AN INVESTIGATION INTO INFORMAL LEARNING DYNAMICS THAT PROVIDE THE CONTEXT FOR LEARNING NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR UNDIRECTED WORKERS

A Dissertation in Workforce Education and Development

by

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Abstract

To bolster performance, many privately owned businesses direct their employee training efforts toward improving non-technical skills. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2006-07, however, shows that not all workers receive employer directed training. According to BLS data, as the size of businesses decrease the likelihood of employer directed training also decreases. Following this data, approximately 53 million Americans do not receive employer directed training (undirected workers).

This study explored the problem of how undirected workers learn these critical non-technical skills when employee directed training is not forthcoming. A qualitative, grounded study methodology was used. Eleven cosmetologists employed by independently owned salons located in various cities and towns in Pennsylvania composed the study sample. Data consisted of participant interviews with a focus on career development and experiences, salon industry learning artifacts and national statistics, and the investigator’s extensive experience as a cosmetologist. Researcher bias was an ongoing concern throughout the investigation and steps were taken accordingly.

Findings show undirected workers learn non-technical skills in the same way they learn technical skills, through informal learning experiences afforded them via social practices and activities that are common to the workers both inside and outside of the work situation. However, although participants were keenly aware of how they were learning technical skills, they did not connect this same process with learning non-technical skills. The findings suggest that these professionals have devalued non-technical skills to the point of disavowing them as learnable professional tools. These
same participants unanimously identified advanced non-technical skills as more important than advanced technical skills for success in their industry.

The importance of non-technical skills must be communicated to all workers, not just those who receive employer-directed training. New methods to communicate this information are needed as well as new methods for delivery that can accommodate the situation of non-directing businesses. These new methods would positively affect, according to the BLS (2006-07), at least half of the American workforce employed by privately owned businesses, making them more productive, increasing their potential income, and improving their lives and the lives of their families.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables ........................................................................................................ ix

List of Figures ......................................................................................................... ix

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................. x

CHAPTER 1: Introduction.................................................................................... 1
  Thesis Question and Sub-Questions ................................................................. 3
  Definitions of Terms ......................................................................................... 3
  Limitations of Study ......................................................................................... 5
  Significance of this Study ................................................................................. 6
  Chapter of this Summary ................................................................................. 6

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature............................................................... 7
  Informal Learning ............................................................................................ 9
    National ........................................................................................................ 10
    International ............................................................................................... 13
    Global ......................................................................................................... 15
    Individual ..................................................................................................... 16
  Situated Learning ........................................................................................... 19
    Occupational Safety ................................................................................... 22
    Refrigeration Service Technicians ............................................................. 24
    Public Defenders Office ............................................................................ 26
    Computer Systems Design ........................................................................ 27
    Global Training .......................................................................................... 29
  Non-Technical Skills ...................................................................................... 31
  Non-Technical Skills in Practice .................................................................. 32
    Accounting, Electronics, Engineering, & Criminal Justice ..................... 33
    Information Technology .......................................................................... 34
    Agriculture, Forestry, & Consumer Science ............................................ 36
    Engineering Professionals ....................................................................... 37
  Cosmetologists ............................................................................................. 38
  Chapter Summary ......................................................................................... 40

