, with three years’ experience, as she applied a universal code of conduct incorporating the ‘golden rule’ in an ethical stance in interactions with guests:

*I think it is how you treat them is how you get treated back, so I always try to make the effort.*

A measure of finding dignity in their employment was the maturity demonstrated by Eva and room attendants’ diligent efforts in performance of tasking. Such levels of high moral reasoning and conscientiousness were enacted to employed compensate for the lack of respect from others.

Inequality revealed during interactions with other staff and guests within the organisational and social hierarchies, discussed in chapter six, has been shown to affect self and role identities (Shigehiro Oishi, Selin Kesebir & Benjamin Snyder, 2009). Demeaning encounters, experienced by room attendants’ during interactions with other staff, guests and the broader public, are believed to induce detrimental
psychological changes in self-esteem (Zell & Alicke, 2010). Room attendants often reaffirmed and justified their value when recounting these experiences. In this way, from a social psychological perspective (David Krackhardt & Lyman Porter, 1985), the extent of room attendants’ dignity in employment was formed by their own and others’ values, beliefs, perceptions and motives. The discrimination and inferior treatment felt by participating room attendants during their daily interactions with other staff and guests, reflected perceptions of their low value and unworthiness for attention, and this lack of attention or acknowledgement contributed to their invisibility. Recognising the many negative aspects identified over the previous three chapters, room attendants offered many different reasons for their involvement in this occupation. The reasons for working as room attendants included the most commonly articulated constraints of ageism, lack of technology knowledge, and poor education, which diminished their employment options.

**Reasons for Working as a Room Attendant**

The often monotonous job, requiring hard physical work, that offered low pay and minimal social status, raises the question of why these women chose to work as room attendants. The room attendants’ pay was perceived by them as very low, despite being the minimum legal rate, for work that was physically hard and signalled servility in a subordinate position, requiring deference to guests and most other staff. Apart pay, the reasons for involvement included having an opportunity for exercise, doing a cognitively non-demanding job, as well as providing a sense of purpose in being occupied and involved socially. Alison, with four years’ experience, rationalised her involvement:

> It takes my mind away from home, it keeps me active and keeps me in the work environment and a little bit up to date with what’s going on, I feel part of society if I work and that is really important to me.

The hard work of tasking was often framed as keeping healthy and fit, as Abbie, with 14 years’ experience, explained:

> It’s bending and stretching and its exercise, that’s what I think of it when I do it, it’s my gym, like some of the girls say ‘gee you’ve lost weight’. I’m conscious of
what I do and it is a strenuous job at time, but the majority of the time I just think I’m here and have exercise so I live longer and stay healthy.

Other room attendants endorsed Abbie’s view that the physical labour involved in tasking was ‘exercise’ that would improve their health. The health benefits are minimal however, as many of the activities identified under tasking have been documented as potentially harmful to room attendants’ health, namely the physiological demands of bed-making, moving the trolley and cleaning the bathroom, described in chapter four. Natalie clarified how long term employment as a room attendant diminished other opportunities:

*The young ones, even though they are doing it now, if they stay in this job, by the time they are 30 their body will be stuffed, and it will be too late to do anything else. A lot of them here have been doing it for twenty years, but you get trapped in the job, and the older you are the harder to get out.*

The physicality of the job resulted in potentially contradictory outcomes: possible increases in fitness, along with possible long-term physical effects that might diminish their employment opportunities as they aged.

The external physical environment in which they worked delighted many attendants. Jamie, like others, appreciated the beautiful sea views available from Gold Coast hotels:

*I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t like it, sometimes I just hate it, I want to leave and find something else. But I do enjoy it and I like the hours, it’s not boring and I see the ocean every day and that’s great, and there’s always worse jobs out there.*

In various ways, room attendants demonstrated a capacity to provide their own satisfactions through cognitive reconstruction of their employment situation, emphasising what they enjoyed and de-emphasising what they did not. Sometimes their choice of work was based on comparisons with other jobs, which they could not do, or did not want, for various reasons. For instance, some said they lacked technological aptitude, which inhibited their choices of work. Rebecca, with three years’ experience, rationalised:

*I had tried an old folks’ home but it was too sad, and I don’t think my husband will ever work again, neither of us use computers.*
Some compared their jobs with those in the low-paid retail service sector which, like room attending, was perceived to be physically hard. Retail employment also involves intense interaction with the public as Eva, with three years’ experience, explained:

*Oh in retail you are standing on your feet all day and the customers are so horrible. I am happy here, I know the place, the people are nice; other places could be worse. If I go to another hotel I have to get to know the staff and you don’t know anything and your way around, I would have to make friends again, it’s nice to work where you already know people, and your bosses.*

The room attendants’ justification of occupation choice is consistent with theories of rational choice behaviour. Rational choice behaviour places worker needs in alignment with job characteristics (Gerald Salancik & Jeffrey Pfeffer, 1977). The room attendants identified the positive aspects of working in hotels to justify their participation and find dignity in their employment.

Working as a room attendant was often rationalised in the context of having few other choices in the labour market. Many room attendants were resigned to their occupation, due to a lack of options related largely to their age, level of education and lack of technological skills and aptitude. Natalie, with three years’ experience, expressed her fears:

*Now I’m too scared to apply for other jobs because of my age, it’s really hard, like I need the money but what else can I do?*

Such resignation to life’s circumstances was explained by Elisabeth, with five years’ experience, as she espoused some benefits of her work:

*I only have another ten years and I retire anyway so I’ll stay here. I know the job and it suits me. I like working on my own. I’m not the best but I think I do a good job. I like a tidy room, I get a lot of satisfaction out of it.*

The expressions of satisfaction with one’s lot were often linked to perceptions that there were few alternatives, due to lack of education and advancing years. Room attendants, anticipating ageism from potential employers, balanced the advantages and disadvantages based on their individual priorities and perceptions of their ‘self’ (John Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer & Jennifer Platt, 1968). In expressing the belief that they had little in the way of employment options, room attendants formed a basic psychological process to develop a coherent justification of
their choice of occupation. While other employment alternatives were often considered unavailable due to age, educational or technological skills, many room attendants expressed aspirations for future careers outside hotels.

**Having Aspirations**

Careers are thought to be a sequence of occupational roles that allow advancement through organisational roles such as rising up the levels of a hotel hierarchy. Most room attendants felt restraints to pursuit of a career within the hotel due to the small number of people employed at higher levels. Advancing to floor supervisor was seen as the most realistic aspiration within the housekeeping department, and even these positions were not considered commonly available. The need to provide financial support to their family households was the main motivator for room attendants’ employment. This needed support was often related as delaying the pursuit of their career aspirations. For example, Daja, with four years’ experience, explained she had chosen to defer her aspirations of a career in finance until her children were independent. In the meantime, she was working to support her children:

> I just have to wait until the kids are settled and then I can think about me. I don’t want to spend twenty years of time here.

While Daja was working at the largest hotel participating in my study, she perceived little opportunity for advancement due to the minimal supervisory positions that became available. It is commonly portrayed that larger organisations, such as the hotel where Daja worked, usually offer a more formal career structure where room attendants could work towards supervisory and management roles (Connexions, 2010). This was not the experience of most participating room attendants. The lack of advancement opportunities in employment have been identified as strong predictors of occupation change (Maume, 2006), and this was the experience of some room attendants.

Some avenues for room attendants’ aspirations were the rare opportunities to undertake in-house training as a career path. Catherine, with 13 years’ experience, revealed her hopes for career advancement within the industry:
I will eventually become a supervisor because I think I am a very straight to the books person and I think I could manage the tasks and the girls, but I like working in hotels and I think I will carry on.

The room attendants’ experiences revealed few differences between the participating hotels in relation to provision of opportunities for advancement. The general perception was that achieving a supervisor role was not a quick process. As Catherine’s employment duration indicates, after 13 years she still aspired to climb one level of the hotel hierarchy. The modest opportunities for advancement affected room attendants’ employment continuity, as a strong relationship has been identified between advancement opportunities and job satisfaction (Hsu, 1995). In my study, long term aspirations for most participating room attendants did not include remaining in housekeeping employment. Aspirations included becoming a police officer, furthering their education and pursuing an entrepreneurial venture. Many also expressed contentment with status quo in the interim because of family commitments and ageism.

Ageism was given as a reason preventing advancement within the hotels for younger room attendants, as well as the reason for staying in their current employment for the more mature room attendants. Elaine, with five years’ experience, identified ageism as an inhibitor to her aspirations:

I really want to be a police officer but I don’t even have leaving certificate so I will have to study a bit first. I’ll never move up here, not if I stay in housekeeping, mainly because of my age. I know I could do the supervisor job but they think I am too young.

