Reckoning Time in the Barber Shop:
A Qualitative Study of a Barber Navigating Time, Temporality, and Rhythm

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation is a qualitative study of a barber and his navigation of time, temporality, and rhythm in his barber shop. Through the use of a multi-part methodology including bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1966), rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 2004), sensory methodology (Pink, 2009), and creative analytic process ethnography (Richardson, 2005), time is reckoned, learned, and taken into account in a variety of forms. In combination with traditional elements of qualitative and ethnographic research, photography, literature, poetry, and metaphor are employed to represent and evoke everyday life in this dynamic barber shop. Findings support the use of creative qualitative methodology to research complex places in everyday life. In particular, this dissertation highlights the ways in which the barber, as owner-operator of a barber shop, navigates his time in multiple, rhythmic ways in response to unpredictable phenomena.
This dissertation is dedicated to Slim Klippence:

Man amongst men.

Barber without peer.

Traveller of time and space.
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Vita

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# Table of Contents

Abstract................................................................................................................................................................. ii  
Dedication............................................................................................................................................................... iii  
Acknowledgments.................................................................................................................................................... iv  
Vita........................................................................................................................................................................ vi  
Table of Contents.................................................................................................................................................. vii  
List of Images ......................................................................................................................................................... xi  
Chapter 1: Introduction........................................................................................................................................ 1  
  Preamble ........................................................................................................................................................... 1  
  The Origin Story ............................................................................................................................................... 3  
  Time ................................................................................................................................................................. 6  
  Learning .......................................................................................................................................................... 14  
  Rhythm............................................................................................................................................................ 19  
  The Spiral Form .............................................................................................................................................. 25  
  Metaphors of Rhythm .................................................................................................................................. 31  
  The Time Machine ......................................................................................................................................... 31  
  The Oracle..................................................................................................................................................... 34  
  The Way Station .......................................................................................................................................... 39  
Chapter 2: Literature Review................................................................................................................................. 44
Chapter 4: Findings, Part 1 ..............................................................................................142
  Preamble .......................................................................................................................142
  A Day in the Life of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop ....................................................146
  Coda ..............................................................................................................................210
Chapter 5: Findings, Part 2 ..............................................................................................212
  Preamble .......................................................................................................................212
  Not a Found Poem, But a Findings Poem.....................................................................215
Chapter 6: Conclusion......................................................................................................216
  Preamble .......................................................................................................................216
  Returning to the Questions............................................................................................217
    Answers to Research Question #1 .............................................................................217
    Answers to Research Question #2 .............................................................................219
  Haircut Story, Reversed................................................................................................222
  Barber Shop Education .................................................................................................226
  Race and Whiteness ......................................................................................................230
  Emotional Labor ...........................................................................................................232
  Rhythmanalysis, History, and The Future ....................................................................234
  Coda ..............................................................................................................................244
References........................................................................................................................247
List of Images

Image 1. The Barber Poles ........................................................................................................29
Image 2. The Time Machine ....................................................................................................32
Image 3. Slim’s Barber Chair .................................................................................................38
Image 4. Repository of Hair and Time ..................................................................................42
Image 5. Researcher in Observation .....................................................................................115
Image 6. Exterior View of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop ................................................147
Image 7. Slim’s Appointment Book .....................................................................................155
Image 8. Hair and Sunshine on the Barber Shop Floor .....................................................160
Image 9. Time in Slim’s Hands .............................................................................................165
Image 10. Waiting Chairs ....................................................................................................171
Image 11. Magazine Rack ..................................................................................................181
Image 12. Slim in the Past ...................................................................................................186
Image 13. Note from Towel Thief .......................................................................................196
Image 15. Doll, Almanac, and Suckers .............................................................................211
Image 16. Barber Pole in Front Window .............................................................................246
Chapter 1: Introduction

Preamble

After getting settled into the hair stylist’s chair, and the protective cape gets draped across the body, there may be a few moments of small talk, but then it is time to get down to business. The question—“So, what are we going to be doing with your hair today?”—marks the beginning of nearly every haircut. Likewise, I intend to start right in here and explain the business of this qualitative research dissertation. In short, this dissertation is about reckoning time in a barber shop through the use of creative ethnographic methods. The term time reckoning typically refers to the effort to quantify, organize, and arrange time based on recurring phenomena such as the sun, moon, and stars back before clocks were invented (Adam, 2004, p. 104). However, it is the more common use of the verb reckon—to consider, to figure out, to come to terms with, to learn—that ultimately guides my work. In this research, I sought to learn about time and the way it operates in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. Ultimately, I did learn about time in ways that I never anticipated. As a result, this dissertation has become something of a reckoning in the noun form—a summation, a settling of accounts, an appraisal—of both what (in terms of knowledge) and how (in terms of methodology) I learned about time. The two research questions that follow further indicate that this dissertation is equally epistemological and methodological in its pursuit of knowledge about time: 1) How does
2) What influence did methodology play in this study of a complex, everyday site?

Falk (2008) suggests, “the great paradox of time is that it is at once intimately familiar and yet deeply mysterious: nothing is more central and yet so remote” (p. 3). Indeed, it is the paradoxical nature of time, and often the paradoxical nature of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop, that leads me to construct this dissertation in unconventional ways. Although time may be mysterious and invisible, it still always exists in space and particular places. In this dissertation, the unique relationship among time, the barber shop, and the people who frequent this place is represented and reckoned through the use of rhythm. While I follow a traditional arrangement of chapters (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings, and Conclusion), my decision to utilize the unusual conception of rhythm as a research analytic to explore the temporal operations of the barber shop influences the construction of each chapter. That is, in an effort to demonstrate workings of rhythm in the barber shop, throughout and across each chapter I employ what I later define as a spiral form to address a variety of themes as they intersect and repeat in a bold effort to explain and emulate the elusiveness of rhythm.

For example, in this introductory chapter, as a way to orient the reader into the dynamic place of the barber shop and subtly introduce several key themes, I begin with an origin story, of sorts. Following this story, I attempt to define the concept of time and discuss the forms it takes in The Cut & Shave. Then, I discuss the possibilities of learning in the shop. Next, I introduce rhythm as an analytic to theorize time, which is followed by an explanation of the importance of metaphor in this dissertation. Finally, as a way to conclude this chapter, I employ three temporal metaphors to demonstrate rhythm. The
next two chapters—the Literature Review and the Methodology chapters—are composed in such a way to both expand the conception of rhythm and prepare the reader for the two findings chapters. Chapters 4 and 5 serve as evocative representations of the findings, while the last chapter returns to the research questions and provides concluding commentary. I begin by returning to my own introduction to The Cut & Shave Barber Shop.

The Origin Story

When I first visited The Cut & Shave Barber Shop, I had not been living in this area for too long. One of the more tedious tasks involved in moving to a new city is finding a new barber or hair stylist. As I have come to learn, everyone has an individual set of criteria to determine a positive haircut experience. Some people favor the speed, low price, and relative anonymity of corporate franchised, unisex salons. My own goal was to establish a solid relationship with a conveniently located, reliable barber who charged a fair price. The first few places I tried just did not feel right, though I cannot exactly remember the reasons, so I never went back. However, I knew that I had found the right barber for me when I entered The Cut & Shave and, in less than a minute, I found myself being yelled at by the head barber and proprietor, Mr. Slim Klippence; hereafter, I refer to him by the pseudonym Slim.

Entering this shop can feel a bit like entering an old west saloon. Located in an older, multi-use building with apartment units above and another business next door, the façade is fairly basic: large bay windows with shades partially drawn to keep out the sun, the front door, and the overhead sign reading “The Cut & Shave Barber Shop.” Instead of swinging doors, there is first a screen door and then an ancient glass-paned wood door
(with a transom opening) that can be tricky to open. Each new visitor crossing this threshold instantly becomes the focus of everyone in the shop’s attention. To the left of the door are three barber stations and to the right is a row of four traditional red barber chairs that serve as a waiting area. In the back, and facing the door, is a small bathroom on one side and an employees-only enclosure on the other. There are mirrors, photographs, and artwork on the walls; music and the sound of the hair clippers are always in the air. The space is about what one might expect a typical, if slightly eccentric, barbershop to look like.

Although I had checked the shop’s hours online and had walked by the place several times on my way to school, I was unaware of the haircut appointment making process. In my defense, there was a sandwich board sign out front on the sidewalk advertising “walk-ins.” Yet after making my entrance into the shop for the first time, I was almost immediately asked by the barber, who was busy cutting a younger, white male’s hair, “Do you have an appointment?” Although the second barber was absent that day, it was clear by the location of Slim’s chair in the traditional, first chair location—and, obviously, by his demeanor—that he was the person in charge of the shop. An average-sized, middle-aged, white male, Slim has short gray hair, wears glasses, and sports a number of tattoos. At that moment, however, his physical appearance was not the issue; it was his intensity that made such a memorable first impression. A bit confused, I answered that I did not have an appointment, but I was hoping for a walk-in. Slim replied tersely, “Well, I’m booked up for the rest of the day but I just had a cancellation for the spot in 45 minutes if you want that.” At the time, I only lived a few minutes away so I replied that I would come back at the specified time. As I motioned to leave, Slim, in an
increasingly louder voice, declared, “Don’t tell me you are coming back and then don’t show up. I can give that time to someone else.” As he continued to snip away with his shears, the tense look on his face confirmed that he was not joking around.

Caught between confusion and anger—I had to ask myself, is this guy I’ve never met before this moment calling me a liar?—I paused and then stated that I would be back shortly. As I walked down the street, I was conflicted and increasingly angry at myself for not telling Slim what to do with his precious appointment; I grew even angrier that I had agreed to return. After thinking about it, I realized that this man took his work and his time seriously, and he spoke his mind freely. I respect those traits in a barber (or anyone else). So, in order to “win” our little showdown, I did return—on time, of course—for that first haircut and what turns out to be the beginning of this research project. It was, in fact, a positive haircut experience in terms of the way my hair looked and the way it marked the beginning of a relationship built during my regular visits for the next six years. These days, Slim and I laugh about this story, but those few intense minutes of our introduction demonstrate a number of ever-present elements of human behavior that make this barber shop, and hair sites in general, such dynamic places of inquiry.

I return to this origin story in the next chapter as it is relevant to the literature review of barber shops and beauty parlors. However, at this point I would like to explain the path from that first encounter with Slim to a dissertation about time in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. With each visit to the shop for a haircut, I learned more about Slim and the way the shop operated. Having cut hair for 30 years in the region, and owning The Cut & Shave for about 10 years, Slim is a highly skilled barber with a strong
knowledge of the local community. In the shop, he has created an eclectic, bustling environment that, despite first impressions, is quite welcoming to a wide range of clients of various ages, races, genders, sexualities, and socioeconomic statuses. As a client, I enjoy my time in the shop as Slim cuts my hair and engages me in extended, meandering conversations punctuated by the phone calls of other clients seeking appointments. As a qualitative researcher, I reflected on these stimulating encounters and slowly, haircut by haircut, began my effort to understand this unusual place. After about three years of these regular visits, I asked Slim for permission to conduct my dissertation in The Cut & Shave. After receiving Slim’s approval, I continued to learn about Slim, read about the history of barbering, and review the academic research concerning hair. As I diligently sought to narrow my focus for the dissertation, this project only seemed to become more complicated and multi-layered as each new discovery pushed the project in a seemingly new direction. Ultimately, I conceded to the fact that the way that the shop appears to be bursting-at-the-seams with human energy, emotion, laughter, insight, and vitality demands a similarly complicated but uniquely crafted theoretical and methodological approach. Time, in its many forms, emerged as the one constant theme in my ongoing analysis of the shop.

Time

My particular interest in the theme of time stems from my realization that Slim does several different things at one time. For example, in the origin story, for the entire duration of our emotional exchange, Slim continued to cut the client’s hair. It may be a rather obvious point, but I emphasize it to ground the uniqueness of the hair maintenance profession. That is, as he cuts hair with sharp, dangerous tools, Slim also talks with
clients, answers the phone, and listens to music—all while monitoring the shop, his employees, and the bustling thoroughfare through the front window. Other skilled trades people such as carpenters and plumbers may also do more than one thing at once; but their use of tools rarely involves the simultaneous use of interactive emotional and conversational skills. Likewise, educators and counselors may employ emotional and conversational skills, but not while using dangerous tools. There are a variety of terms to explain this complex behavior including multi-tasking, multiple involvements, and polychronicity. Slim uses the term multi-tasking to describe the use of his time “because there is a lot more going on than it may seem” both within the environment and his own mind. In their analysis of a beauty salon, LeBaron and Jones (2002) employ the term multiple involvements to explain how a hair stylist must negotiate a number of behaviors at the same time. Toerien and Kitzinger (2007) extend this concept in their discussion of emotional labor as they argue doing several things at one time is a real skill. For example, “if managed seamlessly, this navigation between multiple involvements may be invisible. That is the point: to ‘smooth’ an interaction successfully, the process cannot appear effortful” (p. 655). Hall (1983) defines polychronic time (“doing many things at once”) in opposition to monochromic time (“doing one thing at a time”) in his application of these terms to describe the way individuals and cultures utilize time (p. 46). Still, the question remains: What is time?

Time is at the center of this dissertation because time appears in a variety of forms at The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. It is necessary to first define the forms and individually explain their relevance to this dissertation before discussing the importance of their intertwined relationship. The struggle to explain time has plagued philosophers for
centuries; as best as possible, I attempt to define what time is, what time isn’t, and what forms it takes in this research. Ultimately, these attempts at definitions seek to show that time is an essential, ongoing part of lived experience regardless of how we define it in language. Because it is “a silent accompaniment, a shadowy implication …[with] a quality of intangibility… [that] resists concretization, indication or direct representation. Time is more intangible than any other ‘thing,’ less able to be grasped, conceptually or psychically” (Grosz, 1999, p. 1). This intangibility and invisibility necessitate the use of metaphor to help explain the existence and operation of time; however, metaphors of time, though unavoidable, are often problematic. For example, time, according to Ermarth (2010), is “not a kind of universal envelope for events, not an infinite neutral common-denominator medium ‘in’ which everything happens” (p. 134). Similarly, West-Pavlov (2013) argues that time is not “a container (in which things exist and events happen), nor is it even a fluid medium (like air or water)” because “there is no ‘separate’ time outside the dynamic, processual becomings of things…rather, time is immanent in things” (p. 50). In terms of metaphors, it is the reversal of time as a mere container to time being something more like “filling” that brings us closer to an understanding of time. Thus, Merleau-Ponty (2012) claims, “I am not in space and in time, nor do I think space and time; rather, I am of space and of time” (p. 141). Likewise, Ernath (2010) suggests time is “a dimension of events” (p. 135). Somewhat counter-intuitively, then, to be best understood, time must be defined by its relationship to other entities and by its existence within contexts rather than in isolation. Further, Einstein’s discovery of the theory of relativity in 1905 technically made it scientifically unsound to consider time in isolation from its relationship to space (Falk, 2008). Therefore, it is important to keep in
mind that time takes many forms in the barber shop and will not be examined as if it existed alone in a theoretical vacuum.

Still, today, we mainly tend to conceive of time as it appears on clocks and watches in the form of linear time, but we also still operate by other forms of time such as the much older form based in nature: cyclical time. The most noticeable example of cyclical time is the sun rising in the morning and falling at night to mark each day. According to Lefebvre (2004), “The cyclical is perceived rather favorably: it originates in the cosmos, in the worldly, in nature. We can all picture the waves of the sea—a nice image, full of meaning—or sound waves, or circadian or monthly cycles” (p. 76).

Importantly, natural cycles also involve the body and its relationship to nature as “almost all organisms, including the human, are made up of interlocking cycles or rhythms in the neurochemistry of the body which pulses away in our organs. Biological rhythms are locked onto the motions of the earth and the moon” (Young, 1988, p. 15). Cyclical time takes a variety of natural and even social, habitual forms in The Cut & Shave.

First and foremost, it is the body’s production of hair at approximately half an inch per month that primarily causes the need for a haircut in the first place. Slim’s regular clients seek haircuts at somewhat arbitrary, yet fairly consistent intervals. That is, clients may visit the shop at a rate of every 2 weeks, or 4 weeks, or 6 weeks, or 8 weeks; others might stop in only 2 or 3 times a year. The relatively close proximity of The College forces the shop to also take account of the temporal cycles of the academic calendar as examination weeks, holidays, and semester breaks significantly impact the flow of clients in the shop. Further, the cycles of graduation and new enrollment cause a surge of new clients every fall and a round of departures in the spring. Each week itself
tends to be rather cyclical as business can be slow on Monday and Tuesday, but very busy at the end of the week. On a daily basis, the telephone rings in predictable waves as clients regularly call to make appointments around 10:00am, 12:00pm, 3:00pm, and 5:00pm. The rush hour occurs every day between about 5:00pm and closing time at 7:00pm because clients often leave their jobs and head straight to the barber shop. Slim is very perceptive of cyclical time and uses this knowledge to not only maximize his time every day, but also to balance the demands of cyclical time with linear time.

Linear time, also known as clock time, abstract time, sequential time and quantitative time, is the most familiar form of time. In everyday life, when we think of time, we think of linear time moving forward in a straight line. According to Adam (2006), “Clock-time, which was developed in Europe during the 14th century, no longer tracks and synthesizes time of the natural and social environment but produces instead a time that is independent from those processes: clock-time is applicable anywhere, any time. Context no longer plays a role” (p. 123). The unshackling of time from the natural world allowed for standardization, reliability, and convenience all of which are necessary to coordinate and maximize modern requirements of work. Lefebvre (2004) argues, “This homogenous and desacralized time has emerged victorious since it supplied the measure of the time of work. Beginning from this historic moment, it became the time of everydayness, subordinating to the organization of work in space other aspects of the everyday: the hours of sleep and waking, meal times and the hours of private life” (p. 73). Today, globalization and technology—in terms of reliable electricity, Internet connectivity, and high-speed transportation—both require and promote the dominance of
linear time. With linear time, every minute of every day can be accounted for and monetized. According to Adam (2006):

As Karl Marx theorized… the fastest throughput and shortest possible capital outlay are part and parcel of th[e] commodification of time. Hence, when time is money, faster is better…It does this not just in the globalized world of work but in all other spheres of social interaction that have been penetrated by this ethos. (p. 124)

As a workplace, The Cut & Shave has a complicated relationship with linear time.

Linear time, as it ticks away day after day, serves as something of an unforgiving foundation that impacts Slim and nearly all aspects of life in the barber shop. The shop keeps consistent hours of operation 6 days a week and operates on an appointment-based schedule. On average, 30 minutes are allotted for each haircut, although clients with longer hair or those seeking services like hair coloring are scheduled for more time. Instead of being charged by the amount of time it takes to complete the service, clients are charged flat rates for each service. Therefore, in theory, the faster a barber cuts hair, the more income can be generated. In a description of the barber shop he patronizes, Alexander (2003) puts it rather directly, “bodies translate into heads, heads into numbers, and numbers into money” (p. 116). In reality, because human beings are involved, there are a number of complicating factors that affect the maximization of linear time and profit in the shop including the following: clients are often late, conversation between barbers and clients can slow the tempo, certain hair styles and textures require more time, the phone repeatedly interrupts the haircut, clients request alterations or revisions, and some clients fail to show up for their appointments (no-shows). Slim, and the other
barbers, are under the constant pressure of linear time as they often must hurry, improvise, and employ tricks of the trade to keep up with the demands of the clock as the next client is always a half hour away. To complicate matters, in order to establish and maintain regular clients, barbers must spend portions of the haircut cultivating relationships primarily through conversation. These non-haircutting activities reflect the importance of temporality in the shop.

Although it is commonly used as a synonym for time, the term temporality refers, more specifically, to the ways that people experience and perceive time in a qualitative manner (Flaherty, 1999). For example, 1 hour of linear time in a classroom may seem to take an eternity or it can fly by in what feels like minutes depending on a student’s (or teacher’s) perception of the experience. Commonly, “the complicated relationships between past, present, and future… make up temporality” (West-Pavlov, 2013, p. 45) because how we experience time depends on our past experiences, current situations, and future plans. According to Merleau-Ponty (2012), “In every movement of focusing, my body ties a present, a past, and a future together” (p. 249). During my fieldwork, I discovered the significance of temporality and the entangled relationship of the past, present, and future in The Cut & Shave. The most obvious and linear demonstration of this relationship happens to be visual and physical in nature as clients visit the barber shop from the past with overgrown heads of hair, they enter the barber chair in the present where the hair receives trimming, then they leave the shop looking noticeably different as they proceed into the future. The client experiences a rather complete temporal experience, yet the barbers experience this cycle over and over, each and every day. More importantly, the conversation and storytelling during the haircut are decidedly
non-linear as Slim regularly tells stories from his 30 year history of cutting hair with some clients he has known for almost that long. Clients discuss upcoming events (e.g., travel, holidays, etc.) for which they are getting haircuts, or they simply mention what they did that particular morning or will do that evening. In terms of the haircut itself, Slim has financial and temporal incentive to remember the clients’ usual haircut preferences in order to provide quality service that inspires the clients to return in the future. Therefore, as linear time always looms, a deft treatment of temporality becomes essential to facilitating a positive overall experience. Over the course of a 10-hour day, decades of time are travelled in narratives that circle in, through, and back around the past, present, and future.

For purposes of clarity, I specifically addressed each form of time individually and point by point, but it is the fact that several forms of time operate simultaneously that makes the barber shop a rich site for temporal inquiry. For instance, a client will schedule a haircut appointment at 3:30pm on a Tuesday (linear time) because it has been 4 weeks since his last haircut (cyclical time). He will visit the shop at the appointed clock time and spend 30 minutes (present) telling Slim about a recent camping trip (past) and an upcoming foot surgery (future). Adam (2004) states, “in everyday life, the relative temporality of past, present and future and the objective time of calendars and clocks are not chosen on an either-or basis. Rather, they coexist, interpenetrate and mutually implicate each other” (p. 69). Or, as Lefebvre (2004) claims, “Cyclical repetition and the linear repetitive separate out under analysis, but in reality interfere with one another constantly” (p. 8). To conclude this section on time, it is useful to consider Adam’s
(2004) model of the “timescape” to conceptualize how the many forms of time operate concurrently in The Cut & Shave:

I propose that we think about temporal relations with reference to a cluster of temporal features, each implicated in all the others but not necessarily of equal importance in each instance. We might call this cluster a timescape. The notion of ‘scape’ is important here as it indicates, first, that time is inseparable from space and matter, and second, that context matters. (p. 143)

Marking the barber shop as a timescape in which dozens of people interact every day helps to reduce the elements of invisibility and intangibility that cloud attempts to understand time in concrete situations. Much like how representations of traditional landscapes feature a variety of elements (e.g., foreground, background, the land, the sky, and both animate and inanimate objects), timescapes encourage “viewers” to see individual elements of these temporal compositions, but also their various relationships. This type of arrangement of people experiencing forms of time in a specific context serves as a key component of the later discussion of rhythm that follows the next section on learning.

**Learning**

As a doctoral candidate in a College of Education, it made logical sense for me to consider the possible role of learning in this everyday, out-of-school setting. Moss (1994) claims, “Just as there is no monolithic notion of student, there is no monolithic notion of an educational setting” (p. 2). Although it is possible to make comparisons to schools—as barber shops and beauty parlors are settings where people come together on a regular basis to share information and forge relationships—the purpose of the barber shop is to
cut hair, not provide education. Thus, it seemed more worthwhile to explore other non-traditional educational possibilities. That is, I thought that one of the many uses of Slim’s time might involve participation in a unique, situated form of informal, reciprocal education or learning. Based on the regularity of the clients’ cyclical visits and the half hour of time spent during the haircut engaging in conversation and fostering relationships, I began to explore this possibility with familiar theories of learning. A somewhat paradoxical testament to The Cut & Shave is that two very different models of learning apply equally well to explain how learning works in the shop. While neither theory completely explains the situation, both the traditional “banking” model of learning and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) social practice theory of learning offer some preliminary insights to the educational possibilities of the shop.

Somewhat surprisingly, a recent trend involves medical researchers investigating issues of community health education in barber shops and beauty parlors (or hair sites). These studies are indicative of the traditional model of education in their efforts to provide information to “traditionally underserved populations” (Solomon et al, 2004, p. 806). Specifically, medical researchers seek to distribute, or transfer, relevant health information (and also study the efficacy of this method of information delivery) about the following topics: prostate cancer (Luque et al 2011); health education (Solomon et al 2004); health promotion (Releford, Frencher, & Yancey 2010); health screening (Bragg 2011); HIV/AIDS (Baker et al 2012); hypertension (Victor et al 2009); heart health (Ferdinand 1995). Dismissively, in relation to schools, Freire (1993) refers to this model of information distribution as “the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the
deposits” (p. 53). Within school contexts, this model can indeed be oppressive and alienating, but in non-school settings it can function more democratically when participants determine the information they chose to share or deposit. Marberry (2005) describes these types of learning experiences by writing, “as I visited [Black] barber shops across the country, I observed, among barbers and customers alike, an informal yet earnest proclivity to teach, to enlighten, to ‘school.’ Knowledge is passed on, not salted away…And sometimes the schooling is as fundamental as how to prevent a crop of tomatoes from getting brown spots or even the right cop to see about fixing a ticket” (p. 4). Certainly, dating back to ancient Rome, barber shops have served as sources of useful, relevant news, gossip, and facts (Lewis, 1995). In The Cut & Shave, Slim himself serves as a human repository of community information about jobs, real estate, local music, and restaurant recommendations that he shares with his clients, and they do likewise with him. Although limited as an all-encompassing theory of learning, information transmission remains relevant in non-school based and community settings.

Based on theories of practice, contemporary models of social learning emphasize the role of change and knowledge construction within social contexts in everyday life. Since clients visit the shop seeking change (or trying to prevent it through steady hair maintenance), social learning theory resonates with some of the activities here. For instance, Lave and Wenger (1991), in opposition to the banking model, argue, “learning is never simply a process of transfer or assimilation: Learning, transformation, and change are always implicated in one another” (p. 57). With their conception of “community of practice,” Lave and Wenger (1991) further theorize learning as a form of apprenticeship in which people of different levels of experience work together to develop
“knowledgeable skills” (p. 29). Additionally, and rather directly, they state, “one way to
think of learning is as the historical production, transformation, and change of persons”
the same time, it is “fundamentally experiential and fundamentally social” (p. 227). It is
the combination of developing knowledge, social interaction, and identity construction
that makes the social model of learning attractive to a study of many barber shops and
beauty parlors.

However, The Cut & Shave is not like most shops partly because of its unique
scheduling system that allows clients to make appointments by telephone, rather than just
walk in the shop and wait for a haircut. Therefore, it does not function as a traditional
communal setting in which a large number of people wait and interact amongst
themselves and the barbers. The sense of community in the shop revolves around Slim as
he acts as a central hub purposefully connecting clients on an individual basis. Thus, the
communities of practice that form in the shop are almost always communities of two:
Slim and the client. Depending on the topic and the client, Slim plays either of the two
roles in this model, that of master or apprentice. Regardless of the model, learning in The
Cut & Shave tends to function in a reciprocal fashion. Like with the banking model,
adjustments need to be made to social learning theory to fit The Cut & Shave, but with
effort either model could easily be employed to explain learning in the shop. How can it
be possible that two, divergent models are applicable here?

A large part of the answer to this question requires further acknowledgement that
The Cut & Shave is a business—it is not a school or a community setting dedicated to a
singular purpose—and any learning that may occur here (in any model or form) is
peripheral or secondary to the main purpose of cutting hair. It is easy to forget this important point because so much above and beyond the cutting of hair transpires here. Because there is so much activity and so many people, such a complex setting conveniently lends itself to the application of a variety of theories (with minor adjustments, of course). It would make no sense to propose that hundreds of people ranging in age from 5 to 85 years old all demonstrate one model of learning during the half-hour haircut once a month. Thus, instead of applying one or more established theories of learning to The Cut & Shave, I argue for a broader approach in which the analytical focus shifts to the distinctive way the shop operates as a whole (under Slim’s leadership) in order to examine what this method of operations may suggest about learning as a peripheral activity in this context.

Although I seek to avoid direct comparisons to school settings, I believe this approach to learning in the shop takes into account Lave’s (2008) argument against more traditional forms of learning that serve to “produce a division such that one maybe learning or living but not both at once” (p. 10). Perhaps more so, this approach aligns with Dewey’s (1938/1977) notion of collateral learning as opposed to primary learning as a singular, focused task, because “collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, maybe and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned” (p. 48). Dewey’s statement hints at the co-existence of the banking model (the “lessons”) and social learning theories (“enduring attitudes”) that also resonates with Alexander’s (2003) apt description of the barber shop as a “cultural thrift store of services and information” (p. 106). Items in a thrift store take on many meanings and purposes as they are bought and sold for a variety
of reasons; similarly, in the barber shop the exchange of information leads to unique applications outside of the shop. Ultimately, learning in the barber shop nearly always occurs unintentionally in an unplanned manner amidst other activities, and it never happens in just one form. While The Cut & Shave exists foremost as a business establishment, a variety of human behaviors and activities occur in addition to the cutting of hair. However, any claims or analyzes of peripheral activities such as learning must be lodged within the context of the entire operations of the shop as a whole and not as isolated components.

**Rhythm**

Descriptions and explanations of the shop develop throughout each chapter of this dissertation in an effort to consistently develop and refine my unconventional approach to this work. At this point I seek to clarify what I mean by “the operations of the shop” to assist in the framing of my argument and methodology. Slim typically works 6 days a week and cuts the hair of approximately 80 to 100 people each week. Each month, he works with hundreds of people who move through his shop. He may only spend half an hour with a client once every 4 weeks or so, but this relationship develops month by month and has the potential to last for several years, and even decades. Teachers may see students for 1 hour a day 5 days a week for several months at a time; co-workers and community participants may work together several hours a day for extended periods of time. Other than familial relationships, the barber-client relationship is rare for its unusual longevity as a one-on-one relationship that withstands consistent change as both parties age and grow as individuals. Importantly, a level of intimacy develops from the physical and emotional components of this relationship.
Sustained touch remains exceedingly rare in our culture. Because hair functions as such a complex, tangible symbol of human identity, clients must literally work closely with barbers to negotiate identities that successfully combine natural bodily material with unstable social constructions. As a result, each relationship is very individualized and always evolving; interestingly, there can be 15 or more of these relationships that the barber must negotiate everyday. Certainly, there are similar characteristics that repeat through each haircut as stories are retold and men’s hairstyles do not radically change; however, each haircut often presents a unique set of unpredictable circumstances with which to work. Therefore, over the course of the entire day, Slim’s navigation of such unique relationships requires a complex, nuanced method of operation that must take into account the various, unpredictable ways clients behave, speak, express emotions, learn, and resolve conflict.

To develop a comprehensive view of the overall operations of the shop, I spent 10 weeks conducting field observations for 5 days a week for several hours at a time. This intensive model of observation was selected for a number of reasons. As noted above, the temporal nature of the barber-client relationship is rather longitudinal and, to some extent, is also unpredictable. Clients may only visit the shop once a month, but there are no standing appointments because clients usually call the shop to make appointments only a day or less before their haircuts. The long gaps between appointments would cause a traditional case-study design involving three or four clients to take years of rapport-building and fieldwork to complete in order to draw an accurate rendering of their barber shop experiences. Hence, I focus less on the individual client experience and more on the barber shop as an environment under Slim’s leadership. Also, as a client of Slim’s for
several years, I already possess a relatively solid client perspective of my own. Spending several weeks of long days in the shop provided the nearest thing to a “barber’s perspective” I could possibly obtain without actually working in the shop as a barber. My divergent roles in the shop enabled me to take a multi-perspectival research approach. Sitting in the waiting chairs as a researcher, I could perceive, appointment after appointment, the shifts in moods and energy throughout the day as Slim consistently maneuvered among past, present, and future in his non-linear conversations. To study and eventually reckon time in the barber shop, I needed to experience time in great duration in the barber shop in order to move beyond the assumptions I developed as only a client. In the end, this unusual perspective as both client and researcher convinced me to take a non-traditional methodological and theoretical approach to this work as I discovered the most effective way to explain my understanding of the temporal operations of the shop involves the use of rhythm.

Since time cannot be observed in isolation because it is always connected to space or place—in this case, a place that is host to constant human activity—rhythm serves to explain the variety of human behavior as it exists in, through, and as time within the barber shop. Like time, rhythm presents significant challenges with definition, but music is a solid place to begin as music is usually the first thing we think of when we encounter rhythm. Mainly, we hear and feel rhythm as arrangements of sound in time as rhythm consists of more than a monotonous beat. Musical rhythm involves ordered, repeated patterns with regular disruptions; it is the temporal element of music. Dewey (1934/2005) offers “a short definition of rhythm. It is ordered variation of changes. When there is a uniformly even flow, with no variation of intensity or speed, there is no rhythm” (p. 160).
A number of scholars insist on the relevance of rhythm beyond music; in fact, several make rather grand pronouncements of its significance. For instance, Adam (1990) states, “All organisms, from single cells to human beings and even ecosystems, display rhythmic behavior. Rhythmicity is a universal phenomenon” (p. 73). Similarly, Langer (1953) claims, “The most characteristic principle of vital activity is rhythm. All life is rhythmic; under difficult circumstances, its rhythms may become very complex, but when they are really lost life cannot long endure” (p. 126). Hall (1983) avers, “I am convinced that it will ultimately be proved that almost every facet of human behavior is involved in the rhythmic process” (p. 153). Lastly, Dewey (1934/2005) emphasizes, “As far as nature is to us more than a flux lacking order in its mutable changes, as far as it is more than a whirlpool of confusions, it is marked by rhythms. Formula for these rhythms constitutes the canons of science” (p. 155). Because rhythm appears to be an unusual analytic with which to theorize a barber shop, I have attempted here to show that this challenging concept does have a lengthy history in the humanities and social sciences.

In this dissertation, rhythm serves as the link connecting time, place, people and even learning in The Cut & Shave. The earlier discussion of the many forms of time in the shop was a preliminary effort to provide the explanatory foundation for the use of rhythm to explore and explain time through the rest of this text. Likewise, I now need to make a few important phenomenological, for lack of a better term, claims about the operations of the shop that also undergird my use of rhythm. Because hair functions as something of a nexus or crossroads between biology and culture, in that hair is bodily material arranged in relation to cultural expectations, the barber shop acts as an interactive space in which the Cartesian division of the mind and body breaks down. That
is, the intimacy resulting from the physical touch of the barber encourages (and even necessitates) communication based on the “non-verbal, tacit, emplaced knowledge” (Pink, 2009, p. 130) reflected in subtleties such as tone of voice, body posture, and quick looks in the mirror. Communication of this sort is not the result of a disembodied mind cognitively directing a passive body; hence, the need to “avoid reducing what people know to what they say” (Harris, 2007, p. 13). More accurately, Merleau-Ponty (2012) refers to a unified structure of mind and body as a “knowing-body” (p. 431) whereas, by the same token, Dewey (1958) labels it “body-mind” (p. 284). Merleau-Ponty (2012) explains, “my body is not a sum of juxtaposed organs, but a synergetic system of which all of the functions are taken up and tied together in the general movement of being in the world” (p. 243). Knowing-bodies moving and being in the world are necessary components in the reciprocal, rhythmic relationship between human beings and their environments.

Rhythm can only develop and evolve in contexts in which people are perceptive and engaged with each other; static, repetitive places lacking movement and vitality are rarely conducive to rhythm. Ingold (2000) suggests, “an approach that is genuinely ecological, in my view, is one that would ground human intention and action within the context of an ongoing and mutually constitutive engagement between people and their environments” (p. 27). Within such environments, Ingold (2000) explains, “by watching, listening, perhaps even touching, we continually feel each other’s presence, … [and] at every moment adjusting our movements in response to this ongoing perceptual monitoring” (p. 196). In relation to rhythm, Dewey (1934/2005) states, “direct experience comes from nature and man [sic] interacting with each other. In this interaction, human
energy gathers, is released, dammed up, frustrated and victorious. There are rhythmic beats of want and fulfillment, pulses of doing and being withheld from doing” (p. 15). Following this brief discussion of the phenomenological arrangement of minds, bodies, perceptions, and environments, ideally it may become easier to conceive of The Cut & Shave as a dynamic, organic environment in which clients contribute and adjust to a variety of energies as they move through the shop at regular intervals. At the same time, Slim must also consistently adjust his behavior—such as his haircutting speed, emotions, and his own energy levels—in response to this environment in order to maintain a sense of equilibrium.

Unquestionably, I will continue to develop my conception of rhythm and its workings in The Cut & Shave throughout the chapters of this dissertation, but there are a few significant challenges I must acknowledge at this point in the form of two questions. First: How is it possible to avoid the problematic implications of neatness and order that rhythm unavoidable suggests when, in fact, unpredictability and disorder are not exactly strangers to The Cut & Shave? Second: How can an elusive entity such as rhythm be convincingly represented in written language? The answer to the first question requires a bit of explanation. My decision to take a more global rather local approach to the operations of the shop is predicated on the belief that rhythm can, in fact, provide a means to explain this paradoxical site that at one moment can appear to be chaotic, absurd, and disorienting, but a few hours later appear to be a well-oiled machine functioning at top speed and maximum efficiency. It is important to note, in each scenario, the view from outside the front window of the shop looking inside would
appear exactly alike—a few people sitting around in chairs getting their hair cut by barbers.

To understand how rhythm works in ways that can be messy and disorganized, but still recognizable as rhythm, it may help to think of dance. Seamon (1980) offers the term “place-ballet” which he describes as “an environmental synergy in which human and material parts unintentionally foster a larger whole with its own special rhythm and character” (p. 163). However, any use of the term ballet connotes too much coordination. Instead, returning to the image in the shop window that remains seemingly unchanged, consider that Slim randomly “dances” one on one with each new client all day long. It is less of a ballet, and more of an old-fashioned dance hall. Some dances are fast, some are slow, and the styles vary from tango to tap. Some days, the same style repeats and Slim waltzes along for hours at a time, while other days seem to be non-stop interpretive dance. Just as likely, the step may change in the middle of the haircut or the other barbers and waiting clients may join the conversational dance. All told, this dance metaphor provides an alternate representation of rhythm operating in unpredictable, yet still traceable arrangements that manage to account for, rather than simplify, the complexity in the shop. To answer the second question—How can an elusive entity such as rhythm be convincingly represented in written language?—similarly lies in metaphor. I discuss it in the next section.

**The Spiral Form**

In this section, I address the importance of metaphor to the study of rhythm in The Cut & Shave. By selecting metaphor as the answer to the second question—How can an elusive entity such as rhythm be convincingly represented in written language?—I
undoubtedly shift this project toward the more experimental end of the qualitative research spectrum. The rationale for the use of creative, unconventional methodology will be explained at length in Chapter 3; however, in short, the decision to forego an exclusive use of traditional social science methods reflects an ethical researcher stance. That is, instead of rigidly pursuing my own education-based agenda that would not only misrepresent but interrupt the operations of the shop, I have crafted a methodological and epistemological approach that seeks to represent Slim and The Cut & Shave in ethnographic ways that are highly subjective, but still based on my direct observation of the shop for hundreds of hours. Issues and crises of representation have beleaguered the social sciences since the 1980s (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986); the challenging subject matter of time and rhythm further compounds the issue of representation. I raise the issue of methodology at this time because my use of metaphor to represent rhythm has a direct relationship on not only the content of this dissertation, but its structure as well. After completing the discussion of metaphor in the social sciences, I introduce the spiral form.