CHAPTER 3: Research Design .......................................................................... 42
  Research Approach ......................................................................................... 42
  Sampling .......................................................................................................... 43
  Data Collection ............................................................................................... 46
  Interview Questions ......................................................................................... 47
  First Approach to Obtaining Subjects .......................................................... 48
  Second Approach to Obtaining Subjects ...................................................... 51
  Third Approach to Obtaining Subjects ......................................................... 52
CHAPTER 4: Findings.................................................................64
Review of the Study..............................................................64
Research Findings...............................................................66
Question Group 1.................................................................66
QG1-1.................................................................................67
  Commonalities and diversity.............................................67
QG1-2 .................................................................................67
  Early desire.................................................................67
  Early exposure to the Industry work..............................68
QG1-3.................................................................................69
  Commonalities and diversity.............................................69
QG1-4.................................................................................70
  Cosmetologist as a technician......................................70
  Cosmetologist as social support for Clients....................70
QG1-5.................................................................................71
  Personal satisfaction and sense of Community...............72
  Strong sense of community..........................................72
QG1 summary.................................................................74
Question Group 2.................................................................74
QG2-1.................................................................................71
  Learning through building a clientele............................75
  Learning through conducting client Consultations.........78
  Learning through client relationships...........................81
QG2-2.................................................................................83
  Learning through sharing knowledge among peers.........83
  Learning through adapting to the salon persona.............85
  Sense of community......................................................87
QG2-3.................................................................................89
  Industry’s employment situation.................................89
QG2-4.................................................................................90
  Opportunities to learn..................................................90
Still a cosmetologist outside of the
salon situation
QG2 summary
Question Group 3
QG3-1
Unknown level of competence
Trying hard to learn
Learning as a novice
QG3-2
A level of success
QG3-3
Learning by watching, listening, and asking questions
QG3-4
Predominant learning areas of interest
Common salon industry beliefs
Learning artifacts
QG3 summary
Question Group 4
QG4-1
QG4-2
Communication difficulties
QG4-3
Industry self-image
QG4 summary
Chapter Summary
CHAPTER 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations
Introduction
Review of the Study
Summary of Findings
Thesis sub-question Q1
Thesis sub-question Q2
Thesis sub-question Q3
Thesis sub-question Q4
Thesis sub-question Q5
Support in Literature
Contributions to the Literature
Conclusions
Recommendations
Recommendations for Future Research
Summary
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Characteristics of Each Unit of Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Validation Strategies Utilized in Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Industry Experience in Relation to Number of Salon Positions Held</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learning Opportunities for Cosmetologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Acquisition of Non-Technical Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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I dedicate this thesis to God and the wife He gave me as they are the two sustaining forces in my life.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration (2007), in 1992 The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) issued a report, Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance, to The Honorable Lynn Martin, Secretary of Labor. In this report the commission defined what they found to be “…the workplace competencies and foundational skills required for effective job performance today and tomorrow” (p. 4). They further attested to the importance of these competencies and foundational skills for all Americans. A wide range of occupations are struggling with the issue of how to train their incoming and existing labor force in these “non-technical skills,” as the SCANS competencies and foundational skills have come to be known.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2006-07) reports that the likelihood of employer-directed training diminishes along with the number of employees in a given privately owned business. This report is based on findings from businesses with 50 to 99, 100 to 249, 250 to 499, 500 to 999, and 1,000 or more employees per establishment. The figures represent 365,494 businesses with a total of 53,929,930 employees or slightly over half of the workforce employed by privately owned business.

Although census numbers are reported for privately owned businesses with 4 - 49 employees, the BLS does not offer information addressing the training practices of these businesses. The census numbers for businesses with 4 - 49 employees represent 7,827,066 establishments with a total of 47,268,469 employees, or only slightly less than half of the workforce employed by privately owned business. Although the BLS and all
other resources cited herein failed to offer information on the training practices of businesses with 49 employees or less, following the BLS report that the likelihood of employer-directed training diminishes along with the number of employees in a given privately owned business, the likelihood of employer-directed training would continue to diminish along with the number of employees in businesses with 49 employees or less. Of interest to this study are the workers in businesses who do not initiate a direction for their employees’ training needs. This worker demographic, those who do not receive employer-directed training, although most likely to occur according to the BLS findings in the demographic of businesses with 49 employees or less, will not be restricted to this group. For this reason this investigation will from this point on identify the demographic of interest, those workers who do not receive employer directed training, as “undirected workers.”

Therefore, this research addresses the following problem: How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills when employer-directed training is not forthcoming?

Kim, Hagedorn, Williamson, & Chapman (2004) reporting for The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), found up to 70 percent of workplace learning identifiable as informal learning. Lave and Wenger (2006) identify social engagements as affording the context in which informal learning takes place. They see learning as “…a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind” (p. 15). Lave and Wenger view learning as gaining “…increased access of learners to participating roles in expert performance (p. 17).” The purpose of this study is to describe the kinds of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers. This information will serve as the first step toward the
discovery of informal learning processes which allow undirected workers to progress professionally.

**Thesis Question**

How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills?

**Sub-questions**

Q1. What types of practices do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

Q2. What types of activities do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

Q3. What are the predominant learning interests for undirected workers?

Q4. What are the common beliefs that undirected workers share?

Q5. What types of informal learning artifacts are available to undirected workers?

**Definitions of Terms**

*Activity* – actions which comprise the life of an individual and/or society (Cole, Engestrom, & Vasquez, 2001).