Ageism had many facets revealing establishment reluctance to appoint younger persons to supervise the generally more mature staff in housekeeping, and the appointment of younger staff for aesthetic reasons. The mature room attendants appeared more content to stay in this employment due to the security of being known, and knowing the context of their employment. Gwen, with 15 years’ experience, believed:

I would like to stay here, I am scared of going for new job. I would like less hours, I wouldn’t mind working just three days. I like the perks, I like the people.
I know my job and you have to think of my age too, to start another job, I’m already 44 so I guess by the time I am 47 maybe I will stop.

Room attendants generally acknowledged a limit to the duration of their ability to perform the physicality of tasking, and many also recognised that it was difficult to find new employment due to ageism and their lack of education. While all room attendants acknowledged the physical toll their work was causing, they felt they had little opportunity to change the situation. Many believed they had little choice other than accept the physical demands or seek alternative employment, a few expressed desires to pursue entrepreneurship.

Having entrepreneurial aspirations were related as long term plans as Helen, with seven years’ experience, explained:

I’ll probably end up in [European country] because my mum is really old and we have the property, and I would like to do something with that, so I’ll go back to my family in [European country] and do something like a coffee shop.

These expressions of entrepreneurship were related to experience and business ideas founded on personal activity preferences as Ivy, with four years’ experience, rationalised:

Well I would like to have my own bed and breakfast. I’ve always wanted to do that, I can do room cleaning, and I like to cook.

Desire to follow entrepreneurial activity that would build on their domestic sphere skill set was driven by acknowledgement of need to provide for their own retirement. These entrepreneurial aspirations were viewed as limited by domestic responsibilities, such as maintaining a regular income, and seen as further limited by a lack of education.

For some room attendants, their aspirations included actively pursuing an education to improve their occupation potential, as Eva, with three years’ experience, explained:

I’m studying at the moment, I’m doing criminology part time, criminal justice externally through Griffith and that’s pretty cool. I’d like to work in the Prison force cos it would be pretty different from this. I’ll probably be leaving next year
to go to our new house and finish my study. I’m looking for a career so that will be my focus, my bachelor degree.

Maureen, with one year’s experience, described her approach to her long term aspirations:

*I’m happy with where my life is going, there’s no real rush, I’ve always had a passion for architecture, I’m always making little plans and that, so it’s going to be great.*

Maureen’s passion for sketching building plans was intended to extend into formal qualifications in architecture. Taking a long term view, which included further education, was also the aspiration of Janice, with three years’ experience:

*I would like to be in South Africa working on a game reserve with animals. But I would have to get a degree first and then go over there. But I’m traveling now and when I’m thirty I will go to uni, I mean I’ve got to work another 40 years. By the time I get to retirement age, there won’t be a retirement age.*

As noted above, several mentioned pursuing an education and three had aspirations of joining the police force. A further dimension of having aspirations was a lack of direction and self-esteem as Rachael, with 10 years’ experience, explained:

*S sometimes I think I don’t really know what kind of abilities I have, I need to do something with my life but don’t know what, I know a lot of girls here are like that.*

Situated with low social status and low education, some women struggled to find a sense of belonging. Across a common theme were perceptions of lack of education or qualifications, which prevented the pursuit of aspirations. Generally, the younger room attendants did not consider staying in their current employment in the long term. While many room attendants had some level of aspirations, low self-esteem and low estimation of their own abilities inhibited these pursuits. This is supported by observations that women are more likely to hold low self-assessments of their abilities (Shelley Correll, 2001).

Regardless of the aforementioned inequities and few opportunities for advancement, many room attendants in my study related that they were happy in their work, deriving satisfaction from tasking conscientiously completed. Dignity of work was found in their performance with professional attitudes of striving to do their
best while contributing to social usefulness. While most room attendants felt they received little recognition to maintain their dignity, their tasking was taken seriously. Approaching tasking as more than a mere means to an end meant room attendants could derive self-respect from their professional performance. Their pursuit of self-respect was evident in room attendants’ discretion relating to guest personal information, their honesty and the pride they took in tasking.

**Discretion**

The room attendants’ operational context demanded their integrity to ensure guests’ privacy in the intimate setting of hotel bedrooms. Discretion related to how room attendants managed the personal implications of interactions with guests such as the intimate exposure related in chapter six, also extreme events such as suicide at the hotel. Susan, with four years’ experience, identified how these personal guest details were entrusted to her and relied on her own standards of responsibility:

*There are issues of confidentiality and you’ve got to live with yourself.*

The need for discretion was reported to often involve undressed guests in intimate situations, and this exposure often surprised and offended room attendants while *Performing* their tasking. These situations are typified by Pamela, with five years’ experience:

*I knocked on this door several times and there was no answer so I went in and there was this guy stark naked on the bed having a wank, and I was shocked, we are exposed to private lives.*

Pamela would have knocked three times and called out ‘housekeeping’. Despite her adherence to protocol, the guest did not respond and Pamela entered the room. As a consequence, the room attendant was an audience to the guest’s performance or act, and as such the guest created the scene, which Pamela found offensive and difficult to maintain her mask of normality. Satisfying basic sexual needs often occurred in hotel rooms and when exposed to this activity, most young room attendants found these displays disconcerting. More mature room attendants were more accepting of these displays as normal human behaviour and a part of life. Elisabeth, with five years’ experience, told how one of her younger colleagues interpreted such a situation:
There was a little Asian girl working opposite me and we could hear a couple having sex in the room, they were very noisy and she comes and says he is hurting her but I had a listen and I did not think so. But she got very distressed over it, so the supervisor came and said that is ok they are allowed to do that, that’s what most people do in hotel rooms.

Discretion suggests room attendants draw on a suite of different masks (or ‘self’ presentations) to suit the situational context of Performing. On entering a room the room attendants are never sure what situation they will encounter. There is a requirement for diplomacy due to their exposure to guest actions in hotel rooms and discretion in assurance of guest privacy.

Guest expectations of room attendants’ discretion may not always be met. In participating hotels the standards required room attendants to monitor guest behaviour to assist security goals. Rebecca, with three years’ experience, explains why room attendants’ unique position helped the hotel ensure appropriate guest behaviour:

*We have to be very careful of families, they sometimes expect us to be babysitters, they lock the kids in the room and go out, and there is a code for a certain age.*

The abandonment of children was particular to establishments closer to the ‘nightlife’ arenas of the Gold Coast. The room attendants recounted that they met these high standards of reporting potential illegal behaviour by guests. Their mask of discretion was challenged in the requirement to report unrecognised people on the floors and also noting hotel employees who were out of their normal workstations. Literature reveals other expectations of room attendants include noting suspicious items in the hotel rooms (for example firearms, large amounts of cash, or animals) (Baker & Huyton, 2001). By having to deal with these important aspects of some guests’ behaviour room attendants show their unrecognised value to the hotel.

A further aspect requiring discretion involved guest suicide. While suicide was not raised by most room attendants, those who broached the topic told how incidents of suicide by guests were deliberately kept quiet by hotel management. This was interpreted as a strategy to avoid negative press for the hotel. Several room
attendants who did raise this aspect of discretion stated there was no counselling offered to the staff. Cara, with three years’ experience, identified the frequency of suicides in hotels:

A lot of young men do (kill) themselves in the rooms and nothing ever gets broadcast, it’s like pretend it never happened.

Literature states housekeeping departments would have procedures to be “followed in the event of a death in a room” (Baker & Huyton, 2001, p. 111). The room attendants at these hotels did not report any services for employees encountering these situations, such as counselling. In this case the hotel’s image may be prioritised over public communication or counselling for staff. Discretion was the key to guests’ privacy and was aligned with guest expectations for room attendants to conduct themselves with honesty.

Honesty

Room attendants recognised special responsibilities with regard to the security of access to the guests’ rooms and property. Room attendants viewed honesty and integrity as important qualities in their performance commitment to ensure respect for guest’s property and their employer. Angela, with 11 years’ experience, conveyed her obligations to the hotel and guests:

An important part of my work is to accomplish my obligation for the day. I believe in putting in an honest days’ work. You don’t go home thinking oh gee I know I didn’t do that, because the guests are paying for it here and you need to feel good about your effort for the day.

The commitment and dedication in Performing involved fulfilment of required tasks and meeting desired standards. This work orientation was further associated with taking responsibility for keeping guests’ property safe in their absence, and expressed in feelings of being involved in personalised service and trust. Catherine, with 13 years’ experience, provided an example of what she thought was important in her conduct and how she found gratification in her honesty:

Like finding lost property in a room and being honest. I feel valued here, because I have so many good comments from the guests. Especially when I found this jewellery and I handed it in. Twenty diamonds in the ring and big
ones, and also a bracelet. I handed it in and I get a very nice letter from the management. I always look after the guests, my best that I can.

Recognition of her trustworthiness and reliability reinforced Catherine’s self-worth in her employment. This attitude has been identified as ‘work orientation’ outlook, and in my study was linked to the personal integrity of room attendants (Carl Hult & Stefan Svalfors, 2002). The participating room attendants strongly stated the need for honesty to meet guest and employer expectations. Conversely this honesty category also revealed that room attendants felt their honesty was questioned.