In terms of time, Young (1988) suggests the reason we utilize metaphors to represent time is “because they cannot be tested by reference to our ordinary senses. We cannot consult them to ask if time is really like a reaper or a whirlwind” (p. 244). In the same way, rhythm also lends itself to metaphor. Lefebvre (2004) expands on this challenge of representing rhythm by asserting:

Rhythm is easily grasped whenever the body makes a sign; but it is conceived with difficulty. Why? It is neither a substance, nor a matter, nor a thing. Nor is it a simple relation between two or more elements, for example subject and object, or the relative and the absolute…The concept implies something more. What?
Perhaps energy, a highly general concept. An energy is employed, unfolds in time and space (a space-time). Isn’t all expenditure of energy accomplished in accordance with a rhythm? (pp. 64-65)

In his writings on rhythm, Lefebvre (2004) often invokes the metaphor of the bouquet or garland to describe the way individual rhythms join together with other rhythms to form larger arrangements. While time and rhythm lend themselves to metaphorical representations, the use of metaphor throughout the social sciences is actually quite common, albeit in more subtle ways than it appears in this dissertation.

It is my intention to use metaphor not only to concretize rhythm on the page, but also to serve as something of an organizing principle in the structure of this dissertation. Richardson (1990) explains, “metaphor is the backbone of social science writing, and like a true spine, it bears weight, permits movement, links parts together into a functional, coherent whole—and it is not immediately visible” (p. 18). Similarly, to provide a sense of structure, Law (2004) suggests that we need to create “metaphors for what is impossible or barely possible, unthinkable or barely thinkable” as “a way of pointing to and articulating a sense of the world as an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations… filled with currents, eddies, flows, vortices, unpredictable changes, storms, and with moments of lull and calm” (pp. 6-7). These two citations are purposefully chosen to not just offer rhetorical and theoretical justifications, but for the actual metaphors each theorists uses to explain the role of metaphor. Richardson’s (1990) use of the vertical spine in combination with Law’s (2004) use of cyclical and circular natural phenomena to explain the need for metaphor lead, figuratively and literally, into the following explanation of the origins of the barber pole.
It is a challenge to think of another profession or trade with such an enduring symbol as the barber pole. Rather simple in design—nothing more than a vertical pole (with caps on both ends) wrapped in a repeating pattern of three colored stripes of red, white, and blue—the pole has been utilized for over 400 years by barber shop owners to indicate to passerby that haircuts and other services are available inside. It is these “other services” that mark the origin of the barber pole. The story dates back over 400 years to England, where barbers, in addition to providing grooming services such as haircutting and shaving, served as medical practitioners who pulled teeth, treated wounds, and performed phlebotomy, or bloodletting. “Patients” would sit in the barber’s chair and stimulate the veins in their arms by firmly grasping a wooden pole as the barber proceeded to cut open a forearm and drain blood into a basin (represented by the metal caps on the barber pole). After one of these treatments for any number of real or imagined ailments, the barber would hang the bloody, white bandages used to stop the bleeding on the pole to dry only to have the wind blow the soiled cloth around the pole to form the enduring image of the endlessly revolving stripes. The addition of the blue stripe served to distinguish barbers from surgeons (Andrews, 1904). Today, in several states, there are laws that prohibit hair professionals without barber’s licenses from displaying the pole in their shops or in advertising. The barber pole is the source of the spiral form.
First and foremost, the modern barber pole is an invitation, or even an enticement, to enter the familiar space of the barber shop. The photograph above of multiple barber poles was taken inside the National Barber Museum & Hall of Fame, home to a vast collection of barber shop antiques and historical artifacts. At this site, there are dozens of fully functional barber poles mounted on the walls that light up and spin to create a dizzying, almost hallucinatory, effect. Here, the symbolic lure of the barber pole becomes clear as staring at it can produce a hypnotic trance when the stripes start to blend together and it becomes hard to tell if they flow upward or downward. Looming over the poles in this image is an ordinary ceiling fan; while not technically a spiral, this fan suggests the familiar combination of horizontal motion around a vertical pole. There are three similar
fans at The Cut & Shave and a number of other spiral-like entities such as: a neon barber pole sign in the front window, the barber chairs that spin around, but also raise and lower on a vertical axis, the spiral-like hair patterns (or whorls) at the crown of the human head, the spiral-patterned fingerprints at the end of Slim’s (and everyone’s) hands and, most importantly, the way time, in its linear and cyclical forms, intersect in the shop.

The spiral form metaphor is not intended to be an exact explanation for every experience mentioned in this text. Nor is it exactly original in social science research, for within educational studies alone, it can be found in Bruner’s (1962) “spiral curriculum,” Wells (2004) “spiral of knowing,” Yammato and Kato’s (2006) spiral-based “generative life cycle,” and Kolb and Kolb’s (2005) use of the spiral in their experiential learning theory. Also, as Slim likes to tell me, the barber pole is technically not even a spiral, it is a helix (but I stick with the spiral because of its broader resonances.) Not only do spiral forms appear in the shop, but entangled, barber pole-like relationships exist throughout this dissertation. For example, I emphasize and demonstrate the intertwined connections of theory, data, and methods. Earlier, I claimed the past, present, and future endlessly circulate in the shop. In Chapter 3, I explain my three-part methodology that includes the use of sensory methodology, creative analytic process ethnography, and Lefebvre’s (2004) theory of rhythmanalysis. Rhythmanalysis itself is based on the study of the relationship among time, place, and energy. Of course, not every relationship in this text contains three elements, but to speak metaphorically about metaphor, the point I attempt to get across here is that I privilege the entire “pole” over the individual “stripes.” As a metaphorical, rhetorical, and conceptual device, the spiral form signifies my ambition to cover a lot of material in a clear, challenging, and efficient manner. Additionally, the
spiral form functions as an imperfect resolution to a potential hypocritical conundrum caused by complaining about challenges of investigating the indefinable, invisible, affective, tacit, and non-representative elements of the barber shop and then proceeding rather problematically to represent these elements in conventional academic forms of writing. In the remaining section, I try to practice what I preach with a brief presentation of three metaphors that represent rhythm in The Cut & Shave.

Metaphors of Rhythm

The Time Machine

A bit of film trivia inspired the claim that Slim’s barber chair symbolizes a time machine. In his novella, The Time Machine, H.G. Wells (1895/2005) provides minimal description of his time travelling device beyond the claim that “parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal” (p. 11). The vagueness of this description may help to inspire the imaginations of the readers, but it provided a challenge for George Pal, director of the 1960 film adaption of the story. “‘The design all started with a barber chair,’ Pal remembers. ‘The art director thought that was a good way to begin. A turn-of-the-century barber chair’” (Hickman, 1977, p. 122). Below is a photo of a full-size replica of the time machine with the barber chair serving as the focal point of the machine.
The only remotely similar time machine reference that I have found is a passing reference by Abecassis and Sauve (2005) to the disappearing traditional barber shops that “have become time-machines in which certain traditional aspects of manhood remains encapsulated” (p. 15). These barber shops may be better described as time capsules for they are stuck in the past; it is the barber chair that best lends itself to the time machine metaphor as Wells (1895/2005) confirms the “saddle represents the seat of a time traveler” (p. 3). Much like the time machine in both the film and the novel, Slim’s chair
always remains in the same location, but seems to move backward and forward through time.

Time travel is conducted narratively through the telling of stories. In a short promotional video produced to advertise The Cut & Shave, a customer of Slim’s for 13 years describes his experience in terms of temporality by claiming: “It’s always a little bit of re-living the past, and then talking about the present, and then figuring out what we’re gonna do next.” Elsewhere in this video Slim himself states, “I think that if someone was looking for a barber what the Cut & Shave has to offer is experience, consistency, a friendly atmosphere, a sense of tradition. And it goes back to that sense of past, present, and future.” In particular, the time machine metaphor relies on the importance of storytelling to help explain the unusual nature of the present as it is experienced from the barber chair. Of the present, James (1890/1950) emphasizes, “it is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions in time” (p. 609). In the barber shop, the “certain breadth” of the present that James mentions equates to about 30 minutes of clock time.

This brief time of the present is bookended by the clients’ entire lived experiences of the past and the uncertain time remaining in their futures. Once the plan of action for the haircut finishes up, there is no present to talk about other than the weather—everything exists before or after the haircut for both Slim and the clients. Perhaps the strangeness of this temporal limbo causes some clients to embrace silence, but the majority take the opportunity to narratively travel in time with Slim. I asked Slim for his perspective on these stories, and he shared the following:
I use the stories for bonding. It is something where we don’t have to share our innermost feelings or whatnot but I can offer an amusing anecdote or something to maybe loosen them up, or mellow them out, or make them feel comfortable, and if they want to conversate, then they can. Or, if not, then maybe they get an amusing story in thirty minutes or so.

Once a bond has been established with the client, Slim can usually tell if a client prefers talking or listening, and then he adjusts his rhythm accordingly—he might tell a story from his own past or simply listen to the client talk about his upcoming holiday plans. Slim’s abilities to tell, in both senses of the term, lead to the next metaphor of the oracle.

In an essay on the novel, Warner (2005) offers the following comment on the time travelling device:

The Time Machine in some deep sense does perform as Wells’s own imagination...It translates a faculty of mind – projective imagination – into an actual piece of technology, and embodies it physically in time and space. It is a Delphic tripod, a crystal ball, a stargazing lens, an I Ching trigram, but made to work in the age of the machine. (p. xiv)

**The Oracle**

The invocation of the oracle as a metaphor for Slim should not be read as a claim for his divinity or direct connections to the supernatural notwithstanding Cooper’s (1971) claim that “with such a background in religion, myth, and legend, hair has inevitably become involved in a mass of folk superstition” (p. 206). In fact, it is the cyclical and almost ritualistic visits, the tripod-like barber chair, and the sense of telling that ground my comparison of Slim to the ancient oracles. Stoneman (2011) offers a brief description
of the most famous oracle, “The priestess at Delphi, the Pythia, delivered her responses to enquirers by mounting a tripod…inside the innermost shrine of the temple of Apollo, going into an ecstatic trance…and pronouncing her oracles” (p. 31). Like with the time machine, the three-legged chair, or tripod, is of utmost importance; it is so important, in fact, that Hercules was forced into slavery for attempting to steal the Delphic tripod and use it to establish a new oracle (Lipsey, 2001, p. 80). Almost like visits to the barber shop, people could only visit the oracles once a month because, according to Broad (2006), the oracles only “worked on the seventh day of the month, seven being Apollo’s lucky number” (p. 13). In his short story about a barber in a small Arizona town, Suarez (2004) offers a contemporary comparison of the barber and the oracle: “Senor Garza is one of those to whom most refer, whether for reasons of friendship, indebtedness, or of having never read Plato or Aristotle, as an oracle pouring out his worldly knowledge during and between the course of his haircuts” (p. 17). A return in time to a novel from 1857 provides a more thorough literary example of this metaphor.

Herman Melville’s (1857/1990) novel, *The Confidence-Man*, tells the non-linear tale of a mysterious trickster figure, or confidence man, aboard a Mississippi River steamboat who masquerades in a variety of guises. In the scene below, he appears as a well-dressed gentleman referred to as “the philanthropist” seeking a facial shave from the boat’s barber. Throughout the shave, there is much discussion of human nature. The rather lengthy passage is arranged in dialogue form for clarity:

**The Barber:** ‘Sir, you say you trust men. Well, I suppose, I might share some of your trust, were it not for this trade, that I follow, too much letting me in behind the scenes.’
The Philanthropist: ‘I think I understand,’ with a saddened look; ‘and much the same thing I have heard from persons in pursuits different from yours…’

The Barber: ‘You see, sir, the truth is, that every trade or pursuit which brings one into contact with the facts, sir, such trade or pursuit is equally an avenue to those facts.’

The Philanthropist: ‘How exactly is that?

The Barber: ‘Why, sir, in my opinion – and for the last twenty years I have, at odd times, turned the matter over some in my mind – he who comes to know man, will not remain in ignorance of man. I think I am not rash in saying that; am I, sir?’

The Philanthropist: ‘Barber, you talk like an oracle – obscurely, barber, obscurely.’

The Barber: ‘Well, sir,’ with some self-complacency, ‘the barber has always been an oracle, but as for the obscurity, that I don’t admit.’

The Philanthropist: ‘But pray, now, by your account, what precisely may be this mysterious knowledge gained in your trade?... What I want to learn from you, barber, is, how does the mere handling of the outside of men’s heads lead you to distrust the inside of their hearts?’

The Barber: ‘What, sir, to say nothing more, can one be for ever dealing in macassar oil [to make hair smooth and shiny], hair dyes, cosmetics, false moustaches, wigs, and toupees, and still believe that men are wholly what they look to be? (Melville, 1990/1857, p. 273)
This artful passage delivers two key points—that barbers speak like oracles and they must use their sensory perception to gauge the trustworthiness of verbal communication.

People made the passage to Delphi in the hope that the oracle could tell their futures and fortunes. Slim does not perform these services, but he does tell many things. Ingold (2013) claims, “The verb ‘to tell’ has two related senses. On the one hand, a person who can tell is able to recount the stories of the world. On the other hand, to tell is to be able to recognize subtle cues in one’s environment” and “these two senses of telling are closely related” (p. 110). The oracles spoke obscurely with their vague pronouncements, and Slim’s stories, though not obscure, are rarely linear, often interrupted, and prone to tangents. These disjunctions in the stories provide Slim with opportunities to make almost imperceptible rhythmic adjustments based on the reactions of the listening clients. Ingold (2000) adds, “a person who can ‘tell’ is one who is perceptually attuned to picking up information in the environment that others, less skilled in the tasks of perception, might miss, and the teller, in rendering his knowledge explicit, conducts the attention of his audience” (Ingold, 2000, p. 190). It must be noted that Slim does his “conducting” of the audience from behind the chair.

In the following image, Slim’s barber chair spins on its axis. The rest of the photographs in this dissertation feature images of The Cut & Shave taken by a photographer who is also a client of Slim’s; I discuss this relationship in Chapter 3. The spinning of the chair reflects both the spiral-like nature of the chair and the movement of the “saddle” from side to side and from the past to the future.
Unlike the Delphic Oracle who sat in the tripod, the barber speaks from behind the chair. In his poem, “The barber,” Bradley (2010) captures this arrangement by writing, “Learn from the man who spends much of his life speaking/To the back of your head knowing what it means to follow/The razor’s edge along a worn strop or random thoughts/As they spring so invisibly from the mind to a mouth” (“Barber,” para. 1). Beyond the spatial arrangement, Bradley captures the random, unpredictability of the oracular relationship. Visitors to the oracle came with specific questions, whereas Slim must figure out, or tell, what exactly people want from him in terms of hairstyles and conversations. Only by looking in the mirrors from the right angles, can Slim make eye contact while talking and
listening. And as Melville made clear, words cannot be trusted. The use of the oracle metaphor with its reliance on telling seeks to emphasize the multiple and unique forms of communication that rely on sensory perceptions and rhythmic responses. The last section on the way station metaphor highlights the significance of the movement in the shop.

The Way Station

The Cut & Shave acts as a way station in which people stop for haircuts on their way to and from other places. The term way station derives from the days of stage coach travel when the vehicles would be forced to stop after a certain distance to rest or exchange horses at trailside structures consisting of little more than small buildings with a stove and room to sleep for travellers—and barns for the horses (Pelzer, 1936). The few comparisons of barber shops to way stations frame this space as a haven rather than just a stop on the way to somewhere else. Proctor (1856/1971), in his 1856 memoir of his life as a barber’s apprentice, uses the similar metaphor of the crossing gate, or wayside stile, in a pasture in his review of writers who cite barbers: “The barber’s shop has proved a kind of wayside stile, where the aforesaid authors, while musing over their deathless books, have rested and diverted themselves during their mental journeys, leaving a kindly wish or a pleasing reminiscence for the benefits received” (p. 3). In a similar vein, Harris (1979) claims, “for the black man in literature as well as across the country, the prototypical barbershop is…his point of contact. It becomes his psychological home, his way station against the cares of the world” (p. 118). While clients do seem to feel at ease in The Cut & Shave, they do not hang around the shop before or after receiving haircuts. In fact, they are often late for their appointments, which offers credence to the claim that the barber shop is a stop along the way of doing other things.
The more travel-based connotation of the way station metaphor emphasizes a sense of movement and temporality that better aligns with the operations of The Cut & Shave. In his definition of place, Ingold (2008) also foregrounds the importance of movement as “places, then, do not so much exist as occur—they are topics rather than objects, stations along the ways of life. Instead of saying that living beings exist in places, I would thus prefer to say that places occur along the life paths of beings. Life itself... is an unfolding of the entire meshwork of paths in which beings are entangled” (p. 1808). The constant, cyclical movement of clients in and out of the shop provides sources of energy and information, but also tangible reminders of the passing of time. Crang (2001) explains, “a place is not necessarily of singular time but a particular constellation of temporalities, coming together in a concrete place” (p. 190). In her poem, “Valentino’s hair,” about a barber cutting Rudolph Valentino’s hair, Sapia (1987) writes of a conversation between the two: “I began to cut his hair,/he trained his eyes on my hands./‘You do not realize it,’ he said,/‘but you are cutting away at my life too,/time leaving me like moments/falling to the floor’ (p. 38). The constant growth of hair marks the time spent away since the last visit to the shop, but it also marks the experiences lived in the meantime as clients move through their lives in the world.

In the film, The Man Who Wasn’t There (Coen & Coen, 2002), Billy Bob Thornton plays the role of Ed, a laconic barber who works with his brother-in-law, Frank. The dialogue below is from a scene in which Ed ponders the inseparable relationship among hair, time, and movement as he cuts a young boy’s hair:

**Ed:** Frank.

**Frank:** Huh?
Ed: This hair.

Frank: Yeah.

Ed: You ever wonder about it?

Frank: Whuddya mean?

Ed: I don't know... How it keeps on coming. It just keeps growing.

Frank: Yeah, lucky for us, huh, pal?

Ed: No, I mean it’s growing; it’s part of us. And we cut it off. And we throw it away.

Frank: Come on, Eddie, you're gonna scare the kid.

Ed: ...I'm gonna take his hair and throw it out in the dirt.

Frank: What the...

Ed: I’m gonna mix it with common house dirt.

Frank: What the hell are you talking about?

Ed: I don’t know. Skip it.

At The Cut & Shave, the hair clippings are swept up and placed in a trash barrel in a storage area out of sight. During my observations, I often swept the floors and experienced similar thoughts as Ed as the hair piled up hour after hour. The image below features the hair barrel posed outside the front of the shop in order to show the varieties (and collection) of hair.
The way station metaphor, in its reliance on movement and time, contains a strong resonance with the spiral form and barber pole metaphor. Each haircut is like a stripe around the pole, and then time passes while hair continues to grow, which necessitates another trip to the shop, adding another stripe to the pole. In relation to this cyclical movement, Fridman (2001) claims, “There is also a more personal, psychological dimension to barbershop visits. The repetition of the barbering ritual every 2 or 3 weeks not only allows us to renew contact with our community, it also provides us with an opportunity to gain some measure of how our lives have changed or remained the same over the years” (p. 435). In her poem, “Among the Things that Use to Be,” Coleman (1983) also references the sense of measurement each visit to a hair site provides: “Use to
be/Ya could learn/a whole lotta stuff/sitting in them/beauty chairs…Use to be/you could learn a whole lot about how to catch up with yourself” (p. 221). As the always-on-duty tender of the way station, Slim’s stationary view of time, change, and movement varies greatly from the clients who flow through it once every few weeks.

The regular visits to the way station serve many purposes regardless of the amount of time spent in the shop. Much like the way the experience of the present in The Cut & Shave is weighted with the past and the future, where (and when) clients arrive from before the haircut and head toward afterwards contributes to the energy of the shop’s rhythm. After the energy dissipates, their hair—as time—remains behind on the floor until the end of the day. In conclusion, the three metaphors in this section were employed to provide more creative and familiar representations of the concepts introduced earlier in the chapter. They also characterize the spiral form as the metaphors overlap and rely on each other for meaning. In other words, clients visit the way station, board the time machine, and consult with the oracle. Finally, the relationship of these three metaphors hint at Lefebvre’s (2004) statement, “everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time, and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm” (p. 15). In the next chapter, I continue to explore these elements of rhythm by providing a detailed review of relevant literature.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Preamble

Following the precedent set in the introductory chapter of this dissertation that will continue through the remainder of chapters, it is necessary to provide some explanatory commentary concerning the design of this literature review. Like many people, I first learned of the role of Levi-Strauss’ application of the bricolage in social science from reading Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) introduction to their seminal collection, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. In this text, Denzin and Lincoln make use of bricolage to describe the contemporary state of qualitative research and to legitimize its relevance as something of a combination of theory and method: “The qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur…uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand” (p. 4). Levi-Strauss (1966) employed the term *bricolage* to explain the operations of “mythical thought” in “primitive” people who made sense of the world by using a repertoire of “whatever is at hand” to solve tasks. The bricoleur makes strategic use of “elements collected and or retained on the principle that they may always come in handy” (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 18). Similarly, qualitative scholars should cleverly use a variety of research materials to solve epistemological and methodological tasks and challenges; hence, the reason I offer these preparatory remarks on the bricolage. At the beginning of
the next chapter, I again invoke the bricolage to describe my distinct approach to methodology; however, the challenges of the following literature review make this introduction necessary because this chapter itself represents an example of bricolage.

I apply the bricolage approach in this chapter because there is surprisingly little research on predominately white male barber shops, and the themes of time and rhythm only receive cursory acknowledgement. The construction of this literature review reflects the need to expand the boundaries of not only what is considered relevant research in this field, but to approach texts from new perspectives. In short, I select what I consider to be the relevant parts of a variety of texts to construct a literature review that serves a few, concurrent purposes. For instance, I analyze studies of Black female hair sites, white female sites, and Black male sites in order to see how scholars address broad themes present in nearly all hair sites such as identity, language, and gender. The frequent crossing of boundaries may be somewhat confusing to the reader as pronouns and terminology can become something of an issue. Additionally, it is problematic that I do not have adequate space in this chapter to contextualize important and at times sensitive issues of diversity from each study. Following a brief review of the Hair Studies field—and a discussion of the methodological challenges hair sites present to researchers—I return to the origin story presented in Chapter 1 to demonstrate the complexity of hair sites. Returning to this story also serves as a transition into the remainder of the chapter, which features a review of several key concepts that impact the rhythms of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. Since the non-traditional format of Chapter 4 (the first findings chapter) prevents me from including explicit explanations of specific scenes, here I briefly explain how the concepts of each category in the literature review connect to Slim
and The Cut & Shave. Overall, the purposes of this chapter are threefold and, in many ways, spiral-like: To demonstrate my understanding of the field, to prepare the reader for Chapter 4, in which I present my findings regarding time and rhythm, and to make direct connections between the Hair Studies literature and The Cut & Shave.

**Introduction to Hair Studies**

Hair Studies is a term I have fashioned to provide a manageable descriptor to gather together the wide assortment of academic studies conducted in beauty parlors, unisex hair salons, and barber shops [or barbershops, as there is no universally accepted spelling of the term; I follow Slim’s choice to use two words]. The participants and patrons involved in studies of hair maintenance reflect various or select combinations of gender, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. Hair Studies differs from more historical studies of hair primarily in terms of research materials and data. That is, despite its importance to human appearance, hair was rarely the focus of traditional scholarly investigations and, as a result, much of its history is collected from paintings, written texts, religious documents, and advertisements (Corson, 2000; Cooper, 1971). Published as books, journal articles, and book chapters, Hair Studies texts tend to be contemporary academic studies based on empirical research conducted in hair sites. Dating back to Schroder’s (1978) study of Chicago hairdressers, researchers from a variety of academic disciplines including Anthropology, Sociology, Education, Political Science, Consumer Science, and Art have, for the last 35 years, conducted a range of qualitative studies in hair sites mostly located in the United States (but also around the world). Because each site is highly situated and localized with relatively small numbers of participants, these studies—collected as a field—exist a bit like an archipelago connected primarily by
chronology, but also, to a certain extent, by gender and race. With the field so disparate, there does not appear to be any universally accepted seminal texts or widely acclaimed leading scholars in Hair Studies.

Methodological and theoretical approaches within Hair Studies often vary according to researchers’ respective disciplines. However, there are some distinct patterns. A few researchers and non-academic authors take a “grand tour” approach and briefly visit a number of hair sites in order to get wide perspectives on a specific theme (Staten, 2001; Marberry, 2005; Black, 2004; Murphy, 1998; Abbecassis & Sauve, 2005; Jacobs-Huey, 2006; Hunter, 2004; Lawson, 1999). In this approach, the purpose is to survey a number of sites in search of broad patterns and general connections. Other than Black (2004), Lawson (1999), and Jacobs-Huey (2006), researchers seldom stay more than a day in each site, which makes it problematic to draw rich conclusions. The majority of researchers more narrowly focus on one or a few sites in which they spend a considerable amount of time—at least several days, but usually several weeks or months to establish a solid rapport—in the effort to make reasonable, valid claims about relevant activities that occur in the site. In these single-site studies, researchers tend to resemble their participants in race and gender so as to avoid sticking out or disrupting shop behavior. For example, Furman (1997), a Jewish woman, studied a beauty parlor frequented by older Jewish women to investigate issues of aging and community while Franklin (1983), a Black male, investigated socialization and gender roles in a black barber shop. Whereas Harris-Lacewell (2004), a Black female, arranged for Quincy Mills, a Black male “confederate,” to research everyday political talk in a Black male barber shop and to conduct “ethnography by proxy” (p. 277) because she “knows that her
very presence will alter the flow of talk, the energy of the rhetoric, and the content of the
knowledge” (Nunley, 2011, p. 80). Interestingly, Harris-Lacewell claims authorship of
the chapter that features the use of Mills’ voice, collected data, and experiences. This
complicated arrangement suggests the challenges of conducting research in hair sites.

It is fairly common for researchers to already be customers in these sites as pre-
existing relationships can simplify the issues of gaining access to the site and building
rapport. Yet a prior history as a client does not automatically guarantee a smooth future
as a researcher. A number of thorny and somewhat distinct methodological issues
frequently influence the research in hair sites largely because they are such intimate,
modestly sized places. I discuss these issues at this point in the chapter because they help
to frame the later review of key concepts in the literature and because I faced similar
issues in my research. Subsequently, these issues factor strongly in my efforts to answer
the second research question of this dissertation, “What influence did methodology play
in this study of a complex, everyday site?” Surprisingly few researchers offer detailed
insight into their methodologies beyond cursory mentions of participant observation and
interviews. Therefore, my brief review of approaches to these issues is in no way
comprehensive as I am only able to cite the more forthcoming scholars. In particular, I
address issues of familiarity, the physicality of observation, and approaches to taking
notes.

A Brief Review of Field Issues:

Familiarity, Physicality of Location, and Approaches to Taking Notes

The level of familiarity with research participants and/or hair sites can impact
researchers in a number of ways. To begin with the example of the most familiar, or most
familial in this case, Jacobs-Huey (2006) spent six months studying her own mother’s beauty parlor; yet beyond acknowledging that she once insulted her mother by referring to her as a hairdresser, she does not mention any complications of this arrangement. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) benefitted from having no relationship with the sites he investigated as “they had no problem allowing me in because I was only living in the neighborhood temporarily therefore was not ‘involved’ in the current conflicts” (pp. 362-363). Banks (2000) argues that similarity in race and gender can make the research more difficult as she reflected on asking other Black women sensitive, political questions about straightening their hair, “because of my race and gender, I was projecting my own discomfort in asking a question that in many ways made me uncomfortable. Therefore, I argue that a non-Black person, and to some extent a Black male, would have felt more at ease” (p. 169).

However, Smith (1998), a Black woman, argues that this familiarity is essential: “I doubt if [the shop owner] Juanita would have agreed to give an unknown man free reign in the shop to listen and talk with the women. Consequently, for a non-African American [person] or a man of any ethnic background to become accepted into the space of these women would be difficult, if not impossible” (p. 84). After developing a sense of familiarity within a hair site, researchers often face resistance to participation from clients, particularly white male clients. Barber (2008), a female studying males in a female salon, briefly notes that “a number of men declined to be formally interviewed because of family and work engagements” (p. 474). More emphatically, McCracken (1995) explains, “men would not participate in the research. Oh, they would sit for the interview, but they’d reveal nothing useful. Apparently, there’s a secret rule of
masculinity that says, ‘Hair and style are not guy stuff’” (p. 6). In my own research, I experienced similar reticence from clients who did not know me but, more importantly, it was my familiarity with Slim as a long-time client that provided a sense of trust and freedom necessary to take an unconventional approach to this research.

Regardless of their levels of familiarity with participants, it can be a challenge for researchers to figure out what to do with, and where to locate, their own bodies in these hair sites. Gimlin (1996) was “permitted to walk around the salon, observing the stylists and customers and asking any questions I wished” (p. 507). Brown (2001) “tried to meld into the salon environment as smoothly as possible so that I could reduce observer effect...Initially I would sit in a place where I could hear the stylist-client conversation without making eye contact or making it seem as if I was listening in” (p. 138). Later in her research, Brown (2001) folded towels and provided assistance to the stylists. Taking a similar approach, Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) would sweep the floors and “would then return to the back room to get out of everyone’s way. Luckily, the back rooms were very close to where the clients sat and were separated off by a cloth or bead curtain hanging from the door frame” (p. 363). Likewise, Paulson (2008) indicates, “the curtains were always left slightly ajar, and with permission from the client and beauty therapy student, I could watch treatments being carried out. During the course of the study, it became apparent that it was easier to work in an informal way in the busy training salons than to try to record formal interviews” (p. 258).

Most unusually, Godwyn (2006) received permission from a hairstylist to sit “beneath a hair dryer (turned off) that was just inches from his station and pretended to be reading a magazine. I easily blended in with the clientele, and in the four weeks that I
observed, no customers seemed to notice that anything was out of the ordinary” (p. 492). Nevertheless, Franklin (1983), a more participatory researcher who sat in the main area of a Black barber shop, argued for a direct, engaged approach in order to see everyone in the shop because “also important is the fact that much nonverbal communication in the form of shrugs, smiles, frowns, nods of agreement and like gestures occur. This means that even those who do not participate verbally in the negotiation process participate through nonverbal communication” (p. 971). In order to experience the rhythms of The Cut & Shave, it was necessary for me to be as close to the action as possible in order to make use of all five of my senses.

The location of the researchers’ bodies in the sites often dictated their approaches to taking notes. Until careful consideration is given to the symbolic weight of taking notes in terms of power dynamics, etiquette, and transparency, it is easy to dismiss the issue of note taking as minor in qualitative research. However, Furman (1997) explains, “I did not take notes in public during this time because I wanted to establish rapport with people without alienating them in the process. So from time to time I used the shop’s restroom to jot furious notes on a small pad” (p. 9). Similarly, Mills (in Harris-Lacewell, 2004) asserts, “I never taped or took notes while sitting in the shop. Whenever I took a run for beer or to pick up some food, I would record everything I heard” (p. 173). Brunson (2006) employed a modified approach by taking “brief but detailed handwritten notes during the discussions and inserted supplemental information from memory immediately after leaving the shops” (p. 145). Somewhat cryptically, Majors (2003) claims, “audiotaped records of activity were collected to account for participant interactions, talk within these interactions, linguistic and nonlinguistic cues, physical
activity, including movement and the appropriation of space, participant’s physical attributes, and participation structures” (p. 295). As a reader, it is unclear to me whether Majors taped activities occurring in the shop or if she dictated her own analysis of the activities of the shop. Either way, I do not how many of these “silent” behaviors could be audio recorded. Wright & Calhoun (2001) incorporates a unique memory technique in which “the reconstructed field notes were recorded during a five hour span in which the author typed everything he could remember about the interactions and activities that took place in the barbershop during his time as a patron, not a researcher” (p. 272). At The Cut & Shave, I took brief notes on my smartphone to avoid drawing attention to myself as a researcher.

My unusual choice to begin the literature review with these three methodological issues is an example of the bricolage approach to this dissertation. In Chapter 1, I began to define rhythm and the ways I see it operating in The Cut & Shave. It would logically follow that in this chapter I would bring into play a number of similar texts that support, challenge, or inspire my claims about rhythm. Since there are no obvious precedents in Hair Studies, but there are dozens of important texts that both influence and help to contextualize my work, I am forced to work with these materials at hand in an uncommon manner as I move through this chapter. Indeed, none of the researchers cited above (or below) specifically mention rhythm in their work, but I would argue the tactical decisions they made in the field were partially influenced by the rhythms of their respective sites. For certain, qualitative researchers across the disciplines may worry about influencing activity in research sites, but there is strong evidence that the complexity and intimacy of hair sites make them unusually sensitive places to conduct research. In the previous
paragraphs, for example, I highlight Brown’s (2001) concern about the “observer effect,” Furman’s (1997) fear of alienating the clients, and Smith’s (1998) claim about the unwelcomed presence of a non-female gendered, non-Black raced body of a researcher. These examples all suggest a keen awareness that the presence of a researcher, or any newcomer or outsider who deviates from expectations, impacts the social relations in the shop. Call it interrupting the flow of business, disrupting the tempo, or being a distraction, but it all refers back to the same thing: within a hair site there is a ritualized, understood, but often unspoken way of going about the business of doing hair. The head barber or lead stylist, who is typically the owner-operator, tends to establish this method of operation, but clients play an equally important role in sustaining and/or disrupting what I argue is the unique rhythmic operation of every site.

**Introduction to Rhythmic and Thematic Overview**

Despite my firm claim about the existence of rhythm in hair sites, even the most indirect references to the existence of rhythms in hair sites are frustratingly vague. Still, I offer a few cases in which researchers mention experiencing a sense of something that could be read as rhythm in their encounters with hair sites. For example, Wright (1998) remembers, “even as a child I knew there was something interesting going on in the barbershop” (p. 2). Similarly Furman (1997) recalls, “the first time I went to Julie’s International Salon to get my hair cut—some eight years ago—I could sense that there was something compelling about it, though I could not quite put my finger on what exactly was going there” (p. 1). Eayrs (1993) is a bit more specific in her description, “Dee’s is usually full of people—hairdressers, clients, and visitors. It offers a bustling ‘busyness’ and warmth in contrast to the bland dreariness of the mall” (p. 22). In their
discussion of the employee relationships in a salon, Hill and Bradley (2010) claim, “workers could actually experience each others’ moods via emotional contagion” as “cooperative behaviors were seemingly repeated and patterned rituals” (p. 53). My intent in citing these examples—and my earlier discussion of familiarity, researcher location, and note taking—is to provide a tentative first step in my rather roundabout approach to the analysis of rhythm in hair sites. At best, I can argue that these examples and methodological tactics indicate what Lefebvre (2004) describes as the “traces that mark out rhythms” (p. 21). By pointing out these traces that exist in the literature at the outset, I hope to establish something of an admittedly shaky foundation upon which to construct my broader review of the field. Before moving to the review, I address a further complicating matter involving the narrow focus of most hair studies texts.

After wrestling with a number of these studies in an attempt to make them reveal insight they never intended to convey, I now address them on their own terms and stated purposes. Researchers exhibit an overwhelming tendency to select a fairly narrow topic, and an equally specific analytic framework, in the examination of homogeneous hair sites. Such an approach serves to keep the bulk of the hair studies texts very focused (as I will soon demonstrate more specifically). That is, if a researcher states she will investigate gender, then the entire text will emphasize the role of gender in the site, and any non-gender issues will often be connected in some way to gender. Admittedly, this approach makes sense as it conforms to the researchers’ stated agendas and disciplinary expectations. Further, most researchers do in fact emphasize that their work is highly situated; they make no claims for transferability and they freely admit that much more occurs in the site beyond their narrow points of emphasis. Yet quite paradoxically, the
variety of human behaviors in hair sites is exactly what makes them such rich sites of
world of the beauty salon. This area has acted as a microcosm within which to investigate
wider sociological themes” (p. 3). Unfortunately, themes are typically investigated one at
a time. My intent is not to criticize the singular focus of most researchers, but to begin to
demonstrate the challenge of researching complexity in hair sites if one follows the well-
trodden path.

Admittedly, I initially followed this standard research template as I sought to
identify a focused topic to investigate. I struggled to determine exactly how I could
singularly theorize and represent the complex experiences I witnessed in The Cut &
Shave Barber Shop without doing it a disservice. Briefly, I would like to make evident
the vast amount of topics I could have reasonably pursued in this research site by means
of a heuristic device. At the same time, I hope to provide an overview of the many topics
researchers investigate in these sites. I return to the story of my first meeting with Slim
and provide a re-telling of those events using numerous key terms from the Hair Studies
field (that I indicate by bold type and follow with a relevant citation). Neither
comprehensive nor entirely cohesive, this paragraph seeks to quickly and efficiently raise
several conceptual and methodologically issues to be addressed throughout this
dissertation and discussed after the next paragraph.

My decision to visit The Cut & Shave Barber Shop was based on my need for
identity maintenance (Lawson, 1999) in terms of race (Candelario, 2007), gender
(Alexander, 2003), class (Barber, 2008), and sexuality (Philips, 2007) as required by my
incessant, biological hair growth (Morris, 1967) and my conformity to social
expectations (Black, 2004). Although the trend is changing, most Americans historically (Willet, 2000) tend to self-segregate in terms of race and gender with their hair care.

Despite my status as a white male, my visit to this environment (Carpenter, 2003) was something of a disruption to our (Slim and I) routines (Fridman, 2001) and expectations (Hunter, 2004). For what I assumed would be an everyday (Highmore, 2002a) interaction was unusually charged with emotion (Cohen, 2010). Typically, emotion is experienced as a result of the intimacy (O’Donoghue, 2012) created during the haircut, as the hair professional (Gimlin, 1996) uses touch (Sheane, 2012) to transform (McCracken, 1996) the client’s body (Black, 2002) while also engaging in a range of multi-tasking (Toerien & Kitzinger, 2007) activities such as using language (McCarthy, 2000), constructing knowledge (Majors, 2003), and providing humor (Staten, 2001).

Intimacy can often be mutually rewarding, but it also creates taxing situations involving Slim’s emotional labor (Hochschild, 2012). For example, despite Slim’s leadership (Mitchell, 1990), the rhythm (Lefebvre, 2004) of the shop on the day of my haircut was likely altered by a series of earlier cancellations and no-shows, which wreck havoc on the scheduling of Slim’s time (Eayrs, 1993). A combination of the day’s emotional labor and his embodied experience (Kang, 2003) influenced Slim’s perception (Ingold, 2000) of me as a likely candidate to skip my appointment. I did return to the shop that day and, like his other regular (Godwyn, 2006) clients, a visit to the shop became a consistent stop in the cyclical movement (Adam, 1995) of my life.

The 31-bolded terms in the preceding paragraph indicate themes, patterns, and behaviors that contribute to everyday life in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop; it is no wonder Slim jokingly refers to the shop as a soap opera entitled, “As the Pole Turns.” As
the citations indicate, nearly all of these themes have been explored in contemporary academic research. Ideally, the reader will now have a more concrete understanding of the challenge involved in selecting just one theme to examine this shop, or probably any other hair site in America, in which the intersections of biology and culture create unpredictable combinations of issues that contribute to human complexity. It is my intent to follow Stout’s (1995) advice that “we should also understand that complexity should not be interpreted as something negative. Things can be complex without being unpleasant or overwhelmingly negative” (p. 10). It turns out that complex problems usually require complex solutions. Therefore, in something of a rhetorical sleight of hand, I do in fact follow the path of the majority of Hair Studies researchers in my selection of one point of emphasis for this research: rhythm (or time, more broadly speaking). Not surprisingly, complications quickly arise, as any definition of rhythm will explain that it is the union of at least two elements joined in some type of patterned relationship to produce a new, identifiable result. I seek to resolve the complexity of this site and this literature review by explaining how many of the 31 themes work in relation as vital components of both the shop’s actual rhythm and my theoretical conception of it.