*Activity Theory* – calls for a differentiation between and separate research of internal and external activities as to their effects one upon the other. The multifaceted natures of both internal and external activities calls for determinations as to when internal activities become externalized and external behaviors become internalized and what triggers these transitions (Engerstrom, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999). Sandom and Macredie (2003) find that “AT can be broadly defined as a philosophical framework, drawn from Soviet psychology, for understanding the richness of human activity in social contexts” (p. 219).
Communities of Practice – groupings of individuals who have a shared learning goal or interest and who collectively learn and practice in a common space and consciously and/or unconsciously share knowledge and skills (Wenger, 2006).

Cosmetologist - America’s CareerInfoNet offers an occupational description of a cosmetologist as a person who provides “…beauty services, such as shampooing, cutting, coloring, and styling hair, and scalp massage and treatments and who may also apply makeup, dress wigs, perform hair removal, and provide nail and skin care services.” (America’s Career/InfoNet, 2006).

Formal Learning – is delivered in an educational institution using a structured curriculum founded on pedagogy and typically leads to a degree, certification, licensure, or some sort of credit (Brussig & Leber, 2006; Foley, 1999; Malcom, Hodkinson, & Colley, 2003; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Svensson & Ellstrom, 2004).

Informal Learning – typically has little or no structure and is open-ended with few if any restrictions. Founded on andragogic principals, informal learning can take place anywhere without specified curriculum or objectives. The outcomes are learner determined with the intention of developing something new or further developing everyday workplace practices and/or competencies (Brussig & Leber, 2006; Foley, 1999; Malcom, Hodkinson, & Colley, 2003; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Svensson & Ellstrom, 2004).

Legitimate Peripheral Participation – limited participation in situated activities as a means to acquiring skills and knowledge that will lead to group or community acceptance (Lave & Wenger, 2006).
Non-Formal Learning – educational opportunities delivered outside of educational institutions and may or may not utilize structured curriculum and may or may not lead to a degree, certification, licensure, or some sort of credit (Brussig & Leber, 2006; Foley, 1999; Malcom, Hodkinson, & Colley, 2003; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Svensson & Ellstrom, 2004).

Non-Technical Skills – The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration (2007), Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) offers this definition “…the workplace competencies and foundational skills required for effective job performance today and tomorrow” (correspondence to The Honorable Lynn Martin, Secretary of Labor, para. 2).

Participation frame – differences in perspective that mediate learning among co-learners within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2006).

Practice – shared resources, frameworks, and perspectives that are social and historical in nature and in action (Wenger E., 2006).

Un-sponsored Workers – workers who do not receive employer-sponsored training.

Limitations of this Study

The perspective of the business owner who does not initiate a direction for his employees’ training needs is an important aspect in understanding the learning dynamic that takes place in his/her business enterprise. However, the addition of the business owner’s unique leadership perspectives and business knowledge would create far too broad a conceptual spectrum for data analysis in this study. Therefore, this investigation will limit data collection specifically to undirected workers.
Significance of this Study

I have not found any research on workplace learning functions and processes that addresses undirected workers. This is a significant area for workplace learning research in that privately owned businesses with 49 or fewer employees are highly likely to be employers of undirected workers according to the BLS (2006-07) findings, and represent slightly less than half of all American workers employed by privately owned businesses. Further, undirected training is not limited to this demographic, which means the number of American workers may be significantly higher. Since the research has not been conducted, it cannot be assumed that the dynamics of businesses that do not initiate a direction for their employees’ training needs are the same as businesses that do direct their employees’ training needs.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the problem addressed by this research, the purpose of this research, and the thesis question and sub-questions. Further, the definitions of significant terms used in this research were presented along with the limitations and significance of this study. Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to this research interest. Chapter 3 covers the methodology employed through the research design for this investigation. Chapter 4 presents findings of the research. Finally chapter 5 addresses conclusions, implications, and recommendations.
CHAPTER 2
Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to describe the kinds of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers. Specifically, the thesis poses the following question: How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills? This question requires queries into the types of practices, activities, areas of interest, community beliefs, and learning artifacts that are common to undirected workers.