Many room attendants reported that trust from their hotel and guests appeared very thin when something went missing. Room attendants felt they were the first suspect on these occasions. Abbie, with 14 years’ experience, shared her reflections, which illustrated the general frustration many room attendants’ expressed about management and guest perceptions of dishonesty which eroded their dignity:

_Sometimes I am very disappointed, you know when the guest can’t find something they think we steal it. Like a guest may be looking for a book or even some chocolate and they ring down and sometimes you feel very unhappy, because the first thing they think is that you steal their things and you don’t, you just do the job. But I understand them because we are housekeeping and do go into their rooms, but I don’t like that part, usually they find it under the bed or somewhere but we don’t get apology._

The hotel room is a stage of contested space of guest tenure as well as room attendants’ Performing. Having a high moral perspective (what is held to be good and right) (Leininger, 1995), was often expressed and many room attendants felt there was an inherent accusation when guest property was not located. There were no reports that these insinuated allegations were ever recanted. Haley, with six months experience, explained her understanding of hotel procedures to investigate missing guest items:

_The first thing they do when something goes missing is get you downstairs. There are us and managers and mini bar people and supervisors, so there’s a lot of people entering a room and I wouldn’t know who they are._

Room attendants accepted responsibility for ensuring the security of guest property; however, there were factors beyond her control. Feeling they were under suspicion
formed a component of the room attendants’ ‘self’ as it is believed self-perceptions are partly founded on observations of others’ actions toward oneself (Glenn Jacobs, 2009). By feeling they were initial suspects of dishonesty due to their occupation demonstrated discrimination for the room attendants, as an attack on their integrity that was based on social hierarchy inequities. For the participating room attendants maintaining a positive attitude was how they coped with perceived assaults on their integrity and dignity.

**Positive Attitude**

Room attendants believed a positive attitude added enjoyment to their work and was a way of coping with the demands of tasking. Approaching tasking with a positive attitude enabled efficient functioning as Pamela, with five years’ experience, explained:

*You are in the room and you have your own work and you have to be responsible in it. Whatever happens you always have presence of mind. You have to make decisions because sometimes if the executive housekeeper or the supervisor is not around you have to decide for yourself and making sure it’s good and not affected to the guest, or not affected to your job. Presence of mind, you have to do something, especially like for example early in the morning you can’t start the room because all of the guests of your rooms are still there.*

A positive attitude was further demonstrated by Clare, with four years’ experience:

*I have confidence in what I am doing, I do my best, I like the hotel, and I like the guests and I like my job!*

Commitment to high tasking performance improved these room attendants’ productivity. A positive attitude has been identified as necessary in the hospitality industry as contributing to high quality service and to assist guest satisfaction (Hsu, 1995). As identified previously under reasons for working, the context of the luxurious surrounds of 5 star hotels, with sweeping ocean views helped room attendants maintain a positive attitude.
Nevertheless maintaining a positive attitude was described as challenging due to the physicality and the monotony of tasking. Often room attendants had to assume a positive mask of their ‘self’ to hide their struggle to perform. Valerie, with 25 years’ experience, explained:

*The beds are especially hard, because I am getting old, and maybe not 100 per cent all the time. As I am getting older I am very sick, sometimes if I have my period and I get a headache and lately some stomach ache very bad, and so tired.*

Valerie’s description of her exhausted physical state while *performing* is also seen in Kirsten, with eight years’ experience. These room attendants’ identification of their exhausted physical state made maintaining a positive frame of mind difficult:

*Then you’ve got sick leave called in because your body can’t take it and your mind can’t take it.*

The physical and psychological strain was unrelenting for these room attendants. This was exacerbated by the gendered nature of their employment, which meant their tasking mirrored the duties in their personal role in the domestic sphere. Isabella with 13 years’ experience, explained this double role:

*We clean here and then we have to go home and clean our own home.*

Differing roles, which included the same types of activities, required the participating room attendants to exhibit stamina in *Performing* at work and in their duties at home. Stamina, as a room attendant characteristic, was also identified in a study of room attendants in Wales (Powell & Watson, 2006). Due to the physical challenges of their employment tasking many room attendants saw maintaining a positive attitude as necessary to avoid sinking into depression, as Louise, with 15 years’ experience, stated:

*See I am still smiling, but you have to or you just go down down down.*

Room attendants’ attitudes revealed a spectrum of feelings and this diversity was reflected in their job satisfaction. Finding the work worthwhile for personal fulfilment perspective provided job satisfaction, which literature reveals enables high work standards and quality for customers (Zeithmal et al., 1993). The pride room attendants were able to find in *Performing* their tasking well was more significant to their job satisfaction than the minimal rate of pay identified in chapter five. According to Herzberg’s *Motivation-Hygiene Theory* (1959) job motivation indicators include
achievement and advancement (Andrea Larson & Jennifer Starr, 1993). There were little opportunities for advancement, which diminished their self-esteem. The issues described previously in chapters four to six showed room attendants were exploited, oppressed, marginalised and often treated as invisible, which diminished their dignity. However, all room attendants’ described the satisfaction that they found in their employment through taking pride and conscientiously completing tasking. This pride was linked to the discretion and honesty demonstrated by the room attendants as an integral component of their performance.

**Pride in Work**

Room attendants’ reflections in this section demonstrated personal commitment to their tasking, viewing their work as important. Great effort was expended to achieve high standards of hygiene and quality tasking outcomes. Angela, with 11 years’ experience, described how she adopted a personal standard:

> I always do them as though I am the one coming into the room, so it needs to be good and it needs to be clean. I do a good job.

Abbie, with 14 years’ experience, further epitomised the common perspective expressed by room attendants:

> The cleanliness is satisfying, they gleam when you’re done and you can take pride in that. I find when I clean a room I put a new energy into it, get rid of the old, it can all go out, and the new come in.

Personal pride in tasking outcomes was related by Rebecca, with three years’ experience, as a personal character disposition:

> I’m a bit fussy, I like things lovely.

Taking pride was expressed by the assertive ‘I’ and indicated the importance of ensuring all room serving quality details were correct. In meeting hotel requirements to perform tasking continuously at maximum capacity and still endeavour to provide a quality hotel room demonstrates room attendants’ worth through their personal commitment.
Having pride in *Performing* was the main expression of employment satisfaction and one of the few identified positive aspects to this occupation. This satisfaction was stated as pleasure found in the tasks of cleaning and presenting a hotel room, as Adriane, with 18 years’ experience, divulged:

* I just love doing it. I like to try and make everything perfect.*

Having pride in their work was seen as a means of earning self-respect. Ensuring things were as good as possible was reflected in self-evaluation of work standards as Fiona, with five years’ experience, reflected:

*Whatever you do you should take pride in it.*

Room attendants’ pride in their work was a motivating factor. It also provided a sense of achievement, which contributed to their affective commitment to the hotels’ goals and values. Affective commitment is defined as “the relative strength of individual’s emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in their employing organization” (Lee & Peccei, 2007, p. 687). This was demonstrated by room attendants’ striving to excel at tasking. Commitment is also associated with perceptions of competence in coping with the physical challenges of tasking (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Taking pride in tasking outcomes was a means of personal ‘self’ enhancement that was not driven by altruistic motives.

Presenting a clean room was considered a method of welcoming the guest by meeting expectations of standards expected by the 5 star room rates. One of the gauges of quality used by room attendants was guests’ satisfaction, which was expressed by positive feedback in guest surveys or tips left at the end of the guests’ stay. Complementing their desire to satisfy guests was room attendants’ enjoyment of the actual outcomes of the tasks of cleaning. In self-evaluation of their work standards and responsibilities, room attendants monitored their attention to detail and ensured nothing was missed. Bronwyn, with one year’s experience, justified her commitment to responsible service:

*In a 5 star hotel they are charging the guest a lot of money so it has to be very nice, 5 star quality. Clean linen and hygiene, especially in the bathroom, that’s the most important thing. If you don’t do your job properly the guest is not happy.*
This commitment to meeting expected standards was also reflected in satisfaction of achievement, particularly when guests had left rooms in a messy state. Fiona, with five years’ experience, explained how she found fulfilment in being able to transform rooms within the time pressures:

*The best part is when I see a really trashed room and at the end of it, it’s all clean and it’s like I’ve just gotten this to this from that in like 30 minutes. There’s a certain satisfaction in the work. I stand there at the door and I go I can fix this. You have to take that pride in a job well done and room that sparkles.*

The satisfaction expressed in tasking completion is reflected in their role as a change agent in servicing the room as Abbie, with 14 years’ experience, explained:

*The cleanliness is satisfying, they gleam when you’re done and you can take pride in that. I find when I clean a room I put a new energy into it, get rid of the old, it can all go out, and the new come in.*

For room attendants, tasking fulfilment to quality standards generated self-pride. This psychological state of ‘attitudinal commitment’ has been shown to improve congruency between workers’ own values and those of their employer (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The whole action of the room attendants was geared toward caring for the guest and making their stay comfortable. Room attendants pride in their work contributed to guest satisfaction, which is an intangible aspect of hotel profitability, and further demonstrates the hotels appropriation of surplus value.