Limitations in space obviously prevent me from reviewing all of the contributing themes to rhythm over the remainder of this chapter. Consequently, I propose three overlapping categories to guide my review of several key contributors to rhythm in hair studies texts: place, time, and energy. These three categories have been purposefully selected based on one of the many definitions of rhythm Lefebvre (2004) provides in *Rhythmanalysis*: “Everywhere there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm” (p. 15). At the risk of being repetitive, as this
definition was mentioned in Chapter 1, I attempt to tackle Lefebvre’s work on rhythm from different angles in every chapter of this dissertation in an effort to negotiate “his predilection toward prosaic abstraction and borderline incoherence” (Patel, 2012, p. 60). In Chapter 3, I claim that it is crucial to understand Lefebvre’s metaphor of the “garland, bundle, or bouquet” to describe the structure of rhythms (p. 20). In short, rhythm is never singular or fixed; it usually begins with the human body and its collection/garland of unconscious pulsations of the heart, lungs, and numerous other physiological entities. When a body interacts with other bodies in places, larger garlands of rhythms form based on the union of the numerous smaller garlands. In short, rhythm takes its form when a variety of elements join together. Lefebvre (2004) employs two other metaphors to explain the composition of rhythms: “Music (notably symphonic and orchestral)… provide[s] another example. Under the direction of the conductor’s baton (his magic wand), a rhythm falls into place and extends over all the performers, however many there may be” (p. 68). Also, Lefebvre commonly references waves and bodies of water; in this case he compares street activity to water: “There on the square, there is something maritime about the rhythms. Currents traverse the masses. Streams break off, which bring or take away new participants…The tide invades the immense square, then withdraws: flux and reflux” (p. 35).

In many ways, bringing Lefebvre’s (2004) definitions of rhythm into the conversation appears to make an already complicated explanation even more complex. However, it is my hope that Lefebvre’s terminology actually provides an efficient way to demonstrate, in terms of (thematic) content and (rhythmic) form, how the major themes of the literature review represent important strands in the rhythmic garlands of hair sites.
Specifically, it is my goal to show how, when grouped together under somewhat arbitrary categories, the various studies reveal new meanings and contribute new understandings of the complexity of hair sites. For example, the arrangement of the themes including identity, intimacy, emotional labor, and staff relations into the category of “expenditures of energy,” suggests that the emotionally charged process of clients and barbers working together (to create appropriate hairstyles for clients) contributes unpredictable amounts of energy to the rhythm of hair sites. Next, the analysis of hair sites as places addresses the purposeful arrangement of people and inanimate objects within a location, which impacts rhythm. Lastly, I discuss the variety of ways people experience time and temporality in hair sites. As Lefebvre (2004) emphasizes, it is the “interaction” between these three elements that produces rhythm. As I am limited by space, please keep in mind that these sections are joined like stripes on the barber pole as it can be hard to tell where one stripe ends and another begins.

Energy, Or One Human Element of Rhythm

Identity

In Chapter 1, I begin to explain the importance of identity in hair sites, generally, and in The Cut & Shave, particularly. Without a doubt, and for good reason, identity is the most common theme addressed in the Hair Studies literature. As Candelario (2007) says, “Given th[e] confluence of race, gender, class, and sexuality practices and ideologies, the beauty shop is an excellent source of information on how identities are scripted and displayed in everyday life” (p. 179). Black (2002) affirms that the beauty parlor is “a site par excellence for investigating the construction and maintenance of gender and sexuality” (p. 3). However, in this section I do not attempt to provide an
overview of the importance of identity in hair sites; the topic is simply too vast to cover in such a small space. A number of researchers make important contributions to the study of identity in hair sites involving the familiar social constructions of race (Banks, 2000; Rooks, 1996; Mercer, 1987), gender (Black, 2002, 2004; Candelario, 2007; Lawson, 1999), class (Gimlin, 1996; Barber, 2008), and sexuality (Philips, 2007, Alexander, 2003; Cole, 2008). Although I do incorporate elements from these texts throughout this chapter, I do not review their relative merits in a traditional style. Instead, I seek to demonstrate how the identity construction process contributes sources of energy to the rhythms of hair sites. Lawson (1999) states, “to display one’s identity is not sufficient to make it solid or permanent. It must continually be reinforced, constructed and accomplished” (p. 255). Therefore, I argue, it is this relentless need to negotiate multiple, fluid identities that produces an endless supply of positive, negative, and ambivalent energy in hair sites. To illustrate this claim, I review the role of hair growth, individual and cultural change, and the surprising issue of reciprocal identity construction between clients and hair professionals.

Any understanding of the social and individual relevance of hair begins with its irrelevance in terms of biological function. Research in human evolution has demonstrated that human head hair no longer serves any functional purposes (Morris, 1967; Cooper, 1971). That is, for a reason still to be scientifically determined, homo sapiens lost the full coat of body hair linking them to their mammalian ancestors, yet they retained the hair on their heads. As a result, human hair continues to grow, but it only serves a symbolic purpose. Thus, according to Mercer (1987), “nobody's hair is ever just natural but is always shaped or reshaped by social convention and symbolic intervention”
Cheang and Biddle-Perry (2008) argue that “clearly, it is hair’s malleability and hair’s relationship to the body that gives it great power and multivalence within the systems of representation and identity, whether the dominant social ideologies are challenged or confirmed” (p. 251). In short, people select hairstyles that conform to, and collectively serve to manage, their various identifications in terms of race, class, gender, and sexuality just to name the more common categories.

It is always important to keep in mind, however, that despite the emphasis on the social construction of identity (and the social constructions from which hair gains its meaning such as race and gender), the body directly influences identity work in its contribution of the tangible, living material at the center of this discussion: hair. Although hair actually grows in cycles at an irregular pace, it does tend to grow an average of a half-inch in length every month (Cooper, 1971). Much like Lefebvre’s (2004) claim that the body acts as “metronome” (p. 19) in its production of steady, physiological beats that provide familiar starting points to study rhythms, the growth of hair similarly acts like a metronome in the identity maintenance process as its consistent growth is what necessitates cyclical visits to hair sites.

In conjunction with hair growth, the need to negotiate change and manage identity appropriately in everyday life also impels regular visits to hair sites. Butler (1990) argues, “gender ought not be construed as a stable identity… rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (pp. 140-141). Race, class, and sexuality are similar social constructions that depend on the same “stylized repetition of acts” to exist and also to appear “natural.” Black (2004) provides the useful theoretical term of “appropriateness” to help conceive
how these multiple constructions are tended to at once in hair sites: “Appropriateness is a thoroughly sociological concept. It is where class, age, ethnicity, sexuality and so on enter the discussion…each client is aiming to achieve a level of bodily performance in accordance with appropriate standards of looking and being” (p. 51). It is this need to balance so many identities that makes selecting a hairstyle such a challenge.

This issue becomes further complicated by the persistent demands of fashion to adjust or rebel against styles of the moment. Corson (2000) emphasizes, “The capriciousness of fashion…is nowhere more evident than in the manner of wearing the hair” (p. 19). Weitz (2001) implies there is no way to avoid or evade the hair/identity issue because “no matter what a woman does or doesn’t do with her hair—dyeing or not dyeing, curling or not curling, covering with a bandana or leaving uncovered—her hair will affect how others respond to her, and her power will increase or decrease accordingly” (p. 683). The energy produced by the need to establish and maintain a highly subjective sense of appropriateness varies based on the amount of change and complexity in a client’s life. The energy that clients expend at The Cut & Shave not only varies from client to client, but often a single client’s energy may be radically different depending on whether he needs a haircut appropriate for his wedding, photo day at work, or a friend’s funeral.

Even though identity management is a profoundly intimate, private, and subjective act, the fact that most of us simply do not cut our own hair makes this process a social act when we seek the assistance of a hair professional. Hair workers must employ a number of skills (e.g., empathy, expertise, humor, etc.) in order to successfully manage this process. Consequently, clients construct their own versions of the identities of hair
workers based on the particular skills or parts of their personalities the hair workers
choose to involve. Thus, every stylist-client relationship is unique. The following list is a
compilation of the various identities and personas ascribed to barbers and stylists in
studies across the Hair Studies field:

Nurse (Black, 2002, 2004); artisan (Godwyn, 2006); artist (Hill & Bradley, 2010);
miracle worker (Battle-Walters, 2004); sales person (Lee et al, 2011); doctor
(McCracken, 1995; Eayrs, 1993; Jacobs-Huey, 2006); priest/priestess
(McCracken, 1995; Gimlin, 1996); caretaker (Eayrs, 1993; Sanchez-Jankowski,
2008); rock star (McCracken, 1995); teacher (Majors, 2003); “gifted” healer
(Jacobs-Huey, 2006); beauty expert (Gimlin, 1996); commercial friend (Price &
Arnould, 1999); and mental health professional (Hunter, 2004; McCracken, 1995;
Majors, 2003).

The range of this list is fairly impressive especially if we take into account the relatively
low status of hair professionals in society (Herzog, 1996). In my fieldwork at The Cut &
Shave, I frequently observed the construction of Slim’s identities by clients; I call it the
“theory of multiple Slims.” Again, the key point here is that with this reciprocal identity
construction process, where stylists assist in the construction of clients’ identities as
clients simultaneously construct versions of stylists’ identities, unpredictable energy is
produced as both sets of identities are “forged, reinforced, or reinvented” (Sanchez-
Jankowski, 2008, p. 205). At 10:00am Slim might be considered a quiet listener, at
10:30am he could be a boisterous storyteller, and at 11:00am he might be called on for
real estate advice. The rhythm in the shop often depends on who Slim is at any moment
and what challenges clients present in their own identity construction or maintenance.
Intimacy

Intimacy is inseparable from identity work in hair sites because clients must, to some degree, share their understandings of themselves with hair workers in order to construct an appropriate hairstyle. Within hair sites, intimacy takes a number of forms as it develops between the client and the hair worker. And every expression of intimacy, which is also an expenditure of energy, can trigger at least a subtle change in the rhythm of a haircut and the hair site. Although somewhat lengthy, the best, most poetic description of the practice and slow development of intimacy in hair sites is delivered by a barber shop owner, Reginald Attucks, in Marberry’s (2005) collection of Black barber shop narratives:

See, this job ain’t just about skills. You got to know things. You got to know when a customer wants you to lift his spirits…and when he wants you to shut your damn mouth. There’s only one way to know that kind of thing. You have to be intimate with the customer. A haircut is a personal thing, an intimate thing. That’s because it involves touching. When you’re in my chair, I’m on you. I don’t mean touching the wrong way. Now, everybody’s funny about a stranger touching them. But once a barber starts touching a customer, he breaks down a wall…Now, on the other hand, some skilled barbers lose customers because they have no rapport…but if we establish rapport, you start telling me things and I start telling you things. We share. Pretty soon, you don’t think about no other barber but me. I might not even be that good no more, but you ain’t gonna cheat on me. You ain’t
gonna leave me for another barber. I'm telling you, a haircut is an intimate thing.

(p. 120)

Like time and rhythm, intimacy is not seen, but it is felt. In the above passage, Attucks vividly describes the many elements of intimacy (e.g., touch, language, perception, experience, and trust). Intimacy impacts the barber-client relationship in mostly tacit ways, all of which produce energy in the shop.

Nearly all of the Hair Studies research that addresses the issues of emotion and intimacy focuses on relationships between female clients and hair workers (Black, 2004; Gimlin, 1996; Candelario, 2007; Toerien & Katzinger, 2007). However, there are two contemporary articles that examine the links between masculinity and intimacy. Alexander (2003) utilizes autoethnographic techniques to examine his own role as a Black, gay man who receives facial shaves from a male barber, but has hair tightened by a female natural hair specialist. Here, Alexander describes the experience of being shaved:

Luke leans his body against mine when he is trimming my facial hair. I am not sexualizing Luke or the experience, for he is a father figure. But I find that it is one of those few moments when men—and for me, Black men—come into an unacknowledged yet sanctioned intimate contact with each other. We understand the meaningfulness of the engagement, not only in the functionality of the action but in the knowing. (p. 120)

In this passage, Alexander deftly captures the complexity of the unspoken and unacknowledged, but thoroughly understood moments that clients experience rarely, but barbers deal with everyday.
O’Donoghue (2012) also cites Alexander’s passage in the development of his argument that imagines the radical possibilities located in the expression of intimacy in these places. Specifically, O’Donoghue (2012) “invite[s] us to think…about the barbershop as a complex space of relations where affects, sensations, and intensities are produced. …The opportunities in these spaces for connection, affirmation, recognition, and imitation are many (p. 320). Regrettably, few researchers push the field of Hair Studies into more experimental territory like Alexander and O’Donoghue.

Researchers tend to emphasize the rewarding, positive elements of intimacy for clients in hair sites because they are quite obvious and even uplifting. For example, Eayrs (1993) reflects, “after repeatedly observing the (almost) ritual draping [of the client with the cape], I grew aware of the unmistakably nurturing motions intrinsic to it. The act of draping closely resembles the act of bibbing an infant or tucking a child into bed.” (p. 30). However, an alternate metaphorical reading of the cape reveals that it also serves to symbolically cover up the more negative aspects of intimacy that exist primarily for men in barber shops. Philips (2007) explains:

Barbershops are sometimes remembered as a space of domination where a barber’s ‘interpretation’ of a client’s request is devastatingly misunderstood, often in the form of shorter-than-desired cut. There are also remembered as spaces where the imposition of someone else’s will, often a father’s, was enacted over another’s body and self-presentation. These acts, however, often accumulate meaning beyond the simply aesthetic, and come to be seen as acts to quell a rebellious spirit or make a boy into a ‘real man.’ (p. 200)
About his childhood barber, Alexander (2003) similarly recalls, “there was always a sense of dread, the confusion between choice and voice—knowing that until we would be 15 years old, that no matter what haircut we said we wanted, Mr. Brown would give us the haircut my father wanted” (p. 112). Acts of domination and control often manifest themselves physically.

Dating back to the 19th century, Twain (1992) describes the beginning of a domineering shaving experience, “I said meekly that I was in a hurry, and it affected [the barber] as strongly as if he had never heard it. He shoved up my head and put a napkin under it. He ploughed his fingers into my collar and fixed a towel there. He explored my hair with his claws and suggested it needed trimming” (p. 525). Slim, in the Cut & Shave Barber Shop, for instance, balances this tightrope of power and domination skillfully; one of my peer debriefers, Todd, commented that Slim’s approach “put me at ease because I didn't feel dominated.” Ultimately, it is the unpredictable delicacy of intimacy that gives it its power and energy in hair sites; for at any point in a haircut, intimacy can provoke reactions of any and all kinds.

**Emotional Labor**

The effort of hair workers to negotiate the intimacy and emotional behavior of clients is commonly referred to as emotional labor. Hochschild (2012) coined the term *emotional labor* in her 1983 study of airline stewardesses. Emotional labor describes the actions taken by employees to manage their own emotions in an effort to conform to the standards and demands of certain professions with negative consequences to their own sense of well-being. Black (2004) emphasizes the double-meaning of the term by writing that “emotional labor is about both the emotions of the person who is the object of the
labor in question (client/customer/patient) and the emotions of the person who performs that labor” (p. 123) Payne (2009) contends emotional labor “require[s] a sophisticated form of social intelligence, including the ability to read customers’ signals and select from variety of emotional management strategies or tactics” (pp. 352-3). Bolton (2004) further explains:

Like other forms of work, there can be little doubt that emotion work…can be demanding, boring, exhausting, tedious, arduous and stressful. Yet because it is intangible, immediately perishable and open to variation, its qualitative features are hard to define rendering emotion work an ‘invisible’ skill which, though deemed to be a magic ingredient of many occupations, is barely recognized and poorly rewarded. (p. 32)

The relatively low status of emotional work reflects the contentious issue of gender in studies of emotional labor because these types of skills have traditionally been labeled inherently feminine.

Of course, emotional labor skills such as caring, listening, and touching are not “intrinsic to womanhood” (Black, 2004, p. 129) yet “sustained empirical analysis of masculinity and emotional…labor remains sparse” (Nickson & Korczynski, 2009, p. 298). In her study of upper class men who frequent female beauty parlors, Barber (2008) explains, “A barber is assumed to not provide care work or emotional labor; instead, the men make a distinction whereby the women salon stylists are sincerely interested in the clients’ families and want to talk with the men ‘about life’” (p. 468). The lack of discussion surrounding males and emotional labor is surprising because typically where intimacy exists in a workplace, emotional labor is usually right there with it. For instance,
I witnessed Slim perform acts of emotional labor stereotypically considered feminine (e.g., listening, providing empathy, etc.), but I also saw him exhibit more stereotypically masculine emotional behaviors involving anger, silence, and yelling.

Unrelated to gender, Cohen (2010) would suggest that Slim’s negative emotional labor relates to his position as an owner-operator, given that “for…long-time salon-owners, unreciprocated favors expose and undermine the (deep-acting) conceptualization of clients as friends” (p. 210) That is, because owner-operators are reliant on regular clients as a source of income, they often do “favors” for the clients they believe to be friends. However, “a lack of reciprocity gnaws away” at the owners and can lead to “breaking points” (p. 211). The discussion of intimacy and emotional labor demonstrates how much energy is expended both by clients as they share intimate information with hair workers who must also work to provide emotional care while simultaneously managing their own feelings. The relationships of coworkers in hair sites reflect a similar level of emotional involvement.

**Staff Relations**

While the lion’s share of the Hair Studies research focuses on stylist-client relations, coworker relations in hair sites can have a significant impact on shop rhythms. Taking into consideration the practice of hair professionals to work long hours together with little privacy in often cramped spaces, it is not hard to imagine the impact of coworker relations on rhythm. Hill and Bradley (2010) state, “our findings revealed that, like customer service relations, coworker relations were also connected with the everyday lived emotional experiences of workers” as “workers could almost immediately tell if and when their colleagues were in a good or bad mood” (p. 51). Further, Hill and Bradley
(2010) explain moods spread via “emotional contagion” because frequently “certain moods could be transferred from one coworker to the next, as if the workers were links in an ‘emotional chain’” (p. 51). Braun (2013) offers an example from her research site where “customers and colleagues called a hairdresser who openly showed that she was in a bad mood and allegedly threw the salon into disarray a ‘bad apple’ that must be ‘removed from the bag’ because of its ‘bad temper’” (p. 146).

Furman (1997) hints at the importance of staff management as “Julie is also seen as a capable manager since there is no tension evident among the staff, a situation commonly reported about other beauty salons” (p. 23). However, hair sites often present a challenge to shop owners and managers, as these places house very specific sets of relationships. For instance, Candelario (2007) claims “a complex web of interactions between class background, phenotype, and employment status within Salon Lamadas operated to organize hierarchical relationships between owners and staff” (p. 201). In The Cut & Shave, the close quarters and hierarchical differences between Slim and the staff, at times, make shop relations somewhat tense. I did observe evidence of Hill and Bradley’s (2010) contention that “workers developed an awareness of each other’s moods as a function of time” (p. 52) since the longer they work together, the more coworkers learn about each other’s moods.

**Place, Or Where Rhythm Comes Together**

The part that place plays in the creation of rhythm is deceptively simple, as it appears to function as little more than a container for time and energy. The best way to understand the significance of place is to visit a hair site before it opens or after it closes. The room remains recognizably a hair shop as the chairs, mirrors, and tools of the trade
are all present, but the absence of human beings and sensory activity (e.g., noise, smells, etc.) makes the room seem noticeably eerie. Therefore, just as time and energy need a place to inhabit, place requires time and (human) energy to become a place, rather than simply an identifiable space or location. In their study of gendered servicescapes, Fischer, Gainer, and Bristor (1998) contend that these places should be considered “socially constructed rather than physically constructed, but are nevertheless very real to consumers” (p. 585).

Alexander (2003) extends this particular conception of place in his claim that “the Black barbershop/salon is a physical and acoustically sensual cultural site—a site where Black people come in contact with each other through touch, the manipulation of hair (length, shape, texture, and form), the sounds of talk, information sharing, and the deep penetration of cultural memory” (p. 123). Likewise, Carpenter (2003) describes his research site “as a highly aestheticized, socially constructed environment embedded with numerous historical, cultural, social, philosophical, and sensory references” (p. 6).

Unfortunately, I am unable to review the several important inanimate components of hair places such as décor, spatial layout, or geographic location. Instead, I focus on the routinely exclusionary nature of social organization that causes hair sites to serve as gendered and raced places.

In the first chapter, I argued that The Cut & Shave should be viewed as something of a way station as it is a place marked by fluidity and host to constant movement. Yet within research sites in the Hair Studies literature, there is an overwhelming tendency to establish boundaries in these places. Black (2004) adds, “in fact every study of a beauty salon with which I am familiar illustrates the relative homogeneity of the clientele and the
effect this has on social relationships formed inside” (p. 95). Candelario (2007) claims, “beauty shops operate within specific ethno-racial contexts and communities. Indeed, they are one of the last public-private spaces in the U.S. where social segregation is generally accepted without challenge” (p. 179). As a result, “in barbershops and hair salons behaviors associated with men and women can remain grounded in their specific gender identities, while conferring on the other gender a mystical character essential in the formation of a counter identity” (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008, p. 179).

Examples of willful segregation exist across the Hair Studies field. Twitchell (2007) argues, “the American barber shop offered a refuge from the gaze of women” (p. 117). For Scanlon (2007), “beauty parlors have provided a space in which women mediate the demands of beauty culture in a place apart: away from the presence of the male gaze” (p. 318). Furman (1997) states that when men did enter these places “to chat briefly with a spouse or parent…they are most commonly ignored, that is, rendered invisible” (p. 20). As far as racial segregation, Nunley (2011) explains that in barber shops, “men could be philosophers and fools, thoughtful and ignorant, progressive and sexist, but mostly where they could be everything that being human allows...away from the discipling [sic] gaze of whiteness” (pp. 2-3). Additional examples of racial and gender segregation are addressed in the following discussion of boundary crossing.

Throughout the literature exist a number of scenes in which a researcher experiences or observes the crossing of racial or gendered boundaries. These interactions provide another perspective on both the homogeneity of hair places and the way rhythm of a shop is noticeable to outsiders. After describing the décor in an African-American salon, Weitz (2004), a white female researcher, comments, “seeing all this makes me
realize just how ‘white’ typical salons are, and just how out of place black clients must feel in these places” (p. 178). Similarly, Press (2008), a white female researcher, admits, “I realized that this [Black] hair salon represented a different type of space than I’d been used to in all the white salons I frequented” (in Press & Johnson-Yale, 2008, p. 308). Candelario (2007), commenting on a scene involving a Black woman seeking hair service in a Dominican-American beauty salon, notes that “the mood of the shop had changed with the presence of a ‘stranger,’ a non-Latina…In the absence of non-Latinos, the shop was normal; in their presence, it was ethnic and foreign” (p. 210).

Speaking as a gay, Black male researcher, Alexander (2003) says, “although my identity is gendered, it does not always fit comfortably within conversational spaces marked by heterosexual discourse, which is often the case in the barbershop/salon” (p.118). To prevent unwanted border crossings, Hajj, the head barber in Harris-Lacewell (2004) study, would literally lock the front door when white salespeople would appear: “Hajj’s practice of locking white men out of the shop is a powerful statement about his attitude toward whites and an assertion of the nature of Truth and Soul [barber shop]” (p. 200). These disruptions and intrusions in homogenous hair sites serve as but a few of a range of examples that indicate the dynamic nature of a place’s rhythm and its immediate noticeability to outsiders. Dramatic changes in a shop’s rhythm may indicate a situation that demands the attention of the shop’s leader.

**Leadership**

Places such as hair sites may appear to be lively, unpredictable and full of spontaneous activity, but further analysis usually reveals the existence of a sense of order maintained by an authority figure. For these hair sites to function effectively, owner-
operators must demonstrate leadership as they juggle multiple roles as hair professional, owner, staff supervisor, customer relations expert, and the all-around face of the business. Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) explains, “a ‘caretaker’ is needed to establish the rules governing the behavior of individuals while in the establishment. The caretaker is also charged with disseminating information concerning the rules, monitoring norms, and managing conflicts that emerge inside or outside the establishment’s walls” (p. 36). Because conflicts and situations appear unexpectedly, leaders need to spend a significant amount of time in the sites; frequently, they must address these issues immediately and efficiently all while still cutting hair. The multiple responsibilities and dominant presences of these individuals lead Staten (2001) to state, “barbers make the barbershops. Like barbeque joints they don’t do well as franchises. Folks want idiosyncrasy in a barbershop and a barbeque joint. So not two barbershops are alike because no two barbers are alike” (p. 15). Appearing in many forms with a variety of tactics, strong leaders are the focus of the majority of Hair Studies research.

Despite my claims about leadership, none of the researchers cited in this paragraph uses the actual term to describe the central participants. With these following citations, I attempt to show how leadership is dispersed through a number of behaviors. Mitchell asserts (1990) that “Louise’s two primary modes of instruction—criticism and encouragement—in addition to the power, authority, and knowledge that she exhibited ‘held things together’ in the shop” (p. 270). According to Harris-Lacewell (2004), “Hajj was not only the shop’s owner but its heart, the animating force that made this place dynamic” (p. 162). Battle-Walters (2004) states, “Sheila, the shop’s only stylist, gently nurtures this core group similar to the way a mother would care for her children. A tall,
robust woman who speaks with authority, Sheila has an element of gentleness that keeps her patrons confiding in her and coming back” (p. 15). From the other end of the gender spectrum, Franklin (1985) insists, “Bob always was the most powerful negotiator in the barbershop…[he] had the ability to speak on a variety of issues and always from a pro-masculine perspective” (p. 970). Furman (1997) states, “Julie, the owner of the shop, is the object of greatest admiration because she is seen, not only as a capable beautician, but as the tone-setter for the salon” (p. 23). In The Cut & Shave, Slim uses a combination of directness, subtlety, and humor to exercise control over the shop. But he admits that the stress from the leadership part of his job considerably impacts his life. Overall, leadership is essential not only to the management of hair sites as places, but to the coordination of the never-ending, unpredictable expenditures of energy and the pressures of time.

**Time, or the Temporal Forms of Rhythm**

In Chapter 1, in my explanation of the shift from an emphasis solely on time to rhythm as a way to answer my first research question, I briefly mentioned a few Hair Studies texts that involve time. Rather than piece together unrelated references to time across the field, I take a different approach in this section. First, I begin with the themes of language and learning as several researchers stress that much of the time spent in hair sites is spent talking and sharing information. Next, I examine the more temporal issue of nostalgia as most research on white male barber shops focuses on the past rather than on the present or future. Lastly, I examine how much of this nostalgia is sensorial in nature as the reminiscences of white males contain numerous mentions of the smells, sounds, and sights of the past.
The association of hair sites with language use dates back to ancient Greece and Rome when barber shops were known as “wine-less symposia” (Lewis, 1995). Men gathered in these half-private, half-public spaces to wait for and receive facial shaves that lasted approximately 45-minutes during which they would discuss and share news, gossip, and ideas (Boon, 1991). In his study of contemporary “mutually captive” audiences, McCarthy (2000) claims, “the hairdresser’s salon offers the maximum time and space for relational talk [defined as small talk, anecdotes, wider topics of mutual interest], and that, simply put, is why it occurs” because “the alternative, silence, is even more threatening and unacceptable” (pp. 104-105). Herzog (1996) adds, “[Small talk] helps solve a classic problem of social discomfort: the hairdresser is a stranger whose job requires him to violate all norms of body space” (p. 33).

Unquestionably, hair sites continue to be resources of shared information, but language use also contributes to intimacy and the building of communities. For instance, about the hair pressing process, hooks (2007) explains, “it was an exclusive moment when Black women (even those who did not know one another well) might meet…in the beauty parlor to talk with one another, to listen to the talk. It was as important a world as that of the male barber shop—mysterious, secret” (p. 2). Similarly, Majors (2008) defines language in the beauty parlor as “an interactional and dynamic way of talk that includes both stylists and customers, and a transformative medium through which participants…interrogate, contest, and make sense of the world” (p.172). Although I have issues with the metaphor of time as a container that needs filling, within the hair research this view of time seems to be unquestioned. For example, in her discussion of the long wait time in
her research site, Battle-Walters (2004) asks, “So what would women do during that
time? They talked!” (p. 19). Most importantly, language use in hair sites reveals a
significant amount of information about a shop’s rhythm in terms of both subject matter
and the conversational patterns and styles which themselves are often quite rhythmic.

Learning

A number of researchers cite a direct correlation between language use and
learning in hair sites. Somewhat surprisingly, the type of learning described in these texts
seems to follow information transfer, or banking (Friere, 1993), models of learning rather
than more social practice or experiential models. For example, Brown (2001) claims,
“through conversation, the stylists gain a great deal of knowledge about their clients and
the communities in which they live and work” (p. 138). Researchers who highlight
learning tend to conduct fieldwork in sites that feature an interactive community of hair
workers and clients. Nunley (2011) states, “barbershops become de facto schools of
Black ritual, culture, and communal and individual subjectivities” (p. 76). Likewise,
Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) suggests, “the barbershop and hair salon are strategic in
teaching the local wisdom about such roles and identities” (p. 205). Following these
examples, there is a strong overall tendency of Hair Studies researchers to emphasize the
importance of the sharing of information in these sites which suggests a further need to
re-examine the possible applications of the banking model (Friere, 1993) in non-school
settings.

Alexander (2003) offers a more practice-based model of learning by claiming that
“in the barbershop, these old men played a verbal game with us that was clearly designed
to both tease and make fun of us and each other, while engaging in a social and cultural
process of sense making… Their inclusion of us was a form of community building and enculturation” (p. 113). Brunson (2006) emphasizes the democratic nature of learning, as “Charles and Ron frequently call upon customers who have expertise concerning particular issues to take command of these discussions” (p. 153). Yet Franklin (1983) warns of the dangers of learning in a sexist barber shop by writing, “I believe that consistent exposure to such a setting can have harmful effects on growing and vulnerable minds… Maybe this is why after 14 years, I am no longer a customer at Bob’s barbershop and do not take my sons there” (p. 976). Regardless of the content or style of learning, information circulates via language among the people spending time in hair sites.

**Nostalgia**

The “traditional” white male barber shop appears to be lost in time within Hair Studies literature. The few texts that address white male barber shops contain significant amounts of either nostalgia for, or in one case distancing from (Barber, 2008), these places. For instance, in *The American Barbershop: A closer look at a disappearing place*, Hunter (2004) documents his effort to photograph “traditional” barbershops so that he could “capture on film something important that is disappearing” (p. 3). In a similar vein, Abecassis and Sauve (2005) travel to the United States and Canada to photograph barbers and their shops before “barbershops slowly disappear from our urban landscape” (p. 15). *Barberland* (2005) is a documentary film about “a lost community that is fading into our vanishing Americana” (DVD liner notes). Barber (2008) researches upper class men who patronized a female beauty salon and contrasted themselves “with the traditional ‘machismo’ barber shop…and construct themselves as a class of ‘new men’: progressive,
stylish, and professional” (p. 472). In *The Vanishing American Barber Shop*, Barlow (1993) claims, “the last bastion of the American male fell without a whimper” (p. 18). As he concludes his book about “America’s great barbershops,” Staten (2001) asks, “How do you replace something like that?” (p. 171). The barber shop has not been replaced, but it certainly seems to live on in the realm of memory.

In reviewing the work involving disappearing white male barber shops, I frequently came across fond remembrances of childhood barber shops. Seremetakis (1994) writes, “memory is the horizon of sensory experiences, storing and restoring the experience of each sensory dimension in another, as well as dispersing and finding sensory records outside the body in a surround of entangling objects and places” (p. 9). Since I employ the use of the senses in this study’s methodology, I cite these memories as a way to ground the ongoing relationship between time and the senses in hair sites. Philips (2007) explains, “Barbershops in the postwar, Fordist period were known by the sounds of electric clippers as much as by the scent of Lucky Tiger hair tonic” (p. 200). About his first barber shop, Stanten (2001) claims, “If you were to blindfold me today, spin me around five times, and lead me into Sword’s Barbershop, I could tell you exactly where we were; I wouldn’t need a single visual clue. I could even tell you with earplugs in. Sword’s smelled like Sword’s” (pp. 17-18). Hunter (2004) remembers, “My nose eagerly took in the smell of tobacco, aftershave, and the various mysterious potions for the grooming of hair. The scent of masculinity” (p. 39). According to Fridman (2001), “what I recall most about my early visit to Pat and Mike’s, however, are not so much the owners themselves as the reek of stale cigar smoke, the slap of straight razors against leather sharpening strops, and the glint of chrome ashtrays placed next to each waiting
chair” (p. 435). Certainly, these types of nostalgic memories of hair sites are not limited to white males as numerous females and non-white males also have sensory memories.

Although still not completely dead yet, the “traditional” white barber shop has been dying for about fifty years now, or since The Beatles first set foot in America in 1964 and made it permissible for men to wear long hair (Hunter, 2004; Barlow, 1993; Severn, 1971). Seremetakis (1994) believes that “nostalgia, in the American sense, freezes the past in such a manner as to preclude it from any capacity for social transformation in the present” (p. 4). Nostalgia can be a risky proposition because it is pleasurable to recall fond memories of the past but, because the past is safely in the past, it can provide a safe retreat from the threats of the present and future. According to O’Donoghue (2012), “Perhaps in the past, mainly due to fear of one kind or another, narratives of barbershops were too intent on preserving ways in which men ought to be with each other, rather than suggesting ways in which they could be” (p. 321). Currently, in America, there is allegedly a “barbershop renaissance” which involves new barber shops recycling the iconography of the past for new audiences (Colman, 2010). However, Twitchell (2007) argues, “Although strangely true to the history of the barbershop, it won’t work” (p. 117). The Cut & Shave is not an example of this recent trend as Slim has been cutting hair for 30 years and tends to evolve rather than retreat. However, because The Cut & Shave is something of a combination of traditional and contemporary barber shops, the issue of nostalgia appears on a daily basis as clients connect their own memories to objects in the shop like the vintage barber chairs. This nostalgia is one of the ways the past is regularly re-introduced into the rhythm of the shop.
In conclusion, this literature review continues to develop the preliminary definition of rhythm as the primary analytic with which to theorize and experience time in The Cut & Shave introduced in Chapter 1. In particular, I sought to both expand my conception of rhythm and demonstrate my knowledge of the Hair Studies as I utilized the key elements of Lefebvre’s (2004) definition of rhythm—energy, place, and time—to frame my review of the related literature. In the next chapter, I again employ another variation of the spiral form as I cycle through the range of the methodological issues that guided, limited, and benefitted my research. Lastly, it bears repeating that the unconventional structure of each chapter results from my use of the bricolage approach to address, if not solve, epistemological and methodological issues in creative, efficient ways.
Chapter 3: Methodological Approach—Bricolage

Preamble

The methodological approach of this dissertation is based on the belief that any attempt to understand and/or make epistemological claims about a complex site of situated, human activity requires the creative, appropriate use of methods that produce findings in an ethical manner. Following St. Pierre (2000), in this dissertation I seek “to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (p. 27). Relying on a combination of ethnographic, phenomenological, and postmodern approaches, the methodology of this dissertation is best defined as a version of bricolage as mentioned in the previous chapter. Lincoln and Denzin (2011) suggest that bricolage involves the application of a variety of ethnographic methods in traditional and innovative ways as necessitated by the unique circumstances of the research process to create “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (p. 4). A bricolage research methodology enables researchers to make do with “whatever is at hand” as the means to seek and represent their findings (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). At the same time, bricolage is a metaphorical conception, a theory, and a method. Therefore, because of my early embrace of the bricolage, it is problematic to conceive of this dissertation in terms of a rigid, straightforward research design other than to say I sought
to study time in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop by using qualitative methods with the hope of conveying my findings, artfully composed, piece by piece.

A bricolage research methodological approach is beneficial and appropriate to the pursuit of, at least, a partial understanding of the phenomena and experiences in the barber shop that are sensorial, tacit, multivalent, and, at times, invisible. In my use of bricolage methodology, both in the field and in the write-up stage, I regularly followed Ellingson’s (2011) advice “to consider jumping and straddling multiple points across the field of qualitative methods—consciously, actively, and creatively” (p. 595). Specifically, under this umbrella term of bricolage, I employ three additional methodologies—Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis, Pink’s (2009) conception of sensory ethnography, and Richardson’s (2005) creative analytic processes. Intentionally, I use the term methodologies, rather than methods, here because each of these entities is a combination of theory and method. For example, the purpose of rhythmanalysis is to identify and apply collections of rhythms as modes of analysis, while sensory ethnography seeks to understand how we use our senses to make sense of the world, and creative analytical processes suggest that representations of research can be simultaneously creative and analytical. These three innovative methodologies and their intertwined relationship will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. To clarify, in regard to bricolage, as a noun, the term bricolage represents the end product of the dissertation constructed by means of the three methodologies. As something of a verb, bricolage refers to the way I employ each methodology at various points in the research based on contextual situations that require creative or, to use Levi-Strauss’ (1966) term, “devious” solutions (p. 16).
The reason this methodology was selected is influenced by a few factors. Later in the chapter, I will discuss the impact of Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures on the methodology, but for now I will take a moment to address how the contemporary state of qualitative research influences my research. St. Pierre (2011) claims, “qualitative inquiry is more vulnerable than ever now that its positivist tendencies have been outing” (p. 623). Taken from her essay on the future of qualitative research, St. Pierre’s statement suggests the danger in continuing to hold on to, rather than challenge, the traditional use of methods. According to Richardson (2005), “we have inherited some ethnographic rules that are arbitrary, narrow, exclusionary, distorting, and alienating. Our task is to find concrete practices through which we can construct ourselves as ethical subjects engaged in ethical ethnography—inspiring to read and to write” (p. 965). In order to find these concrete practices, we also need to consider Law’s (2004) take on the danger of viewing method as a set of neutral or objective tools. Law states:

Method in social science (and natural science, too) is enacted in a set of nineteenth- or even seventeenth-century Euro-American blinkers. This means that it misunderstands and misrepresents itself. Method is not, I have argued, a more or less successful set of procedures for reporting on a given reality. Rather it is performative. It helps to produce realities. It does so freely and at whim…The consequence is that method is not, and could never be, innocent or purely technical. (p. 142)

It is this performative use of method that I seek to complicate and challenge in the construction and application of my own methodology.
While I agree with the assessments of St. Pierre (2011), Richardson (2005), and Law (2004), I do not, nor do they, seek to totally discount or discredit the importance of methods in social science. Instead, I seek concrete methodological approaches appropriate for the examination of everyday life in our contemporary era. To investigate elusive themes such as time, rhythm, emotion, and sensory perception using strictly traditional methods would be doing a disservice to this particular research setting and to the larger aims of social science and the production of knowledge. With this in mind, I refer to Levi-Strauss’ (1966) assertion that the bricoleur’s first step in a project must be to “turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of dialogue with it and, before choosing between them, to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem” (p. 18). Having already taken this first step, in this chapter, I intend to demonstrate and discuss the use, reconfiguration, and rejection of traditional qualitative methods in conjunction with innovative methods as a way to address a variety of epistemological, ethical, and methodological dilemmas. This approach resonates with what Lather (2007) calls “post-methodology” in her claim that:

While methodology remains key to demonstrating scientific credentials, the ground would shift to foregrounding disagreements, ambiguities, uncertainties, contradictions, and incoherencies. Political, social, ontological, and personal concerns have now invaded what before was thought to be a technical arena. This is the “post” of post-methodology. (p. 70)

In an effort to maintain coherence and efficiency in this chapter, I employ a customary organization of familiar categories of qualitative methods in which I examine
their application and my appropriate modifications. In conclusion, to employ a food metaphor, Tyson (1998) claimed there are “no recipes for epistemology” (p. 22), but I believe there are tried and true recipes for methodology that might benefit from a few updates and additional ingredients.