Defining learning is a formidable task in that definitions offered tend to follow each author’s theoretic perspective on the subject and these perspectives can take many forms. Illeris (2004) identified the complexity of learning as the inter/intra-relationships between the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of the learner. Ormrod (2004) defined learning as constituting two groupings of theories under the headings of behaviorists and cognitivist. The former group theorizes on the manifestation of observable behaviors, such as performance improvement and/or skill development, in response to stimuli affected by environmental conditions. The latter group views learning from the internal cognitive processes of perception, interpretation, and memory in developing, for example, social role proficiencies and general intelligence. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) extended Ormond’s views by identifying five learning orientations of behaviorist, humanist, cognitivist, social cognitivist, and constructivist. Behaviorism addresses observable behaviors and learning is manifest through changing behaviors. The humanist is theorized as seeking self-actualization, the cognitivist is addresses perception and insight as they relate to meaning, while the social
cognitivist is seen as a hybrid, which combines and interrelates the elements of behaviorist and cognitivist theories. The constructivist founds his/her theory on the construction of meaning from experience.

There are also questions of whether learning is tacit, informal, non-formal, or formal, how one would determine this if these are separate entities, the elements of which can stand alone or be combined, or if these elements are on a theoretic continuum that fade one into the other. Within the literature, the debate on learning theory and its variations appears to be endless. Bliss, Saljo, and Light (1999), however, while supporting three differing theoretical positions on learning, found common ground on the importance of the social and cultural settings in which learning takes place. The authors cited practices, artifacts, and beliefs as interacting determinants with regard to the learner’s approach to learning.

Following Bliss, Saljo, and Light’s (1999) line of reasoning and in accord with the focus of this research, I first explore informal learning using a situated learning orientation. The situated learning orientation, by nature, includes elements of communities of practice and activity theories. The elements of interest from these theories will not be dealt with as separate entities but, for this investigation, as inherent components within situated learning as the greater theoretic whole. Following this, I identify non-technical skills and the importance of these skills in relation to obtaining and retaining employment in a wide range of professions. Finally, I offer an assessment of how this relates to the Cosmetology industry.
Informal Learning

Kim, Hagedorn, Williamson, & Chapman (2004) reporting for The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), found up to 70 percent of workplace learning identifiable as informal learning. The NCES defined informal learning resources as including (a) supervised training, (b) mentoring, (c) training manuals and (d) video tapes, computer based courses (via CD, DVD, and online), (e) informal presentations, (f) formal conferences, and (g) professional journals. NCES research also concluded that “…nearly two-thirds of adults (or about 125 million) reported participating in work-related informal learning activities” (p. 40). Schugurensky (2000) informs of two important distinctions when defining informal learning:

In the concept of informal learning, it is important to note that we are deliberately using the word ‘learning’ and not ‘education’, because in the process of informal learning there are not educational institutions, institutionally authorized instructors or prescribed curricula. It is also pertinent to note that we are saying ‘outside the curricula of educational institutions’ and not ‘outside educational institutions,’ because informal learning can also take place inside formal and non-formal educational institutions. In that case however, learning occurs independently (and sometimes against) the intended goals of the explicit curriculum. (p. 3)

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) note that informal learning is often not readily apparent to the learner, in that it is embedded in everyday life and function and can occur in any setting in which the learner may be a participant. Illeris (2004) terms informal learning “everyday learning” in that, it is “…learning which occurs
informally and apparently by chance in everyday life as one moves around the spaces of one’s life, without consciously intending to learn anything…” (p. 178).

Schugurensky (2000) posited three forms of informal learning: “…self-directed learning, incidental learning, and socialization, or tacit learning” (p. 3). In these forms he identifies self-directed learning as intentional on the part of the learner and a learning experience of which the learner is aware at the time it is taking place. Incidental learning he distinguished as unintentional on the part of the learner but a learning experience of which the individual is aware at the time or at some time thereafter. Tacit learning or socialization is a learning experience which is unintentional on the part of the learner and of which the learner is not aware. Although self-directed learning is an important and highly researched informal learning principal, it is far too broad a subject to be addressed within the structure of this study. Incidental and tacit learning however, will be addressed in this worked-situated research but not as principals of learning within the theory of informal learning per se. By addressing the whole person within incidental and tacit learning situations (or any other situation for that matter), Lave and Wenger (2006), among other scholars, put forth the theory of situated learning.