*Common housekeeping operational practise was to allocate the same rooms to a room attendant, which helped their pursuit of excellence. By being allocated the same rooms each day, room attendants were able to take responsibility for, and ‘ownership’ of rooms. Susan, with four years’ experience, related:*

*This is my floor now and I look after it.*

This ownership or identification with set rooms facilitated routine establishment and fostered pride in work is demonstrated by allowing room attendants to check their own work. This responsibility was an affirmation of their worth to hotel operations. Haley, with six months’ experience explained her focus:

*You must make sure everywhere is clean so we must be careful, and I check my own rooms but with that comes a big responsibility.*
Evidence of how serious room attendants take their responsibility was explained by Elaine, with five years’ experience:

*I have a set routine and I find if I follow that I cover most everything, but just the little things that I worry about.*

Expressions of worry were a common feature and this shows stress induced by conflicting physical and time demands invading the room attendants’ private life. A converse side to the efforts to achieve quality in their work is a factor of guilt and worry associated with not meeting required quality standards. Most room attendants explained that establishing a routine helped to avoid errors in room provisioning details. The many small items, which were required, entailed detailed checking and the sheer volume of doing this in up to eighteen rooms a day was an impediment to efforts to do a sound performance.

Taking pride in room attendants’ work was a measure for them to earn self-respect through positive self-evaluations of tasking well done, and this facilitated finding dignity in their employment. The enjoyment that room attendants reported from ensuring their work was meticulous shows, as identified in literature, that job status was not linked to job satisfaction (Norman Feather & Katrin Rauter, 2004). These positive self-evaluations facilitated room attendants finding dignity in their employment. Positive self-evaluations are believed to occur unconsciously and continually, and are linked to maintaining a positive attitude (Zell & Alicke, 2010). This pride was demonstrated by the room attendants as an integral characteristic of their performance and provided dignity in their employment.

**Finding Dignity in Employment**

The features identified above, namely discretion, honesty, taking pride in their work, and maintaining a positive attitude demonstrated how room attendants’ achieved dignity at work despite the challenges of their employment. The issues related over the previous three chapters, notably exploitation through overwork and marginalisation and oppression through their low level placement within the hotel and social hierarchies, revealed room attendants’ *invisibility* through a range of
discriminatory situations. Particularly in the workplace, and to a lesser degree in their social sphere, room attendants found respect from others was often lacking. Self-respect is believed to greatly depend on how others treat us, and dignity involves “integrity, respect, pride, recognition, worth and standing or status” (Sayer, 2007 p. 567). For room attendants, the erosion of their dignity was caused by humiliation, lack of recognition and acknowledgment, by often being mistrusted and taken for granted. Dignity in employment was at risk for room attendants as lower workers on the occupational hierarchy, because dignity requires being treated with respect as people, and being allowed autonomy rather than being merely a means to an end (Hodson, 2001). Dignity in employment also involves being listened to, taken seriously and undertaking work, which is not demeaning (Sayer, 2007). These aspects of dignity in employment were not elements in the room attendants’ experiences.

The room attendants’ gender interwove with their occupational status within the hotels, and was reflected in interactions with both operational and social hierarchies. The divisional focus on gendered employment subordinated room attendants by affirming maternal virtues of caring and cleaning to tasking skills. In this way room attendants were largely unrecognised and their work dismissed as ‘natural’ behaviour. Women working in hotels are gender assigned and funnelled into housekeeping departments (Peter Adler & Patricia Adler, 2004). The gendered nature of the work was a problem in that traditional patriarchal views of cleaning as women’s work placed less value in room attendants’ work and contributed to their invisibility. It has been posited that most women, and especially mothers, are instrumentally oriented to employment, showing no concern for the tasks or advancement opportunities of their jobs (Judith Buber Agassi, 1986). In this way it is alleged that women do not suffer alienation as they obtain their emotional satisfaction from their domestic roles, and this argument is commonly used to justify placing women in repetitive domestic styled work (Buber Agassi, 1986). Alienation from work is believed to be due to employees’ lack of control or voice (Buber Agassi, 1986), and this alienation was a common circumstance of these room attendants’ experiences. Room attendant work was alienating through the tasking and hierarchical characteristics, which caused psychological damage to the room attendants as performers. From a socialist Marxist feminist perspective, the hotels (as capitalists) maximise profits by
increasing the pace of work and by maintaining close control over room attendants in pursuit of surplus value. In this way, these room attendants were stripped of dignity.

The room attendant self was the manner they think of themselves due to co-constructed interpretations of their interactions with others. The room attendants experiences revealed unfairness and discrimination through mismanagement and abuse, overwork and limits on their autonomy; however, “people earn dignity through their actions” (Hodson, 2001, p. 4), and this was the case for the room attendants. Despite the negative features recounted previously, room attendants achieved dignity in their employment by taking pride in their tasking, participation in hotel citizenship, and co-worker camaraderie. Self-worth and self-respect was gained from the physical effort they expended and the discretion, honesty, and pride in thoroughness they demonstrated in their work. Their self-view emerged out of the processes of reflecting on theirs and the guests’ behaviour during social interactions in the hotel. As room attendants had little organisational status they were voiceless to change the situations.

The lack of respect room attendants believed they received required psychological justification through a self-categorisation process as being of worth. In particular, the discrimination they experienced resulted in loss of ‘self’ through diminished dignity. This means self and meaning were processes in which social status and occupation have a great impact on self-esteem, so Performing was central to room attendants’ self-evaluation. This was demonstrated in the behaviour of avoiding certain social interactions or withholding information about their occupation in external social situations. These behaviours were voluntary restrictions to avoid devaluation of their ‘self’. Many authors acknowledge that dignity at work has been described as a sense of pride in one’s work and the development of social aspects of working life (Mariann Arany Tóth, 2008). Room attendants reflected on their social interactions and questioned or confirmed ‘self’ assumptions during Performing. The realities of work for room attendants were the common indignities of their tasking within occupational and social hierarchies, whereas decent work emphasises equality of access, provides employee voice and fair rewards (Sharon Bolton, 2007).
The broader social perception of room attendant employment as menial resulted in feelings of being demeaned. The servility contributed to their alienation related to powerlessness, social isolation and invisibility. Room attendants’ social status was experienced and reframed during interactions in which they were required to demonstrate inferiority (Gorringe & Rafanell, 2007). The ‘looking glass analogy’ of Cooley (1922) relates to how our perceptions of another’s view of our appearance, behaviour or standing influence the self. So self is a mental representation ‘of the self to the self’ in a collective construction of image that acts as a stimulus to guide action. Continuous modification of room attendants’ self-representations were a social product in the hotel collective context framed by their perceptions of others viewing them as of little significance and invisible. Resultant feelings of inequity based on perceptions of others’ views of their ability or value reveal social judgment bias and distortion through status comparisons and non-acknowledgement. Displays of power and lack of promotion opportunities need consideration in relation to how room attendants’ estimated their own value (David Dunning, Judith Meyerowitz & Amy Holzberg, 1989).

Performing demonstrated room attendants were required to undertake emotional labour, which created an emotive dissonance revealed in the clash between their inner real feelings and the external fake masks required by the hotel. The dispersion of control through emotional labour for guests in a self-subordinating role contributed to room attendants’ identity construction. The pressure of this was seen in room attendant enjoyment of some autonomy of their work which allowed avoidance of social interaction or exposure negative social categorisations. Room attendants’ exchanged their labour for wages in an oppressive and exploitative environment. This exchange exposed them to a world of personal power forces resulting in manifestation of social norms and discriminations. Central to this was the sexual harassment experienced by room attendants. Sexual harassment of women has been conceived in terms of failure to protect dignity in the workplace (Tóth, 2008). Often the discursive production of self was constraining for room attendants as the hotel’s organisational communication determined and limited their self.
Room attendants’ identity involved perceiving their self as dramaturgical and acting a role in *Performing* to convince co-performers such as other staff and guests of their authenticity and worth. Room attendant identity was influenced by hierarchical interactions as identities, which are formed from life experiences in self-understanding (Kath Woodward, 2000). These room attendants had little control on the conditions of their employment with minimal opportunity to express their beliefs and values within the functioning space of hotel housekeeping. So room attendant identity was an outcome of the operational and social forces enacted within these 5 star hotels. Exploring room attendants’ employment experiences revealed commonalities and contradictions in identity as room attendants often felt a sense of belonging and alienation within the hotel.