**Methodologies**

**Rhythmanalysis**

Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) was a French Marxist philosopher who spent much of his career examining everyday life. Although his most popular text is the English translation of *The Production of Space* (1991a), his major work is the three-volume study, *The Critique of Everyday Life, Volumes 1-3* (1991b; 2002; 2005) published in 1947, 1961, and 1981. According to Highmore (2002a), “Everyday life suggests the ordinary, the banal, but more importantly, for Lefebvre, it connotes continual recurrence, insistent repetition…and by emphasizing ideas of recurrence he can articulate his most fundamental and radical working of the concept of everyday life: everyday life as the interrelationship of all aspects of life” (p. 128). As a Marxist, Lefebvre understood everyday life to be “fragmented, segregated, and discontinuous” in capitalist societies, but he also believed there were revolutionary, or at least enjoyable, unpredictable “moments” that occurred (Moore, 2013, p. 68). “Such moments,” writes Harvey (1991), “were ephemeral and would pass instantaneously into oblivion, but during their passage all manner of possibilities…stood to be both uncovered and achieved.” Harvey (1991) continues, “‘Moments’ were conceived of as points of rupture, of radical recognition of possibilities and intense euphoria” (p. 429). Despite his valorization of moments, in the main Lefebvre is often considered a harsh critic of everyday life. However, in her defense
of the safety and comfort often provided by routine and repetition, Felski (2000) recommends, “It is time to make peace with the ordinariness of daily life” (p. 95). At the end of the day, any discussion of Lefebvre and rhythm must begin with everyday life, for “Lefebvre sensed an underlying and persistent rhythm to it” (Moore, 2013, p. 68).

Published posthumously in English in 2004, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time, and everyday life* is Lefebvre’s last book; parts of the book were written with last wife, Catherine Regulier (Elden, 2004). Lefebvre (1991) had high hopes for his groundbreaking method, believing that “rhythmanalysis might eventually even displace psychoanalysis, as being more concrete, more effective” (p. 205). According to Elden (2004), the English translator of this thin volume, rhythmmanalysis is an “attempt to get us both to think space and time differently, and to think them together” (p. ix). Regrettably, “Lefebvre’s ideas about rhythmmanalysis are scattered and unfinished, but they represent a powerful methodological tool” (Moore, 2013, p. 61). Merrifield (2006) boldly claims, “rhythmmanalysis signals an ancient scholar’s farewell, his last gasp, an indulgence we can forgive, even when we know very little adds up or extends what he has told us already. Rhythmanalysis was Lefebvre’s personal right to [the] city, a right he perhaps should have never shared” (p. 75). Despite the real and exaggerated shortcomings of Lefebvre’s final project, a number of contemporary scholars have innovatively employed rhythmmanalysis in their work, including Highmore’s (2002b) historical analysis of 19th Century London street life, Spinney’s (2006) cycling study, Edensor & Holloway’s (2008) rhythmmanalysis of an Irish bus tour, and Moore’s (2013) preliminary take on African-American popular music.
I have attempted to provide introductory context to Lefebvre and his work before defining rhythmanalysis because, to be honest, there is no straightforward, accepted definition of rhythmanalysis. Thus, it is important to understand the context that shaped this theory/method. Since “rhythms escape logic, and nevertheless contain a logic” (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 11), one might just have to accept that the charm and power of this method are partially based in its mystery. Somewhere between Lefebvre’s basic explanations of rhythm and his grand proclamations for the entire rhythmanalysis project, I seek to ground my use of this methodology in my barber shop research. Of the term rhythm itself, Lefebvre (2004) offers some preliminary definitions. He states:

The meanings of the term remain obscure. We easily confuse rhythm with movement, speed, a sequence of movements or objects (machines, for example). Following this, we tend to attribute to rhythms a mechanical overtone, brushing aside the organic aspects of rhythmmed movements. (p. 6)

More specifically, and for the third time here, Lefebvre (2004) believes that “everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm” (p. 15). Therefore, he provides a list of several key components of rhythm:

a) repetition (of movements, gestures, action, situations, differences);

b) interferences of linear processes and cyclical processes;

c) birth, growth, peak, then decline and end. (p. 15)

The aforementioned components “supply the framework for analyses of the particular, therefore real and concrete cases that feature in music, history and the lives of individuals or groups” (p. 15).
At a very minimum, then, it is necessary to grasp that repetition and disruption must both occur to create rhythm (in any place where time and energy are experienced, which I think is pretty much “everywhere”). For Lefebvre (2004), it is frequently in the intersections or “interferences” of linear and cyclical time where rhythm is created, experienced, and necessarily always ends. Rhythms are not permanent or fixed.

While I could easily chase Lefebvre (2004) and his serpentine methodology around for pages, there are two keys points of rhythmanalysis that I believe are most important in order to understand how I use this theory/method to examine the barber shop: bodies and garlands. As Lefebvre is highly critical of the Cartesian division of mind and body, the following discussion of the body is based on a more unified conception like a body-mind, rather than just a physical body (pp. 16-17). However, it is in the very corporeality of the body where we must first learn of rhythm as “the rhythmanalyst calls on all his senses. He draws on his breathing, the circulation of his blood, the beatings of his heart and the delivery of his speech as landmarks…He thinks with his body” (p. 21). Thus, for Lefebvre, “the theory of rhythms is founded on the experience and knowledge of the body; the concepts derive from this consciousness and this knowledge” (p. 67). Moving beyond the physical, our bodies also contain “our preferences, references, frequencies; each must appreciate rhythms by referring them to oneself, one’s heart or breathing, but also to one’s hours of work, of rest, of waking and of sleep” (p. 10). Therefore, the rhythmanalyst must listen “first to his [sic] body; he learns from it, in order consequently to appreciate external rhythms” (p.19). Lefebvre defines the working, healthy arrangement of the body’s rhythms as eurhythmia (p.16).
Lefebvre (2004) uses the terms garland, bouquet, and bundle interchangeably to describe the arrangement of rhythm. I prefer to use garland because it seems more flowing, elongated, and interwoven like a spiral than a grounded, collage-like entity. Garlands are not exclusive to bodies, for “the surroundings of bodies, be they in nature or a social setting, are also bundles, bouquets, garlands of rhythms, to which it is necessary to listen in order to grasp the natural or produced ensembles” (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 20). For instance, in relation to the barber shop, all barbers and clients each have their individual garlands of rhythms consisting of biological and social rhythms. The shop itself has its own garland of rhythms that continually adjusts to and incorporates everyone’s individual garlands for better or worse. For instance, garlands of rhythms often clash and resist any attempt at synchronization. Most clients only spent 30 minutes at a time in the shop and although they contribute to the shop’s rhythm, they are not aware (in the same way as the barbers) of entire day’s rhythmic patterns and how these rhythms of longer duration may be impacting the experience of their haircuts. The fairly linear patterns of each day overlap with the larger, more cyclical rhythms of the week as the shop shifts from being slow early in the week to fairly hectic on Fridays and Saturdays. The semester cycle of The College and its series of holiday breaks make the shop busier before and after a college break, but slower during the break.

These examples begin to identify the forms rhythm takes in the shop, but they also cause me to return to the issue of defining rhythm analysis, as it is a challenge to determine exactly “what is meant by a rhythm analysis rather an analysis of rhythms” (Elden, 2004, p. xii). Although Elden (2004) argues, “Lefebvre uses rhythm as a mode of analysis—a tool of analysis rather than just an object of it—to examine and re-examine a
range of topics” (p. xii), there is little concrete evidence as to what the end result of this analysis is or looks like. A return to the text only reveals Lefebvre’s (2004) grand pronouncements such as “this book…proposes nothing less than to found a science, a new field of knowledge” (p. 4). And it is also important to note that, to some degree, analysis for Lefebvre is always influenced by Marxist analysis. Due to this definitional uncertainty, I employ rhythm analysis as both an analysis of rhythms and as a mode of analysis that uses rhythms to examine other topics. In particular, the dissertation’s findings, presented in Chapters 4 and 5, serve as a creative analysis that both demonstrates and analyzes the rhythms of the barber shop, while in the dissertation’s conclusion, discussed in Chapter 6, I discuss the importance of these rhythms in relation to other topics and issues.

**Sensory methodology**

Pink’s (2009) conception of sensory methodology provides a solid, complex approach to complement Lefebvre’s (2004) complicated, esoteric rhythm analysis in my efforts to theorize and conduct research in The Cut & Shave. Issues of perception, representation, and methodology trouble any study of time and temporality. Young (1998) explains, “time is commonly represented by a spatial metaphor so that we can put our ordinary senses (and particularly our eyes) to work on its mystery and so try to make up for the fact that natural evolution has given us no organ of time perception as it has given us sight and touch for objects in space, hearing for sounds, smell for scents, and taste for food” (p. 245). Because there is no “time sense,” but yet we can always sense and feel time, I look to Pink’s work as a method well-suited to my pursuit of understanding time and rhythm as experienced from the sensory perspectives of both
participants and the researcher. Pink does not provide a textbook definition of sensory ethnography, but she does claim its starting point is “the multisensoriality of experience, perception, knowing and practice” (p. 1). Essentially, at a minimum, it involves “the researcher self-consciously and reflexively attending to the senses throughout the research process” (Pink, 2009, p. 10).

Sensory ethnography is not necessarily a radical approach to the study of human experience or a re-working of ethnography, as “the study of the senses would not normally be the sole and primary objective of research itself” (Pink, 2009, p. 45). Nevertheless, as Pink asserts, “it forms part of a methodology, part of an approach to understanding other people’s experiences, values, identities, and ways of life. A methodology based in and a commitment to understanding the senses provides a route to forms of ethnography” (p. 45). Thus, for example, as I seek to answer my first research question—“How is time experienced in The Cut & Shave?”—I utilize sensory ethnographic approaches to learn about and analyze how the bodies of both Slim and I (as the researcher) experience time and rhythm.

Time and rhythm do not exist in a vacuum; they always exist in places. The barber shop is a place where time and rhythm are experienced everyday. Pink’s (2009) emphasis on the emplaced nature of experience is especially relevant:

I propose an emplaced ethnography that attends to the question of experience by accounting for the relations between bodies, minds and the materiality and sensoriality of the environment. It is now frequently recognized that we need to investigate the emplacement of the people who participate in our ethnographic
research. It is equally important for ethnographers to acknowledge their own emplacement as individuals in and as part of specific research contexts. (p. 25)

In many ways, this passage from Pink (2009) resonates with Lefebvre’s (2004) claim that rhythm-analysts must first be caught up in the rhythms of a place before they can analyze them. These experiences and understandings, Pink claims, are essential components in the creation of “ethnographic places.” On this point, she writes:

The ethnographic place … involves the ethnographer intentionally pulling together theory, experiential knowing, discourse, and more, into a unique configuration of trajectories. The challenge for ethnographers is to do this in such a way that invites our audience to imagine themselves into the places of others, while simultaneously invoking theoretical and practical points of learning. (p. 42)

The fourth chapter of this dissertation serves as an example of an ethnographic place as I combine the various forms of my research materials to create a day in the life of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. Ethnographic places are built with the research materials collected from the study of the senses in the field; however, they do not claim to be the actual, geographic places. Ethnographic places are always the constructions of the researcher.

Learning is a fundamental part of the sensory ethnography as researchers serve as “sensory apprentices” to participants (Pink, 2009, p. 69). Additionally, as Pink (2011) argues, “the approach to ethnography I outline here would involve learning in and as part of the world, and seeking routes through which to share or imaginatively empathize with the actions of people in it” (p. 270). Learning results as people share experiences; in particular, the researcher learns from the participants when “[t]here is a shift between looking at and collecting data on, to being in and engaging in ways of knowing about the
worlds and actions of other people” (Pink, 2011, p. 271). In my own experience, I had to sit in the waiting chairs and watch Slim for weeks before I could begin to learn and understand the ways Slim negotiated what seemed to be the random chaos of the shop. However, “learning to sense and make meanings as others do thus involves us not simply observing what they do, but learning how to use all our senses and to participate in their worlds, on the terms of their embodied understandings” (Pink, 2009, p. 72). Only in retrospect, did I come to realize how much I was in fact “using all my senses” to make sense of The Cut & Shave. Therefore, this particular methodology not only produces a convincing demonstration of how rhythm and time in the barber shop (through their traces, best grasped through sensory perception), but it also forces me to incorporate my learning experiences into the construction of this knowledge.

**Creative Analytical Processes Ethnography**

Like with many aspects of postmodern and poststructural theory, it is something of a challenge to pin down a working definition of Richardson’s (2005) creative analytic processes ethnographies, or CAP ethnographies. At a minimum, Richardson (2005) states, “this label can include new work, future work, or older work—wherever the author has moved outside conventional social scientific writing” (p. 962). CAP ethnographies are often the product of applications of Richardson’s (2005) conception of “writing as a method of inquiry” (p. 960). Regarding this method, St. Pierre (in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) suggests, “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is a seductive and tangled method of discovery…Richardson has brought this understanding to qualitative inquiry in the social sciences” (p. 967). Richardson (2005) herself emphasizes the importance of this work in her claim that “CAP ethnographies are not alternative or
experimental; they are, in and of themselves, valid and desirable representations of the social... The practices that produce CAP ethnography are both creative and analytical” (p.62).

For me, this approach to composition and representation is desirable and effective because it provides theoretical and rhetorical justification for my attempts to pin down elusive, invisible entities—time and rhythm, amongst others—through creative (and I believe logical) means. Further, while there is no rule requiring harmony between the content and form of a piece of writing, the case of rhythm presents some rare challenges. Using Richardson’s terminology, it does certainly make “creative” sense to write about rhythm in a fairly rhythmic, rather than stultifying, way; more important, however, is the analytic part of the term, CAP. My findings chapters are composed in a style that intentionally blends the depiction and analysis of “data.” If I had separated the data and its analysis into distinct sections, I would have lost any hope of establishing an implied resonance of the rhythm between the content and the form.

Later in the dissertation, I include another element of CAP ethnography in the form of a poem I composed from lines of Slim’s dialogue. I am a bit hesitant to call it a “found” poem because I spent so much time analyzing and re-writing it with the assistance of Philip, an expert in poetry and one of my peer de-briefers. These attempts to be creative and analytic concurrently reflect a commitment to Richardson’s (2005) hopeful assertion that, “any dinosaurian beliefs that ‘creative’ and ‘analytical’ are contradictory and incompatible modes are standing in the path of a meteor; they are doomed for extinction” (p. 962). For it is from this combination or twining of the creative and the analytical that I seek to create evocation. The urge to evoke can be traced back to
the crisis of representation within the field of anthropology in the 1980s and the postmodern ethnography movement. Tyler (1986), for instance, claims that the “whole point of ‘evoking’ rather than ‘representing’ is that it frees ethnography from mimesis and the inappropriate mode of scientific rhetoric that entails ‘objects,’ ‘facts,’ ‘descriptions,’ ‘inductions,’ ‘generalizations,’ ‘verifications,’ ‘experiment,’ ‘truth,’ and like concepts” which “except as empty invocations, have no parallels either in the experience of ethnographic fieldwork or in the writing of ethnographies” (p. 130). In order to judge this type of evocative representation, I provide and discuss Richardson’s (2005) evaluative criteria below in the trustworthiness section.

**Summary of Methodologies**

In sum, within The Cut & Shave, time and rhythm take many forms, primarily linear and cyclical, but also in the form of the familiar temporalities of past, present, and future—all of which often intersect and join together. To understand and construct knowledge about these temporal and rhythmic phenomena, I use a bricolage methodology composed of three additional methodologies: rhythmanalysis, sensory ethnography, and creative analytic processes. Because Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis is somewhat vague and because rhythm itself is invisible and best perceived through the senses, sensory methodology is employed as a supplement to rhythmanalysis. However, like time and rhythm, sensory perceptions are also a challenge to represent in texts; therefore, I also employ Richardson’s (2005) creative analytic processes as a means to both represent and analyze the findings involving rhythm in the next chapter.

These methodologies share two fundamental understandings about the research process that involve the issue of separation: 1) A refusal to separate the mind and body,
and 2) An emphasis on the inseparability of experience, learning, and (data) analysis. In his dismissal of the Cartesian divide of mind and body, Lefebvre (2004) remarks that it “is exhausted” (p. 16), and Richardson (2005) explains that her selection of the acronym CAP is “because the head is both mind and body, [and the acronym’s] metaphorical use breaks down the mind-body duality” (p. 976). Pink (2009) emphasizes it is essential “to understand the body not simply as a source of experience and activity that would be rationalized and/or controlled by the mind, but itself a source of knowledge and subsequently of agency” (p. 24). Lefebvre (2004) and Pink (2009) demonstrate that experiencing rhythms and attending to the senses in the field are inherently analytical and learning behaviors. Richardson (2005) claims analysis occurs during the writing stage, not exclusively before in a bounded data analysis stage. In different ways, all three theorists suggest that shared experience, learning, and (data) analysis are ongoing, mutually dependent aspects of the research process that do not exist separately.

Research Site

The Cut & Shave Barber Shop has been in business under this name in the same location since the late 1960s; a few different people owned it before Slim bought the place about 10 years ago. It is centrally located in a relatively large city (referred to in this dissertation as “The City”) in an average-sized state in the Midwestern region of the United States. The proximity of a large university (referred to in this dissertation as “The College”) and regional state government offices to The Cut & Shave is significant. Government work brings people in and out of town on a regular basis. The influx and departure of college students every fall and spring creates a steady turnover in the shop’s clientele. When I pressed Slim for an estimate of how many of his clients have some
connection to the university—as employee, student, former student, family member, etc.—he thought it was about 40 percent. The shop’s location on one of The City’s main thoroughfares (referred to in this dissertation as “The Boulevard”) allows clients to walk, take the bus, ride bikes, or drive cars to the shop. Many clients live in the surrounding suburbs and tend to drive to the shop; they must find parking on the street around the shop, as there is no dedicated parking lot. The location of The Cut & Shave within The City, the state, and the region is very important because getting clients through the door is essential to any hair site. Thus, Slim is not alone on The Boulevard. Within a couple miles in either direction of the Cut & Shave, there are at least a dozen total hair salons and barber shops.

When clients make their way through the door of The Cut & Shave, they enter a relatively open, rectangular room with high ceilings that measures approximately 550 square feet. The State Barber Board regulations dictate the layout of the shop to a large extent as their detailed codes limit the arrangement of each barber station. For example, every station requires a sink to be nearby and the electric tools require proximity to the outlets on the walls. Furthermore, Slim and his wife Nancy (Nan) designed and renovated the shop’s interior and the exterior façade. Most of the activity in the shop revolves around the three barber stations on one wall, and the four barber chairs serving as the primary waiting area on the other wall. There are two benches, one in the front next to Slim and one in the back corner by the basement door, used for seating and temporarily storing personal belongings like backpacks and hats. In the rear of the shop, there is a vibrating massage chair (I only ever saw one person turn it on) that mostly serves as a
resting place for Slim’s green, Fender Stratocaster electric guitar, which he came to own as a result of a lopsided trade for a haircut; a small amplifier sits nearby on the floor.

Above the massage chair is a small, flat screen television that is never turned on; it is only used to connect with the surveillance camera that is necessary to have here because of the ongoing crime issues in the neighborhood that result in broken shop windows. The tiny bathroom is on the left, and on the right is the half-walled area with swinging doors which serves as an employees-only area. Because this area is not fully enclosed, unlike the bathroom, the absence of a ceiling permits sounds and smells to circulate so the employees can hear if the door is open, while clients can often smell food. Containing a small refrigerator, a microwave, a sink, the stereo system, and storage areas for hair maintenance supplies, I call this area “The Back” as in “Slim is in The Back, he will be right out.” The only real private spaces in the shop are the bathroom and the basement; thus, employees and clients both tend to leave the shop for private telephone conversations. Sometimes I would look through the window and see Slim pacing up and down The Boulevard on his phone like the rest of the neighborhood regulars.

Ethics

There were a number of ethical concerns that impacted the design and conduct of this study, but I emphasize the three major issues involving: 1) The barber shop as a place of business, 2) IRB protocol, and 3) Reciprocity. The majority of educational research occurs principally in schools, but also in community settings. Unlike in schools where researchers, teachers, and students are tangentially connected through mutual interests in education, conducting research in the workplace means that my purpose in being in the shop differed from the barbers and clients. From the early planning stages of the project,
a primary objective involved preventing my unusual presence and behavior from impacting the business conducted in the shop in a negative way. Despite my numerous claims about the cultural, epistemological, and communal value of this shop, it is first and foremost a place of business in which barbers depend on clients to earn an income.

When receiving haircuts, clients are often in a vulnerable position physically and emotionally as a large cape covers them while sharp tools whirl around their heads as they often share intimate details of their lives with the barbers. Additionally, each client has different habits and expectations of the haircut process; potential disruptions in the process could inspire clients to seek another barber, as they have no binding obligation to continue their patronage of The Cut & Shave. Clients come and go for any number of reasons and I did not want to be one of those reasons. Therefore, also heavily influenced by Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and practices, until I established rapport, I was much more reticent than proactive in my interactions with clients.

The entire IRB process impacted this research more than any other factor from the start to finish of this dissertation despite the fact I never experienced any situation in which the participants appeared even remotely in danger. In privileging strict adherence to IRB policies, and regarding the use of the participant consent form in particular, I was forced to configure unconventional conceptions of validity in this study. As I discuss below in the participants section, the fast-paced, rhythmic setting of the barber shop was not conducive to the collection of signed IRB consent forms; therefore, I collected minimal data from the barber shop clients. Without significant, sanctioned involvement of clients, it was necessary to change the direction of this study. The barbers all agreed to sign consent forms, and although we often discussed my project with clients, without any
signed client forms, I neither took notes in front of these clients nor have I used any of their words in the dissertation.

In terms of the barbers, after submitting my IRB application, the feedback I received indicated that I needed to make some amendments to my participant consent form. In particular, I was instructed to include the following sentence in the shop employee consent form: “I have been advised not to provide any information that may cause harm to my employment.” I made this change and then received approval to begin research. In the hair business, and at The Cut & Shave, employees are typically independent contractors who pay the owner (Slim, in this case), a percentage of the money from each haircut. By nature, the hair maintenance business is fairly transient as workers move from shop to shop; as a client at the shop, I have seen barbers come and go. Because it would not be unheard of for shop employees to stop working at the shop with little notice, and because I am not sure exactly what constitutes “harm” to employment in such an intimate space as the barber shop in which information of all kinds is shared, I substantially minimized participation from Sharon and Lester in this dissertation, just to be safe. However, to erase them completely would have been unethical, as well. Although he works side by side with Sharon and Lester as a barber, Slim is also the owner with a significant power advantage. At any point, Slim always has the authority to remove anyone from his shop (including me). Hence, in the dissertation, I only include a minimal amount of the vast quantity of “backstage” information I learned just from being present in the shop.

In compliance with IRB policies, I took a number of steps to ensure the anonymity of the participants, clients, and The Cut & Shave. All barbers, clients, and
other participants have been given pseudonyms and, outside of a few situations when it was absolutely necessary, I have changed their professions. The use of photography was significantly altered by the need for anonymity. All the images had to be composed in ways that could (partially) convey sensory information about the shop without revealing any obvious identifying information. Image editing software was used to remove data in the scenes where the close-up and unusual camera angles failed to do so. An ethical dilemma resulted from the need to protect the shop’s anonymity while still giving credit to the photographer, “Steve”, for the images. Steve’s real name, his impressive body of work (which includes an earlier photograph of Slim) and his location are easily accessible on the internet; therefore, including his real name would likewise reveal the name and location of the barber shop. Luckily, I informed Steve of this ethical issue and he understood my dilemma and agreed to have his work appear anonymously. In an attempt to act reciprocally, I paid Steve for his photographic work through a bartering arrangement with a series of haircuts I pre-purchased from Slim.

Below in the trustworthiness section, I discuss the specifics of reciprocity. There, I begin to contextualize the reason reciprocity was such an important concern in this particular case even though it is assumed that all researchers should be respectful of, and reciprocal with, their participants. The intimacy and stress involved in barbering prompted me to make emotional labor an important part of my research as Slim is continually frustrated by clients and their perceived lack of respect for his time. Therefore, as I observed these behaviors, it was very important not to replicate them and cause additional stress for Slim. I always tried to be vigilant about my behavior, yet I also
tried to be clear and specific about time—when I would be in the shop and when I would miss a day.

Although Slim never said anything, my presence was an additional factor for him to juggle as he multi-tasked his way through the days. So, whenever situations arose, I seized the opportunities to contribute (e.g., going to pick-up lunch, completing maintenance tasks). To complicate the issue, however, when ethical dilemmas involving reciprocity arose, I tended to err on the side of doing too much, rather than doing too little. Now, when I return and see that the floors need sweeping and Slim has returned to eating sandwiches for lunch, I wonder if I was too “participatory” in my observation. Ultimately, from my perspective, it is better to have the participants miss a researcher rather than criticize his/her lack of reciprocity; I cannot speak for Slim’s perspective on this matter. Overall, while important in all forms of research, as these three examples indicate, ethical commitments are essential to non-traditional methods throughout the research process.

Participants

Before I introduce the participants individually, there are a few necessary points to address that relate to the participants overall. From the very beginning of the planning stage of this project, I always intended to focus observations on Slim because I had an ongoing relationship with him and he was the owner of the shop. The issues with the IRB restrictions addressed in the ethics section above indicate why I also chose to limit the inclusion of the other two barbers, Sharon and Lester. Still, I discuss all three below, but in ways that reflect the way they are “introduced” everyday as they meet new clients for the first time in the shop. That is, whenever people call the shop to make an appointment,
they are usually asked, “who cuts your hair?” and new clients are distributed on a somewhat random basis depending on barber availability. After agreeing to a time, the client will be told the appointment is with one of three names: Slim, Sharon, or Lester. Each client begins the barber-client relationship with only a name, then a first impression based on the barber’s body and demeanor, and eventually a relationship may build 30 minutes at a time once a month. That is not a lot of time to get to know someone. In my description of the barbers below, I intend to reflect this process in my fairly brief descriptions by providing some basic information that is usually revealed during a first haircut.

Additionally, I am influenced by St. Pierre’s (2009) critique of the traditional participants section of qualitative dissertations, particularly when she writes:

Even though we write theoretically about fractured, shifting subjects, participants in our reports retain the characteristics of humanist subjects—we organize them under proper names, ‘pseudonyms,’ and we write rich, thick descriptions of their appearances, personalities, and experiences embedded in stories. We continue to serve them up as whole as possible for our readers, believing that richer and fuller descriptions will get us closer and closer toe the truth of the participant. And, of course, we celebrate their voices, trying to stay as close to their original spoken words as possible. (p. 229)

I agree with St. Pierre’s critique of the disconnect between these types of descriptions and theories of identity construction. Previously, I discussed how hair plays such an important and very deliberate role in the identity constructions of clients. The identities of the barbers seem to be created in the minds of clients with much less effort than the clients
put into their own self-constructions. I do not claim to be much more of an expert on the
barbers’ identities than the clients, as this research is not a traditional ethnography in
which I lived with the barbers and learned every aspect of their lives. Slim is so busy at
work that it was a challenge to schedule an interview with him, let alone find time to
interact socially outside the barber shop. Lastly, it is important to emphasize that all of
the factors described above, along with basic limitations of size and scope in this text,
forced me to leave out information that may have contributed to a deeper, more well-
rrounded representation of this place.

Slim

Slim is an average-sized, middle-aged white male. He has short hair, visible
tattoos, and he wears glasses. When clients enter the shop, Slim is usually the first barber
they encounter as he tries to greet every client and because his chair is located in the
traditional “first chair” location nearest the door, another indication that Slim is “the star
of the show” as a client (and my peer de-briefer), Philip, called him. The bulk of Slim’s
clients are “regulars” who visit the shop on a cyclical basis—once every month or so, on
average. With new clients, Slim plays what he calls “twenty questions” as he attempts to
get to know clients. In general, Slim is curious and likes to talk to people so he asks a lot
of questions. For instance, Slim mentioned, “one of the things [I like] about working
around a university is that I get the layman’s Cliff Notes of what some astronomer or
some physicist is doing. Most of the time, I have a pretty good idea of what they are
talking about and it makes every day interesting. I think perhaps I’m just naturally that
way and I like to learn.” Early in his career, Slim taught at a local barber college and later
spent a few years at The College as an undergraduate student pursuing a humanities degree.

Once again, I return to the origins story from Chapter 1 as a way to complicate Slim’s identity within The Cut & Shave. The reason I can confidently state my theory of multiple Slims is because I, myself, have created multiple versions of him. After that first encounter with Slim six years ago, I thought he was a jittery alpha male with anger issues. As a client with a few years now under my belt, I think he is a really smart, creative guy who marches to his own beat. After observing him for a few months, I now think of him as a hardworking businessman with a whole lot on his plate. Because Slim is always asking questions and sharing stories, he provides numerous “foundations” on which clients may construct their own versions of Slim. Every week almost a hundred clients sit in Slim’s chair, each with a different conception of Slim’s identity. I asked Slim about his relationships with clients and he mentioned something one of his bosses early in his career said about him:

She always would say that one of my strengths was bonding with the clients and also, whether it was a strength or a weakness, that I would wear my heart on my sleeve. Probably, [pause] you know, these guys see it, you have seen it, if I’m having a particularly melt-y day, I can melt down. It’s because of all the external and internal multi-tasking, you know, because there is a lot more going on than it may seem.

In this response, Slim further complicates the issue of his identity construction with his admission of the role emotions play in his life. That is, although emotions and moods are not the most popular topics of conversation in the barber shop, they significantly impact
the rhythms of the shop everyday. In relation to Slim’s identity, my point is that new
clients have a significant amount of materials with which to construct a version of Slim
based on his conversational topics, the questions he asks, and his current mood.

Sharon

Sharon is a petite, white female in her late sixties who has worked at The Cut &
Shave for approximately four years. She has worked as a licensed barber in the various
shops in the regional area since graduating from barber school in the late 1960s. I think
her response to my interview question, “What do you like best about working here?”
serves as a nice introduction to her personality and demeanor, but more importantly
reflects the way she usually seems to focus on the present in her interactions with clients:

At this particular shop, I just love these kids who come in here, not just the kids,
but by kids I mean the college kids, their diversity, what you learn from them. We
learn something new everyday. I enjoy young people. They say there is a
prejudice against age, but all old people talk about is their medication and their
bowel movements. They’re younger than I am and that's all they talk about! I say
good lord! And they just think it’s awful that I’m working. But I say, “Good god,
what would I do all day?” It’s a blessing, for one thing, to even be alive. A lot of
people my age are dead. How many years has it been [that I’ve been cutting hair],
46, 47 years? I am doing what I love to do. I cut back to 4 days a week. There are
days when I would like to sit with the cat at home and read. But that is no way to
live, it’s not productive, it’s not good for a person. Being in here keeps your mind
going.
Sharon’s chair is stationed at the opposite end of the shop from Slim’s chair. All the noise in the shop, and having spent over 40 years in noisy barber shops, occasionally makes it challenging for her to participate in group conversations. In her conversations with clients in her chair, Sharon mostly talks about recent events in the lives of her clients or her own life. Occasionally, she reminisces about stories from her barber career. With new clients, Sharon introduces herself and learns the client’s name. She then tries to determine exactly what the client seeks in a haircut. During the haircut, she focuses intently on the client’s head rather than on conversation. Sharon serves a range of people, but her regular clients are shy, younger clients and talkative, older clients; she also handles a significant portion of the walk-in clientele. When not cutting hair, Sharon reads books, magazines, and newspapers while sitting in her chair.

**Lester**

Lester is a large, white male in his thirties who works 5 days a week at the shop. He has only been cutting hair for about a year since completing barber school. He was a regular client at The Cut & Shave when Slim encouraged him to become a barber. Despite his physical size, Lester has a calm, non-intimidating presence and most of the time he tries to create a welcoming first impression by cracking a few jokes. When people ask him how he’s doing, he always replies, “I’m living the dream,” but never really expands on what exactly that dream involves. Lester’s favorite topics of conversations include sports (baseball and football, in particular), heavy metal music, guns, dogs, and food. When not cutting hair, Lester plays video games on his smartphone. The majority of the shop’s walk-in clients see Lester for haircuts. Slowly, he
appears to be building a clientele of white males between the ages of 18-35 who enjoy discussing the above topics with Lester.

**Clients**

My representation of the identities of the clients in this dissertation is inversely related to the construction of multiple Slims. That is, Slim’s identity in the shop consists of several versions of Slim built up and modified over the years, filling in gaps along the way. In this study, I intentionally disassemble what I know of clients’ identities to leave only unrecognizable pieces and scraps in the picture. To make use of the bricoleur as handyman metaphor, Slim’s (shop) identity is an ongoing sculpture cobbled together piece by piece with all the materials shared in his chair throughout the years. Whereas, within this dissertation, the clients’ identities are more like the handyman’s workshop floor after he completes a project. There are scraps of wood, bent nails, and piles of dust—evidence that something happened in the space, but little remains aside from fragments. If this metaphor does not quite work, Pink’s (2009) distinction between an actual research site and what she theorizes as the ethnographic place constructed by the researcher may help. Namely, in the actual, real-life place of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop, clients are vital, dynamic, and surprisingly diverse human beings essential to the rhythmic operation of the shop. In the ethnographic place of this dissertation, because of IRB rules, the clients appear as vague, incomplete, and fragmented caricatures; it would be more accurate, but fairly annoying, to refer to them as clients throughout the text, making appropriate symbolic use of the strike-through feature along the way.

In my dissertation research proposal, I stated that I planned to conduct informal interviews with customers as they receive haircuts. Based on my preliminary
observations as only a client, I assumed the language-rich context of the haircut, and Slim’s willingness to engage in any and all forms of conversation, would make it a convenient space for me to ask clients questions. At that time, I did not know that every client has a different expectation for the time during which they are receiving a haircut—some want to relax, some want to talk about themselves, some do not want to talk at all. Furthermore, I did not realize the barber shop functions as a way station through which people move quickly through on their way to somewhere else. During my first week of observation, I never quite felt comfortable asking clients to sign IRB consent forms because of the awkwardness of the interaction and because I was still new on the scene. However, through Slim’s networking, I was able to arrange an interview with Philip, a client for over twenty years who taught writing at a university, before his hair appointment. As an academic, Philip was familiar with the IRB process so the signing of the form was not the issue here; it was more a lesson about time and busy schedules.

After our brief interview at the diner next door to the shop ended at the scheduled time, Philip and I returned to the barber shop for his haircut with Slim. This haircut marked the first time Slim thoroughly incorporated my work in a haircut conversation as he created a three-way dialogue as we continued parts of the conversation Philip and I began next door over lunch. About half way through the haircut, I noticed that Philip began to check his watch and the clock above the mirrors on the wall. Never having seen Philip get his haircut, I had no idea how long it was supposed to take, especially since he wears his hair somewhat long. During our second interview, Philip remembered this incident:
**Philip:** The last time I was here getting my haircut, I had a meeting afterwards, right, and I had to get the meeting –

**Tom:** I remember, you were stressing to get out of here –

**Philip:** Yeah, I was clearly kind of trying to give visual cues, but he was really into talking so, it was fine, but it was real stressful. Today, not so much, the day is a little open afterwards.

At the time of this haircut, I felt bad because if I had not been there, I doubt Slim would have talked as much or changed his approach and, most importantly, Philip would not have been late for his appointment. To me, it seemed unethical and hypocritical to literally take time from someone in order to study time.

What I did not understand at the time was that I negatively impacted Slim’s rhythm. My research was one more variable to juggle as he cut hair, answered the phone, and talked to clients. After this incident with Philip, I reconsidered my approach to informal in-chair interviews especially after realizing the challenge involved in obtaining signed IRB consent forms minutes after meeting a client for the first time. Below is a recreation of an informal, in-chair interview:

10:56: Male client arrives and sits in a waiting chair.

11:02: Slim invites client into his barber chair.

11:04: After adjusting the cape over the client, Slim establishes or confirms the plan for the haircut with the client and begins cutting.

11:07: Slim and the client finish catching up on recent events since the last haircut. With a brief description, Slim introduces both my project and me as a researcher.

11:09: I extend Slim’s introduction of my research and attempt to build rapport.
11:11: The phone rings. The client and I could continue to carry on our conversation but cues in Slim’s body language, like placing a hand over his ear in order to block out the shop noise, make it clear that simple politeness dictates we pause our conversation.

11:13: At this point, before asking any interview questions, I would have to get up and disrupt the haircut to hand the client the IRB form on a clipboard. The client would have to move the cape to free his hands and, even worse, if he wore glasses, ask Slim to retrieve them from the counter. To read the text, the client would bend his head over making it very difficult for Slim to cut his hair. As the client read, I, much like a looming salesperson, would answer any questions and explain details of the process according to protocol.

11:18: I retrieve the signed form and clipboard from the client. In an attempt to ease back into this “informal” interview, I begin with “easy” questions such as “how often to do you visit the shop?” or “how long has Slim been your cutting your hair?”

11:20: It is likely Slim would “pre-screen” interviewees because he knew the conversational habits of his long-term clients and because neither Slim nor I thought it would be wise to potentially scare off newer or first-time clients. The majority of people I casually conversed with had been with Slim for years, not months. So answering the question “how long has Slim been cutting your hair?” required asking Slim for his recollection or confirmation of when certain events in the shop’s history occurred. This interaction could often inspire tangents and lead the conversation in a new direction.
The three of us continued to talk, and even laugh at Slim’s self-deprecating jokes, and I might continue with my script for one or two more questions. More likely, there were obvious questions to ask based on the answer to the previous question.

Slim would start trimming around the ears and the neckline, which meant the haircut was about to end.

I would thank the client for talking with me and we would shake hands. Earlier in the haircut, the client mentioned that he was headed to his workplace right after the haircut so there was no time to continue the interview.

The point of this scenario is to demonstrate the unanticipated challenge of conducting interviews in a fast-paced, interactive environment while adhering to IRB protocol. Simply put, I never considered the physicality and temporality involved in reading, comprehending, and signing an unusual piece of paper.

In retrospect, my struggle with the IRB consent form was one of many prescient signs that pushed my research toward the theme of rhythm. In fact, the decision not to pursue these interviews caused a number of interesting ripple effects. For example, it would have been unethical to ask clients to sign IRB consent after the interview when the haircut was over. And without the signed consent form, I could not take field notes during our informal conversations, even though the notes were about Slim and not the clients. These barriers became affordances that pushed the research in new directions. Without having to focus on client interviews or taking detailed notes all the time, I was able to take everything in more casually and, unbeknownst to me at the time, start to learn about rhythm from a more sensorial basis. Lastly, I began to re-consider the need for
client voices to serve as a demonstration of validity. St. Pierre (2009) makes this point convincingly:

I find the unexamined celebration of voice in qualitative research increasingly tiresome. I believe we have burdened the voices of our participants with too much evidentiary weight. I suggest we put voice in its place as one data source among many from which we produce evidence… and focus for a time on other data we use to think about our projects that we’ve been ignoring for decades. (p. 221)

After all, the interviews with clients would have only been a maximum of 20 minutes in length. I did not know enough (or anything, to be honest) about the clients to judge the veracity of their statements, and they would be answering questions about the person (Slim) standing behind them with sharp objects. While these voices would have enhanced the polyvocality of this text, I am not sure they would have made it more “valid,” especially not more so than the claims I make myself after spending hundreds of hours of in the shop.