**National**

Informal learning is a highly researched educational phenomenon within the American workplace. In the United States research on workforce education is limited to organizations with 50 or more, or only slightly more than half of Americans employed by private enterprise. Reardon (2004) addressed informal learning in the work place through an inductive, qualitative study that explored the specifics of the informal learning dynamic and its implications in the wake of major organizational change. His interest was
directed specifically toward the change agents who were responsible for implementing necessary changes in the organization at the same time they were learning how the components of the changes worked. In order to gain this unique perspective Reardon investigated nine experienced engineers who, after a plastics manufacturing company’s organizational change, were given the task of reflecting on how they learned to readjust their performance. These engineers performed as key players in the course of their organization’s change process representing management, technical and project support, and production supervision. The average age of the engineers was between 40 and 50, with an average of 15 years of experience. The reorganization they were responsible for employed 19 additional engineers and approximately 200 to 250 other employees during the time the change was implemented.

The participants were interviewed on the job about (a) the effects of the organizational change on them and their jobs, (b) how they learned new roles after the change, (c) possible improvements on the change process, and (d) specifics on their adaptation and learning process in relation to new technology. All of this led to a further understanding of the learning processes for the company leaders who had served as the foundation for the implemented organizational change and on whom the greatest learning burden laid. The resulting data was ultimately refined to three categories addressing aspects of learning and five addressing limitations on learning. The three aspects of learning were (a) new workflows, (b) developing expertise, and (c) new processes. The five limitations on learning were (a) lack of formality and time structure, (b) linear flow of all learning, (c) learning being restricted to necessity, (d) difficulty learning within the new organizational structure, and (e) the lack of defined learning steps.
Reardon (2004) found that all of the learning for the engineers in the process of the organizational change was informal. They had to learn (a) new workflows, (b) engineering expertise in relation to the changes to be made, and (c) the institution of newly introduced chemical processes without the aid of predetermined structure and within the course of implementation. He reported that the learning took place over time in a peer-to-peer fashion and was restricted out of necessity to learning only what was needed to perform the newly acquired aspects of their job. His subjects found this to be very difficult in that there were no successive steps or patterns to follow in the learning process. Their experience, however, supported existing informal learning theory and demonstrated that informal learning is shaped, both positively and negatively, by existing organizational structure and by existing experience and tacit knowledge of those instituting the change. Further, learning took place during the course of daily work, happened in conjunction with the learning of others, and typically was not a wholly conscious enterprise.

Reardon (2004) called on HRD professionals to work toward enhancing informal learning within organizations by developing informal learning channels and to work toward identifying and implementing the forms of informal learning that will best suit their organization. He recommended that they need to reflect critically on the dynamics of the required work in order to identify learning needs and determine formal and/or informal means to fulfill these needs. Further, Reardon called for additional study on how informal learning occurs in diverse setting and populations. He suggested ethnographic research for the identification of effective social networking channels to support learning.
To this end this review of the literature will look at research on informal learning conducted in East and West Germany.

*International*

Brussig (2006) investigated informal learning practices and their implications as they related to employer provided training in East and West Germany enterprises. In his analysis Brussig looked at the diversity of training among East and West Germany enterprises as well as the variance in the blend of training forms. His analysis considered the composition of the firms’ populations and their specific training behaviors.

Brussig identified his key conceptual distinction as that between formal and informal training. “Further training activities are learning activities of individuals aiming to a better understanding of, or coping, with current job tasks” (p. 306). Of particular interest to Brussig was the greater importance for training and further training for East Germany due to socioeconomic differences as they related to both micro and macro level indicators. The critical element placing East Germany’s economic performance below West Germany’s was the human capital of East German enterprises. Despite a consistently greater percentage of employees who received employer-provided training in East Germany for the years 1997 through 2003 their performance lagged behind West Germany. “This needs explanation, bearing in mind an often assumed positive correlation between further training activities and corporate performance” (p. 308).

To obtain the data for his research Brussig (2006) employed a survey addressing a wide variety of learning forms in both the formal and informal structures. His survey “Competence development in enterprises” was sent to 8,701 organizations of varying types of enterprises, employing between 20 and 999 employees. Additionally he included
1,300 small enterprises with 5 to 19 employees. In all 1,788 surveys were returned in a usable form realizing a 22% return ratio. The survey included questions about the kinds of training offered to employees with a particular interest toward identifying the formality or informality of the offerings. Brussig made no claims as to the levels of learning that may or may not have taken place in the course of training or the degree to which the training was transferred to the workplace. The interest instead, focused on (a) the forms of training, (b) the intensity at which it was offered, and (c) its diffusion among employees within the participating enterprises. Brussig analyzed whether East German firms provide variation in training activities related to formal and informal methods and influencing factors in comparison between East and West German enterprises.