Central to my thesis was providing room attendants with voice. My aim was that this would assist broader social appreciation of room attendants self as created cultural and historical constructions. My purpose in taking a socialist feminist critical theory critique is to generate change through challenge to the *status quo* by providing an avenue for room attendants to tell their story. My social constructionist view of an emergent social world constructed through human interactions shows the impacts of social formations of power as evidenced in empirical regularity of the room attendants’ experiences. This final interpretive chapter has revealed how room attendants found dignity in their employment by taking pride in their work and how this enabled reinforcement of a ‘self’ at the hotel workplace despite their lack of acknowledgement and perceptions of being undervalued or *invisible*. 
Chapter Eight

Performing

The philosopher's job is to identify what exists fundamentally or in its own right and to describe the dependence-relations of everything else to this absolute thing.

(Georg Hegel, 1820/1979, p. xiii).

This final chapter draws the strands of Performing together in a holistic discussion and identifies some wider implications. My research has examined the hotel room attendants’ employment experiences from the perspective of 46 room attendants working in 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast of Queensland, Australia. Using a constructionist grounded theory methodology I have generated Performing from empirical material, as a conceptual model grounded in hotel room attendants’ employment experiences. In this chapter, I summarise the empirical material and related discussions, which revealed room attendants were exploited in tasking, marginalised in their working conditions and oppressed by the hotel and social hierarchies. This summary forms the foundation for my recommendations for further research. Initially I present Figure 8.1 as the now explained basic social process (BSP) of Performing.
Performing is a socio-psychological process of defining self as a room attendant and finding dignity in the course of completing daily tasking and interacting with guests and other hotel employees as social actors on 5 star hotel stages. Upon these stages, room attendants are scripted into roles, which are undervalued, under-recognised if not invisible. In these roles, they are exploited, marginalised and oppressed by the hegemonic, patriarchal and hierarchical perceptions of employment value within society and power structures as demonstrated by the participants in this study of five ‘5 star’ hotels on the Gold Coast, Australia.

My research interest was founded on my personal experiences in the occupation of room attendant, and a review of literature within the fields of hospitality. My research provided a view of this gender-segregated work and recognition of their essential contribution to hotel operations. Performing reveals how room attendants cope with requirements for emotional labour and how they deal with aspects of hierarchical organisational and social structures that render room attendants ‘invisible’. Performing reveals how room attendants found dignity and satisfaction in their employment. My study facilitates an identification of issues of...
marginalisation related to hotel housekeeping through the experiences and opinions of those actually delivering the service.

In chapter one I outlined the importance of accommodation to the hospitality industry and presented extant research and literature related to room attendants, which provided the background and focus for my research. I further identified a gap in this literature that failed to recognise gender injustices or seek the ‘knowledges’ of women employed as hotel room attendants. This set the foundation for my key research questions, and justified the importance of my research. Only six academic studies were found that particularly focused on room attendants, dating from 1974 until the present time. Related research identified ergonomic and medical studies, which identified the negative physical and psychological aspects of this employment. Hotel room attendant employment involved task related ergonomic stressors, including musculoskeletal disorders, exposure to pathogenic bacteria and detrimental effects of daily handling of toxic chemicals. This literature revealed little was known about the employment experiences from the perspective of hotel room attendants although there were six studies focused on room attendants and one specifically identified the non-acknowledgement and lack of appreciation of room attendants by staff and guests as the *invisibility* of room attendants.

My study expanded this research to show how room attendants experienced *invisibility* and how their invisibility instigated a lack of appreciation of their value. I introduced the area of my research, its purpose and focus within the Gold Coast context. As a relatively new topic of research, this everyday activity lacked theoretical grounded empirical material from room attendants in the substantive hospitality field. The purpose of my study was to develop a theoretical explanation of hotel room attendants’ employment experiences. My research questions were:

- What is the nature of room attendants’ daily task routines?
- What are room attendants’ employment experiences?
- What are room attendant’s perceptions of work related conditions?
- How do these women perceive their roles within the hotel organisation?

To investigate these questions I assumed a non-dualistic ontology (there are multiple realities), and a socialist feminist critical theory epistemology (knower and subject
construct understanding through social interaction). I explained how these perspectives combined with my reflexive approach in my qualitative research using constructionist grounded theory methodology. Applying the tenets of Glaserian grounded theory allowed an open social critique through examination of patterns of action and social interaction within hotels from the perspectives of room attendants.

In chapter three, I provided a detailed description of my application of constructionist grounded theory methodology. Empirical material was gathered during in-depth interviews with forty-six room attendants working at 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast, Australia during 2009-2010.

Grounded theory processes were used to identify the concerns of room attendants and how they were impacted by the conditions and interactions in their employment context. Inductively deriving theory from empirical material involved refining and developing concepts to lead to a theoretical model of Performing. Construction of Performing was influenced by my values and emotions generated by my gender, low socio-economic class and my emic experiences as a room attendant. I employed an exploratory, descriptive, explanatory qualitative research design in which empirical material was collected by in-depth, one-on-one interviews lasting between 30 and 75 minutes. A purposive sampling technique engaged my participants. Interview questions were designed to explore the room attendants’ employment experiences, so open-ended questions were used to encourage room attendants to expand on the research question themes noted in the preceding research questions. Grounded theory coding processes were used to interpret and identify themes and patterns to provide an overall conceptual portrait of room attendants’ experiences and perceptions. An ongoing member checking process verified the evolving interpretation as having fit for these participants.

Chapter four presented empirical findings of my field research in a generated model of a Performing as basic social process. Performing is activity that explains hotel room attendants’ employment experiences. Performing represents the dramaturgical processes of the operation and social life of a hotel as experienced by room attendants. The symbolic interactionist influence on my research took hotel room attendants’ meanings as the focus of my inquiry. The room attendants’ meanings,
actions and experiences revealed every act was conditioned by organisational and social interactional contingency. The basic social structural process (BSSP) of tasking was centered on three major concerns of hard work, which incorporated bed making, the trolley and bathroom cleaning. The second concern of tasking was the time pressures imposed through the allocation of 30 minutes per room service, and thirdly the difficulty the previous concerns made for meeting required quality standards.

In chapter five – working conditions and social influences - Performing related the working conditions as a basic social structural process (BSSP), revealing that room attendants generally perceived their pay for Performing did not compensate them for their efforts. Other working conditions included minimal and varying hours of employment, which raised financial viability issues and uncertainty through casual employment, both weekly and as tenure. There was training offered to room attendants, however, this was mainly focused on O H & S issues. Room attendants would have appreciated training, which further developed their occupational skills. The social aspects of their employment experiences formed a basic social psychological process (BSPP) of which the greatest pleasure for room attendants was the collegiality of other staff.

Chapter six – working as a room attendant within hotel and social hierarchies - Performing identified the multiple discriminations and injustices room attendants faced as a collective group of employees working within a hierarchy as basic social structural (BSSP) and basic social psychological (BSPP) processes. These processes highlighted the social disadvantages of the room attendant occupation. The hierarchical structure of operational roles caused perceived isolation of the housekeeping department, upward communication barriers and demeaning interactions with various levels of management. The social psychological processes revealed social power was causal to room attendants’ invisibility, and this was revealed through guest contacts that shaped the employment experiences. The hotel requirements for room attendants to perform emotional labour resulted in concealment of their real self to display a masked self and act to conform to organisational norms. Despite offensive and unwanted sexual advances from some male guests, room attendants demonstrated sincerity in interactions, and used
humour sometimes to rebuff these advances. These processes revealed inequality, oppression and harassment of room attendants.

Chapter seven – finding dignity in employment - formed the final interpretive chapter. Room attendants found dignity in employment in a basic psychological process (BPP), revealing values and attitudes, such as honesty, discretion, and positive attitude that are not included in social status assessments. These values were discretion in relation to guests’ private information and utmost honesty in handling guest property. Failure to recognise these values by operational and social players in the hotel was further evidence of room attendant invisibility. Despite the degrading associations of their low social status reflected in many inequities, these women took pride in their tasking and maintained a positive attitude, so finding dignity in their employment.

The interlinking and interconnectedness of the processes identified in Performing are revealed in Glaser’s (2005) explanation:

“one needs a BSPP [Social Hierarchy] to understand the focus of a BSSP [Hotel hierarchy]. A BSP [Performing] may include both a BSSP [Tasking] and BSPP [Social Hierarchy]. When the BSSP [Hotel Hierarchy] follows and facilitates the BSPP [Social Hierarchy], it takes on properties of the latter. Thus BSPP can become structural conditions which affects the nature of BSSPs and vice versa.

In this way a theoretical link is made between the two general levels” (p. 43-44).

Performing offers a reflection of relationships between the sub-categories of processes such as tasking, working conditions and the hotel and social hierarchies, which produced similar effects in a repetitive or cycling path of influence. The action in a category occurs under conditions or sets of events that create the situations, issues or problems affecting room attendants’ employment experiences. These conditions may be causal (influencing events), intervening (those that alter impact of causal conditions) and contextual conditions (specific sets that interact dimensionally to create circumstances). These sub category processes also revealed consequences of actions and interactions within the hotel context. Each of the conditions and consequences has properties and dimensions that interrelate in a cumulative manner.
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

and these interlinking processes reflect room attendants’ employment experiences in Performing.