Tom

I consider myself a full participant in this research. To avoid overlap, I describe my role in the researcher section below. If I had to rank the importance of the participants in this study, they would be: Slim, Tom, Clients, and Sharon/Lester.
I began this section with a photograph of the lower part of my body to indicate the embodied and emplaced nature of my researcher perspective. Steve the photographer took this shot on the sly as I sat in a waiting chair (with a stripe-covered book about barbering in my lap) talking to Slim as he cut hair. Since I spend the majority of this
chapter explaining my motivations and understandings of the research process, I believe my researcher philosophy and perspective have been adequately introduced. Similarly, in the methodologies section, I explained how my methodological approach is inherently reflexive as my body and perceptions are key components of the research. However, much like Slim’s identity, my own identity was often in flux and under construction in the barber shop, although I never reach Slim’s level as a human identity kaleidoscope. Following Pillow’s (2003) claim that “an understanding of a subject as postmodern, as multiple, as unknowable, as shifting, situates the purposes and practices of research, and the uses of reflexivity, quite differently” (p. 180), I review two of my identities in play at The Cut & Shave.

The first, and I feel most important, of my identities is that of “just another dude in a barber shop.” I take this phrase from a story Slim told me during our interview as we discussed my fieldwork:

I thought it was smooth. And some of the people have asked, ‘Oh, where's that one guy?’ Just last week, actually. ‘Oh, well he's done.’ ‘Done what?’ [asks the client]. ‘Oh, I thought he was just a friend hanging out or something.’ [Slim says:]’No, he was doing observations.’ So, yeah, you were interacting but they just thought you were just another dude in a barber shop…I think it was as natural it gets [laughter].

To me, Slim’s story seemed to be a validation of my attempts to blend in as much as possible even though it impacted parts of my research. There were two key parts of this identity. First, I had to possess the necessary social skills and understanding of behavioral codes of males in a barber shop in order to be “just another dude in a barber shop.”
Second, my body and its cultural markings are well suited to this environment. The image above not only reveals a portion of my large, white male body but it reveals, almost like an echo, a similar body two seats down from me (following the male code to leave a chair in between each other whenever possible). It was the privilege of my race, gender, and sexuality that granted me the freedom to blend in and appear natural in this place. In fact, I was usually asked ten times a day by other clients, “are you next?” as they assumed the only reason I could possibly be there was to get a haircut. The majority of my conversations with Slim were not about my research, so both what I said and how I spoke did nothing to comprise this identity. It was only when my research was discussed did I have to stop being “just another dude in a barber shop.”

Whenever Slim would “out” me to a client by mentioning I was a researcher studying informal learning, communication, and time in the barber shop—as Slim usually described my project—I could feel my body immediately react to the shift in identities. As a researcher, I had to be more conscious of my behavior and what I was saying; it was a much more tense experience. The tension resulted from the fact that I never knew how clients would react. There were three typical reactions: ambivalent, positive, and negative. Most people were ambivalent as they would acknowledge me, maybe ask a question or two and then return to their previous conversation with Slim. The positive clients were very supportive, asked a lot of questions, and thought my project was a great idea. The negative clients expressed incredulity and mockery to a certain extent. They would ask questions such as, “Now, what exactly are you studying?” or “What do you plan to do with research in the real world?” With all three of these types of clients, Slim would at some point explain that I was also a client. I was surprised at how important this
information was to my shop identity. The mention of my status as a client of several years was a quick, efficient way to say that I had “walked the walk” so I could “talk the talk” as a researcher. Even with The College being so geographically close to The Cut & Shave, it was surprising to see how much distance the mention of academic research could create between some of the clients and me.

**Timeline**

Following the earlier claim in Chapter 1 that time exists in many forms, establishing a time line for this research is a bit of a challenge. To keep it simple, I will state that the timeline consists of three overlapping phases. First, I have been a client of Slim’s for approximately 6 years, which involves me visiting the shop for a minimum of 30 minutes at least once a month, but sometimes twice a month. During these visits I established a strong rapport based on our mutual interests and similar senses of humor as we slowly built a relationship that should hopefully continue well past this research.

Second, about three years into my tenure as a client, I asked Slim for permission to eventually conduct research in his shop as part of my dissertation fieldwork. It was during this period that I would routinely run my various ideas for research and make informal observations of the shop. He never said anything, but Slim must have doubted I would ever finally settle on a single, clear reading of his shop. Following IRB protocol, I have not used any “data” from this time period in the actual dissertation.

Third, after receiving IRB approval to conduct research, I began the final phase of the timeline as a full-time researcher, spending approximately 10 weeks from April until June 2013 in the shop. The timing of the fieldwork allowed me observe the shop equally while The College was still in session and during the time when many students leave The
City. On average, I spent 5 or 6 days a week at the shop for a total of approximately 350 hours. As Slim likes to spend time before the shop opens preparing himself for the day ahead, I never arrived at the shop any earlier than about half an hour after the shop usually opens at 10:00am (some days, and most Saturdays, it opens earlier). Similarly, I always tried to leave at least half an hour before the shop closed to avoid being a distraction who might possibly prevent Slim from leaving the shop. It was often difficult to pick a time to leave every day both because Slim would often stay late for regular clients and I would often get caught up in the experience; I did not want to miss any “good action.” After completing the fieldwork, I have continued to get my haircut every 2 weeks and continue to be in regular contact with Slim with various questions and requests for confirmation of my findings as I write the dissertation. In sum, I have a six-year history with Slim and The Cut & Shave Barber Shop that includes an intense 10 weeks of ethnographic fieldwork.

**Data**

The findings in chapter 4 are represented in a “day in the life” format that is composed of narratives, photographs, interview excerpts, researcher analysis, artifacts, and recreated dialogue arranged in a rhythmic form to evoke a sense of my experiences in The Cut & Shave on any everyday basis. This CAP representation, in its combination of “data” and analysis, serves as an indication that conventional renderings of data, data analysis, and data coding do not appear in this dissertation; therefore, they are not included in individual categories in this section. Following Pink (2009), to suggest “that there are real rigid distinctions between fieldwork and analysis, making them separate stages of an ethnographic research process, would be misleading” (p. 119). As I have
already discussed, the fact that analysis occurred throughout the research process, and because I do not employ any traditional data coding, I explore the concept of data in the remainder of this section.

According to St. Pierre (2011), “the understanding of data…is increasingly positivist because, first, it must be fixed and visible in words, and, second, because we increasingly treat words as brute, interpreted data rather than as already interpreted data that we must explain” (p. 621). Since participant observation was the primary method of this research, common sense would point to my field notes as the most identifiable forms of data. The issue with the field notes involves the “already interpreted” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 621) nature of these notes. Seeing that I did not obtain IRB consent from clients and because the research site is very small, I rarely took traditional notes. Even before discovering my use of rhythm as an analytic, I could sense that when I took notes on paper, or on my laptop computer, this type of researcher behavior appeared to subtly impact the rhythms of the shop; taking notes set me apart from, rather than included me in the group. Consequently, following the common practice in the shop for clients to check email or send text messages as they stared at their handheld phones, I took notes on my smartphone. These notes were often brief and served as reminders; by the end of the days when I went to write them up, there meanings may have changed significantly from 11:00am to 8:00pm based on all that happened in the shop in between. Mostly, these notes functioned to stimulate the “forms of memory work and imagination that link the researcher in the present to moments in the past” (Pink, 2009, p. 125).

Because the bulk of the findings chapter results from my re-shaping of experiences that I observed, rather than direct citations of traditional examples of
findings, “data might be better conceived as the material for telling a story where the challenge becomes to generate a polyvalent data base that is used to vivify interpretation as opposed to ‘support’ or ‘prove’” (Lather, 1991, p. 91). Lather’s suggestion resonates with the practice of the bricoleur to use the materials at hand to fix problems; therefore, I often substitute the term research materials for data. As these materials were intangible, invisible entities—time, rhythm, and sensory perception—they were difficult to identify, let alone arrange. I compare them to what St. Pierre (2011) called “transgressive data,” which she identifies as “emotional data, dream data, sensual data, memory data, and response data”—data that were not visible and that disrupted linearity, consciousness, and the mind/body dichotomy” (p. 621). In the end, I used a variety of methods and forms to demonstrate that my principal research materials time, rhythm, and sensory perceptions did unquestionably exist in the shop.

Methods

Participant Observation

The principal method of investigation in this study was participant observation. In short, I sat in chairs for several hours per day for almost 10 weeks observing barbers, clients, and rhythms while participating in many of the shop activities. According to Saldana (2011), the goal of participant observation is to “capture people’s naturalistic actions, reactions, and interactions, and to infer their ways of thinking and feeling” (p. 46). The confined space of the barber shop made it possible for me to observe just about every action, reaction, and interaction except when the barbers went in The Back or Slim strategically lowered his voice so only his client could hear him. As “just another dude in the barber shop,” I could avoid active participation until Slim blew my cover explicitly
by explaining my presence to a client, or implicitly by engaging me in familiar conversation that indicated we had some kind of close relationship. For the most part, outside of politely greeting clients if we happened to make eye contact, I followed a policy of “don’t speak until spoken to” with clients.

As the weeks passed, I became more familiar to regular clients and we talked informally before and during their haircuts. A frequent question I received was, “So, did you get this place figured out?” to which I would usually respond, “I wish” or “No way, it’s too complicated.” I learned to fairly accurately determine my level of participation early in a haircut, as conversation took the form of either dialogue or monologue in most cases. Monologues consisted of clients (or “chatterers”) talking non-stop about themselves while Slim cut their hair and occasionally Slim would nod his head and say, “um-hmm,” “right,” or “I see.” On occasion, some of the less talkative clients would encourage Slim to perform monologues by not interrupting him in the middle of a story. I rarely participated in the monologues other than to confirm or deny a random point of confusion or contention. The majority of conversations were dialogues, but my level of participation in these dialogues was never consistent.

I was not in the shop to hear myself talk so I did my best to avoid needlessly jumping into conversations or rambling excessively. Yet there was a fine line with my participation in any conversation. I could equally hinder the rhythm of a haircut by talking too much like a loudmouth or by not talking enough like a weird researcher. In my mind, the ideal level of participation was to contribute as if I were a back-up singer to Slim by chiming in at the appropriate moments and then receding from the spotlight. Similarly, I often served as Slim’s answer man by looking up odd facts and random
information to settle arguments online via my smartphone: “Yeah, you were right, Slim, that Led Zeppelin song is from 1972, not 1974.” Unlike Mills (2005), who, in describing his fieldwork in a Black barber shop, claims, “as an ethnographer, I could not actively engage in the discussions and arguments about electoral politics, Black nationalism, and other political worldviews” (p. 195), I often shared my opinions. When asked questions, I tried to answer as honestly as I felt appropriate although I tended to privilege tact over honesty. Since I was asking questions, I needed to be able to answer them from everyone. However, with sensitive issues like religion or politics, I was admittedly more reserved than I might be in a setting where I was not a guest in an intimate space.

Fieldwork is often portrayed as spending time waiting for the “good stuff” to happen. In The Cut & Shave, good—or at least odd and random—stuff happened all the time, but it was in the not-so-exciting hanging out time that I discovered important knowledge about the shop. Specifically, it was all the repetition in the shop that led me to rhythm. Sitting there hour after hour, my back would ache and my legs would get charley horses so I always stretched my body around in the chair to try to stay loose. It often felt like being on a long car trip everyday, but with better tourist attractions. Thus, it was my body that first perceived repetition, but it was not alone. I often heard the barbers’ same stories over and over. It was not that they were boring people; it was more that they worked in a way station. Nearly every client would ask Slim, and the others to a lesser extent, “What have you been up to lately?” Slim once told me he wished he had a tape recorder so he could just play a tape to deliver the quick summary of the current events in his life. I must have heard Slim’s vacation story at least 75 times; it got to the point where I would listen intently for the minor variations in the story because Slim never told it
exactly the same way. And that is the textbook definition of rhythm—a recognizable pattern of repetition and disruption (or difference).

Repetition also revealed important lessons about temporality; again, the way station metaphor also helps to explain the strange relationship of the past, present, and future in the shop. That is, from the client’s perspective, the thirty minutes in the shop appears much more vitally in the present than for the barbers. Consider it from a cinematic perspective, the client walks into the shop from the past looking one way in terms of appearance and then he leaves the shop headed into the future looking much different from when he walked in thirty minutes prior. There is no sense of barber shop continuity for the client, time in the barber shop seems to exist in the “ever-present.” As Philip puts it, “when I’m there, I’m there. When I’m not there, I’m not there.” But for the barbers, the present, on the one hand, adds up appointment by appointment in a linear fashion. On the other hand, especially for Slim, each of these presents contains a significant amount of time travel to the past and future. Clients discuss what they did last week or what they talked about with Slim ten years ago. They are often getting haircuts for events in the near future like picture day at work or a wedding. As I sat there watching these patterns occur over and over, I discovered the idea of barber chair time travel by trying to get an understanding of my own temporal disorientation because I was so unused to this non-linear approach to experiencing time.

Interviews

Because my plan to interview clients “informally” in Slim’s chair (after gathering their signed IRB consent forms) fell through, interviews took a much smaller role in the research. A few weeks after I completed the fieldwork, I was finally able to arrange a
time with Slim for a formal interview. In order to avoid disruptions, we conducted the interview in the basement of the shop. Following Pink’s (2011) understanding of the interview, “less as a data collecting exercise than as a shared conversation through which new ways of knowing are produced” (p. 271), our meeting was indeed more of a conversation than a formal interview. Although at first, compared to the free-flowing nature of straightforward dialogue in the barber shop, the structured formality of this interview caused the questions and answers to feel somewhat contrived and unnatural. However, we eventually fell into our natural conversation patterns and often went on tangents punctuated by laughter.

Still, I gathered valuable knowledge in this more focused setting as Slim was very forthcoming. One afternoon when Sharon did not have any clients, I interviewed her while sitting on the bench in the back of the shop. Last of all, early on in the fieldwork and once toward the end, I interviewed Philip (the client) in the restaurant next to the barber shop. I transcribed all the interviews and edited them for clarity. Denzin (2001) claims, “the interview is not a mirror of the so-called external world, nor is it a window into the inner life of the person” instead it “functions as a narrative device which allows persons who are so inclined to tell stories about themselves” (p. 25). Pieces of dialogue from each of these interviews are interspersed throughout the findings chapter and, as “data,” are considered no more or less important that other forms of “data” just because they are the “voices” of the participants.

**Photography**

In the ethics sections above, I discussed the impact of anonymity on the composition of the photographs in the dissertation. In this section, I address additional
factors that influence how photography was utilized as a research method. According to Pink (2009) “photographs have the capacity to bring textures, surfaces and the sensory experiences they evoke right up close to the reader: they both invoke embodied reactions and offer routes by which, via our own memories and subjectivities, we might anticipate what it feels like to be in another place” (p. 136). After completing the fieldwork, and as I started to write about and analyze my experiences, it became clearer to me that it was going to be a real challenge to convincingly represent abstractions like time and rhythm. During the fieldwork, I met Steve, the photographer, when he came in for a haircut and asked Slim if he could take his picture. I remembered this meeting and contacted Steve to see if he could take photographs of the shop for my dissertation. After he kindly agreed to help, I wrote to him with a list of ideas for the photographs and something of a thesis: “In short, each of these images is meant to convey the rhythmic relationship of time, bodies, and human experience in the barber shop…The list is organized by themes with a description of the motivation behind each shot.” It is imperative to note that all use of photography as a method came after the fieldwork; these are not scenes from the “wild.”

Within the first findings chapter, images appear as a form of data surrounded by traditional word-based narrative; however, I argue that these images are in fact most effectively understood as demonstrations of analysis. To put it another way, I composed the images through a field of what Grasseni (2007a) calls skilled vision, “an analytical tool that indicates a process of embodiment and the acquisition of the capacity to see the world with new eyes” (p. 168). After months of fieldwork and weeks of writing and analysis, I had a better understanding of time, rhythm, and sensory experience in the shop. I now began to see it with “new eyes.” Importantly, Grasseni’s use of skilled vision
does not imply a privileging of the visual over the other senses. Instead, because all of our senses work together and not separately, Grasseni (2007b) claims, “skilled visions are embedded in multi-sensory practices, where look is coordinated with skilled movement, with rapidly changing points of view, or with other senses, such as touch” (p. 4). For example, the image of the waiting chairs seeks to evoke the feeling of sitting in the chairs for hours at time, bodies touching and wearing out the tape on the seats. And, the ceiling fans image is intended to convey the feeling of the movement of the air and the smelling of the scents in the shop’s air.

The use of photography later in the research process provided a more convincing demonstration of reflexivity. MacDougall (2006) states, “photographic images are inherently reflexive, in that they refer back to the photographer at the moment of their creation, at the moment of encounter” (p. 3). Taking into consideration the need to limit the subject matter of the photographs to protect participant anonymity, and the fact that I did not take the photographs myself but “directed” a professional photographer, these images reveal a high degree of reflexivity because they were intentionally and even artificially composed to achieve my skilled vision. The written analysis following the images further reveals my researcher intentionality. In addition to its contribution to reflexivity, the image making process also reflects the social models of learning and knowledge construction that exist within the shop. That is, through Slim’s networking, Steve and I worked together, sharing ideas to construct visual knowledge about The Cut & Shave. In the end, the photographs serve a variety of methodological and epistemological purposes throughout the dissertation.
Trustworthiness

Validity

The issue of validity is particularly problematic for this dissertation because I do not claim to be doing the kind of social science research that can be evaluated by traditions tests of validity. Instead, I offer my re-configurations of some traditional methods to ensure validity, a demonstration of catalytic validity, and Richardson’s (2005) set of criteria to evaluate creative analytic processes ethnography. I favor the term trustworthiness over validity because I believe it is more accurate. In the introduction to this chapter I cited Lather’s (2007) definition of post-methodology that emphasizes the need to foreground the “disagreements, ambiguities, uncertainties, contradictions, and incoherencies” (p. 70) involved in the research process. Throughout this chapter, and the next, I consistently address these dilemmas and situations. If readers of this text believe what I write, and how I explain my analyses, then my research may be considered trustworthy. Following Law’s (2004) claim that method is performative (p. 142), I would add that the representation of method (and everything else in the text) is also rhetorical in nature as I must persuade the reader to believe what I am saying is accurate, believable, and trustworthy. In the following sections, I present my case.

Peer Debriefing

Spall (1998) states, “in peer debriefing, a researcher and an impartial peer preplan and conduct extensive discussions about the findings and progress of an investigation” as “peer debriefing contributes to confirming that the findings and the interpretations are worthy, honest, and believable (p. 280). I do not believe any person can be impartial, but after running into issues with incorporating client perspectives, I actively pursued a new
way to test my partiality and the assumptions I had about The Cut & Shave. In this
section, I describe four people, all of whom received haircuts from Slim, who I enlisted
as peer debriefers to help me in my understanding of the shop. Karl, Todd, Philip, and
Steve are all white males ranging in age from 25-55; each has a different relationship
with Slim as Todd met Slim only once, but Philip has known Slim for over 20 years.

In many ways, Karl’s role as peer de-briefer is surprisingly similar to the monster
characters ubiquitous in 1950s horror movies and episodes of the cartoon *Scooby-Doo*.
Like these creatures—existing at the bottom of lagoons, frozen in ice, or stuck in tar pits
whose resurrections served as cheap plot devices—Karl had not been seen in The Cut &
Shave Barber Shop in over 10 years. Karl is a white male in his 50s who has lived in the
region his entire life. He has a long history of visiting a number of area hair sites dating
back to his childhood. Karl lives on my street (or I live on his street as he would likely
say) and we often talk during his daily dog walks. Karl is a bit of a conversationalist so I
cannot say exactly how the topic arose, but at some point along the way, I learned that he
used to frequent The Cut & Shave back in the days when he had more need for hair care.
As I was grappling with the role of place and environment in the rhythmic workings of
the shop, I remembered this fact and asked Karl if he would be interested in helping me
with my research by getting a haircut and beard trim from Slim. A few days later, I
interviewed him for about 45 minutes about his previous experiences at the Cut & Shave
when the barbers were two women and the place looked a lot different. Then, we drove to
the shop at the scheduled time for Karl’s first barber shop haircut in several years (Karl
cuts his own hair now). Karl was clearly surprised by how much different the shop
looked after all of Slim’s renovations. Afterwards, he said, “upon entering I was
immediately struck by the cleanliness and aura of a barbershop previously absent. The Cold War era utility closet/tax return office ambience has disappeared.” Karl also commented, “Slim’s demeanor is professional but friendly.” This somewhat unorthodox peer debriefing exercise served as a confirmation of preliminary conceptions of the shop’s rhythm and Slim’s skill in reacting to and finding common ground with unique individuals like Karl.

Philip was introduced above in the clients’ section. Throughout the years, Philip has followed Slim from shop to shop which was not easy in the years before the internet was commonplace. His longitudinal perspective on Slim’s career helped in two ways. First, he helped me to see that the Slim I know as an expert barber was not always so highly skilled with people and time. Specifically, Philip said:

I’m not sure he’s always had that. It seems to be me that he sort of built up [his skills]… You know, when I think of my own teaching, it might be intuition, but a lot of it is experience, learning how to do it. Respecting spaces of silences, and also opening up spaces to talk. That's the thing about experienced teachers, though, you actually question the silences and it can be really productive. I would think there might be some connections to classroom practice, so classroom management might have some connection to chair management, if you want to call it that.

In this passage, Philip’s statement about experience prompted me to reconsider my emphasis on Slim’s intuition and focus more on the idea of experience. I also found Philip’s term “chair management” particularly apt as it made me think about my ambivalence toward the barber shop as classroom metaphor. Philip was also an excellent
resource during the composition of “The sound of the blades,” the poem I constructed from Slim’s words. With his knowledge of both poetry and Slim, Philip provided valuable insights about both the content and form of the poem.

Todd is a white male in his mid-20s who I’ve known for a few years. Where Karl is older than me, Todd is younger than me and, while Karl admirably puts everything on the table from the get-go, Todd is more reserved. I encouraged Todd to get a haircut from Slim because I valued his opinion and insights. Immediately after his haircut, Todd claimed that Slim was very “intuitive,” but when I checked back with him weeks later, he had reconsidered his initial impression. Todd thought it was a bit rash to make an assumption about Slim’s intuition based on just one visit. I was impressed by his thoughtful reconsideration and asked him for more feedback. He responded via email with the passage below. Shortly after his haircut, Todd moved to the opposite end of town from the shop, making his return to The Cut & Shave doubtful. Todd wrote:

If I had just moved to the area though, I think I probably would have given Slim another shot because I really did like the atmosphere/experience. The biggest thing for me was that, at least during that half-hour I was there, Slim wasn't a particularly smooth talker. And that really put me at ease. I know that I'm the exact same way, which is a considerable source of anxiety when you've got to talk to the barber and try and explain what you're looking for in the cut.

I asked Todd what he meant by “smooth talker” and he said he was trying to convey the idea of the fast-talking salesperson or even a con man to a certain degree, not the idea that Slim was awkward at conversation. What I gathered from Todd’s “review” of his experience was the feeling of meeting a new barber for the first and realizing how
delicate that interaction can be. For example, I got so used to hearing the frequent inability of clients to communicate clearly with Slim to create a “thesis” for their haircuts that I often assumed it was a lack of concern or an inability to articulate their desires. Todd reminded me that explaining one’s vision of self-identity is not easy to do.

My collaborative work with Steve, the photographer, to compose the photographs in this dissertation is discussed above in the photography section. Steve is in his late 20s and has been a client of Slim’s for less than a year. Although I never conducted a formal interview with Steve, I view our collaboration with the photographs as a valuable source of peer debriefing. Via email, Steve and I exchanged ideas about my goals for the project, which forced me to really boil down into words what I hoped to achieve with the images. When we met early one Saturday morning to take the photographs, Steve and I worked through issues of lighting, composition and anonymity on the spot. Later, Steve worked to edit the photographs to finish the images that appear throughout the chapters of the dissertation. Through the visual medium, Steve and I were able to share our experiences and understandings of The Cut & Shave.

**Member Checking**

Member checking occurred on a daily basis during the fieldwork, albeit in a highly unstructured and informal manner. The process was certainly never referred to by its unfortunate double-entendre. The affordances of the interactive, conversational barber shop environment provided quick and insightful confirmations and disconfirmations of my own and any one else’s assumptions. However, the process was often delayed until clients were not within earshot. These “check-ins” reflected the unusual forms of data analysis that occurred throughout this study. Schwandt (2007) proposes, “member
checking may be more of an ethical act than an epistemological one. In other words, it may simply be the civil thing to do for those who have given their time and access to their lives to give them the courtesy of knowing” (p. 188). Nevertheless, I regularly learned new perspectives and information from Slim by running my assumptions and observations by him. Even during the writing process, I would regularly contact him with seemingly random questions to which he would provide brief, insightful responses.

**Negative Case Analysis**

Glesne (2006) suggests researchers should “search for negative cases and unconfirming evidence so that you can refine your working hypotheses” (p. 37). Ideally, it would have been useful to observe and interview a disgruntled client to hear that perspective, but that did not happen. Of course, today, it is very easy to find negative cases with internet searches. Dozens of client reviews of Slim and The Cut & Shave have been posted on a variety of websites. I do not include any of the few negative reviews (nor any of the abundance of positive ones) because online reviews cannot be confirmed as they tend to be anonymous. Additionally, the few complaints about Slim are so specific, and at times odd, that they could easily reveal the name of the shop if a reader chose to conduct an online search using a few key phrases from my description. On a side note, in order to maintain his online reputation, Slim monitors these sites and responds to any criticisms in negative reviews that he finds unwarranted. Interpretations of time spent in the barber shop may exist forever online.

**Reciprocity**

Lather (1991) claims, “reciprocity implies give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power” (p. 57). From an ethical point of view, it was important for me to
demonstrate and sustain a reciprocal relationship with Slim and the other participants. Despite my attempts to engage Slim in the composition of the research plan and agenda, in an effort to do research “with” participants rather than “on,” he mostly seemed to trust my approach and expressed no significant concerns (Pillow, 2003). For example, while in the client stage of our relationship, I would often broach the topic of the future research during my haircuts and solicit his input. He would state his opinions, but never laid down any restrictions. Also, I provided him with a hard copy of my dissertation proposal, but we never actually talked about it in depth; I do know he read at least part of it because he teased me about the use of the word “epistemological.”

Although it was neither planned nor intentional, Slim did make significant contributions to the conceptual foundations of this dissertation over the course of our conversations. For example, whenever he described the positive aspects of his job, Slim would often reference the concept of “flow” he learned about from reading the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990). On good days, Slim said work could resemble what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) labels, “optimal experience,” especially during periods when Slim would get into a groove, or flow, and time would fly by as the haircutting, conversation, and surrounding environment blended seamlessly. His interest in the mystical elements and patterns of geometry and mathematics encouraged me to take the spiral form seriously in framing my research approach. Having been granted this gift of trust involving my methodological and, yes, epistemological authority, I ultimately found the means to reciprocate and show my appreciation for this research opportunity more practically during the fieldwork. And, to be clear, in no way do I mean to imply that it was Slim’s responsibility to shape the research agenda of this study. My point here is to
suggest that out of respect for the fact Slim knows more about his world than I do, I solicited Slim’s insight.

By the end of my first week in the shop, I began to see ways I could contribute to Slim and the operation of the shop. Late in the afternoon one day, I asked Slim, “Did you eat anything today?” He replied that he had not. I, too, had not yet eaten because I was still in the process of determining how to behave appropriately in the shop and I had not quite figured out how everything worked. The indeterminacy of the schedule everyday means Slim never assigns a specific time for lunch. For example, if he did block off 12:30-1:00pm for lunch, then, as luck would have it, the 12:00 appointment would be a no-show and then a walk-in would probably show up at 12:35. Also, it was an economic risk to go out anywhere for lunch because as soon as he leaves the shop, Slim misses phone calls and walk-ins. Consequently, eating occurred when/if there was available time, usually very quickly between appointments huddling over the sink in The Back. I was able to positively contribute to this ongoing “lunch dilemma” by walking to a variety of restaurants on The Boulevard within a half mile in each direction to pick-up lunch for Slim, Lester, and occasionally Sharon or bringing them meals from home (e.g. bacon sandwich Tuesdays). Because they would be talking all day, they drank a lot of liquids so I would make daily trips to the gas station for Slim’s drink of choice, Honey Ginseng flavored Arizona iced tea, and Lester’s orange or fruit punch flavored Gatorade.

The other primary means of demonstrating reciprocity literally involved bricolage in the handyman portion of the term’s definition. This role began the day I noticed the toilet was running, but not filling with water. I messed around with it a bit to see if anything was obviously wrong, but I did not discover any obvious issues. I asked Slim
about it in case there was a trick involving jiggling the handle or something. Slim informed there was no secret technique and came to inspect it himself. He did not see anything either, so we checked the basement for leaks or unusual activity. In a place with so many people, a working bathroom is fairly important so I offered to go the hardware store to get a toilet repair kit because Slim could not leave the shop and did not want to call the landlord or a plumber. Working together, while a client waited for him in the chair, Slim and I fixed the toilet. It was a bit of a quandary because it needed to be fixed quickly; however, I did not want to be the person who broke it and made it worse. Luckily, Slim applied the proper force where it was needed and everything turned out fine. From that point on, I would jump in to help whenever maintenance issues would arise (e.g., changing light bulbs and going to the hardware store for new ones, cleaning the air conditioner filter, repairing the shaving lather machine, vacuuming, dusting, cleaning the mirrors, cleaning the bathroom, mopping floors, helping Slim clean the basement, emptying the trash, and sweeping the floors).

**CAP Ethnography Criteria**

In her defense of postmodern research, Richardson (2005) suggests we need new models of validity. Instead of the traditional model of the triangle, Richardson (2005) asserts, “not triangulation but crystallization” (p. 963). In her substitution of the three-dimensional crystal for the two-dimensional triangle, Richardson seeks to expand the angles and perspectives from which we assess qualitative research. In the rather lengthy passage that follows, Richardson provides a number of questions to inspire readers to take a multi-faceted approach in order to view the merits of a text from a number of angles. Richardson writes (2000), “I believe it is our continuing task to create new criteria
and new criteria for choosing criteria. I believe in holding all ethnography to high and
difficult standards” (p. 254). She claims to use the following five criteria to review
qualitative texts:

1. Substantive contribution: Does this piece contribute to our understanding of
social-life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) human-
world understanding and perspective? How has this perspective informed the
construction of the text?

2. Aesthetic merit: Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does the use of creative
analytical practices open up the text, invite interpretive responses? Is the text
artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?

3. Reflexivity: How did the author come to write this text? How was the
information gathered? Ethical issues? How has the author’s subjectivity been both
a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-
exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view? Do authors
hold themselves accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people
they have studied?

questions? Move me to write? Move me to try new research practices? Move me
to action?

5. Expresses a reality: Does this text embody a fleshed out, embodied sense of
lived-experience? Does it seem “true”—a credible account of a cultural, social,
individual, or communal sense of the “real”? (Richardson, 2000, p. 254; see also
Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962)
As these questions are addressed to the readers of this text, Chapters 4 and 5 in particular, it is not appropriate for me to answer them in this space. However, I do feel these questions are very relevant to my work and I would appreciate learning how readers “grade” this text.

**Catalytic Validity**

Lather (1986) suggests that her term catalytic validity “represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it, …[Catalytic validity is] unorthodox; it flies directly in the face of the positivist demand for researcher-neutrality” (p. 272). Catalytic validity forces researchers to think about our impact on research participant: Did we provide any thing of benefit? Or did we just gather what we needed and then leave? It would be interesting if I could claim that the insights I learned during the fieldwork somehow helped Slim maximize his time and increase his total amount of haircuts from, say, 15 to 18, but I cannot claim such benefits. During our interview, I explained the concept of catalytic validity to Slim and then I asked for his assessment of the impact of my research on the shop and on Slim as an individual. Before I provide his response, I must admit that it is certainly contradictory, if not hypocritical, to cite a long passage containing Slim’s voice to demonstrate what I claim is evidence of “validity.” Considering the earlier critique of participant voice, I understand this gesture may not exactly be considered “trustworthy” especially since I transcribed and edited the statement, as well. However, I know of no other means to demonstrate catalytic validity other than through Slim’s words:
Slim: It hasn’t been a burden at all. I think it's been pretty smooth, actually, because we already knew each other, we were familiar with each other prior. So I think that made it smoother than if a stranger had walked in and said, ‘Hey, can we do this?’ It might have been a little more difficult and I think even as far as communication—in my mind I know you're here, you're observing—but some people would maybe try to hide that, but that is [my] openness. Well, man, some of the things we have talked about that I probably wouldn't have brought to you just to you as a client. But you are doing this process and this observation, and you wanted to get to know not just the fun, fluffy stuff [mutual laughter], but all facets of it…[And] it is kind of interesting and nice to have a second opinion or another perspective about some of the things - you're not going to be biased about some of the things I deal with [here]. I can explain some of the stuff to my wife, but I think you see more than even she has seen and you could offer her some perspective. Not that she didn’t believe [me], but to know the level of details or I mean the level of absurdity it can reach -

Tom: Right, like, ‘I’m not crazy.’

Slim: Yeah, succinctly put [laughter]. Or at least not about that stuff.

Although Slim addressed the novelty factor I brought to the shop and some of the things he learned from our conversations, I suggest that my efforts to listen and witness made the most significant difference in Slim’s experiences. In the shop, Slim’s role is unique because he is a full-time barber, but he is also the owner/boss whose responsibilities impact his relationships with other barbers (who are true peers to each other, but not with Slim). Although he considered many of clients to be friends, within
the shop, the client/worker dynamic is usually privileged. His wife, Nan, hears about the stories and incidents, but her full-time job prevents her from observing everyday life in the shop. Therefore, if nothing else, I was able to partially view the barber shop from Slim’s perspective and discuss many situated issues with him that do not appear in this dissertation.

Limitations

The most significant limitation of this dissertation is the lack of direct, IRB-approved client participation. In many ways, these limitations turned into barriers that I was able to work against to create a more innovative approach to the research. For example, in my sacrifice of client interviews, I was able to gain an understanding of rhythm in the shop based on what I learned from engaging my own sensory perception. A case could be made that more time in the field may have led to the development of a greater sense of rapport and trust with some of the clients, which may have led to more trustworthy, insightful interviews. Yet, because some clients visit the shop once every 2 weeks while others visit twice a year, and one only knows, at best, 1 or 2 days in advance when they will appear, I would have to be in the shop every minute it was open (nearly 10 hours a day, 6 days a week) to have a chance at building stronger, consistent relationships. It would take years to develop a sense of trust and, even then, I do not necessarily believe direct quotations from the clients would significantly alter my findings beyond adding the appearance of “realism” to the artfully constructed voices in the text.

In many ways, I feel that I may have overstayed my welcome by staying for nearly 10 weeks. Within that time period, I slowly became a useful complement by
making positive contributions to the shop. The longer I would have stayed, the more significant my departure would have been felt as Slim and the other barbers became more and more used to my presence. Additionally, because I arrived so late at my understanding of the shop, the study may have been richer if I had sought to observe rhythms from the start. For example, halfway through my fieldwork, I was sitting in a waiting chair flipping through the copy of Lefebvre’s (2004) *Rhythmanalysis*, and one of Sue’s clients asked me about it after his haircut. It turns out he was a new instructor at The College familiar with Lefebvre and we discussed his work for a few minutes. Where else but at The Cut & Shave is something like that going to happen? Instead of placing Lefebvre’s text on my stack of other books that might somehow unlock the mystery of this place, I would have benefitted from diving right in and applying the theory/method of rhythmanalysis to what I saw and felt in the shop. In conclusion, the limitations of this dissertation involve issues of which I had little direct control over and, speaking optimistically, these issues eventually forced me to re-tool and ultimately improve my research.
Chapter 4: Findings, Part 1

Preamble

8:00am

The overall purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of my research through an evocation of the complex and frequently dizzying movement of time and rhythm in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. Instead of jumping right into the text, or the dissertation’s data set, it is necessary to provide a few introductory explanations and clarifications in order to contextualize the strategies and justifications that impact the composition of this “ethnographic place.” It is essential to emphasize Pink’s (2009) claim that ethnographic places are not “the same actual, real, experienced places ethnographers participate in when they do field work. Rather, they are the places that we, as ethnographers, make when communicating about our research to others” by “combining, connecting and interweaving of theory, experience, reflection, discourse, memory, and imagination” (p. 42). In this way, ethnographers can, according to Pink, represent “a material and sensorial presence, be this in the form of a book, a film, an exhibition of scents, pictures, a musical composition, or a combination of these” (p. 42). In other words, as an ethnographic place, this chapter is a subjective representation of the experiences I have observed (and participated in) at the barber shop using a variety of traditional and non-traditional qualitative methods.
The challenge of representing my findings about time and rhythm necessitates the use of Richardson’s (2005) creative analytic process method. I experienced the shop’s rhythms, I analyzed the shop’s rhythms, and now I must represent them in a convincing manner. A traditional, detached write-up of these findings would be nothing short of absurd, but I must also admit that my unique approach is itself somewhat absurd. Accordingly, I understand that whether this text succeeds or fails is in its ability to stimulate readers to “imagine themselves” (Pink, 2009, p. 42) in this place where rhythms are experienced. A bit of a tricky proposition, I must say. So, with the purpose of conveying concurrently both recurrence of cyclical time and the inescapability of linear time (or clock time) I take a “day in the life” approach by organizing a variety of experiences into the half-hours that organize time in the shop. In particular, this imagined day is meant to be a combination of the Friday and Saturday leading into Memorial Day 2013. This period is appropriate because the shop is busier near the end of the week and before holidays, many college students are still in town, and the extended weekend allows for the arrival of travellers into the shop. Nevertheless, any calendar day could have been selected because these experiences actually occurred over the course of 10 weeks and the temporal movement of the past, present, and future does not follow the calendar.

To use Slim’s terminology, I construct this very busy day with a “hall of fame, greatest hits” arrangement of memorable experiences punctuated by a series of common disruptions and repetitions. Even though both disruptions and repetitions are necessary to make rhythm, I inordinately privilege disruption over less dynamic, more routine examples of repetition to the point where the disruptions may begin to repeat so often that
they themselves become rhythmic. Part of this uneven distribution derives from the
creative challenge of representing silence and inactivity—or what might be called
tedium—as activity always occurs. Amongst other reasons, photographs are strategically
utilized here as a means to slow the tempo and to force the audience to “see,” or more
accurately “sense,” the shop from unexpected angles. It is not only behind the scenes
where I make my authorial maneuvers. As the composer of these arrangements, I appear
in three distinct identities and voices that overlap in messy ways. First, the bulk of the
chapter contains my descriptions as the participant-observer-researcher who describes the
“play-by-play” action occurring in the shop; nearly all of this voice appears in standard
font, much as it looks right now. Second, in italics, I present a more detached researcher
voice by offering more direct analysis of the experiences, in general, and the
photographs, in particular. Third, I am often an active participant within my own play-by-
play descriptions of shop activities who also happens to be observing. Of course, all three
identities and the first two primary researcher voices are my own and inherently
analytical and powerful; however, some voices may appear more obvious than others.

Representing the voices of other people is inherently problematic, and in this text,
it is even more so. Many of Slim’s quotations come from the edited transcriptions of our
formal interviews, a few were from audio-recordings in the shop, and others I composed
from my notes and memory. Thus, they do not serve to replicate Slim’s exact responses
to situations (regardless if that would even be possible in some un-mediated way).
Earlier, I discussed the way clients often construct their versions of Slim (as do I). In this
text, I try to provide multiple versions of Slim, but do not specifically differentiate them
in my ongoing effort to show how identity is always under construction in the shop.
Descriptions of the rest of the people in the shop are intentionally brief and admittedly very problematic. The need to ensure anonymity means names and other identifying information have been changed and any quotations attributed to clients have been invented by me—based on my observations of actual conversations, but still invented—to keep the text clear, understandable, and flowing.