Brussig (2006) found, in relation to the first question, the formal training activities of East and West Germany to be comparable. However, he discovered that West German enterprises incorporated a higher level of activity and greater intensity in the informal and work-integrated forms of training.

In relation to the second question, Brussig’s findings indicate that training works differently between East and West German enterprises. The difference related to innovative behaviors. East German enterprises offered a wide range of formal training through innovations in (a) new technologies, (b) new materials, (c) product development and improvement, and (d) organizational change. West Germany, however, concentrates on informal forms of training through the same types of innovations.

These findings, according to Brussig allowed for the plausibility of linking East and West German productivity gaps to the types of employer-sponsored training offered. He stopped short, however, of crediting his findings as empirically stable. Brussig called
for more information on performance indicators and a larger conceptual frame in relation to the further training of workforce and enterprise performance. He also recommended influences from the cultural context both inside and outside of organizations.

**Global**

The importance of informal learning in workplace education literature has cast an even broader net than the possible variances between East and West Germany or even between the United States and Germany. Investigations into informal learning, if they are to truly understand the workplace learner, must encompass a wholly global perspective. Conlon (2004), through his investigation of informal learning theory as it pertains to developing global professional competence, looked to informal learning as the foundation for developing professional global competence through theory, practice, and policy in the context of the global workplace. He reported that from 80% to 90% of workplace learning takes place through informal learning by means of listening, observing, reading, and reflecting on the work environment. The areas of competency that he found to be important in the global workplace called upon the employee’s cognitive, emotional, political, cultural/social, organizational, networking, innovative, and intuitive skills. He further indicated that workers should be disposed to adaptability, teamwork, and technological proficiency.

Conlon (2004) called on the learning organization in conjunction with Human Resources Departments at the introductory level of training. Such training would include new employees in product line knowledge and other technical skills as well as company policies and legal concerns. However, he maintained that conveying minute detail, day to day function, and/or company specific social/cultural attitudes is best left to informal
learning resources readily available through the work situation as it unfolds in the normal course of business. The challenge, Conlon concludes, lies in defining the specifics of the informal learning dynamic and its implications. To this end, global professionals must direct their learning efforts toward openness to new experiences, cross-cultural awareness, nationalism, and global-centrism.

*Individual*

This research has moved through the literature on informal learning in a progression from a national prospective to an international prospective to a global perspective. This progression was possibly due to the obvious importance of informal learning to the workplace. The underlying constant in this global view of informal learning is the individual worker/learner in whatever size organization that person is employed. In order to increase productivity, an organization must focus on engaging and motivating its employees toward further efforts, whether that involves conscious pursuit, passive reception, or even unconscious response on the part of the individual. Toward this end, the organization must consider what managerial forces and tactics drive informal learning in the workplace and how these should complement the personal forces and tactics that compel the individual to pursue, passively receive, or simply react to further learning in the workplace. This is especially important when considering the business enterprise in which employer sponsored training is least likely to be forthcoming.

Helterbran (2007) conducted case study research involving 4 adults who:

…had not earned a college degree and who exhibited the criteria as follows: (a) be an avid reader; (b) exhibit qualities of self-confidence,
self-awareness, and curiosity; (c) be self-reflective and use knowledge gained for the betterment of him- or herself personally and the community; (d) exhibit a personal motivation to learn in the absence of external pressure or reward; (e) be considered as a person of character; and (f) be of both sound psychological and mental health. (p. 14)

Through these case studies Helterbran examined the learning attitudes, practices, and beliefs of these individuals “…in relation to their self-direction, motivation to learn, and self-efficacy” (p. 7).

Helterbran’s interest laid with individuals who exhibited these particular qualities and who also did not hold formal degrees. This interest stemmed from her determination that this type of individual represented a segment of the workforce in which formal credentials are increasingly important, but 70.99% of adults do not hold a college degree (U.S. Department of Education & National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). She provided the following explanation for this:

It is the premise of this research that individuals who do not have high levels of formal educational attainment may provide valuable insight into better understanding and promoting the practice of lifelong learning and in defining or redefining what it means to be educated. (p. 8)

Because lifelong learning may include formal, non-formal, and informal forms of education it is reasonable to assume the validity of her findings in relation to the discussion at hand.