My research contributes to tourism discourse by providing voice for the largely invisible hotel room attendants. This voice revealed an exploited cohort of workers who contended with intense physical demands and exposure to many potential health hazards. This physical Performing was conducted in an arena of organisational and social discrimination founded on the hierarchical organisation and social status levels. These women’s work had an uncertainty of tenure; and they perceived that their financial recognition was not commensurate with their labour; and other conditions, particularly the uniform hotels provided, hindered room attendants’ functionality and sexualised them. Performing is the culmination of my holistic research approach examining hotel room attendants’ lived employment experiences. My aim was to advance the accumulation of knowledge relating to the hospitality industry.

Performing relates room attendants’ understanding of what is actually occurring, not what ought to occur in 5 star hotels. A major contribution of this study is towards a fuller understanding of the work of hotel room attendants. My study reveals exploitation, marginalisation and oppression of these workers was systemic within 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast. In Performing, there were three major concerns and these were: the physical demands of the work; insufficient time in relation to allocation of their daily workload; and the payment of the legal minimum rate of pay. The physicality of tasking and potential pathogenic exposure, as well as their subservient emotional performance requires recognition of pay at a higher level.

This Performing model contributes to current comprehension of the employment situation of room attendants as difficult and hard work. Participating room attendants’ employment was conducted under organisation and social hierarchies, which contributed to their invisibility. Hotel praxis reveals room attendants were an unacknowledged cohort of workers and as a community of knowledge within the hotel, their wisdom and practical advice was ignored. Further within these hierarchies room attendants were recipients of displays of power by others. Room attendants have the right to conduct their employment on an equal
basis with promotion opportunities, and free of sexual harassment and social discrimination. In line with my anticipated benefits of exploration, description and explanation of social processes influencing room attendant employment, Performing offers areas of implication in housekeeping operations. By providing focus on the pragmatic concerns of room attendants, not usually encompassed within management research, I advance socialist feminists’ perspectives in hospitality employment. Specifically, the recognition of the value of female room attendants’ efforts and knowledge, and an increase in the pay rate to recognise the physicality of tasking, the required emotional labour, the harassment and discrimination they endure in social interactions with guests.

My research shows how room attendants give meaning and purpose to their occupation, and makes two important contributions in the area of services. First, issues related to room attendant employment highlighted the major concerns as injuries due to physical exertion involved in servicing rooms, and performing this service within tight time frames, with low financial reward. Secondly, room attendants were unrecognised as a community of value and their wisdom and knowledge were ignored by the organisation that could stand to benefit from this knowledge through consultation. My study provides the first grounded theory empirical operationalisation of room attendants’ employment experiences. My findings also demonstrate that the services provided by room attendants have significant impact on guests however, additional research is recommended to define the service processes. In this way new strategies or processes of hotel cleaning and employee consultation may be developed.

Recommendations

Performing encompasses the employment experiences of hotel room attendants working in 5 star hotels on the Gold Coast. While my research is not a comprehensive analysis of the hotel workplace, it serves as a starting point for future research within the hospitality context. The constructed model of Performing suggests directions for future research. The model devised could provide potential to guide hotel employers
to engage in closer consultation with room attendants. Additional research is needed to further investigate the dichotomy between room attendants’ performance and hotel expectations. The results of this research may help hotel employers identify and address areas of room attendants’ stress and job dissatisfaction to reduce staff turnover, absenteeism and improve room attendants’ health. The housekeeping department of hotels offer a fertile ground for research with genuine implications for hotel practice and these areas are expanded below.

My study investigated the dichotomy of high management expectations of the physical and psychological performance of room attendants, with an apparent lack of acknowledgement due to the ‘invisibility’ of these hotel workers. Hotels as a component of the hospitality industry are major contributors to employment growth in Australia, yet there has been very little empirical research into employment relations. Conflicting interests between employers and employees within the Australian hospitality industry with the award simplification reveals closer examination of pay inequities is needed. Room attendants’ labour produces profit for hotels and the requirement for increasing profits is focused on ever increasing productivity within a world of wealth. I argue for the provision of an equitable wage for the efforts room attendants’ expend as their employment generates inequality through the gendered pay not recognising their worth.

A work value study of attendants’ work would ascertain the extent of time and physical pressures they contend with, and this would justify the need for an increase in their pay rate to reflect these conditions. Such studies would confirm the unsustainable workload allocated to hotel room attendants. This research would require sensitivity in order to avoid perceptions of further surveillance of room attendants. The physical aspects of room attendant employment lend themselves to further research in the interests of minimising health hazards. Pathogenic bacteria have been found to be common on hotel surfaces, and the room attendants participating in my study reported dilution of the cleaning products. This poses questions for future research related to hygiene repercussions of the hotel practice of dilution, and bacterial count on hotel room surfaces along with research into alternate materials/chemicals and relationship to green credentials currently in use.
Examination of room attendants’ experiences of low status employment, *invisibility*, gendered work, and power relationships from women employed ‘on the frontline’ identified problems and potential improvements for hotel operations. I recommend further investigation into the hotel hierarchical organisation in respect of gendered construction of hierarchy, particularly hotels’ organisational norms, use and abuse of power, and what avenues hotel workers can implement to achieve greater inter-level hierarchal interactions and workplace equity. Researchers acknowledge that the role of employee-customer interactions in delivering quality service to customers is significant. The relevant issues, such as lack of power and low social standing of the participants in their interactions and *Performing* service, needs investigation because the hotel hierarchy dominates room attendants’ lives, restricts quality delivery and reflects broader social structures and situations of dominance. Hotels are complex organisational environments with influencing variables that are not necessarily replicable in experimental research, such as employment arrangements, disparity of stakeholder objectives, organisational and individual cultural issues. Within hotels as social institutions diverse topics are offered for new directions and guide future research with consideration of a longer time horizon in order to recognise the socially valuable work of room attendants.

Greater consideration is required of the room attendant as a person with feelings behind the service encounter. The emotional labour room attendants perform is currently undervalued and this type of labour should be highly rewarded because of the demands it places on employees. In performing emotional labour the elimination of individuality is stressful, frustrating and negative for the room attendants. Further research could highlight the contribution of emotional labour to cognitive burn-out and perceptions of low personal achievement for room attendants.

Investigations into links between the human resource department and employee performance as well as job satisfaction are relatively unexplored. My research reveals room attendants’ experience multiple forms of oppression and seek a change from the dominant patriarchal systems of management. The room attendants in my research perceived little satisfaction in their relationships with human resource
managers and therefore there is a need for investigation into these relationships to determine why and how to resolve these issues.

Finally, greater focus on training and educating room attendant staff to deal with the social interactions they encounter, namely inter-cultural relations and specifically ways to address sexual harassment. The denigration and sexualisation of room attendant work, and room attendants needs to be considered from the impression this forms on the guests as audience, including hotel labour pools and guest groups. Such research would inform higher levels of hotel management particularly of the rate and type of harassment incidents room attendants are subjected. This awareness of the sexual harassment problem would facilitate control methods and minimise these negative interactions for room attendants.

Concluding Remarks

From a theoretical perspective, my research offers a step toward a better understanding of how hotels’ hierarchical levels impact status structure and status perceptions. My research contributes to literature related to social comparisons, through focus on the lower level of employees in 5 star hotels as I identified how room attendants respond to their low cohort rankings. Discrimination, and by some staff and guests, denigrating behaviour threatened room attendants’ perceptions of their social status. To listen to the voices of room attendants’ presented in this research highlights possibilities to improve the hospitality industry in Australia. The overall intent of my thesis is to improve room attendants’ working conditions by raising awareness of issues from room attendants’ perspectives. I have attempted to offer a conceptual model in the process of Performing to recognise hotel room attendants’ occupational health risks and expose social discrimination that is inherent in this role.

The opulent façade of 5 star hotels represented by sumptuous lobbies present a glamour and economic prosperity opposite to the toil of the largely undocumented invisible hotel room attendant. The room attendants in my study frequently described their physical and emotional exhaustion. The employment experiences related in my thesis identify the hierarchy and current management practises as creating and
sustaining inequities. As facilitators of hotel profitability, room attendants need recognition of their productive tasking and the social contribution they make through emotional labour. Greater recognition of the importance of this type of work will flow to broader hierarchical organisational and social structures, which form the context of Performing. The embodied nature and physical effects of room attendants’ labour has been long ingrained in hotels’ expectations, and remains unchanged. The intensity of work and hazards faced by these women on a daily basis has been examined. These aspects are largely ignored in praxis and this is an assault on the dignity of women working as room attendants by those who have never done the work or know how it is accomplished.