In balancing the fine line of maintaining anonymity and believability, I often describe clients by visible “physical” characteristics in an effort to follow Lefebvre’s (2004) mandate to “never los[e] sight of the body” (p. 67). Yet gender and race are social constructions that become even more complicated when the issue of hair (as biological matter) enters the picture. Even with signed Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent forms, asking clients deeply personal questions about their identities as they are getting their hair cut would have been rude and, of less importance, destructive to the rhythm of the shop. So, in this no-win situation, I do use “physical” descriptions as a way to avoid granting whiteness the privilege of invisibility. I also use more descriptive terminology to create an efficient handle for the reader to grasp onto in the navigation of this busy text without getting sidetracked by descriptions that may or may not be accurate. In the end, the need for adherence to Institutional Review Board policy privileges anonymity above the rest of these concerns, so the readers of this document should take these dilemmas into consideration.

Additionally, it is also necessary to clarify a few of the tricks of form and style used in the text. It is impossible to underestimate the role of the telephone in The Cut & Shave; it probably deserved its own entry in the participants’ section of the methodology chapter. As a researcher, the phone calls were challenging because all I could do was to
listen to Slim’s end of the conversation; in other words, I would listen to Slim listening (to what I could not hear). What I mean here is that Slim could often suss out whether callers were likely to be no-shows for their hair appointments. He could hear something in their voices—a lack of confidence, a sense of uncertainty, or just “bad vibes”—in what they actually said to him. I learned to watch Slim’s body language for changes in disposition due to agitation, anger, confusion, and even joy. As the phone calls nearly always disrupted his conversation with a client, it was not appropriate to immediately ask Slim about the phone calls. Slim admitted, “when it gets annoying is when it gets to be about 5 to 7 phone calls per haircut and then I say, ‘I’m really, really sorry, we’ll get this haircut done today.’” To convey this experience in the text, I include Slim’s side of the conversation punctuated by ellipses, which indicate the points in the conversation when the caller talked. Occasionally, I will include important contextual information in the ellipses. This “trick” and others are rhetorical shortcuts I found necessary to take in order to try to look at the “big picture” of the shop as a way station host to all kinds of people and rhythms.

Finally, more than at any other location in the dissertation, the spiral form takes center stage in this chapter as phone calls, photographs, re-created scenes from haircuts, interview transcripts, and researcher analysis are not only intertwined, but in constant rotation like a very colorful barber pole.

A Day in the Life of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop

8:12am

In his memoir describing his experiences as a barber apprentice and barber in 19 Century London, Procter (1856/1971) declares to his readers the following:
Walk into their shops, and see what witty fellows these shavers be. Do not be deterred by the *Boston Transcript*, nor by any other doubtful authority, that tells you two years of an old man’s life is wasted by attending the hairdresser’s shop…and that the cost of shaving could build you an ornamental cottage.

Ornamental nonsense! Walk in frankly and often. Accept the invitation of the pole…The genial atmosphere and pleasant chat of the place will not only enliven the passing hour, but will lengthen out your days to such an extent that year or two, more or less, will never be missed. (pp. 11-12)

8:14am
Originally, the above photograph was meant to emphasize the most prominent barber pole in the shop. It has been cropped to remove the sign above the window that states the real name of the shop; similarly the name of the shop has been removed from the white circle on the pole sign. Unexpectedly, the window, at once, reflects the outside world and reveals the interior of the shop, suggesting the shop’s role as a way station in which people enter and exit all day long. In his study of intimacy in barber shops, O’Donoghue (2012) utilized photographs to explore the potential for learning in these spaces. Referring to a photograph of the front window in a barber shop, O’Donoghue states: “While serving as a record of a place, the image also suggests a place of constantly becoming, rather than being; that is, the place presents itself anew to everyone who encounters it.” He continues: “…And in this repetition, there is ever the chance of it being read or understood differently. It is a place that is constantly brought into being by encounters, engagements, and interpretations” (p. 320).

Specifically, this photo of the front window of The Cut & Shave serves as an invitation of sorts to people on The Boulevard (and readers of this text) to “accept the invitation of the pole” (Procter, 1856/1971, pp. 11-12). Taken together, the three words on the left, the three words on the right, and the pole in the middle provide a direct explanation of the shop: This is who we serve—men, women, and children. This is who we are—barbers. This is what we do—cuts, colors, and shaves. It is a straightforward declaration that implies something of a democratic approach to the business of hair.

The rest of the images in this chapter convey scenes that were photographed from the interior. The above view of the barber shop from the sidewalk replicates the vantage point of those at whom we always gazed. Many are familiar faces to Slim and,
eventually, became familiar faces to me as well. There was the professional woman who has fascinated Slim for the last 10 years in her daily after-work walk, the semi-homeless guy referred to as Johnny, the day drinkers at the bar next door, and the blonde undergraduate student in the apartment across the street who developed quite a following in the shop. Also, there were others: the hung-over Saturday morning diner patrons, the unstable window washer, all the different mail carriers, the guy who mowed the lawn in the apartment complex next door, the people buying cases of beer on Friday night at stores in all three directions, the guy from the upstairs apartment walking his baying dog, and the overly tanned guy from the tattoo parlor down the street who always strutted around the block as he talked on his phone. Everyday, there was an endless parade of regular characters and anonymous passerby.

8:19am

*Phone rings.*

**Slim:** Cut & Shave.

**Slim:** …Ok, who cuts your hair?

**Slim:** …What time are you looking to come in?

**Slim:** …Well, the soonest I have would be 9:30 with Lester, can you make that?

**Slim:** …Ok, what is your name? And telephone number?

**Slim:** …You are scheduled with Lester at 9:30 this morning.

8:21am

Philip, a middle-aged white male teacher, arrived for a hair cut and beard trim. He is one of Slim’s veteran clients who followed Slim from shop to shop earlier in Slim’s
career. Since there are few client voices in this text, I will use Philip’s own description of the haircut that I gathered during two formal interviews with him. According to Philip:

For the most part, it’s very relaxing, almost sensual and there is that intimacy... Male intimacy in straight culture is rare. It’s very relaxing especially when Slim washes your hair, sometimes he does, sometimes he doesn't.

Sometimes he will cut my moustache and beard before he cuts my hair sometimes after, it is just a whim. And its basically the same sort of cut, sometimes he will leave it a little longer, or a little shorter, we usually don't talk about it. I remember last time, two times ago I thought he should have cut it shorter on top, it had been 8 weeks and it was still a little long, and we just talked about cutting it shorter next. So there is the shampoo part, the beard/moustache trim part, and the hair part. Slim seems to have a pretty good [understanding of what to do]. Sometimes we talk, sometimes we don’t. And he seems really sensitive, maybe this part of the skill being a good barber. Not only having the technical skills, which he has in spades, but just that skill of ‘ok, he wants to talk, we’ll talk, if he wants to be quiet, we'll be quiet.’ He gets in that rhythm. [In sum.] Slim is very relaxing, extremely competent, gifted as a haircutter, and very sweet. I don't know after 20 something years, it's a bit like he is family. I guess he might be like an uncle you hang out with.

8:58am

Kelly, a white college-age female, scheduled this appointment two days ago. Slim was a bit nervous about the early start time because she is a relatively new client, he doesn’t know her that well, and she has already no-showed him once before.
9:00am

*Kelly is not in the shop yet.*

No-shows are something of a phenomenological conundrum because the client never physically appears, but his/her presence lingers in the shop the entire time he or she was supposed to be there and sometimes throughout the day.

9:05am

*After receiving payment from Philip, Slim leans on his chair and wraps up their conversation.*

Clients are often a few minutes early or late, and Slim does not always start right on time mostly because clients were late earlier in the day and it can take a few hours to get back on schedule.

9:08am

*Darrell, a semi-regular middle-aged white client, opens the door and leans in to ask Slim if he has any time for a haircut.*

“Sorry, Darrell, I know that the chair looks empty but I’m supposed to have a 9:00 right now. You can wait to see if she shows up.” Darrell declined because he was in a hurry and said he would try again some other time.

9:10am

*Slim checks his watch and asks, “I wonder where Kelly is?”*

After about ten minutes, the situation becomes even more tense because if the client does not arrive soon, there will not be enough time to even speed through the cut without disrupting the next scheduled appointment.
9:13am

*Still no Kelly.*

Because the late client may arrive at any minute without warning, Slim and the other barbers have to hang around and still be ready to cut hair as soon as the late client arrives. Time exists in limbo in these gaps because the barbers can’t get too involved in anything they cannot stop doing very quickly. Slim checks his phone messages and returns a phone call while he waits.

9:15am

*Slim gazes out the window while talking on the phone.*

I asked Sharon about the worst part of her job during our interview and she replied, “When people are running behind and late. When the appointment is not here, my stomach starts burning. I used to be terrible about my appointments, like an appointment fanatic. I think that is the most stressful part of the job. If I’m behind, it’s not so much annoying to myself, but it is to the person who is waiting, some of them have to be some place.” *The physical symptoms she described here surprised me as I assumed the frustrations caused by the misuse of time were emotionally, and even financially, based responses, rather than physical.*

9:18am

*Slim is pretty sure Kelly will not show up today.*

At this point, it is better if Kelly does not show up because Slim would have to tell her he cannot cut her hair today since the day is fully booked. Slim loses money regardless, but if she drives all the way here and discovers there will be no haircut—and Slim asks her to pay for this time—it could lead to a tense interaction. Slim would have
to explain that she already missed one appointment previously (for which he did not charge her) and a potential walk-in had to be turned away because he held the appointment for her. These conversations can be educational if the client understands Slim’s perspective and changes her/his ways. On the other hand, these conversations can serve as the end of a working relationship.

9:22am

Having officially given up on Kelly, Slim sits in his own barber chair and waits for the 9:30 appointment, who is usually very punctual. If he arrives soon, Slim will start early to stay ahead of the day until the next disruption arises.

While I was still only a client circling the shop in pursuit of a specific research angle, it was hard not to notice how riled up Slim got when discussing no-shows. His emotional reactions indicated the importance of time in the shop. As something of a bricoleur, it is essential for Slim to have clients in the chair, or to put it another way, materials at/in hand, in order for his system to work and for him to earn a living. No-shows certainly affect all hair professionals, but unlike bigger salons that accept credit cards, the cash only policy at The Cut & Shave means there is no way to “punish” the no-shows financially. And, even if punishment were an option, it might drive away clients. In many ways, the no-show issue is a no-win situation for Slim. In the following excerpt, Slim describes to me the impact and frustration of the no-shows:

Slim: I think that is definitely an interesting phenomenon. I don't know if it is the location or time but I don't remember getting this many no-shows except for the last ten years at this shop. Maybe it’s because I’ve gotten busier or it's the location.
Tom: That is what got me into the idea of the negative emotional labor, that the no shows were costing you…

Slim: It is taxing emotionally, for sure. And that goes back to whether it is taxing on the logical or the financial [side]. It's taxing on the emotional and the mental exhaustion and there's degrees based on whether they take responsibility for their actions or whether they want to argue about it or lie about it. For example, that story about the one professor who had to adjust three times in one day. I wasn't minimally frustrated, but I was also not totally exhausted because that is unusual for him and so on and so forth. But the ones who are blatant about it, that is where the intuition comes into it. It's like, Dude, don't tell me ‘I’ll be back in a half an hour’ and then let me watch you walk right across the street [to another hair shop]. And then let me watch you walk out of there and come back over and say ‘never mind.’ That is just rude and inconsiderate. I think you’ve got to be professional, [but] I don't think the customer is always right. Again there is reciprocity of conversation and the give and take. We are a service industry, but we're not servants, you know. You're giving us money but were giving you something for that. Hopefully, it is more than just a haircut.
Image 7. Slim’s Appointment Book
Slim’s appointment book is the sacred text of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop; much can be learned from studying it. In the above image, taken over Slim’s shoulder as he answered the phone, my primary objective is to evoke how time, mostly linear time, takes a most quantitative, measurable form. For the sake of privacy, the client data on the pages have been blurred. When clients call or physically come into the shop to make an appointment, Slim asks for their desired starting time and then either gives them that time or suggests an alternative time before or after the original request. At a minimum, Slim always writes down at least a first name and a phone number. The phone number is the only “collateral” Slim has to guarantee his time. If someone is excessively late or fails to show up for the scheduled appointment, Slim may call the person. Slim tends to use pencils because clients frequently need to re-schedule or cancel their appointments all together. He uses a red pen to indicate no-shows for future reference. In the margins are brief notes that Slim takes during haircuts that only make sense to him: the names of clients’ bands, recommended restaurants, reminders of tasks, etc. Slim keeps all of the appointment books from his entire 30-year career stored in his house; it is a complete history of his time spent as a barber.

It is a challenge to pin down everything the appointment book means beyond its existence as a physical object. Obviously, it serves the demands of linear time to quantify and organize work and life. Along the same lines, the appointment book documents the set of promises that Slim and the clients make to each other involving clock time. However, the appointment book is also an artifact, or a piece of art, that reflects the way Slim creatively builds and lives his days at work using the knowledge gained from years of experience. Slim uses a variety of tactics defined by de Certeau (1984) as “procedures
that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time—to the circumstances
which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the
rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among
successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of… rhythms” (pp. 38-9).
Slim uses these “time” tactics to build and experience his days. For example, the
appointment book reflects his never-ending juggling of the past, present, and future as he
must pause his present haircut to answer a call to schedule a future appointment while, at
the same time, he accesses his memory of the past to remember if this caller has no-
showed him in the past or regularly shows up late. If this phone call lasts too long, or
another client calls soon after, Slim can see on the pages that a client will arrive shortly
and he must adjust his rhythm accordingly.

9:32am

I did not see the first part of the haircut with Hank, a lanky white male in his
twenties. When it became obvious the previous appointment was going to be a no-show, I
figured it would be a good time to look at the sluggish air conditioner in the shop,
especially since Lester did not have any clients scheduled and his chair sits directly under
the air conditioner. From the bits and pieces of talk during Hank’s haircut that I
overheard in passing—as I climbed up and down the ladder to remove and clean the dirty
air filter—I gathered that Hank was leaving town as a result of his military job. The
conversation reminded me of the graduation haircuts I had recently observed during
which it became clear that the barber-client relationship was coming to an end as students
prepared to leave town following graduation. It starts with the talk of the future that the
client is headed toward, includes some reflections about the client’s past experiences in
and outside the shop, and then ends with a fond farewell to the present at the end of the

cut.

9:47am

*Phone rings.*

**Slim:** Cut & Shave

**Slim:** …Shaves are $25.

**Caller:** [I learned this exact question later because the conversation was so confusing, I
made sure to ask Slim about it]: Why is it so expensive?

**Slim:** …Excuse me?

**Slim:** …Well, I guess because we use hot, steamed towels to prepare face, apply the
lather, and then use a straight razor. The whole process takes awhile.

**Slim:** …Ok, bye.

In the above case, Slim and Hank laughed and joked as the conversation covered
Hank’s new job in an unfamiliar city and then looped back to early memories in their
relationship. When the haircut ended, I was sitting on top of a ladder about ten feet in the
air wiping dust off the air conditioner and installing the filter. It was a much more
cinematic view up there as I watched Hank tell Slim how much he enjoyed the time he
spent in the chair and how he will miss coming to The Cut & Shave for his fine haircuts
and conversations. Finally, Slim removed the cape and Hank stood up to give Slim
payment for the haircut, an extra-healthy tip, and a firm goodbye handshake. They,
essentially, thanked each other for their relationship and Hank said he would return
whenever he came back to The City. From my perspective, their exchange appeared to be
a very sincere, emotional moment. As I was putting away the ladder, I commented to
Slim, “That was nice. I have not seen that kind of straightforward expression of appreciation before.” Slim replied, “Yeah, the good ones always leave.”

*I learned it is very easy to get caught up in the rhythm of the ever-present in the shop when just about every half-hour there is someone else in the chair. Linear time and cyclical time exist within the shop, but the conversations themselves are decidedly non-linear. Events can easily blend together as stories get interrupted by the phone, Slim goes on unrelated tangents, The Boulevard demands attention, and haircuts eventually get finished before stories reach their conclusions. Perhaps during the next haircut the conversation will resume, but most likely not. Hearing most of Hank’s goodbye speech and only seeing part of it from an unusual perspective somehow amplified not only its intensity, but also the nature of emotional relationships to develop slowly over time. These relationships often end in an instant for any number of reasons. Slim’s reaction to my comment suggests that this spiral of growth and departure can take its toll.*

9:58am

**Tom:** [Looking out the front window and pointing across the street]: Hey, is that Johnny pissing on the ice machine?

**Slim:** What?

**Tom:** Look at the ice machine right next to the front door.

**Slim:** I believe it is, let me see [moves over to get a better view]. Yes, it is.

**Tom:** It must have been a rough night.

**Confused Waiting Client:** Why is he pissing on the ice machine?

**Slim:** That’s Johnny, sometimes he sleeps on the porch of that abandoned house over there on the corner.
Confused Client in Chair: Yeah, but why is he pissing on the ice machine?

Slim: That’s a good question. The alley is right there. Or he could go behind the convenience store. I don’t know.

[A few more minutes pass with more, somewhat awkward discussion of the homeless man’s urination habits. Everyone makes a mental note not to buy ice at that convenience store.]

10:01am

Image 8. Hair and Sunshine on the Barber Shop Floor
The best word to describe the weather in The City is gray. The weather is not drastic; the seasons change here, but the sky tends to be overcast. The photographs were taken on a rare bright day. Largely, I just wanted a close-up shot of the hair to suggest its metaphorical connection to time. All the hair on the floor represents the time in between haircuts, the cycles of growth, and all that occurred while living life outside the barber shop. The hair suggests something of a monthly cycle. But, here in this image, as well, the sunlight indicates the natural daily cycles in the shop. Facing directly east, the sun—when it is out—fills the shop in the morning, but slowly recedes throughout the day much like the tide at a beach. The blinds in the front window help to keep the sun from heating the shop, but by late afternoon the sun is well overhead and the blinds can be raised.

The lamps, ceiling fan lights, and wall fixtures become the primary source of lighting during the post-work rush. After dark, when I’m driving by in a car or riding on the bus, it is one of my habits to crane my neck to see if Slim is still cutting hair way into the night. The bright interior lights of the shop make the exterior view look like a blurry Edward Hopper painting as I drive by at 30 miles per hour. The sunlight (and the weather in general) makes quite evident the role of cyclical time in the daily rhythms of the shop, but it also engages so many aspects of sensory perception as we hear so much talk about the weather, feel the touch of moist humidity and hot sweat on our bodies, and often watch storms develop outside the front window. Beyond the five senses, day after day of rain tends to lower the energy of the shop while the rare beautiful days cause most clients to enter the shop in good moods.
10:08am

*Phone rings.*

**Slim:** Cut & Shave.

**Slim:** There are a few spots this afternoon.

**Slim:** …I have that open. So, do you want the 2:00, then?

**Slim:** Well, I can’t guarantee that spot will be open if you don’t schedule it now…

**Slim:** …Ok, then, you can take your chances.

10:11am

Slim’s clients range in age beginning with young kids getting their first haircuts to elderly clients perhaps getting their last cuts. I have seen Slim gracefully help people in and out of the chair, hand them their canes, and walk them out the door. One day during my stay he left the shop to cut the hair of a client in an assisted living facility. I say all of this to ground the fact I was not too surprised when Louie shuffled into the shop.

Probably in his seventies, he was wearing a short-sleeved golf shirt with the top 3 buttons undone. He had a salt and pepper moustache surrounded by 4 or 5 days worth of beard stubble. His hair was covered by an ill-fitting baseball cap, and there was some dark hair sticking out from underneath but not enough to tell whether or not he really needed a haircut. However, what caught my eye the most was the pallor of his skin, for he looked like a ghost.

I was sitting in the waiting chair, third one down from Slim. Louie sat right next to me in the fourth chair and did not acknowledge anyone or say anything for nearly 10 minutes or more. Initially, I thought he might be a little drunk as he was slouched over in the chair and appeared to be falling asleep. Then, I began to wonder if he was sick.
Because he was so close to me, I could only make occasional sideways glances, but he was in the “time warp” waiting chair. Facing forward, this seat lines up directly into Lester’s mirror to create the infinity effect with the mirror on the wall behind the waiting chairs. In this instance, Slim had a better angle to watch Louie than I did; nevertheless, I could argue that my view of Louie was more artistic in the infinity mirrors.

Finally, Louie slowly and deliberately raises himself from the chair and begins an uncertain walk toward the door. “Can I help you with anything?” Slim asked. “No. You are not my barber,” Louie replied softly. “Excuse me?” Slim responded. “Slim is my barber,” Louie said with a bit more emphasis. “I am Slim,” a confused Slim stated. “You are not Slim,” argued Louie. Slim tried a different tactic by asking, “Is your name Louie? I think I used to cut your hair several years ago.” I could not see Louie’s face, but he seemed to nod in the affirmative before ending the conversation by stating, “You are not my barber.” Slim could not say much more than, “Ok,” as Louie opened the door, stepped out, turned left, and disappeared.

After shaking my head in confusion, I asked Slim, “What in the hell was that all about?” All he could say was, “I don’t know.” I went out front and looked around, but there was no sign of Louie anywhere. We have no idea how he arrived at the shop.

*It is important that Slim stood back and watched for so long before engaging Louie. Most of the time, six days a week, Slim is not going anywhere so he can afford to sit and wait for people to make their moves or declare their intentions. For example, during the entire time Louie was sitting in the shop, Slim continued to cut the hair of a white male in his twenties while carrying on a conversation with him about his job as a*
waiter, all while keeping an eye on Louie. It turns out Slim did cut Louie’s hair dating back to 1987 or 1988 when he inherited him from a retiring barber also named “Slim.” Louie had a comb-over and was very particular about it, always checking Slim’s work in the mirror after the haircut. But Slim had not seen Louie in about 10 years. He literally walked in from out of time. Slim and I discussed the scene for days because it was so odd. Slim figures Louie had Alzheimer’s disease or some kind of memory issue; I thought he was a ghost.

10:22am

A 20-something, white musician enters the shop with an armful of flyers for his band.

Musician: Hey, Slim.

Slim: What’s going on Kevin?

Musician: Oh, I just have a flyer here I was hoping you could post.

Slim: When is your show?

Musician: In three weeks.

Slim: All right. Leave it on the bench and I’ll put it up later.

Musician: Thanks, Slim.

Slim: See you, Kevin.
These two photos began as separate, unrelated compositions. In the image on the left, the point of emphasis is Slim’s entire right thumb. The image on the right sought to capture the tattoo of the sundial on Slim’s left wrist that is typically covered by his watch. However, in conjunction, these two images tell a story of the relationship among time, Slim’s body, and his tools as represented by the shears (never scissors, always shears in
barber terminology). This relationship is rhythmic and more specifically, to use Lefebvre’s (2004) metaphor, it is a particularly eye-catching flower in the shop’s “garland” or “bouquet” of rhythms.

By itself, the sundial, one of the early devices serving to organize time by natural phenomena, signifies Slim’s long-held interest in time and nature. The tattoo palpably resonates with this dissertation’s theme of time, but it also implies a sense of humor and an appreciation for the absurd. The image of his thumb requires more explanation. As a barber, Slim touches at least 15 different people every day when he cuts their hair. Outside of handshakes and a few hugs, from women usually, clients do not touch Slim. As a client myself, I was no different until the time I squeezed Slim’s thumbs. Somehow, during one of our odd haircut conversations, the fact that his thumbs are two different sizes came up. With the palms open, he held out his hands and told me to touch them.

The challenge of representing the human senses calls for me to make a food analogy here, so please bear with me. There is a common misconception that the degree of a steak’s doneness can be determined by pressing one of your fingertips against the tip of the thumb on the same hand and then by poking this thumb with the other hand. The farther down the hand you go, from index finger to the pinky, the more well done the meat. While this technique will not accurately determine the doneness of a steak, it will demonstrate how Slim’s thumb feels. For example, if you press the tip of your pinky against the fingertip of the thumb real hard and feel the thumb muscle with your opposite hand, then you will know what Slim’s thumb feels like. The right thumb muscle is significantly larger and firmer than the left one as a result of Slim squeezing his shears millions of times over the past three decades. Each snip of the shears is thus collected in
the storehouse of time that tangibly exists in Slim’s thumb. If you will, a second look at
the photographs should now reveal the two prominent symbols of time on and in Slim’s
body. Initially, the tattoo appeared to be the more obvious marking of time, but the thumb
tells much more.

Several researchers (Black, 2004; Jacobs-Huey, 2006) emphasize the
importance of body in hair sites, but they predominately focus on the client’s body, rarely
the hair worker’s body, and hardly ever the researcher’s body. Because he wears shorts in
the summer, it is easy to see Slim’s developed calves built up from walking around and
around the barber chair. If one brushes up against his shoulder or gives him a pat on the
back, then one will feel the rigidity of Slim’s upper body, a rigidity that results from him
constantly moving his arms and head as he holds and cuts hair. Slim is a professional and
never mentions to clients the toll the job takes on his body. Even when I asked him about
it, he downplayed the toll, as noted in the following statement: “There are some mornings
where it feels like I’m going down to the plant or factory. That’s an interesting question
because I think ‘oh, man’ if I’m getting out of bed and I might be thinking about just the
repetition or my legs are aching but then usually when I get here it is the human
interaction that takes the repetitiveness, the mundane away.”

Slim addressed the connection between the repetition of the job and his body.
Repetition exists in many forms in the shop and it is an essential component of the shop’s
rhythms and our bodies’ rhythms (and, of course, rhythm in general). Returning to the
rhythmic relationship among time, Slim’s body, and his tools as presented in the images,
I suggest Slim’s use of the shears, and his other primary barbering tool, the electric
clippers, complicates the tendency to frame repetition in narrow and negative terms.
Ingold (2001) suggests a more dynamic understanding of repetition in his attention to craftsmanship:

Skilled handling of tools is anything but automatic, but is rather rhythmically responsive to ever-changing environmental conditions. In this responsiveness there lies a form of awareness that does not so much retreat as grow in intensity with the fluency of action. This is not the awareness of a mind that holds itself aloof from the messy, hands-on business of work. It is rather immanent in practical, perceptual activity, reaching out into its surroundings along multiple pathways of sensory participation. (p. 61)

Watching Slim cut hair, as he bends and twists his body to find the best angle to level out a client’s bangs, provides support for Ingold’s (2001) claim about the connection among the worker’s mind, body, senses, tools, and the environment. Just as there is no separation in Slim’s mind-body, the tools seem to become part of his body as they provide yet another source of sensory information.

Although Slim may follow a routine standard set of barbering procedures—first cut the sides, then the back, top and edges last—with every client, because each client (and his/her hair) is unique, he must constantly respond to unplanned activities. The experience and knowledge of, and in, his mind-body regarding people and their hair enables Slim to respond to unplanned activities in an efficient, effective manner. The point here is not to suggest the “ever-changing environmental conditions” (Ingold, 2001, p. 61) of a routine haircut constantly present new or unfamiliar situations to Slim. Instead, I am trying to argue that change and unpredictability provide Slim opportunities and spaces to use his various time tactics to adjust his haircutting rhythm. An obvious
example is found in children’s haircuts when safety is very important and Slim must bob and weave in anticipation of the child’s every move to avoid any unwanted contact with the shears. He knows when to increase the tempo and when to slow it down based on the child’s behavioral cues.

Because Slim appears to negotiate unplanned activities so effortlessly, for a long time I simply thought he operated by intuition alone. The more I observed Slim, the more I gained a better understanding as to why similar looking haircuts would take different amounts of time to cut. The actual, physical cutting of hair—the reason why most people come to this shop, or any shop—is the one aspect of the job over which Slim has the most control. That is, he cannot control when the phone rings, when clients are late or do not show up, or the clients’ demeanors. Yet Slim is in charge of the haircut and its rhythms. He, or his mind-body, makes seamless adjustments in cutting based on his sensory perception—what he sees, hears, touches, and even smells—that allow him to maximize his time. I asked Slim about these skills and he explained: “A lot of that is the repetitive experience. I think the repetition and the years of experience allow that stuff to become second nature so I can be doing it and answering the phone and conversating [conversing]. So I think experience helps the smoothness of all those things integrating.”

Ultimately, there is a give and take relationship between time and Slim’s body. On the one hand, Slim learns, gains experience, and hones his embodied time tactics during every haircut, which helps him to maximize and control his time. On the other hand, time does take its toll as each haircut is felt and compounded in his body.
10:53am

*Phone rings.*

**Slim:** Cut & Shave…

**Slim:** …Oh, hey Travis…

**Slim:** …Ok, while I appreciate the call, your appointment was supposed to start 20 minutes ago.

**Slim:** …I realize that people can get busy, but…

**Slim:** …No, Travis, I can’t fit you in later today, I’m booked and…

**Slim:** …Travis, let me finish, what I was saying about the policy is you need to call much farther in advance to cancel so I can give the appointment to someone else and…

**Slim:** …Yes, I realize you are calling now, but the appointment is already over and I was saying you still need to pay for this appointment the next time you come in…

**Slim:** Hey, Lester, do you have any appointments this afternoon?

**Lester:** Yes.

**Slim:** All right, Travis, I will hand you over to Lester. Bye.
Image 10. Waiting Chairs

*Note to photographer:* “Waiting Chairs. This shot will indicate where I spent hundreds of hours watching Slim. Also, we need to include the duct tape on the seats because it suggests all the time spent with asses literally wearing out chairs. It gets changed every few months or so.” As I wrote the aforementioned instructions, I was hoping to include an image that could deliver the message that the term *waiting chair*
actually contains a verb, not an adjective. I waited all day long for things to happen and I was rarely disappointed.

Lester hates country music so we never listened to the classic country station on the satellite radio. But the day country legend George Jones died, we listened to the various tributes on the radio and in between all the George Jones classics, I remember hearing Willie Nelson’s (1993) song, “Still is still moving to me,” and the following lyrics aptly reflect my study of rhythm from these chairs and within the barber shop:

And it’s hard to explain how I feel
It won't go in words but I know that it's real
I can be moving or I can be still
But still is still moving me,
still is still moving to me.

These lyrics express what it is like to sit still for hours while surrounded by movement. Much of this movement involved clients making their way through the shop into the chairs and back out the door.

Even more, this endless movement caused me to get swept up in all the rhythms of the shop as I listened to the sound of the blades and the voices, followed the gazes of clients as they snuck looks at the barber’s process in the mirrors, reacted to the emotional moods and waves of the barbers and clients, and travelled time in the stories of Slim the oracle and the other tellers of tales. Waiting was physically demanding and it took a few weeks for my legs and back, in particular, to grow accustomed to this activity. Much like the barbers enjoying the few minutes that they could sit in their chairs, I looked forward to getting up and sweeping the floors. Two of these chairs in the above photo came with
the shop when Slim purchased it; he found the other two chairs in the regional classified advertisement newspaper, *The Tradin’ Times*. Slim drove out of state to buy and pick-up the two chairs. It would be fairly expensive to re-upholster the seats, so Slim uses colored duct tape to cover the rips in the fabric. Until I learned the right way to sit on/in these seats, I would get the adhesive from the tape stuck on my pants.

11:09am

*Guy in tracksuit enters the shop in a hasty manner, zooming right past Slim and approaches Lester.*

**Tracksuit guy:** Hey, I’m looking for a haircut.

**Lester:** Are you scheduled in?

**Tracksuit guy:** What?

**Lester:** Do you have an appointment?

**Tracksuit guy:** I didn’t think I needed an appointment. This a barber shop, right?

**Slim:** We do take walk-ins but we honor our appointments first.

**Tracksuit guy:** I never heard of a barber shop with appointments.

**Slim:** Do you want to make an appointment?

**Tracksuit guy:** I thought this was a barber shop. I just wanted a haircut. Maybe I will try back later *[He turns and leaves just as quickly as he arrived]*.

**Slim:** I can guarantee that guy is not coming back.

11:14am

Brenda, a white woman in her forties, arrived for her appointment for a cut and coloring with Slim a little early. Yesterday, Slim had stopped by the barber and beauty supply store to stock up on materials, but he left the products he needed for Brenda’s hair
in his car. He went to his car to get the products, but he became trapped in a conversation with one of the neighborhood characters. Lester had left a little earlier to get his lunch at his favorite Chinese takeout place. Before leaving, Lester had changed the satellite radio to his preferred heavy metal station. So, I talked with Brenda about her family for a few minutes while we were alone in the shop. I had met her once before when she brought her son in for a haircut. I have also met her mother, Janet, and her daughter, Amy, when each came in for haircuts. They compose a three-generation family who have followed Slim from shop to shop throughout his career. Just as the conversation with Brenda had reached its logical end, the song “Run to the hills” by Iron Maiden (Harris, 1982) came on the radio as we sat there [the lyrics to this song appear below in italics]. Brenda looked at her phone and I looked out the window.

_White man came across the sea_

_He brought us pain and misery._

Discussing rhythm in terms of music can be dangerous because it is such a logical, easy comparison. Too much emphasis on music makes it more challenging to describe and analyze rhythm as it exists in the unpredictable, non-musical arrangements throughout everyday life.

_He killed our tribes, he killed our creed_

_He took our game for his own need._

Lefebvre (2004), himself a music enthusiast, frequently used music to explain certain elements of rhythm analysis (Elden, 2004). For example, he claimed that music’s “relation to the body, to time, to the work, it illustrates real (everyday) life. It purifies it in the acceptance of catharsis. Finally, and above all, it brings compensation for the miseries
of everydayness, for its deficiencies and failures. Music integrates the functions, the values of rhythm” (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 66).

*Run to the hills—run for your lives*

*Run to the hills—run for your lives*

For Lefebvre (2004) and for Slim, music (and the rhythm upon which it is constructed) can be redemptive. In The Cut & Shave promotional video mentioned in Chapter 1, Slims states, “Music is integral to the shop because of my character, my personality.”

*Raping the woman and wasting the man*

*The only good injins are tame.*

Most mornings at the shop, and when time permits during work hours, Slim likes to sit in a corner chair and play his electric guitar. He played in rock and roll bands when he was younger, and now he plays mostly by himself to learn and improve his technique. It helps him to prepare for the day.

*Chasing the redskins back to their holes*

*Fighting them at their own game*

Before satellite radio, Slim would mostly listen to an independent radio station that featured a blend of music and National Public Radio. As a customer, it took me a while to learn that Slim never listened to the news programs because it was impossible to follow the linear stories with the phone ringing, the noise of the clippers, and the need to concentrate on one or more ongoing conversations.

*Murder for freedom the stab in the back*

*Woman and children, a coward’s attack*
Satellite radio suits the shop because it provides a variety of mostly commercial-free music channels. On Saturdays, Slim likes to start with classical music and then maybe switch to the blues channel. The Motown station is a frequent choice early in the week to draw up some energy. Chiefly, rock and roll music is playing. With his encyclopedic knowledge of music, Slim can sing along to just about any song and even do a little jig from time to time when he is in a good mood.

_Run to the hills—run for your lives_

_Run to the hills—run for your lives_

As he looked out his window onto the Paris streets, Lefebvre (2004) claimed, “The harmony between what one sees and what one hears (from the window) is remarkable. Strict concordance” (pp. 28-29). The activities in The Cut & Shave shop can achieve this harmony when the music and its rhythms enter into the overall rhythms of the shop as clients tap their feet in the waiting chair, as Lester nods his head to the beat, and as the buzz of the clippers and snip-snip-snip of the shears contribute their own musical instrumentation at Slim’s direction. Unfortunately, the satellite radio hardware is finicky and the music often disappears. Lefebvre (2004) uses the term *arrhythmia* to describe the pathological condition of rhythms breaking down. Interestingly, arrhythmia is, at the same time, symptom, cause, and effect of the pathological state.

_Run to the hills—run for your lives_

_Run to the hills—run for your lives._

I cannot speak for Brenda, but from my vantage point, hearing the lyrics to the song “Run for the hills” in the barber shop was an arrhythmic experience. Admittedly, for a heavy metal song, the lyrical composition of the song is fairly innovative in its structure.
featuring both perspectives of the European colonization of Native Americans. However, the propulsive tempo of the music and the fast-paced screaming of the lyrics about murder, rape, women, and children all while using racist language evokes a more immediate impression of sheer violence, not lyrical subtlety. Time slowed down in that scene because there seemed to be no appropriate reaction for me to take, as I did not know if Brenda was actually listening to the lyrics since she appeared busy typing on her phone. Eventually, Slim returned to the shop and started cutting Brenda’s hair. The station was changed back to one of the regular rock stations.

_The above scene demonstrates the important relationship of music and rhythm using a stylistic gimmick to convey a feeling of arrhythmia. It shows how music and rhythm need to be inclusive rather than exclusive in this type of (relatively) diverse, intimate setting. In terms of music selection, because men, women, and children circulate in and out of the shop randomly, the music should neither alienate nor offend clients. Specifically, in regard to gender, it was always fascinating to see how the overall shop rhythm incorporated the presence of women (and children). The presence of women in barber shops rarely gets explicitly discussed in the shop, but the increases in silence and the shifts in conversation and body language suggest that some male clients are sometimes unsettled. For example, one day when Sharon walked through the door to begin her shift, one of Slim’s male clients who had previously been incessantly commenting on female college students walking by the shop suddenly changed the subject (but continued to stare out the window at the women as he now talked about the college football team)._
Many male clients assume the shop is a gender specific space. Slim and I have discussed this issue, of which I call the “fluid barber shop,” because every client has his/her own expectation of what a barber shop should be based on how they believe it should operate or how it was during their childhoods. On occasion, Slim checks these assumptions as politely as possible. Regardless of how it is conceived, the shop is not a male-only place. For example, approximately 5-10% of the clientele at The Cut & Shave is female, Sharon works in the shop 4 days a week, and Slim’s wife, Nancy (Nan), who has her own full-time job outside the barber shop, is the co-owner, co-art director, and co-manager of the shop. It is important to address not only the physical presence of women in the shop, but also the rhythmic contributions they make. Because the women vary in age, profession, and personality as much as the men, they contribute their individual rhythms to the overall shop rhythmic garland. From Slim’s perspective, and from my own perspective when I was present, the more diverse the rhythm, the more interesting the day.

11:52am

Phone rings.

Slim: Cut & Shave.

Slim: Hey, what are you doing?

Slim: …No, there is nothing left today…

Slim: Yeah, it’s looking more like Tuesday or Wednesday.

Slim: …Tuesday at 5:30 is yours.

Slim: Have a good weekend, Danny.
11:58am

At the end of every week, a barbeque truck is set up in the parking lot just a few blocks from the shop, and it attracts a weekend audience. The truck is quite popular so there is often a long line. Most weeks I would walk down to get lunch since Slim and Lester could not leave the shop unattended for the half-hour or more it usually took me to get food. It was a challenge figuring out when to leave the shop because there might be something interesting happening. When I did return, the smell of smoked meat filled the shop. I would unpack the food and then it was a matter of dumb luck who could eat first, depending on where Slim and Lester were in their haircuts and who was waiting in the chairs. Sharon usually arrived after lunch, so we saved food for her.

12:46pm

Being late spring, it was prom season. Earlier in the week, Slim had taken a phone call from a mother who wanted to schedule a haircut and a shave for her son in anticipation of his prom night. I heard Slim explain to her that if her son could not make the appointment, then he needs to cancel in advance. When I inquired with Slim about the mother’s response, he noted that he had “heard something in her voice” that gave him pause. Yesterday, the prom son was supposed to at the shop at 3:00pm, but he never showed up. Slim was extra steamed about this no-show because he booked some extra time to work with the prom son because it was a first time visit. He called the number the mother gave him, but there was no answer or voicemail. He spent the next hour in a cranky mood. This incident is relevant because there was another mother-arranged shave and haircut scheduled with Lester today.
12:51pm

*Phone rings.*

**Slim:** Cut & Shave.

**Slim:** …No, I’m not interested…

**Slim:** I’m cutting hair I can’t talk to you about utility rates right now…

**Slim:** …No, no…

**Slim:** …No thank you, goodbye.

**Slim:** Sorry about that.

This second mother actually called twice, the first time to ask a bunch of questions and schedule an appointment and the second time to re-schedule. Based on Slim’s no-show yesterday, it was a bit of a running joke throughout the morning: Would the kid show up? Would mom be there to supervise? About 5 or 10 minutes to 1:00pm, the kid did show up by himself. He was nervous, but managed to tell Lester who he was before taking a seat to wait his turn. It was a full house with all three chairs booked and 3 or 4 other people were waiting around. The kid sat on the bench in the back of the shop and immediately faded into the background until he got up a few minutes later and motioned to leave. As he walked passed me, he quickly told Lester that he had to go “check on something.” Nobody paid it much attention until Lester finished with his 12:30 client at 5 minutes after 1:00pm.