Helterbran (2007) collected her data through interviews using 15 reflective questions about the subjects’ life experiences in relation to the meaning that they
constructed about their understanding of learning in society and their place within society. Her subjects were supplied with copies of the questions one week prior to the interview and additional probing questions were used during the interview. All of the interviews were audio recorded and follow up interviews were conducted when data required clarification.

Through her efforts, Helterbran (2007) found common expressions of pride in accomplishments, self-education, and an underlying routine conduct bolstered by a strong sense of self-efficacy. Despite having no formal degrees or credentials, all four individuals considered themselves educated as a result of their self-direction and self-motivation. “Competent, resourceful, intelligent, successful, purposeful, and involved: These are key descriptors of individuals who are essential to building and maintaining a learning society; these are qualities that characterize the participants in this study” (p. 16). The subjects saw themselves as well rounded with a high quality life that was unquestionably the outcome of their self-directed education and personal efficacy. They did, however, express an understanding that their self-education was not valued by society and established institutions. In spite of this lack of credit they saw themselves as assets to society. Helterbran found that each participant’s self-education path had been determined by their responses to personal life situations. This finding leads to considerations of how the situational context in which learning takes place modulates that which is learned and to what extent.
Situated Learning

When evaluating learning, Hanks (2006) informed that situated learning theorists seek to understand the social engagements that provide the context for the learning experience rather than cognitive and/or conceptual explanations. Within the theoretic context of situated learning, Lave and Wenger (2006) posited that all activity is situated with the agent, activity, and the world mutually constituted one by the other. For this reason Hanks stresses “Learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind” (p. 15). Even though formal learning situations constitute instances of situated learning, the focus of this study is on workers who are not likely to experience formal or even non-formal learning situations in relation to their everyday work activities. Hence, they rely, whether wittingly or unwittingly, on situated learning experiences to gain the knowledge and skills that they need to prosper. Lave and Wenger defined these learning situations as “legitimate peripheral participation:”

By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of the community (p. 29).

The communities of practice in which the research subjects of this investigation engage in are independently owned business with 4 - 49 employees, representing fully engaged and highly complex learning communities (Lave & Wenger).

Through peripheral participation within a community of practice, an individual experiences a holistic learning situation that, according to Lave and Wenger (2006), “…implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities –
it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person” (p. 53). Lave and Wenger did not suggest the assimilation of an individual into a static community or organizational form. Rather, they theorized a dynamic process in which the community effects change in the individual and the individual effects change in the community. In this dynamic form, each new arrival and departure is experienced by community members both individually and as a whole in a learning give and take unique to that specific community situation. The process takes its form from the work practices that comprise the purpose of the community. This common engagement in common work practice, Lave and Wenger theorize, “…may well be a condition for the effectiveness of learning” (p. 93), in that learning is not a function of any one individual but an ever evolving dynamic of the community of practice as a whole.

One of the fundamental concepts of situated learning, as Brown and Duguid (1996) pointed out, is the focus on understanding the learner in order to understand what is learned. Every person is different and brings a unique history and way of perceiving and understanding the world into any given learning situation. For this reason, individuals might not learn what was conveyed in the way it was intended. This does not mean that nothing was learned, but that perhaps the individual put the information to a different use than the one intended. Brown and Duguid entitled this “active appropriation” (p. 49), through which learning becomes reciprocal between the educator and the learner. This give and take forms a complexity of information that can not be formalized due to its situated nature; if the same information is conveyed but the situational dynamics are altered, the meaning can be irreversibly changed.
In order to further define the breadth of the intrinsic dynamics of situated learning, Lompscher (1999) stressed that if any learning is to take place prerequisite abilities, motivations, and memory structures must be in place but not fully developed. Without partial development of these prerequisites learning would not be possible within the related situation, and if fully developed, learning in that particular situation would be unnecessary. Even with all of these prerequisites in place to the proper degree for a given situation while employing ideal learning activities, outcomes can go awry. Brown and Duguid (1996) stressed that when connecting situational dynamics with communities of practice, communities are not necessarily warm, congenial and supportive. “Communities can be, and often are, diffuse, fragmented, and contentious” (p. 53).

Offering further qualification for the diversity inherent in peripheral participation, Lave and Wenger (2006) offered the following comments:

Legitimate peripheral participation is not itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or a teaching technique. It is an analytic viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning. We hope to make it clear that learning through legitimate peripheral participation takes place no matter which educational form provides a context for learning, or whether there is any intentional educational form at all (p. 40).