As a basic social process, Performing relates to on-going activity, which implies both a past and a future. As a basic social process Performing has high theoretical impact by allowing for an expansive theorising about many facets of room attendants’ employment experiences, by integrating room attendants’ relationships with others within the hotel context. Hotel room attendants receive little acknowledgment and are frequently treated as invisible and are often unnoticed. Performing offers a socio-psychological process of defining self as a room attendant and finding dignity in completing daily tasking and interacting with guests and other hotel employees as social actors on 5 star hotel stages. Upon these stages, room attendants are scripted into roles, which were undervalued, under-recognised if not invisible. In these roles, they were exploited, marginalised and oppressed by the hegemonic, patriarchal and hierarchical perceptions of employment value within society, and power structures as demonstrated by the participants in this study of five ‘5 star’ hotels on the Gold Coast, Australia.
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Physiological and Psychological Stressors for Hotel Room Attendants

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<tr>
<th>Stress Source</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Physiological Stress</td>
<td>Musculoskeletal injuries and contact with bed bugs</td>
<td>Clark &amp; Penner, 1976; Milburn &amp; Barrett, 1999; Sogaard, Blangsted, Herod, &amp; Finsen, 2006.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chemical exposure from commercial strength sanitizers particularly <em>Ammonium hydroxide</em>, <em>Potassium Hydroxide</em>, <em>Ethylene Glycol</em>, <em>Monobutyl Ether</em>, <em>Methylated Spirits</em> (Ethyl Alcohol), <em>Alkyl benzene Sulphonic Acid</em>, <em>Caustic Soda</em> (Sodium Hydroxide) bleach (Sodium Hypochlorite)</td>
<td>Fedoruk, Bronstein &amp; Brent Kerger, 2005; Lalla &amp; Peter, 2004; Zemke &amp; Shoemaker, 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Stress</td>
<td>Derived from hierarchical organisational structures, demands of guests and as ‘instruments of labour’ in monotonous repetitive work of low social status</td>
<td>Choy, 1995; Cuomo, 2003; Creed &amp; Muller, 2006; Faulkner &amp; Patiar, 1997; Herod &amp; Aguiar, 2006; Maribel Sosa, 2006; Weatherly &amp; Tansik, 1993; Wright, 1993.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Low status’ associated with high employee turnover</td>
<td>Wasmuth &amp; Davis, 1983.</td>
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</table>
Situations demonstrating potential threats faced by room attendants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Exposure or Threat</th>
<th>Source</th>
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</thead>
</table>
Literature related to waves of feminism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal Arena</th>
<th>Focus of Writing</th>
<th>Key Terms</th>
<th>Prominent Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Wave (1980s to 2000s)</td>
<td>Challenge to heteronormativity Migration Culture Gender studies Sexual rights Genetic engineering Information technology Robotics Globalisation</td>
<td>Queer theory Standpoint Epistemology Intersectionality Girl power Riot grrl Generationalism Post-feminism</td>
<td>Auslander, 1997; Atkins, 2005; Bertolino, 2005; Bulbeck, 1999; Butler, 2004; Cixous, 1981; Code, 2000; Collins, 2004; Cornwall, Harrison &amp; Whithead, 2007; Dworkin, 1997; Ehrenreich &amp; Hochschild, 2002; Eyben, 2007; Facio, 2004; Frug, 1992; hooks, 200a,b; Jain, 2004; Lewin-Epstein &amp; Stier, 2006; Irigaray, 1996; Kahu &amp; Morgan, 2007; Magarey, 2001; Martin, 1997; Mulinari &amp; Sandell, 1999; Porter, 2007; Reincke, 2006; Roseneil, 2004; Sardenberg, 2007; Small, 1999; Swim &amp;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Wave (Present era)</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Male inclusion</td>
<td>Global capitalism</td>
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</table>

Letter of contact initiation for hotel establishments

[Printed on Griffith University letterhead]

Date
General Manager
GC Hotel
Address
Dear [Personalised greeting],

I am seeking [Hotel name] hotel’s participation in research for my Doctor of Philosophy degree. My research project is investigating the employment experiences of hotel room attendants in Queensland.

The aim of this research is to examine the social working conditions of hotel room attendants through a critique of their workplace experiences. The practical implications of this research include identification of an improved service design that incorporates social meanings of employment for housekeeping staff.

My research would involve 15 to 30 minute interviews with members of your room attendant staff on a voluntary basis. I would conduct these interviews out of working hours and at minimal inconvenience and disruption to your organisational processes. I propose to offer an incentive to participants of an entry into a $100 prize draw.

I would like to contact your office by phone in the near future, to seek your approval for conducting my research at your hotel, and hope to arrange a meeting with you to explain my research in detail. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on (07 55529726; 0405227205; s.kensbock@griffith.edu.au); my principal supervisor Associate Professor Gayle Jennings (07 55527048; g.jennings@griffith.edu.au), or my associate supervisor Dr Anoop Patiar on (07 37354014; a.patiar@griffith.edu.au).

Thank you for your time.

Yours truly

Sandie Kensbock (Ms)
The aim of this research is to enhance the employment conditions of hotel room attendants through a critique of their workplace experiences. The practical implications of this research include identification of an improved service design that incorporates social meanings of employment for room attendants. This will benefit the recruitment of room attendants, enhance the provision of service to guests, and provide a voice for the often neglected and unobserved staff in the room cleaning service context of the hospitality industry.

You are invited to participate in this research. The research aims to build on your lived experiences and involvement in the hospitality industry. It is envisaged that your participation will involve a 15 to 30 minute interview to discuss and share your experiences, impressions and reflections of what housekeeping employment means to you. The interview will be audio-recorded to allow accurate transcription. The transcription will be de-identified and the recording erased immediately after transcription.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you may abstain from answering any question. If you do decide to partake in the interview, you will be asked to sign a consent form at which time you will be deemed to have consented to participate in the research. Feedback information will be sent to you in the form of a summary report at the end of the project at your request.
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

As participation is voluntary participants may withdraw their consent at any time without comment or penalty. Under the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee, steps have been taken to ensure confidentiality and to minimise any risk. These include the use of consent forms and information sheets, secure storage of transcripts and the use of pseudo names within any publication.

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research involving Humans. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project, they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 3735 5585 or by email to research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this research, please feel free to contact any of the researchers listed above.
Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

Appendix F

Participant Consent Form

[Printed on Griffith University letterhead]

Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants

Research Team:  Contact Phone  Contact Email
Ms Sandie Kensbock (B.HoMgt.1A)  (07) 55529726  s.kensbock@griffith.edu.au
Assoc. Professor Gayle Jennings (PhD)  (07) 55527048  g.jennings@griffith.edu.au
Dr Anoop Patiar (PhD)  (07) 37354104  a.patiar@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include participation in an interview of approximately fifteen to thirty minutes.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand the risks involved.
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded to allow accurate transcription. The transcription will be de-identified and the recording erased immediately after transcription.
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty or comment.
- I understand that de-identified findings of this study will be used for a Doctoral Thesis, journal articles and public presentations.
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the research team.
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on (07) 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Signed: Participant …………………… Signature:…………………………… Date:……………………
Prize Entry Form

[Printed on Griffith University letterhead]

**PRIZE ENTRY COUPON**
Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research.
To be eligible for the draw to win a cash prize of $100 please complete the following:
- a. Take part in an interview;
- b. Complete the prize entry coupon at the bottom of this page;
- c. Place the coupon into the small prize entry envelope provided; and
- d. Place the prize entry envelope into the larger sealed envelope at the interview.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY**
1. When you enter the competition, you accept these terms and conditions of entry.
2. Employees of Griffith University directly involved with the ‘Employment of hotel room attendant staff’ research project and their immediate families are ineligible to enter.
3. Entry into the competition is by partaking in an interview with Sandie Kensbock and placing the prize entry coupon into an envelope provided.
4. The first randomly drawn entry will receive one $100 cash prize.
5. The decision of the University is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
6. The winner releases the University from any and all causes for action, losses, liability, damage, expenses (including legal expense), cost or charges suffered, sustained or in any way incurred by the winner as a result of any loss or damage to any physical property of the winner, or any injury to or death of any person arising out of, or related to or in any way connected with the University or the prize.
7. The winner will be notified by phone or email in April 2010.
8. The competition closes in March 2010 when the research ‘empirical material collection phase’ is completed. The competition will be drawn in the presence of Associate Professor Gayle Jennings and Dr Anoop Patiar at the Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus, Queensland, Australia. You do not have to be at the draw, the prize will be posted to the winner following contact.

**Privacy Statement**
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your individual personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at [www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp](http://www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp) or telephone (07) 37357343.
To be in the draw to win a $100 cash prize, please provide the following information.