“Did that kid ever come back?” Lester asked. I told him no and we both walked to the front and I went outside to look to see if he was on the phone or something. After waiting about 10 more minutes, Lester called and left a confused but terse voicemail message. The kid was never heard from again and no one could figure it out. *Did he hear*
something? See something? Smell something? Or were the shop’s rhythms just too much for him to handle? There was no way to really know and it cost Lester an hour’s pay. The fact that two similar no-shows occurred in consecutive days indicates how the past can linger and recurrently contribute to ongoing rhythms in the shop.

1:33pm

Image 11. Magazine Rack

This image is a close-up of the magazine rack located on the wall behind the shop’s door. It is intended to represent the massive amount of information that flows
through the shop. Originally, I had hoped to get a shot of one the two displays of client business cards—one is on a rack on the front window ledge and the other is a corkboard that runs from the floor to the ceiling next to the back wall mirror—or to get an image of the flyers advertising concerts and local events. Unfortunately, too much personal information was visible. The business cards are evidence of Slim’s List, or what Slim simply calls “networking.” Although the name is taken from the craigslist.org website, Slim’s List is a bit old-fashioned. After cutting hair for three decades in the same town, Slim possesses a vast amount of knowledge that can be very helpful to his clients.

Unlike many barber shops in which people hang out for hours and develop community amongst each other directly, community in The Cut & Shave tends to revolve around Slim as the hub, like the center of a bike tire where all the spokes connect. Slim helps clients find jobs, legal advice, music lessons, construction contractors, and good restaurants. After receiving the information, clients decide what to do—whether to follow up on their own via email or telephone: “Hey, Slim from the barber shop said I should call you…” Slim does a lot of business with clients himself including for his website, promotional video, and electrical work as well as selling a motorcycle, just to name a few examples. From Slim, I myself found the photographer of the images included in this dissertation, a writer to discuss the shop and poetry, a tree company, and a transcriber to refer to a university professor. *Slim’s List is another tangible example of how the past, present, and future are intertwined in The Cut & Shave. Slim tends to learn and remember information gathered during past haircuts, which he will share with other clients in the present moment while cutting hair in order to influence their futures.*
The magazines themselves reflect a shift to digital media in contemporary culture, as clients tend to sit down and stare at their phones rather than pick up magazines to read. It was surprising to learn that Slim does not purchase the magazines; instead, they are sent to the shop unsolicited by a marketing agency that is looking to boost magazine subscription figures. All of the titles, other than the *Mother Earth News* which Slim brings to the shop, have been pre-selected without any input from Slim. Somehow it was determined that these magazines reflect the interests of the clients in The Cut & Shave. Interestingly, there are no magazines specifically targeted to non-white or female readers. The shop is also sent two copies of *Playboy* magazine because, as the running shop joke tells it, Slim is such a virile man that one copy would not be enough. These are stored in the bathroom where they take on a rhythm of their own as pages get ripped out and they eventually disappear. In the last few months, the *Playboy* magazines have stopped arriving in the mail for some undetermined reason.

**1:44pm**

According to Slim, Stan and Javier are longtime customers. Slim has known Stan since the early 1990s, and Javier has been a customer for “only the last ten years or so.” Stan brought Javier into the shop fold after they became a couple. They usually had Saturday appointments to get their hair cut one after the other. Today they stopped in before going to a matinee at a local movie theater. Javier is fairly quiet; he did not say too much in the chair and mostly played a video game on his phone while Stan got his haircut. As soon as he sat in Slim’s chair, Stan held the floor for the rest of their hour-long visit by first catching up with Slim, asking me about my project, and then telling a long, rambling story about Javier dragging him to an amusement park. In terms of
content, the story itself really was not that much different than the dozens of other similar stories I had heard about guys getting dragged to places they did not want to go by their girlfriends and wives. Yet it was the animated, dramatic delivery that not only made the story interesting, but also fairly obvious that Stan (and Javier, it logically follows) is gay.

Sexuality became a point of interest because the shop was crowded and Lester and Sharon both had college-aged white males in their chairs whose haircuts coincided with Stan’s story. Sitting in the chair closest to the door, I was able to follow Stan’s story and comment here and there when I was not laughing at his jokes. I was also watching the other two clients. Maybe they were just quiet in general, or maybe it was the volume of Stan’s voice, but the other two clients did not engage in much conversation with Lester or Sharon. Mostly, they just watched and listened to “The Stan Show.” At times, it seemed like the younger client’s eyes were frozen on Stan. Because there is such a variety of young college students passing through the shop, with some of them having arrived to The City from a small town or from halfway around the world, it can be a real challenge to interpret their behaviors. In this case, I would not quickly classify their behaviors or body languages as hateful or agitated; instead, I read their reactions as confusion and intrigue that a gay man was so overtly being himself in what is supposed to be a hetero-normative setting—and no one else really seemed to care.

I asked Slim about this later and he did not notice the other clients watching Stan. Mostly, he did not notice because he could not see their faces from his vantage point, but also Slim is so familiar with Stan that the story was just about an amusement park, not a story about Stan’s sexuality. So, there really was not a need to look around for reactions. There is a fairly steady gay and lesbian clientele at The Cut & Shave, so most of the time
I did not know of a client’s sexuality until it came up randomly in conversation with Slim. Similarly, a few months after this scene with Stan and Javier, I was in the shop talking to Slim and to Frank, a sixty-something, white male client, about my project. Frank started talking about his search for a barber in town before meeting Slim. Frank described an awkward haircut with a female stylist who asked him about his wife and kids. Slim joked, “You should’ve said, just to mess with her, ‘They’re gone. She left me, the kids, and the dog.’” Frank told us he just wanted to get out of there at that point. Where he did not really say much about Stan’s sexuality, here Slim had no problem joking with Frank about his “wife.” To me, this suggests that Slim negotiates “difference” much like he does everything else—by selecting a particular reaction based on the audience and the situation. Afterwards, I mentioned to Slim that he never seems to treat gay people any different than heterosexual people, which, of course, is not the same as simply ignoring sexuality, even when people we both know to be homophobic were present in the shop. He thought about it for a moment and said, “Well, if the homophobes don’t like it, it’s their issue.” In the end, both scenes reflect Slim’s leadership and its influence on the rhythm of the shop. Much like Levi-Strauss’ (1966) bricoleur, Slim must primarily react to and make sense of the various phenomena that flow into the shop. He never starts anything from scratch. It took me a while to understand how power and control operate from this more reactive, rather than proactive, standpoint.

2:48pm

Sharon: Cut & Shave.

Sharon: ...Ok, who cuts your hair?

Sharon: Slliiimmm, telephone.
Slim: This is Slim.

Slim: ...Yeah I was out of town.

Slim: ...Not bad, not bad.

Slim: ...Next Saturday?

Slim: ...Ok, you are scheduled for 10:00am. See you then.

2:53pm

Image 12. Slim in the Past
This image, without the black bars, is taped to the top of the mirror in front of Slim’s barber chair. It was taken at an all-day rock & roll festival where Slim and his colleague, the woman in the striped top posing with him, were cutting hair in a booth. With so much narrative time travelling occurring in his chair, or time machine, Slim frequently directs his clients’ attention to this photograph as a way to contextualize what he looked like in the 1990s. The placement of the image in the mirror means that Slim looks, at least peripherally, at this version of a younger Slim all day long, which serves as a slightly different time warp mirror from the one in which I viewed Louie earlier. Nevertheless, it is one of the more telling artifacts in the shop, so I asked Slim about it during our formal interview:

**Tom:** So, is it like going back in order to make a point, today, with the stories? The longhaired guy, just the way you can point to him and go back in time.

**Slim:** Oh, yeah. It’s a point of reference.

**Tom:** It’s so effective.

**Slim:** It is multi-leveled, it’s a quick way to give them perspective on who I am or something. I use it as some sort of relevance or perspective for being around the younger people—‘this is what I looked like when I was young’—so they don’t just see some gray-haired barber or something. [Slim says in a grizzly, old man’s voice] ‘Careful of me, kid, ‘cuz this will be you in 15 years. That was me, now look at me’ [mutual laughter]. Something like that…

Just as younger clients may make assumptions about Slim, older clients do so as well. Because Slim has so many interests and continues to develop new ones, when people first become clients can influence their own version of Slim. Clients of 25 years
have much different conceptions of Slim than 19-year-old sophomores receiving their first haircuts at the shop. The conversations and stories I heard at the shop during haircuts both reflect and shape multiple versions of Slim including: motorcycle Slim, music Slim, small town Slim, quiet Slim, wild Slim, reflective Slim, animal lover Slim, gruff Slim, tattoo Slim, sensitive Slim, zany Slim, and generous Slim. As we discussed the topic of emotional labor, Slim raised this issue of identity construction:

**Tom:** But they still seem to be getting something human from you and it varies what that is, and it is not that everyone really wants to talk about it as I've learned, but they are getting something. It might be something different for each and every one of them…

**Slim:** Totally. It is the same as whoever I am in their minds or how they perceive me. It is different for each of them and that comes back to the conversation thing because some of them know me in more detail. Maybe more people know the details and chapters of my life. Or have only seen the [film] trailer, a piece of it.

In particular, Slim’s use of a cinematic metaphor is important for a few reasons.

Adam (2004) claims, “Rhythmicity and the past, present and future are culturally malleable whatever the chosen means for telling a story…temporality becomes amenable to ‘editing’” (p. 98). Often, Slim would compare my research to filmmaking by stating that I was “taking it all in” and would eventually edit it into a movie, or a finished dissertation. However, I would say that Slim is the master of temporal editing. Operating from the unique standpoint of the proprietor of the barber shop, or the way station, Slim makes the most of his temporal location in the ever-present into which clients enter and exit one half-hour at a time. Namely, in his narrative time travel, Slim utilizes a non-
linear editing approach to compose stories that jump across time from the future to the past in order make connections and build relationships in the present with his clients. Slim often tells the same stories, but they are never edited the same way because every client is different and the delivery always depends on the present moment in the barber shop (Is the phone ringing? Are there “new” people in the shop? Did the next client arrive early?). As a result, each telling of a story creates a new rhythm that intersects with the overall rhythms of the shop and often contributes to the construction of a different version of Slim.

2:59pm

Travis, the guy who missed his appointment earlier, arrives just in time for his new appointment with Lester. On his way toward Lester’s chair, Travis tells Slim he is sorry for no-showing his morning appointment and hands him something. Slim smiled and thanked him and returned to cutting his older white male client William’s hair. The next week when Slim and I were eating Middle Eastern food in The Back, I asked him what Travis gave him. A little smirk came across Slim’s face and he said, “Five bucks.” I laughed and shook my head. It is equally funny and depressing because Travis made a bit of a show about his seemingly apologetic gesture, so I figured it was a twenty dollar bill since it was a pretty bold move to no-show Slim and then make another appointment the same day with Lester.

3:28pm

Slim: Did you notice that?

Tom: What?

Slim: The door. He just locked it.
**Tom:** On the side latch?

**Slim:** Yeah, it’s subconscious; they hang out in the doorway and then push the button without thinking about it. I’m surprised you didn’t notice.

**Tom:** [Laughing] My job is to get up and close the door 10 times a day when they leave it open. I didn’t know I had to watch the lock, too.

4:02pm

A white, suburban dad brought in his two sons, one of whom was in town from boarding school, for haircuts. The father had been in earlier in the week for his haircut. The sons were very quiet, the younger one was almost surly. Mostly, it was in the short, terse answers to the father’s awkward attempts to engage them that I could hear and sense the emotional tension in the family dynamic because it was such a radical departure from the more laidback, yet energetic flow of shop conversation.

Whereas most clients adapted to the conversational flow of the shop, this family brought their own communication practices into the shop, which created something of a barrier to engagement with the rest of us. It was the lack of interactive conversation on their part, and the phone not ringing for once, that allowed Slim the space and time to tell the “towel story” in its entirety. These haircuts occurred when I brought in my computer and scanner to make a digital version of a note that appears later in this chapter. The note is kept inside the storage cabinet by Slim’s chair, underneath the phone and appointment book. It does not come out too often, and I had only heard the story once before. Realizing this was an important shop text, I did not want to take any chances of damaging it or losing it, so I scanned it at the shop.
4:29pm

As I was busy setting up the equipment (my computer and scanner), the second son climbed in the chair and Slim started to tell this story as a way to explain what I was doing with all this computer equipment in the back of the shop. Since I knew what was coming, I recorded the story on my smartphone. At that time, the satellite radio had been tuned into the Motown channel and The Supremes song, “Come See About Me” (Holland, Dozier, & Holland, 1964) was more than noticeable when I eventually listened to the audio recording of the story. Slim and Diana Ross appeared to share the stage, so the lyrics are blended in with Slim’s story to re-create this effect:

*Come see about me*

*I've been crying*

'Cause I'm lonely for you

[The front window was broken] on a Friday, and the guy from the glass company came and measured the windows on Monday. I came in on Tuesday and the towel I had placed over the plywood was gone off of the window from the outside. And I thought, “Man, they're even stealing the towel off the window.”

*Smiles have all turned to tears*

*But tears won't wash away the fears*

I came in the shop and I looked at my surveillance camera. At 6:30 that morning, a guy walked past, and kind of stopped, looked at the window, and then he put his bags down. He was carrying two cloth, re-usable grocery bags filled to the gills. Long story short, he stole the towel. Yeah, it was a nice towel [in response to client]. So, I saw that and then got started on my day and probably about 10:30 or 11:00am, he stops in.
That you're never ever gonna return
To ease the fire that within me burns
It keeps me crying, baby for you
Keeps me sighin', baby for you

He puts the bags down over there [by the waiting chairs] and he sits over here [on the bench] and says, “Hey, Slim, do you remember me? I used to go to your old, ex-business partner to get my hair cut and I've been out of town for awhile.” And all the while I have someone in my chair and I'm thinking, “How am I going to deal with this? Just confront him or whatnot?”

So won't you hurry?
Come on boy, see about me
(Come see about me)
See about you, baby
(Come see about me)

So, he is talking all this gibberish. He's been out of town, his wife left him, and he lost his car, blah, blah, blah. If I were to guess, he might have been in jail or something. I don't know, I can't say that part is true, but whatever.

I've given up my friends just for you
My friends are gone and you have too
No peace shall I find
Until you come back and be mine

So, when he gets done talking and I say, “Hey, do you happen to have a towel there? In one of your bags or something?” You know, a little hint but not necessarily
accusative. And, without missing a beat, man, he says, “Yeah, I got it from the gym this morning” [everyone in the shop laughs].

*No matter what you do or say*

*I'm gonna love you anyway*

I said, “Oh, ok, because I thought you might have taken it off my window.” And he says, “Oh, why, what happened to your window?” It's kind of obvious that it's broken.

*Keep on crying, baby for you*

*I'm gonna keep sighin', baby for you*

*So come on hurry*

*Come on and see about me*

*(Come see about me)*

*See about your baby*

*(Come see about me)*

And then goes on, without hesitation, he says, “Oh, can I get a haircut Friday?” and I say, “No.” He's like, “Why not?” And I didn't say because you stole my towel! I said, “I’m not gonna be here” or something like that.

*Sometimes up*

*Sometimes down*

*My life's so uncertain*

*With you not around*

So, then he gets up and pretty much just immediately leaves and there was one guy in my chair, and one guy sitting over there, and as he [the towel thief] leaves I say, “That guy just stole a towel off my window this morning.”
From my arms you maybe out of reach

But my heart says, you're here to keep

They're like, “What?” So I showed them the surveillance video and the one kid says, “He is wearing the same thing!” And I said, “Yeah, because that just happened 3 hours ago, 4 hours ago. He’s wearing the same thing because it happened this morning.”

Keeps me crying, baby for you

Keep on, keep on crying, baby for you

So won't you hurry

Come on boy, see about me

(Come see about me)

See about your baby

(Come see about me)

You know, I’m so lonely

(Come see about me)

So, a few days later, I came in on a Saturday morning and he had left me a nasty note. And, Tom, is [currently scanning the note], he is the guy who is doing his field observations who is writing his dissertation about informal education and communication in the barber shop and watching how I manage my time and so on and so forth. So, the guy left this message on the door.

I love you only

(Come see about me)

See about your baby

(Come see about me)
So, of course, I checked the surveillance and it’s the same guy, he pulled right up out front and sat in the car, turned on his dome light, wrote the note, and put it on the door. I haven’t seen him ever since. It’s just a silly story about how far some one will go...It never ceases to amaze me what people will do sometimes...He wasn’t homeless, he might have been delusional, but he’s more halfway house delusional.

_Hurry, hurry._
The note reads: “Pussy [illegible word] face [Slim] – 12/11, If I ever see your white, pussy ass fake blonde [illegible word] hair...outside of this poor excuss [sic] of a barber... Make up... you little c**tch!"
shop, I will kick your silly white, slim ball ass. Man up…you little bitch! [drawing of smiling face].”

_In our interview, Slim provided the following bit of backstory and perspective to the towel story, the note itself—and its apparent misspelling of the word slimy—provided the perfect pseudonym for Slim in this dissertation:_

Most of the time, even the crazy, chaotic stuff that goes on around here I mean, yeah, it’s frustrating as hell to get your window busted and get called at three in the morning and have to come down here at three in the morning on Friday and board the thing up and be back here at seven in the morning to start the day.

That’s not a very good story [laughs] but that is part of it— but that is not the part I choose to tell people about. It’s a bummer, and its not entertaining, but I guess just even the wackiness of getting the towel ripped off and the note, um, maybe I could spin that in a negative way too and be angry because he stole my towel… I think I remember the details because in my head I’m going, really, what is going on? The wackiness of it. I mean I think that’s why I like the wacky stories is because I can’t believe it or something. There is some sort of an element of humor and maybe, like you said, some moral or parable, I don’t know.

_There is not much analysis to add to this scene. It demonstrates Slim’s ability to transform bizarre, even painful, experiences into stories that serve as entertaining texts for this willy-nilly environment. Much like the story of Louie the ghost, it can’t be explained in reasonable terms; therefore, the metaphor of the oracle best shows how Slim interprets and transforms unpredictable phenomena into the unique stories that he tells his clients._

197
4:57pm

Phone rings.

Slim: Cut & Shave.

Slim: What’s up, Scott?

Slim: Oh, I’m sorry to hear that…

Slim: …Well, I hope it works out.

Slim: …I guess it makes sense that you need to cancel your 6:30 tonight..

Slim: …Do you want to make another appointment now or just wait to see what happens?

Slim: …Ok, then, maybe I will hear from you next week.

5:04pm

Neal, a white male in his early thirties, works at The College, and has been a client for about two years. He is a good illustration of the less-talkative constituency of Slim’s clientele. I only saw a couple of clients (the “relaxers”) who literally turn themselves off while in the chair by closing their eyes and acting as if they were asleep. Most of the silent types are white males in their twenties who remain fully engaged and participatory; they just do not talk a lot after the initial thesis stage of the haircut.

Slim: Hey, Neal, how are you today?

Neal: Not bad. You?

Slim: Yeah, I was out of town last week. Doing what we did last time?

Neal: Yeah, #3 blade on top, #2 on the sides.

Slim: Got it.

[A good minute or two pass without comment]
Slim: So, what do you have going on today?

Neal: Not much. Just running a few errands.

Slim: Sounds productive. Have you seen any rain out there?

Neal: No. So far, so good.

5:17pm

Phone rings.

Lester: Cut & Shave…

Lester: Slim, it’s your better three-quarters…

Slim: Hello…

Slim: Cutting hair….

Slim: I’m really slammed right now, I’m gonna have to call you back later.

[More silence as Slim resumes the haircut; then Slim asks me a couple of unrelated questions before speaking again to Neal].

Slim: Ok, Neal, take a look.

Neal: Looks fine.

Slim: All right, then.

Neal: Thanks, Slim.

Slim: Thank you, Neal. Have a good one.

This dialogue accounts for all that was said during the haircut. It only lasted about 20 minutes as less conversation usually results in a faster haircut. Whenever Slim mentions these haircuts it is usually in terms of word count as in, “Do you remember that guy from yesterday, he probably said 10 words the whole time?” These haircuts are awkward for me because I could not really watch the action in the chair because the 10-
worder and I would habitually face each other, so I would often stare out the front window or take notes on my phone to avoid uncomfortable eye contact. Customarily, I would try not to bother Slim with questions during these cuts because he seemed to go so far off in his mind. Later, I asked him about these moments:

**Tom:** Ok, so you gave it a fair shot at starting a conversational fire, and it’s kind of clear that it wasn’t going there, and you’re not insulted, and so what happens to you? I mean, I’ll see you from the outside, and it looks like you are going somewhere mentally but you’re still very focused on the cut-

**Slim:** Oh, sure, yeah, I can still do that. I can be thinking about a conversation with my wife or shop dramas. Yeah, I can phase out and still be there. That’s just staying in the here and now and now for 10 to 12 hours…[Long tangent about a client.]

**Tom:** How does that happen—going to those different places and still multi-tasking?

**Slim:** That’s a good question because it’s not like its linear, we don’t think linear anyway. And trying to stay in the here and now is effected by the character of the person and the topic of the conversation. So, that’s kind of an interactive communication in itself. It’s like, “Ok, Slim, stay here, you know.”

*I would estimate that a good 10-15% of the haircuts are similar to Neal’s, maybe not quite so spare, but definitely quiet. Granted, these quiet clients are not exciting to observe because they reveal so little in terms of spoken and body language, but they are very important to the shop’s stability and rhythm. Time takes many forms in the shop, but it can always be equated with money. In addition to the short duration of these haircuts, the 10-worders tend to wear their hair short in length, so they have to make frequent visits, making their visits doubly rewarding in terms of time and money. Speaking in more*
temporal and rhythmic terms, the silence provides Slim an opportunity to experience time more reflectively as he can focus on his thoughts instead of conversation—and it gives his voice a rest. Lastly, these appointments serve a rhythmic purpose by acting as silences, or valleys, between the peaks of the more intense, demanding clients. Over the course of each day, a different rhythm develops based on the arrangement of quiet and talkative clients. Three quiet clients in a row followed by a talkative one creates a much different rhythm than three talkative clients followed by a quiet one. Because clients determine the times of the haircut, Slim has little control over the day’s arrangement in terms of this aspect of rhythm; therefore, everyday is perceptively different.

5:26pm

White guy dressed in contemporary fashion walks in but does not sit down.

**Fashion Guy:** I was wondering if you had any Lay-rite pomade?

**Lester:** Do want the yellow or brown jar?

**Fashion Guy:** Brown. That is the super-hold, right?

**Lester:** Yeah. You can pay Slim.

**Slim:** Hey, how are you?

**Fashion Guy:** Good, Slim. How have you been?

**Slim:** Busy, I just got back from a family vacation.

**Fashion Guy:** Sounds interesting, here’s the cash.

**Slim:** Thanks, man.
As he developed his argument that the primary responsibility of educators involved the establishment and maintenance of environments in which students learn by experience, Dewey (1938/1997) stressed the need for curricular planning to stimulate particular types of experiences because “unless experience is so conceived…it is wholly in the air” (pp. 27-8). For better or worse, experience at The Cut & Shave is wholly in the air. My notes to the photographer of the included images suggested: “The fans convey
the circular/cyclical idea of time in continuous motion. There is a line from a poem titled ‘Barbershop’ by Holden (2000) that reads, ‘Above us, a fan revolves, a tireless oar recirculating the air like orange drink in a Woolworth’s five & dime’ (p. 27). There are three fans in all and we might be able to do a long, overhead shot if we get the ladder from the basement.” Once again, my intention with this photograph was to convey symbols of time, but the image had more to say about bodies and the senses.

The location of The Cut & Shave within The City is favorable because it is centrally located. The location of The Cut & Shave on the first floor of its multi-use building, however, can be problematic. There is only one way and in and out of the shop; that is, through the front door. While there is a door on one side of the building, it has long been blocked off, presumably for security reasons. There are no windows that open, so there is no cross-breeze in the shop. All this is to say that ventilation, or the circulation of air, is a real issue in the shop. The three ceiling fans are always in motion and if the weather is nice, then the door will be left open. A few years ago, Slim paid for a new air conditioning unit to keep the room comfortable because the humidity around the shop exists in the air and collects on the body. This spring and summer, the air conditioner began to malfunction and was an endless source of stress to Slim. In this image, one can partially see the air conditioner on the right side of the shop where the top of the wall meets the ceiling; it is blocked by the fan closest to the viewer and the back of the shop.

Lefebvre (2004) accentuated the role of the body in rhythmanalysis. In the following passage, he emphasizes the importance of the senses to the rhythmanalist:

He [sic] thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but in lived temporality. He does not neglect, therefore… smell, scents, [and] the impressions that are so strong in
the child and other living beings, which society atrophies, neutralizes in order to arrive at the colorless, the odorless, and the insensible. Yet smells are part of rhythms, reveal them: odors of the morning and evening, of hours of sunlight or darkness, of rain or fine weather. The rhythm analyst observes and retains smells as traces that mark out rhythms. (p. 20)

It is these traces of rhythm that are wholly in the air at The Cut & Shave. I must make it clear that in no way am I insinuating The Cut & Shave smells bad; I only seek to convey how the presence and movement of dozens of bodies in a small space create distinctive scents. Following Lefebvre (2004), I view these smells as traces of experience and rhythm worthy of attention.

In the literature review chapter for this dissertation, I discuss how the smells of childhood barber shops trigger nostalgic memories. Today, the smells of hair maintenance products are not as dominant as in the past. For example, Lester uses more products on his clients than the other barbers. At the end of the haircut, he will apply Club Man powder or any number of aftershave-like tonics that have somewhat traditional medicinal smells. Slim tends to use pomades more than anything else. They are sold by the jar and have a semi-solid consistency and have more contemporary vanilla and lemon smells. The electric clippers, hair dryers, and coloring treatments all contribute their own scents to the shop. I often felt uncomfortable bringing in lunch because even when kept in The Back, the lack of a ceiling in this area allows the aroma to permeate the shop and I did not want to offend the clients. Occasionally, the barbers have to deal with the unpleasant body odor of clients but, for me, one of the more unwelcomed sights (and
smells) was someone lighting up a cigarette outside the shop, smoking it, and then coming in for a haircut. The smell would hang in the air.

5:43pm

A bedraggled/disheveled white man stumbles in through the front door along with the smell of cheap booze:

Drunk man: Hey, buddy, how far isss the Illiquor storrrre?

Slim: You got about a block to go. Head north.

Drunk man: Ok, thanks, buddy. I been walking awwwilllee.

Slim: Good luck.

Drunk man: [After turning to walk out and making it halfway through the doorway]:

Which wayyy againnn?

Slim: [Pointing vehemently] Left, left.

Drunk man: [Giving the “thumbs up” sign] I see it!

5:51pm

“Hey, knock it off, everybody,” Slim yelled in an unusually loud voice. He had been talking to a white lawyer in his late thirties about wills or estates, some kind of future planning. I had not been paying too close attention as I was trying to figure out whether I was going to beat the rain since I rode my bicycle to the shop today. Lester had a younger, Asian college student in his chair. Not having heard that tone in Slim’s voice before, I instantly looked up from my chair to see two uniformed officers of the law steadily approaching the front door.

They entered the shop and walked toward the far end of the room, near the Back. No one just walks to the back of the room without saying anything. They matched the
stereotype of the stern, white cops perfectly. With their matching, pressed uniforms and hats, which revealed blonde crew cuts at the baselines, they looked exactly alike except for the fact that one was in his 50s and the other in his late 20s. Everyone in the shop stared at these two. Slim asked somewhat hesitantly, “How are you two doing today?” “Fine,” they replied. “We’re looking for haircuts.”

Slim asked Lester if he had anyone scheduled, but it was understood that it did not really matter even if he did. “Yeah, we can fit you in,” Slim responded. “You can have a seat, it won’t be too long.” The cops did not budge and continued to stand in the back at full attention. Slim’s client scheduled for 6:00pm, Jason, a skinny white guy in his early 30s with longer hair arrived a few minutes late and appeared startled to walk in and see the law. It did not appear to faze him that he was now in for a bit of a wait.

After a minute or two, Slim even stopped cutting hair to walk over and clear the magazines off the bench, but the officers still refused to sit. Eventually, the younger one asked, “Who plays the guitar?” Fairly surprised at the question coming out of the blue, Slim said, “It’s mine. Do you play?” The younger cop said that he used to play a little so Slim told him the amplifier was turned on if he wanted to use the guitar. It was a bit of a shock to see the young cop walk over, sit down and start playing blues rock lines like a poor man’s Stevie Ray Vaughn.

When he finished playing after a few minutes, Slim inquired about his musical background and then the conversation started to pick up a bit all around. The lawyer in Slim’s chair asked the older cop a question about the top speed of the police cruisers. Lester finished up with his client and the younger cop took a seat in the chair and proceeded to explain to Lester exactly how he wanted his haircut by leaning in toward the
mirror, pointing to areas of his head. It was obvious he was concerned with his receding hairline.

The older cop took his seat in Slim’s first chair. Slim placed the cape over the cop’s chest and asked to remove his Bluetooth earpiece. But it was not a Bluetooth earpiece, it was a hearing aid. It was a bit awkward, but Slim is pretty smooth at handling those kinds of issues by tactfully addressing them and then moving on. At this point, both cops were in the barber chairs with their hats obviously removed and all symbols of their power veiled, other than the shiny shoes. Anyone walking in would only see a couple of stiff guys with real conservative haircuts. Vulnerabilities were revealed, power was masked, and the dynamic in the room began to shift. Both Slim and Lester tried to establish connections by mentioning the police officers in their extended families. It was a strange doubling affect: two cops, two barbers, two older guys, two younger guys. Each chair diverged into separate conversations.

6:21pm

Phone rings.

Slim: Cut & Shave.

Slim: Hey Don.

Slim: ... I do have 1:30 open on Tuesday.

Slim: Ok, Don, I’ll see you then.

Mostly, I sat and watched the scene unfold. I did not say anything until Slim told them what I was doing in the shop and then the discussion turned, temporarily, to barber shops. It turns out the officers were not locals, they were in town for training and decided they needed haircuts. They first went to Rick’s salon across the street, but he was busy
and they did not seem to cotton to the atmosphere over there based on the way they compared it negatively to The Cut & Shave once they settled in a bit.

By the end of their haircuts, the conversation was flowing at a semi-regular pace. The older cop even made an interesting comparison between Slim (and his visible tattoos) and himself when he pointed out that they both are probably judged fairly quickly by their appearances. Once the capes had been removed and the hats put back on their heads, the rhythm shifted back around to its less convivial, original state.

Like nearly all other newcomers, they were flustered by the no credit cards policy and began fumbling amongst themselves for cash. Lester was not quite sure how to handle the payment issue. Are you supposed to give cops free haircuts? What about the local cop who gets his haircut twice a month and who always pays full price? There was no precedent of which I was aware. Lester deferred to Slim who suggested a discount price. The cops refused and said they could not accept the discount. Slim said, “It is a gesture of respect.” They would not take a discount but, by barely having enough cash to pay the regular price, I do not think they had much leftover for the tip. After they left, we all let out a collective sigh of relief.

_In my interview with Slim, I brought up this scene. Here is an excerpt of the conversation between Slim and me:_

**Tom:** There have been very few points when you are not mostly on top of the rhythm of the place. But then there is the one time when the cops just came in—

**Slim:** [Laughs heartily].

**Tom:** And messed with the rhythms. When you put it in terms of rhythms, the cops’ scene makes more sense now.

208
**Slim:** Yeah, it’s like Carnival, then [makes dramatic screeching brakes noise].

**Tom:** Because they wouldn't follow the codes of the shop, the way things work and then…

**Slim:** My paranoia [laughs, then in mock fearful voice]: “You guys want a haircut? Please?!?”

*What struck me the most about this scene is how quickly the rhythm changed not just overall in the shop, but for everyone in the shop. For example, the client in the chair when the cops arrived changed his whole demeanor. I even felt myself tense up and become hyper-vigilant about my movements so as not to attract any attention; of course, that made me stick out as an oddly quiet, tense fellow sitting in the corner chair. Moods and rhythms change quickly around the shop, but never so severely. Obviously, power was involved, but every haircut is a power struggle to a certain degree. The institutional power of the cops demonstrated that despite its intimacy, the shop is really no different than any place else when it comes to vulnerability to the kind of power that exceeds the type vested in everyday one-on-one struggles with typical clients.*

**6:22pm**

*Phone rings.*

**Slim:** Cut & Shave.

**Slim:** …No, I’m sorry we’re technically almost closed right now. I’m just finishing up for the week.

**Slim:** …I can schedule something for next week…

**Slim:** …Ok, when you get your calendar figured out, call me next week.

**Slim:** …Have a good night.
6:24pm

Slim finally starts on his 6:00 client, Jason, after feverishly apologizing for the delay. Jason told Slim he understood and he had witnessed nearly the entire cop scene. In retrospect, it was fortunate that Slim never filled the 6:30 slot that was cancelled a few hours ago. We spent the rest of Jason’s haircut talking about what a strange day it had been before closing the shop at just a few minutes past 7pm.

7:03pm

Phone rings.

No one answers, the caller does not leave a message.

Coda

Candy, usually in the form of chewing gum or suckers, is an age-old barber shop incentive for children to behave during their haircuts. If you do not cry, then you will get some candy. I saw many more adults than children eat the suckers in the shop, however. As the day comes to a close in this ethnographic place of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop, it is fitting to end with an image of the sucker jar. The fact that it sits in front of the creepy 1950s Howdy-Doody puppet while resting on top of the 1990 almanac is somehow oddly appropriate for a place in which random temporal elements join together to create rhythm.
Image 15. Doll, Almanac, and Suckers
Chapter 5: Findings, Part 2

Preamble

Following the fairly ambitious attempt to evoke a day in the life of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop as an ethnographic place, this short chapter serves as a bookend, or companion piece, to the previous long chapter. Specifically, each of these two chapters utilizes Richardson’s (2005) creative analytic process methodology for the same purpose; that is, to creatively represent the relationship of Slim, his shop, time, and rhythm, but with nearly diametrical approaches. Following this short introductory explanation, I present the poem, “The sound of the blades,” that I composed entirely of words spoken by Slim in a variety of contexts during haircuts and in our interview. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I worked to edit this text with the assistance of my peer de-briefer and poetry authority, Philip. In total, I revised approximately 10 versions of this poem before settling on this final version.

Utilizing the same methodological approach as the last chapter, I employ bricolage to create another evocative representation of The Cut & Shave. Rather than assembling a variety of scenes from my fieldwork, I reduce of the scale of my approach by taking Slim’s very specific words and phrases and arranging them in a poetic form. In their economy and precise word choice, poems inspire readers to use their imagination and creativity to interpret subjective meanings. In an article reflecting on her experience translating her own research materials into poetry, Richardson (1993) claims, “a poem as
‘findings’ resituates ideas of validity and reliability from ‘knowing’ to ‘telling’” (p. 704). Building on the metaphor of the oracle discussed at length in Chapter 1, with this poem I attempt to provide something of a spoken oracular pronouncement of sorts told by Slim, about his own experience and in his own words.

Of course, this is obviously a paradoxical claim. Although, I showed Slim versions of the poem, it is entirely my own creation composed of words Slim did not know I was planning to turn into a poem. Once again, issues of representation and validity are problematized in my effort to evoke the overall complexity of the rhythmic operations of the shop. To not so much resolve these issues, but address them, all I can really do is state my intentions with this poem. Somewhat cryptically about this process of turning research materials into poetry, Richardson (1993) states, “the poem is a whole which makes sense of its parts; and a poem is parts that anticipate, shadow, undergird the whole. That is, poems can be experienced simultaneously as both whole and partial” (p. 704). In an effort to be direct, and not coy, I offer a list of the “parts,” or themes may be the better term, that I hope the “whole” of this poem—and this dissertation—convey: sensory perception, the union of the mind and the body, barber lingo, situated and experiential learning, reciprocity, the importance of language despite its instability, repetition, the inevitability of change, time in its numerous forms, respect for diversity, fluid identity construction, and a solid appreciation for the barbering trade.

Where the more than 70 page representation of the shop as an ethnographic place was composed to be read as if it were a day-long ride in Slim’s Time Machine (see Chapter 4), this 1-page poem is more like an answer from the Oracle to my first research question: How does time operate in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop? All messages from
oracles are riddles in some way, but the poem is not meant to confuse or complicate the reader. Just as with the metaphor-filled introduction, the deconstructed literature review, the multi-layered methodology chapter, and the narrative findings chapter, this supplemental findings chapter seeks to provide yet another new perspective on time in the shop. Another stripe around the pole, if you will.
Not a Found Poem, But a Findings Poem

The sound of the blades

I’ve been doing this for 30 years.
I stand here 10 hours a day,
I feel it more than I did 10 years ago.

I was born here,
grew up in a couple towns nearby.

When I got into this business
I used to be kind of reserved.
But I learned,
in this business what you do is talk.
We’re here to fill each other’s gaps.

I have a pretty strong clientele built up.
I learn about their lives.
They learn about mine.
Doing what we usually do.

Everybody takes a different path,
it’s all in the timing.
One thing I’ve figured out –
They’re gonna judge you either way.

I’m used to the sound of the blades.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Preamble

If a spiral continues to endlessly turn and grow, how does it ever reach a conclusion? At the end of each day, at least a barber pole can be turned off with the flip of a switch. This dissertation presents a bit more of a challenge to conclude, especially because it directly follows the two unconventional findings chapters. My authorial intention with these creative and analytic compositions was to evoke the rhythmic and temporal experiences of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop as I interpreted them. Readers who patiently invested the time to read the entire document will make their own determinations of the merits of this rhetorical and methodological approach. Throughout the dissertation, my objective was to consistently both show and tell my understandings of a variety of temporal experiences in the barber shop. Overall, this strategy either worked or it did not work. Therefore, having irrevocably staked my claim in this non-traditional approach, I shift perspectives in this chapter to review several issues that address the importance, implications, and applications of this research as it stands. First, I directly answer the two research questions, next I present another story of a haircut, and then I discuss a few implications of rhythmanalysis related to learning, race, and emotional labor. Lastly, I apply the findings of this dissertation to an analysis of issues facing Slim and The Cut & Shave within the broader contemporary cultural context.
My claims regarding the minimal amount of direct analysis of the findings chapters are not meant to imply in any way that these findings lack relevance. Instead, the issue is more that creative representations are, to a large degree, meant to speak for themselves. Additionally, and somewhat contradictorily, several important elements of the chapters did receive immediate analysis in the form of commentary within the chapters. Still, I do discuss sections of the findings chapters throughout this last chapter.

At this point in the text, with my efforts to demonstrate the overall rhythmic operations of the shop now nearly complete, I can focus on what this more global representation of the shop reveals about the local, individual parts that compose it. Although they do not appear in traditional, separate sections, my goal in this chapter is to address components of the expected categories of summary, implications, limitations, and future directions. Because this research is interdisciplinary in nature, the methodological and epistemological implications obviously will vary across the disciplines. Therefore, simply put, I hope to demonstrate the importance of this research. To begin this process, I believe it is important to answer the research questions in a direct and efficient manner, rather than dance around them throughout the conclusion. So, then, how does time operate in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop?

Returning to the Questions

Answers to Research Question #1

Time exists in many forms in the shop. Specifically, time exists in the following forms: linear or clock time, cyclical time, the past, the present, the future, time as money, slow time, fast time, fun time, angry time, absurd time, morning time, afternoon time, historical time, and nostalgia; and these are only a few of the more obvious examples.
The primary purpose of this dissertation has been to demonstrate how all these forms of time—and the activities that constitute, and are constituted by, all these forms of time—tend to be experienced and negotiated rhythmically. Despite its elusive nature, and because of its elusive nature, rhythm helps to explain how Slim navigates and responds to the experiences that constitute time in its many simultaneous and conflicting forms. Due to its invisibility, intimate ties to space, and immanence in human bodies, time can easily fade into the background or seem to disappear. Rhythm, forever impossible to separate from music, forces people to feel and sense rather than to only think and see life in all its temporal forms. In music we can hear rhythm, but in life we feel and sense rhythm.

In the barber shop, all forms of time are important but the looming, constant, and almost tangible presence of linear, clock time plays a dominant, unavoidable role. Cyclical time explains how days turn into nights and back into days, clients appear at certain intervals, and the recurring events—often listed on the calendar—impact life in the shop. However, clock time is always present, always consistent; outside of planetary movement, cyclical time is not quite as consistent. Thus, the intersections of linear time and cyclical time often produce unusual rhythmic patterns. Rhythms in the shop are unpredictable, messy, and always overlapping, but the clock serves as a steady beat pulsing underneath each and every barber shop rhythm. As a result, clock time operates as a type of baseline with which to establish a rhythmic equilibrium. In terms of temporality, Slim may narratively travel back and forth through the past, present, and future during the 30 minutes of clock time that defines the average haircut, but clock time always dictates the arrival of the next client. Slim’s years of experience and astute sensorial and temporal perceptions provide him with the means to work with and against
the parameters of clock time to experience time in several forms simultaneously. As a bricoleur and as a business owner, Slim works with and responds to people interactively to create and maximize temporal experiences that align with the demands of the clock. No matter where and how far Slim may travel during a haircut, he must return in time for the next haircut to maintain equilibrium. In sum, time operates in many forms in The Cut & Shave Barber shop; because these forms operate concurrently and in opposition, time is best understood through rhythm.

**Answers to Research Question #2**

What influence did methodology play in this study of a complex, everyday site? Methodology influenced every aspect of this study from start to finish. In particular, I will discuss the need to utilize multiple tools, issues of representation, and the composition of the text. Other than Slim, nearly every object of study in this dissertation is invisible, intangible, or unspoken including time, temporality, rhythm, emotion, sensory perception, and body language. I cannot imagine how such objects could be investigated using conventional positivist methods or even by strictly textbook ethnographic methods. Buried in a footnote to Levi-Strauss’s (1966) essay on bricolage, a translator’s note offers an intriguing definition of the bricoleur that accurately represents my approach to the methodology of this dissertation: “The bricoleur has no precise equivalent in English. He is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man, but, as the text makes clear, he is of a different standing from, for instance, the English ‘odd job man’ or handyman” (p. 17). The suitability of this definition to methodological approach becomes evident if you consider that the problem I was committed to solving—how time operates in The Cut & Shave—
required me to use a variety of research materials, several unique tools, and my own experience and skills. There was no preexisting template or blueprint for this task, and the methods, materials, and tools were selected and applied in ways that I will now explain.

A case can be made that my multi-part methodological approach needlessly complicates this work. From my bricoleur’s perspective, I would firmly argue otherwise as my “handyman’s” (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17) task here was not a simple matter; therefore, in order to research complex human activity, I required a number of tools, each intended for a specific task. The reasoning varies little from Slim’s approach to cutting hair, as his tools include the primary clippers, the outliner, the all-purpose shears, the thinning shears, and the straight razor. Each is used at a specific point in the haircut for a logical reason. My tools, including rhythm analysis, sensory methodology, and creative analytic process ethnography, were selected and employed to solve particular dilemmas and challenging questions in the research/job site. Early in the research process, I committed to an overall bricolage methodology but not to the exact three methodologies I ended up using. Once I was in the research site, I was able to experiment with more traditional qualitative methods such as participant observation, interviewing, and taking field notes. When complications arose, such as the issues with the consent forms, I was able to modify theses traditional methods and take up more experimental methodologies. The flexibility of the bricolage methodology provided room and justification to solve problems creatively almost on the fly.

Issues of representation arise in all qualitative studies, but these issues are exceedingly problematic in this research on concepts and objects that often by their natures defy representation. While I was still only a client of Slim’s, I struggled to
understand the complexity of the shop, so I read extensively about barbers and hair
maintenance in general and collected numerous sources in the hope, as Levi-Strauss
(1966) says of the bricoleur’s junk pile, that “they may always come in handy” (p. 18).
Once I started to spend time in the shop as a researcher and started to focus on the non-
representational elements, it became obvious that I would need to be creative and
systematic in my effort to translate the dynamic barber shop experience onto the page.
Therefore, metaphors, photographs, stories, poems, novels, personal narratives, critical
analyses, films, observations, scientific studies, and interviews were all used at
appropriate points to represent, infer, but mostly in an effort to evoke. But even as I
emphasized that my intention was to evoke, rather than directly represent, temporal
experience in the barber shop, I struggled with the accuracy of evocation as a
representational practice. Specifically, I believe that the findings chapters appear much
more organized, or neat, than the actual activity in the shop. Similarly, no good solution
could be found to demonstrate Slim’s multi-tasking, so events appear very linear and
sequential. Most importantly, rhythm often remains elusive and gets lost in the dramatic
nature of the contents of the findings. To address these shortcomings, I placed
considerable effort into the construction of the entire dissertation.

The bricoleur as handyman metaphor is best suited for discussion of how the text
was constructed. Because bricolage, rhythmanalysis, sensory methodology, and creative
analytic process ethnography are all combinations of theory and methodology, I sought to
reflect the overlapping relationship among theory, methods, and data within the structure
of the entire text. Admittedly, with so many research materials and so many tools, it was
a big construction job. My principal architectural objective was to make the text evoke,
and resonate with, the barber shop experience in both content and form. Clifford and Marcus (1986) claim, “it is not only about writing beautifully, or rendering people and events poignantly. And poetics don’t license texts without order. The challenge is to put things together inventively, to order them in a way that reorders readers’ experience” (p. xii). My intent to incorporate creativity and order in the structure of the text helps to explain the use of the spiral form.

The spiral and the barber pole appeared throughout my research in the field and in the library, and within the dissertation it serves specific structural purposes. To explain my application of this spiral metaphor to the textual composition process, I offer yet another metaphor. My rhetorical objective was to walk the reader up a spiral staircase featuring a supporting central post symbolizing time and rhythm. Each step up the stairs provided a different view of the post/subject matter that built on the previous perspectives. Although I employed fairly traditional chapter divisions, I attempted to circle through each of the chapters in ways that forced the reader to look at time and rhythm from a number of angles. Occasionally, it was necessary to take a few steps down to re-examine certain views, but then the text always resumed its upward path. Purposefully, I avoided the use of footnotes or endnotes to maintain the readers’ consistent focus on the flow of each page. Having now nearly reached the end of the text, we look back at the entire journey upward from the top of the spiral structure. In sum, the bricolage methodology impacted every aspect of this project from the planning stage, through the fieldwork, and into the construction of the dissertation.

**Haircut Story, Reversed**

In the days leading up to the end of my observation period in the shop, Slim said
that he wanted me to cut his hair. Part of me thought he was joking, but the rest of me knew he was serious. Much like the way Slim, on rare occasion, declined to cut certain hairstyles because they were unfamiliar to him (and he never wants to do anyone a disservice), I said I did not want to screw up his hair. But Slim’s hair is very short and Lester was to serve as my instructor, so there was no getting out of it. I did not know it at the time, but this haircut served as my combined final examination and graduation ceremony signaling the end of my barber shop education. My research agenda never involved becoming a barber. But, after all, I had sat there for a number of weeks, a few feet away from Slim as he cut head after head, and if I didn’t know at least the basic steps by now, then I had not really been paying attention as a researcher. I had to demonstrate my experiential knowledge. We got started at the end of my next to last day in the shop. From the get-go, the whole scene was spatially disorienting because Slim the Oracle was actually sitting in his own time machine/tripod and I was the one behind him draping the cape over his body.

Side by side, Lester stood next to me as I grabbed the electric clippers and flipped the switch to the on position. The heft of the metal and pulse of the vibrations startled me a bit because Slim is so fluid in his movements that it is easy to forget the clippers are a power tool with considerable mass, much like an electric drill or a saw. I adjusted my grip as I moved my hand to the base of his neckline and began to hesitantly move the clippers up and down. It was a challenge to concentrate with Lester yelling instructions in my ear: “Keep it moving! Smooth strokes!” As I shifted to the side of Slim’s head, I had to bend his ear out of the way and I was immediately cognizant of the touching his body. As a client, I don’t think twice about Slim touching me, and obviously I had watched him
touch people all day long for weeks, but standing over Slim with my face less than a foot away from his face, one hand on his ear and the other holding the clippers against his skull, the physicality of the situation was a bit overwhelming.

But I began to get the hang of using the clippers as I learned the key was to follow the hair patterns. After mowing my way through the sides, I shifted my attention to the top of Slim’s head. I was shocked to see a spiral on his head.

Explanatory tangent:

Hair whorls are the clockwise, or counter-clockwise, spiral growth patterns of hair on the human head, most people have only one; each whorl’s center point, or axis, is usually located near the middle of the crown of the head, but it can be off to the side. Whorls also exist in beards and on the bodies of most mammals including lions, horses, dogs, and mice. The metaphorical significance of Slim’s whorl prompted me to later investigate scientific studies of whorls, which revealed some unusual findings. Over the past several years there has been increased genetic research focused on the relationship of the direction of the human scalp whorl to other human traits, left or right-handedness for example. The fact that 80-90% of human beings are right-handed, heterosexual, and have clockwise hair whorls has lead scientists to investigate the possibility of a connection between these traits and genetic sources. Klar (2003) claims that handedness shares a common genetic mechanism with hair whorl direction. Intriguingly, one study (Beaton & Mellor, 2007) of handedness was co-written with a barber who investigated whorls and handedness by asking clients which hand they use to hammer a nail as he visually examined their scalps to determine the direction of their whorls. In the end, Beaton and Mellor (2007) conclude that while more left-handed people do have counter-
clockwise whorls, “the precise quantitative relationship between handedness and
direction of hair whorl thus remains to be established” (p. 300). In a later study, Klar
(2004) claims “that sexual preference may be influenced in a significant proportion of
homosexual men by a biological/genetic factor that also controls [counter-clockwise]
direction of hair-whorl rotation” (p. 215). However, Rahman, Clarke, and Morera
(2009) found “no difference between heterosexual and homosexual men in the direction
of objectively measured hair whorls” (p. 256). My purpose with this tangent is to suggest
that other people also look for answers and patterns in hair whorls that resist a
consistent scientific and genetic explanation.

As I stood behind the chair and continued to stare at the symbol on Slim’s head
that had steadily come to represent all things barbering to me, I heeded Lester’s advice to
“Follow the lines! Follow the lines!” With the clippers, I traced the spiral on Slim’s
crown outward from its center, each swipe feeling smoother than the last. After finishing
up on top, I tried out the shears for a minute and then switched to another set of clippers
to trim around the ears and the neckline. When I was done, Lester cleaned up the spots
that I missed and Slim ended up looking not half-bad. I believe I passed the final exam.

Structurally, in terms of the composition of the text, this story serves as the
second in a matching set of haircut stories that appear near the beginning and the end of
the dissertation. But the main purpose of the story is to reflect the radical inversion of
perspective that happened during this haircut. I finally got to walk not a mile, but at least
a few steps in Slim’s shoes. Moving from the periphery to the center, I simultaneously
experienced complexity, multi-tasking, and communication in a new, yet more intense
way. With the music playing, Lester yelling instructions at me, Sharon watching me, the
last client of the day laughing at me, the phone ringing, passersby looking at me through the window, power tools vibrating in my hands, Slim’s body under my control, and my eyes on the clock, the whorl on Slim’s head seemed to function as a vortex from which all this activity spun out of control. Every move I made, every word I said, and every thought in my head served as a rhythmic adjustment to the stimulating phenomena at—and in—hand. From the waiting chairs on the side, I did experience, sense, feel, and theorize time, rhythm, and a range of other “data” but momentarily walking in Slim’s shoes confirmed, through direct bodily experience, that my observations and analysis as a researcher had been fairly accurate. For the remainder of the text, I focus on specific examples, lessons, and implications that resulted from my study of time and rhythm in the overall operations of the shop.

**Barber Shop Education**

When I mentioned above that giving Slim a haircut marked the end of my barber shop education, I introduced a helpful term that brings together the various forms of learning that I experienced during my time in The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. In Chapter 1, I provided my conceptions of peripheral, or collateral, learning and education in the barber shop. Specifically, I argued that the barber shop may be analyzed with a variety of learning models because the existence of so much heterogeneous human activity easily lends itself to multiple interpretations; yet haircutting, rather than learning, always remains the primary purpose and activity in the shop. Importantly, it is not only learning that may be examined peripherally, for the lack of a better term, but any of the contributing factors to the multiple rhythms in the shop are also candidates for specialized analysis. Because, by definition, rhythm results from a relationship of time,
place, and energy, it was first necessary to demonstrate what rhythm looks like in the shop as a whole before examining the individual elements that contribute to this whole. Following this section on learning, I will similarly review issues of race and emotional labor as peripheral themes revealed in the larger compilation of the shop’s rhythms.

This section functions as a reckoning, or a settlement of account, of my experience reckoning, or learning about, time in The Cut & Shave. In Chapter 3, I addressed a number of issues that limited my formal research engagement with clients; therefore, I can only ethically and confidently speak of my own experience with learning in the shop. Nonetheless, these numerous learning experiences were invaluable and they significantly shape the epistemological claims of this dissertation. The concept of learning, or reckoning, appears rather straightforward and routine in these lines from the poem, “The sound of the blades”: “I learn about their lives/They learn about mine/Doing what we usually do.” But time reckoning involves observing and then engaging a range of learning processes at appropriate times; it does not just happen. Moreover, I learned many of these processes from watching Slim employ them during his interactions with clients. All in all, I claim that my barber shop education resulted from the study of rhythms and consisted of the following forms of learning: the banking model (Freire, 1993), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), sensory learning (Pink, 2009), and temporal learning (Adam, 2006).

A very interesting form of the banking model of learning occurred in the shop. Every day, sometimes for 8 hours straight, I sat there in the waiting chairs as Slim and the clients deposited information into me. I can neither say how much of this information is 100% true or even valuable to people outside this context nor can I honestly say how
much of it I will retain. However, I can confidently say it was indeed a wealth of information. Since I did not take notes, but still needed to retain information, I had to concentrate fairly intently on the conversations between Slim and his clients because there was never any way to predict who would be an interesting client to listen to or when Slim might provide valuable insight. Slim often commented that I was like a filmmaker sitting there recording everything and later I would go home and edit down all the information. He was right, which may indicate that the banking model does have its value in certain non-school settings. Again, I return to Alexander’s (2003) description of the barber shop as a “cultural thrift store of…information” (p. 106) to emphasize that information is distributed in a number of intentional and unintentional ways in the barber shop. Unlike in schools, were information is often delivered top-down for specific purposes, information sharing in the barber shop is much more democratic and unpredictable. Just as workers in the thrift store never know if a customer is buying a dress for an interview, a Halloween costume, or as material to make curtains, Slim rarely knows how clients will employ the information “banked” in his shop. Likewise, clients do not know how Slim may distribute information they share with him. Further studies could take up this non-school-based re-configuration of the banking model.

As a two-man community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Slim and I co-constructed knowledge every day during my observations. I would run my ideas and theories about certain behaviors and incidents by Slim and then use his insight to gauge and hone my claims. Likewise, he would ask me for my take on client behavior or shop dramas. Some topics were so challenging and absurd, like the visit of Larry the ghost, that even now we still try to figure out these situations when I return to get my hair cut.
The community of practice model typically involves masters and apprentices working together toward a similar purpose. Although our learning was reciprocal, Slim was chiefly the master as he taught me quite a lot about temporality and sensoriality.

It is important to note the difference between time management and the application of temporal learning. Time management typically involves the efficient organization of linear time, where the application of temporal learning involves a multi-layered maneuvering of several elements of time and temporality in everyday life. Adam (2006) explains:

The ability to count, name, number and quantify change processes and repetitions facilitates predictability of the seemingly unpredictable. It allows for anticipation and planning. Thus, time reckoning, the getting to know temporal processes and rhythmic patterns, is also knowledge for practical use. It is know-how knowledge for the structuring, ordering, synchronizing and regulating of social life. Moreover, it is knowledge that engenders a sense of ownership and control. (p. 121)

During the first week of my observations, I actually tried to diligently type into my smartphone the exact times when every significant event happened. Very quickly, I (temporally) learned that time was experienced and negotiated in ways and forms that did not relate strictly to the clock. Upon further review, these detailed notes really did not explain anything. Once I learned how Slim maneuvered temporally, I slowly developed my understanding of how rhythm might be the best way to theorize time in the shop.

Much like with temporal learning, the sensory learning process developed slowly and methodically, but also unexpectedly. Pink (2009) claims, “forms of ethnographic
learning are characteristic of ‘participant sensing,’ where the ethnographer often simultaneously undergoes a series of unplanned everyday life experiences and is concerned with purposefully joining in with whatever is going on in order to become further involved in the practices of the research participants” (p. 66). For me, sensory learning resulted from paying attention to my own body, moods, and emotions as I sat in the shop observing Slim and participating in shop activities as much as possible. Originally, I focused more on Slim’s behavior, but eventually I learned that non-verbal, tacit communication could only be observed through sensory perception. Logically, it followed that I needed to acknowledge and investigate my own role in this information-sharing relationship as the receiver and interpreter of subjective, sensorial information. In the end, each form of learning provided me with specific knowledge that I utilized to reckon time and rhythm in The Cut & Shave.

**Race and Whiteness**

Initially, the themes of language use and race are what prompted me to consider conducting research in a barber shop. The interest in language stemmed from the fact that Slim and I always had such rich conversations during our haircuts, and in school I read a lot about literacy practices in community settings (Moss, 1994). The well-established cultural pattern of self-segregation in hair maintenance led me to consider the possibility of investigating white male literacy practices. I eventually discovered, however, that although the term literacy can be attached to just about any adjective, barber shop literacy could not quite explain The Cut & Shave. Still, my interest in race never diminished although it never quite takes center stage in the findings. The overt presence of race, and whiteness in particular, appears minimally in the findings chapters because the issue was
very rarely discussed in the shop. Lewis (2004) argues, “especially today when racial thinking and behavior remains pervasive but operates in much more covert ways, ethnographic work in white settings on the ‘everydayness’ of whiteness is essential” (p. 638). While I agree with Lewis entirely, there are significant challenges to the ethical study of white people in everyday settings, especially when race operates covertly.

Over the course of my hundreds of hours in the shop, I cannot recall any direct mention of whiteness other my own use of the adjective white to describe white people in conversation (and in the findings) or when I would discuss my project in depth with clients. Slim and I would discuss whiteness in The Back or when the shop was empty, but the topic simply did not enter into conversation during haircuts. Race, in general, only came to the surface along the peripheries and even then it could be awkward. For example, people would call the shop to ask if The Cut & Shave was a Black or white barber shop. Slim never quite seems sure how to answer the question or what exactly the caller expects him to say. Slim has several regular, non-white clients, but I never heard them comment on their own experiences with race in the shop. Asking people of any racial background specific questions about their identities can be a sensitive matter. Lewis (2004) suggests “whites’ racialized experiences may well mean, however, that directly asking them about race may not be the best way to tap into how whiteness and racial privilege work. It is not that whites are trying to fool interviewers; a luxury of belonging to the advantaged racial group is that one’s own racialness often is invisible to oneself” (pp. 640-1). I have learned that this conundrum of studying behavior without actually questioning participants may be resolved, in part, with a rhythm-analytical research approach.
In Chapter 3, for ethical reasons, I claimed that I did not want to disrupt the rhythm of the shop by asking clients questions that would, in fact, disrupt the study of rhythm. I also did not want to do anything to disrupt or negatively influence the haircut experience of Slim’s clients. While I am not suggesting that researchers use rhythmmanalysis as a surreptitious way to study whiteness, what I am saying is that my own use of the method to study time also provides a peripheral ethnographic representation of a primarily white place. Again, it is the need to take complexity, rather than partiality, into account that affords rhythmmanalysis the ability to reveal unanticipated insights. Further, according to Lewis, “studying whiteness or white people absent of social context obscures the precise reason why it is important to focus on whiteness in the first place—in order to remove the cloak of normality and universality that helps to secure continuing racial privilege for whites” (p. 642). It is the issue of normality more so than privilege that the findings chapters may best convey. However, following rhythmmanalysis’ tendency to examine any particular theme in relation to other elements, it does not offer an unclouded view of whiteness. According to Hartigan (2005), a complex representation of race may be more accurate as “one key to understanding whiteness, then, is recognizing that racial interpretations are always competing with other interpretive repertoires such as class and gender and neighborhood and nation” (p. 14). Additional commentary on race appears in the final section.

**Emotional Labor**

The various activities that constitute time in The Cut & Shave often have consequences on the emotional states of Slim and everyone else in the shop. As mentioned in the previous section, one of the benefits of a rhythmanalytical approach to
methodology is that many themes, patterns, and complications may be unexpectedly revealed in the research process. In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature focused on emotional labor in primarily female hair sites to demonstrate the impact of emotion on the energy in these places. Additionally, I indicated that a significant gap exists in gender-based emotional labor studies as males are rarely studied. The findings chapters in this dissertation contain numerous examples of the display of emotion by Slim and some of the clients. In particular, the use of various forms of representation including photography, metaphor, and poetry not only partially concretize rhythm, but also suggest the presence of expressions of emotions that are equally difficult to represent.

Beyond the issue of the improved facilitation of representation, rhythmanalysis (and sensory methodology) offers two insights for future researchers of emotional labor experienced in masculine settings. First, while the majority of hair studies research focuses on the emotional costs of providing traditionally feminized forms of nurture, care, and emotional support, demonstrations of emotions that are regarded as traditionally masculine—anger, yelling, silence—do occur in both male and female hair sites and thus warrant further investigation. Second, emotions do not appear and then suddenly disappear. In The Cut & Shave, emotions of all kinds including frustration over no-shows, joy from seeing a long-lost client, and sadness from a depressed client, strengthened, lingered, and dissipated depending on the rhythms of the shop. The use of rhythmanalysis and sensory methodology to study negative emotions within the larger contexts of shop rhythms may provide a welcome alternative to the over-emphasis on interviews as the primary data in the investigation of emotional labor.
Rhythmanalysis, History, and The Future

There are two significant limitations to this dissertation: the neglect of barber history and the absence of the world that exists outside the barber shop. The need to slowly, methodically, and creatively build my case for the use of rhythm as the analytic with which to explain the shop limited the scope of this research to the four walls of the shop. Still, whenever any one would ask me if I was observing any other barber shops, I could only chuckle and reply that there was plenty of material to work with in The Cut & Shave. In an effort to address both of these limitations in one exercise, and also to suggest future implications of this research, I return to the work of Lefebvre (2004). As mentioned in Chapter 3, Elden (2004) argues, “Lefebvre uses rhythm as a mode of analysis—a tool of analysis rather than just an object of it—to examine and re-examine a range of topics” (p. xii). In this final section, I take up Elden’s suggestion to utilize rhythm to analyze wider social issues that impact Slim and his future.

Admittedly, there is a high degree of uncertainty about what exactly a “rhythmanalysis versus an analysis of rhythms” (Elden, 2004, p. xii) actually looks like. Yet Highmore (2002b) suggests, “It is enough for the moment to embrace the fact that Lefebvre provides no systematic methodology for rhythmanalysis. Like the most productive writing within urban cultural theory it is both a provocation and an invitation to think…differently” (p. 177). Following these ambiguous criteria, I intend to think differently about what rhythmanalysis may indicate about the current barber shop renaissance (Colman, 2010) trend as it relates to temporal issues like history, nostalgia, and the future within The Cut & Shave and broader, ongoing issues of change and resistance within contemporary culture. Certainly, as the existing literature on
rhythmanalysis indicates, applications of this methodology, and the others discussed in this dissertation, could be applied in a variety of settings such as schools, restaurants, and hospitals just to name a few.

The dramatic and often bizarre history of the barbering trade dates back almost 4000 years to Egypt (Corson, 2000), and parts of this history live on today in The Cut & Shave. Likewise, the world outside of the shop flows in and out of the shop’s rhythms throughout the day. The way station metaphor was selected to describe this interactive relationship between the barber shop and the world—a relationship that exists throughout the history of barbering. Lefebvre (2004) suggests the need to “follow each being, each body, as having its own time above the whole. Each one therefore having its place, its rhythm, with its recent past, a foreseeable and distant future” (p. 31). Unfortunately, the lack of access to the lives of clients, and the lack of space in this dissertation (even if I had gained this access), prevented me from showing how the experiences of clients outside the barber shop eventually make their way into the shop. Still, I did witness countless examples of the outside world entering and impacting the shop ranging from Slim selling his client a motorcycle to political talk with clients who were government officials. Additional detailed descriptions of these types of encounters would have showed how Slim rhythmically negotiates the impact of the outside world on the shop from his spatially grounded position as tender of the way station.

To quickly demonstrate this relationship, I reflect on a simple fashion trend. The television program Mad Men was quite popular during my fieldwork, and a number of clients sought the 1960s hairstyles worn by the male characters in the show. For years, Slim has given these types of haircuts to older men, but now he needed to incorporate a
knowledge of popular culture into his routine because of this hairstyle’s recent popularity. For, in order to know how to cut the hair of younger men who seemed to consider themselves too cool to admit they wanted a hairstyle from a television program, Slim had to decipher their awkward descriptions of this hairstyle. Depending on his mood, Slim might eventually just cut to the chase and ask, “So, do you want a *Mad Men* haircut?” In the end, most clients appeared pleased with these haircuts and seemed to benefit from Slim’s experience and skills. Hairstyles are often cyclical, but when they return to popularity, the cultural meanings and representations change because the world is different, in this case, than it was 50 years ago. This example is just one of many that indicates that “the barbershop of today continues to function as a medium through which social life happens” (O’Donoghue, 2012, p. 316). The key word here is “continues” as the dynamic, and at times volatile, relationship between the barber shop and the larger culture features prominently in the history of the trade.

Despite Mark Twain’s (1992) argument in his 1871 essay that “All things change except barbers, the ways of barbers, and the surroundings of barbers. These never change. What one experiences in a barber shop the first time he enters one, is what he always experiences in barber shops afterward until the end of his days” (p. 525), the barber shop has always been host to impactful social change. Going back to 1856, Procter (1971) suggests the trade “seems to be in a transitional state at the moment…[as] pride and innovation threaten the extinction of [the] party-coloured pole” (p. 206). In 1925, in reaction to the influx of women seeking short, bobbed haircuts, in barber shops, shampoo magnate Fred Fitch chastised barbers: “Don’t you see that your place of business is becoming a beauty parlor, as well as a barber shop? Why not get ready for this change
and embrace the opportunity, instead of building a wall around yourselves” (cited in Barlow, 1993, p. 18)? Furthermore, De Zemler (1939) warns, “if the barber knew the history of his profession and the changes it has been compelled to undergo, he would realize that it has not stopped changing and that he must keep up with the times and adapt himself and his services to new demands” (p. 153).

Everything in life changes, but hair sites tend to operate either at the cutting edge or the trailing edge of social change. The continuous growth of hair forces people to make regular decisions about whether to embrace change with new hairstyles, or do everything in their power to resist change by maintaining the same hairstyle years past its popularity. Again, because barber shops are profit-seeking businesses, it logically follows that barbers must be able to quickly and appropriately respond to the desires (to seek or resist change) of their particular clientele or risk income loss. Dating back to ancient Rome, citizens might loyally wear the same hairstyle as one emperor and then shave their beards if the next ruler said to do so (Hunter, 2004). Similarly, certain religions across the globe require followers to cut their hair in a certain style; others prohibit followers to cut their hair at all (Cooper, 1971). The barber shop functions as a place where the cultural and ideological struggles that hair symbolizes undergo negotiation. Yet this negotiation process works in two directions; within hair sites, all types of ideas, relationships, and larger movements beyond hairstyles develop and spread to the outside world.

For example, during the civil rights era, the Highlander Folk School would often recruit and train African-American beauticians to teach their clients to read in order to pass voter literacy tests. In Charleston, South Carolina, Bernice Robinson, cousin of civil rights leader and educator Septima Clark, was able to educate future voters in the safety
of her salon because white people never entered this space (Gill, 2010). Conversely, 
barber shops have consistently served as places of localized resistance to wider social 
change as many shops refused to service female clients seeking short haircuts in the 
1920s, many white and Black barbers (with primary white male clienteles) refused to 
service Black males well into the 1960s, and some barbers refused to cut the long hair of 
males in the 1960s and 1970s. The rise of the unisex salon in the 1980s, in which all 
genders and races seem to be welcome, at first appears to be a move toward a new, 
desegregated hair site. However, most of these salons are corporately owned or 
franchised businesses that pay low wages, maximize efficiency, and discourage personal 
relationships between stylists and clients (Willet, 2000). These examples are only just a 
few of the many that demonstrate the historical connections between hair sites and social 
change.

Slim has a unique perspective on the history of barbering as he has experienced a 
number of transitions firsthand. Growing up in the late 1960s and 1970s, Slim received 
his childhood haircuts from “traditional” barbers and witnessed first hand within his own 
family the era’s contested politics of long hair. After finishing his professional training, 
Slim entered the trade in the early 1980s cutting hair in a variety of shops that serviced 
both men and women. Throughout his career, rather than resist them, Slim has adapted to 
changes in fashion and trends in the industry. Eventually he purchased The Cut & Shave, 
which has operated under this name and in this exact location since the late 1960s. Slim’s 
transformation of the shop symbolizes his rhythmic approach to change.

He kept the traditional shop name and a few barber chairs, he renovated the shop 
himself, and then he sought to build a clientele of the shop’s old clients, his regular
clients, and new clients. As a bricoleur in his shop, Slim worked with the materials at hand to make creative use of valued elements from the past as he addressed the issues of the present. According to Slim, “the shop has become whatever it has become but I didn’t have the complete design in mind when I started ten years ago. It wasn’t pre-designed; it just kind of evolved into what it is.” If his employee, Sharon, and her 47 years of barbering experience, is any indication, Slim’s barbering career may last several more years. Slim’s tendency to evolve and change with the times—while refusing to abandon valued traditions from the past—reflects a sharp, rhythmic contrast with the current trend in the industry, the barber shop renaissance.

Toward the end of Chapter 2, I discussed the demise of the “traditional” barber that been ongoing at least since 1904, when Andrews (1969) lamented, “the old-fashioned barber passed away” (p. 8). Because, by definition and financial necessity, barbers and their shops must adapt to meet the needs of their changing clients, certain people, such as Andrews, and almost always men, invested in the old ways tend to express their displeasure after each “death” of the barber shop. After the safety razor blade invented by Gillete eliminated the need to visit the barber shop for facial shaves 2 or 3 times a week, a version of the barber shop died (Barlow, 1993). After women began regularly receiving short haircuts in the barber shop during the “roaring ‘20s,” a version of the barber shop died (Willett, 2000). After The Beatles “invaded” the United States in 1964 and made longer hair fashionable, a version of the barber shop died (Severn, 1971). Today, rather than concentrating on the present and the future, a number of independently and corporate owned barber shops are shifting back to the past. The recent barbershop renaissance involves new businesses designed to look like “authentic-looking
barbershops…done up with, say, vintage lighting fixtures, antique barber chairs and, of course, a big glass jar of blue Barbicide on the counter” (Colman, 2010, para. 7). What makes this current look backward all the more curious is the apparent lack of one specific instigating factor.

These retro barber shops have become prevalent enough to be classified into three categories: the upscale retro salon, the independently owned shops by younger barbers, and the corporate franchise. It is my claim that the recent popularity of all three types of shop, and their often exclusionary practices, reflect a retreat from sociocultural issues such as class, gender, and race. Of the upscale salons, Twitchell (2007) argues, “rather like the cigar bar, these self-conscious places with their cherry wood floors and forest green walls are for men who want the reminiscence of childhood with the reality of a pedicure. These places are spas cavorting as bars, salons as saloons. Although strangely true to the history of the barber shop, it won’t work” (p. 117). The high costs of services in these spaces significantly limit what has historically been the democratic, low-cost appeal of the barber shop. In her study of upper class white executives, Barber (2008) suggests class-based exclusion is exactly the point of high-end salons as the white executives sought to distance themselves from “the barbershop as a space for a white working-class masculinity (p. 469). Barber’s focus on primarily white clients serves to emphasize the singular focus on class in these types of high-end settings.

The second category involves younger barbers in their 20s and 30s who establish their own shops designed to look “old-timey” in their mission to supposedly carry on the traditions of the trade. Although there are a few of these shops here in The City, the need for anonymity prevents me from describing them. However, Colman (2010) states, “As
cute or contrived as these places might seem—many are selling a kind of false nostalgia to customers too young to remember the real thing” (para. 16). Consider the math involved here, if in 1964 when The Beatles arrived in America, we can generously state the youngest “traditional” barber of that era was 30 years old. If scores of traditional barbers either left or went out of business because they refused to adapt to the trend of long hair, today, the few remaining barbers would be approximately 80 years old. If any direct link from the last remaining traditional barbers to contemporary retro barbershops survives, it is very, very thin.

However, in an essay on the Art of Manliness website, Brett (no last name, 2008) writes:

Every time I go to the barber shop I just feel manlier. I don’t know what it is. Perhaps it’s the combination of the smell of hair tonics and the all-man atmosphere. But more so, it’s the awareness of the tradition of barbershops. Barbershops are places of continuity; they don’t change with the shifts in culture. The places and barbers look the same as they did when your dad got his hair cut. It’s a straightforward experience with none of the foofoo accoutrements of the modern age. (para. 19)

Brett’s analysis reflects not only a misunderstanding of barber history as continuous and lacking change, but the tendency of these places to be unwelcoming to females, as indicated in his statements about the “all-man atmosphere” and the “foofoo accoutrements.”

The third category, corporate franchise retro barber shops, indicates that this trend has demonstrated enough cultural resonance to warrant corporate branding. A number of
franchise salons cater to men, such as Sport Clips and Lady Jane’s, but these two brands prominently promote attractive female stylists to attract the patronage of male clients, a somewhat tried and true business strategy but not retro. It is the Roosters Men’s Grooming Center that best represents this retro shop category with its emphasis on tradition and the past. Notice the emphasis on time in this description from the corporate website: “Clients arriving at Roosters step back in time to the quality and tradition of the classic men’s barbershop...The unique focus of Roosters is on taking the time to meet the individual needs of each and every client, every time they walk through the door” (“Concept strategies,” para. 1). The Roosters brand is owned by the Regis Corporation, a hair conglomerate that owns dozens of salon brands each marketed to particular audiences—unisex, family, male and female—including Supercuts, one of the most popular discount, unisex salons in America.

The following lengthy passage, found on the “About Us” section of the Roosters website dramatically integrates many elements of barber history discussed in the preceding paragraphs in an effort to attract franchisees and clients:

The barbershop was an American cultural icon form the early nineteenth century through the late 1960s. For generations, men went to barbershops for a fine haircut and to enjoy great conversations with the barber and fellow clients. Barbers were held in high esteem as doctors, growing strong, personal relationships with their clients that lasted a lifetime. As men’s style changed, the unisex craze swept across America and barbershops almost disappeared. Men’s choices were limited to salons that were devoid of everything they enjoyed about getting a haircut. Interesting conversation and personal relationships were
replaced by cold plastic seats, unpleasant chemical smells, and awkward periods of silence. Stylists often clipped away at lightning speed to move from one client to the next as quickly as possible. (para. 1)

My intent in citing this passage is not to simply point out the obvious hypocrisy of a corporation mocking one of its brands to promote another. Instead, Regis’s financially driven, proven ability to identify and capitalize on cultural trends indicates that there are enough willing consumers to patronize Roosters and what it purports to represent.

In this section, I have attempted to expand the reach of rhythm and rhythmanalysis beyond the four walls of The Cut & Shave to demonstrate not only how rhythm operates in and across numerous contexts across time, but to suggest that these larger rhythmic patterns will have a direct impact on Slim’s future as a barber. In my discussion of the barber shop renaissance, I made evident a significant contemporary cultural trend that appears to fly in the face of hundreds of years of barber history. Rather than adapting to the present and looking toward the future, barbers are looking backward. Why is this the case? O’Donoghue (2012) suggests, “Perhaps in the past, mainly due to fear of one kind or another, narratives of barbershops were too intent on preserving ways in which men ought to be with each other, rather than suggesting ways in which they could be” (p. 321). Rather than embrace—or even attempt to capitalize financially—the slow societal changes leading to increased racial diversity and gender equality while resisting the growing class divisions, these establishments retreat into the past of “tradition.” Like the word heritage, tradition is a loaded term that not so subtly suggests life was better in the past when everyone supposedly had their place and the place of white males was at the top.
Of course, every renaissance barber shop is different; some may favor gender, racial, or class exclusivity, some a combination of two or all three, others may not exclude anyone. The point here is that this cultural trend exists and it impacts The Cut & Shave. Hopefully, this trend will be a fad that fades away soon, but it has been going strong for a few years. I have tried to show that Slim is a master navigator of time, but he now finds himself in a very odd historical moment. By definition, Slim is a traditional barber because he has followed the historical precedent of the trade to either adapt to the present or to perish during his 30-year career. Yet his competitors now claim to be “traditional” barbers, but they often have fewer years on the planet than Slim has years of barbering experience in his right thumb. They long for a past they never knew and that Slim is wise enough to want to leave behind. The question becomes: How does Slim rhythmically adapt to this unsettling trend? Drummond (2004) suggests, “to do nothing may be the biggest risk of all because it involves gambling that the world will remain stable” (p. 494). Slim has no control over whether clients visit his shop, for all he can do is continue to create and maintain a welcoming, democratic environment that fosters the experience of time in ways rewarding to both the clients and to himself. Hopefully, continuing to embrace change as he utilizes his experiences, instincts, and knowledge will help Slim evolve into the future. As always, time will tell.

Coda

All long as Slim keeps cutting hair and as long as I continue to live in The City, I cannot think of any reason I will not continue to patronize this shop and maintain my personal relationship with Slim. This dissertation will always serve as evidence of my attempt to understand and evoke the experiences of the time, temporality, and rhythms of
the shop. It took many, many turns—equally theoretical, methodological, temporal, epistemological, and sensorial in nature—around the spiral pole to arrive at this point in the research. Finally, I can now metaphorically place the traditional metal basin, used in the old barber-surgeon’s bloodletting process, atop the pole to signify its end. Slim will probably put a bound copy of this dissertation on the bookshelf in the corner of the shop. Perhaps most importantly, this project will likely live on in the way station when it shows up in Slim’s stories and oracular riddles rhythmically delivered as he navigates the time machine back to the days I spent earning my barber shop education. It is appropriate to finish with the following close-up image of the barber pole attached to the front window of The Cut & Shave Barber Shop. For as Lefebvre (2004) says of rhythm, “to grasp this fleeting object…it is necessary to situate oneself simultaneously inside and outside” (p. 27).
Image 16. Barber Pole in Front Window
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261


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