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Contact phone number: or
Email address: __________________________
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<th>Categories</th>
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<td>Causes</td>
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<td>Conditions/qualifiers</td>
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<td>Beings</td>
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<td>Process</td>
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<td>Degree</td>
<td>Limit, range, intensity, extend, amount, polarity, extreme, boundary, rank, grades, continuum, probability, possibility, level, cutting points, critical juncture, statistical average, standard deviation, exemplar,</td>
<td>Implies a matter of degree modicum, full, partial, almost, half.</td>
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<td>Dimension</td>
<td>Dimensions, elements, division, piece of, properties of, facet, slice, sector, portion, segment, part, aspect, section.</td>
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<td>Type, form, kinds, styles, classes, genre.</td>
<td>Indicate variations to the whole</td>
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<td>Paired or polar opposites</td>
<td>Reverberations equilibrium</td>
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<td>Limits Tolerance zones Confidence limits Front line Cutting points Deviance transition</td>
<td>Occurrence at edge or boundary of social structure</td>
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<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Strategies, tactics, mechanisms, managed, way, manipulation, manoeuvrings, dealing with, handling, techniques, ploys, means, goals, arrangements, dominating, positioning.</td>
<td>Interactionist – people strategy people. Structuralists – mechanisms and arrangements</td>
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<td>Employment Experiences of Hotel Room Attendants</td>
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<td>variable pattern</td>
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<td>Cutting Point Family</td>
<td>Boundary, critical juncture, cutting point,</td>
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<td>levels, dichotomy, trichotomy, polychotomy,</td>
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<td>deviance, point of no return.</td>
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<td>Means-goal Family</td>
<td>End, purpose, goal, anticipated consequence,</td>
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<td>Cultural Family</td>
<td>Social norms, social values social beliefs,</td>
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<td>Proper-lining, interpreting, vaguing, base-</td>
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<td>Consensus Family</td>
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<td>Consensus to dis-consensus.</td>
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<td>conflict, descensus, differential perception, cooperation, homogeneity-heterogeneity, conformity, non conformity</td>
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<td>Mainline Family</td>
<td>Social control, recruitment, socialization, stratification, status passage social organisation. Groups, aggregates, divisions of labour</td>
<td>People in process in study of social order and social organisation.</td>
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<td>Social order  Social institutions  Social interaction  Social worlds  Social mobility</td>
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<td>Theoretical Family</td>
<td>Parsimony, scope, integration, density, conceptual level, relationship to data, relationship to other theory, clarity, fit, relevance, modifiability, utility, condensability, inductive-deductive balance and inter-feeding, degree of, multivariate structure, use of theoretical codes, interpretive, explanatory, predictive power.</td>
<td>Useful for generating and critiquing theory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ordering or Elaboration Family</td>
<td>Structural (unit size: organisation, division, group, subgroup, team, person – influence and power flow). Temporal and generality ordering.</td>
<td>Flow of a variable influence or decision up or down and in what order. Interrelations and interplay.</td>
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<td>Orientation, institutional goal, organisational value, personal motivation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit Family</td>
<td>Collective, group, nation, organisation, aggregate, situation, context, arena, social world, behavioural pattern, territorial units, society, family, positional unites – status, role, role relationship, status-set, role-set, person-set, role partners.</td>
<td>Structural units, clusters of possibly relevant variables. “They are in process themselves, and they are where the action, behavioural pattern and process of our theory takes place (are grounded) for a time” p. 81.</td>
<td>“Status is a position in a social structure, a role is the relationship between two statuses and the evaluation of status is rank. But often role is used as this meaning of status, and status is used as the meaning of rank” p. 80. Clear on meaning of positional terms.</td>
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<td>Reading Family</td>
<td>Concepts, problems, hypotheses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Models</td>
<td>Linear model or property space.</td>
<td>Facilitate writing the substantive meaning of each relationship.</td>
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Glaser’s Eleven Analytic Rules

1. **Starting to Sort.** The analyst can start sorting anywhere with his [sic] piles of memos.

2. **Core Variable.** Since the theory will be generated for a core variable, the rule is to begin sorting all other categories and properties only as they relate to the core category or BSP.

3. **Promotion – Demotion of Core Variables.** To sort on a core variable is not always easy if there appear to be two equally qualified cores.

4. **Memoing.** Once sorting on the core variable begins, the constant comparison are likely to generate many new ideas, especially on theoretical codes for integrating the theory.

5. **Carry Forward.** In relating categories to the core it is important to sort for cumulative build-up in the use of concepts and the multivariate complexity of the theory, as sections and chapters proceed.

6. **Integrative Fit.** All ideas must fit in somewhere in the outlines or the integration just be changed or modified.

7. **Sorting Levels.** The conceptual ordering of sorting is on at least two levels.

8. **Idea problems.** In sorting several problems of integrative fit and the ordering of conceptual level occur, for which we have evolved brief rules, which change when necessary.

9. **Cutting Off Rules.** There are several reasons to stop sorting.

11. *Theoretical pacing*. Closely related to sorting mechanics is the theoretical pacing of the analyst.

The Finer Points of Bed-Making

A dream vacation is made in part by those smooth sheets on the tightly made hotel bed. The International Executive Housekeepers Association demystifies the tidy skill of professional bed making so you can bring that clean, cozy atmosphere home. You may be surprised to learn the entire technique takes less than three minutes with practice.

Begin with a freshly laundered sheet set. Place all bedding on a nearby chair to prevent contact with the floor. While many hotels use flat sheets for both top and bottom — securing the lower sheet by the miracle of hospital corners — you probably own a perfectly beautiful, fitted bottom sheet. Pull it taut from corner to corner until the mattress is covered.

Standing at the footboard, shake out the top sheet until it billows down evenly over the bed; adjust to ensure a similar length drapes down either side of the mattress. Moving to the head of the bed, lift the end of the sheet and lay the hem in one smooth line directly along the headboard. Returning to the foot of the bed, gently pull out any bunching until the sheet lies flat and the excess dangles toward your feet.
Repeat this step with your blanket of choice, but lay the top hem two hand widths short of the headboard. Fold the top sheet back over the blanket to protect the sleeper’s face from rough fabric — and to protect the blanket from body oils and moisture that increase the need for laundering. Give the top sheet and blanket two swift hospital corners (see below) at the foot, leaving the sides loose to ease tucking yourself in.

**Hospital Corners**

This tidy trick sounds complicated but takes only seconds to apply. Tuck the top sheet and blanket together under the foot of the mattress. When you are done, the dangling fabric at the sides of the foot will have made a short U-turn back along the length of the bed. Pinch the U between your fingers and pull it toward the headboard, parallel to the mattress. Then, tuck the hanging corners of the sheet and blanket together under the mattress. Let the remaining fabric fall over the tucked portion, and that, as they say, is that.

**Finishing Touches**
To save your pillows from oils, etc., avoid grasping them under the chin to pull on the cases. Instead, lay them on the bed and inch the cases on with rocking hand motions. A vertical shaking should take care of the rest. If the length of the case overwhelms the pillow, tuck the top surface over the end and just inside the bottom fabric. Fold the bottom excess in after it to form a smooth pocket — as if the pillow's lips were inside out (or, rather, outside in). Set the pillows aside for a moment.

Apply the bedspread, keeping the length even along the sides and foot of the bed. You should have significant surplus at the headboard. Double this back over the spread until the fold line runs parallel to the headboard a few inches short of the top sheet. Center the sleeping pillows on the fold and lift the remaining spread over their tops. This prevents the day's dust fall from resting on the pillows. Alternate ending: Use a bed skirt and choose a coordinating comforter in place of the blanket. Toss decorative pillows and throws as desired. Mints are optional.

Source: The International Executive Housekeepers Association (IEHA), 2010.
### Literature related to guest satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee service component</th>
<th>Authors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee contact a component of guest satisfaction</td>
<td>Butcher, 2005; Chacko, Davidson &amp; Green, 2005; Cho &amp; Johanson &amp; Woods, 2008; David, Grabski, &amp; Kasavana, 1996; Davidson, Manning &amp; Timo, 2001; Davis, 1993; Dube &amp; Renaghan, 1999; Ekinci, 2002; Faulkner &amp; Patiar, 1997; Gill &amp; Mathur, 2007; Grönroos, 1993; Gummesson, 1992; Gundersen, Morten &amp; Olsson, 1996; Iacobucci, Grayson &amp; Ostrom, 1994; King &amp; Grace, 2005; Kirwin, 1990; La Lopa, 1997; Luthans &amp; Waldeser, 1992; McColl-Kennedy &amp; White, 1997; Oliver, 1993; Michael Riley, 2007; Wall &amp; Berry, 2007; Sarabahlksh et al., 1989; Stephens &amp; Akers, 1994; Shoemaker &amp; Shaw, 2008; Testa, Skaruppa, &amp; Pietrzak, 1998; Tideswell &amp; Fredline, 2004; Weatherly &amp; Tansik, 1993; Wilkins, Merrilees &amp; Herington, 2006.</td>
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