Brown and Duguid (1996) identified situated learning as a demand focused theory of learning, requiring an understanding of what a learner needs before determining what should be offered and how it should be delivered. In the workplace situation this determination would be an outcome of the demands put on the worker by the nature of the work performed. Often delivery occurs in several complementary forms that interact,
again determined by the nature of the work performed. Several examples of how the
work performed effects delivery will follow. These examples relate to training in (a)
occupational safety practices, (b) refrigeration services, (c) a public defenders office
practices, and (d) computer systems design.

Occupational Safety

Machles (2004) investigated “…how learning occupational safety practices
occurred for employees outside of, and in addition to, what was taught through planned,
intentional safety training” (p. 5). His interest was in how learning has taken place
through situated learning that has happened consciously and unconsciously in the
workplace and whether the situated learning has had a complementary or diminishing
effect on the planned training or possibly no effect at all. Machles’ population was taken
from a biotechnology manufacturing and research company with 450 employees. He
chose this particular site because, due to the nature of its work, the company is highly
committed to and supplies consistent, federally mandated training in occupational safety.
What was most compelling to Machles was the fact that despite the companies’
commitment to safety and safety education, accidents persisted.

Through his study Machles (2004) sought to study workers who became accident
victims after they learned occupational safety both inside and outside of the classroom.
Although his methods section is well developed and very detailed one interesting
oversight was the omission of how many subjects ultimately participated in the
investigation. Machles conducted research as a partial requirement for a doctoral defense
so the assumption is that an adequate number of subjects were interviewed. The
interviews were conducted on site and were based on reflective open-ended questions
pertaining to the participant’s training, both formal and informal, as well as the accident in which they were involved.

Machles (2004) found that the participants had transferred situational knowledge both into the researched environment and from the researched environment into other environments successfully. Knowledge that had been transferred from one environment to another was adapted accordingly creating an ongoing refinement of learning. “The participants in this study did not see their lives as fragmented into sections: work, home, military, but instead as a continuous collection of life’s experiences, learning, and knowledge” (p. 57). Much of the knowledge that the participants spoke of constituted shared knowledge that had been passed from one community of practice to another through stories. Participants shared information and knowledge freely with co-workers while simultaneously learning, all through the free exchange of stories. Participants sought out persons they saw as experienced and knowledgeable to serve as mentors as they adapted to new environments. These selection processes were informal, interpretive, and intuitive with an apparent high level of success.

These findings satisfied Machles (2004) as to the validity of informal and situated learning theories. Accordingly, he reported that this does not diminish the importance of formal safety training but does imply a need to marry both informal and formal learning methods for the best utilization of existing community knowledge and the highest level of knowledge transfer to new hirers. Other implications cited by Machles included a change in training format from single training quantity delivery to broader training schemes that incorporate situational exercises and experiences as well as work community participation. Machles recommended similar research on a broad spectrum of
industries. He called on professional safety trainers to incorporate the safety training that is taking place informally in the workplace into their classroom delivery by drawing on work community stories and practices. Finally, Machles recommended that future research on situated learning should focus on the mastery of skills as a means for gaining acceptance by the community of practice as well as access to the learning resources inherent in that community.

Lave and Wenger (2006) discuss this focus on skills mastery as a limited coparticipation by new community of practice members as a means to “…gaining access to modes of behavior not otherwise available to them, eventually developing skills adequate to certain kinds of performance” (p. 18). This focus they identify as “…legitimate peripheral participation (LPP)” (p. 18).

Refrigeration Service Technicians

Although he did not employ Lave and Wenger’s (2006) term, “legitimate peripheral participation”, Henning (1996) did incorporate the mastery of skills as a necessary component to acceptance in the community of practice of refrigeration service technicians. Henning conducted research on site and in the field areas of a company that had operated 150 grocery stores - a meat packing plant, a dairy plant, a warehouse, and a distribution network. He focused on eighteen refrigeration servicemen employed by the company and their community of practice. Henning recruited “…seven servicemen, one retired serviceman, the manager of refrigeration and store service, his secretary-dispatcher, and his two field service managers who work directly with the servicemen assigned to them” (p. 60). He then gathered data for his work from participant observation, artifacts analysis, and unstructured interviews.
Six of the seven servicemen who participated in Henning’s (1996) study were formally students of his in a two year technical program from which they had graduated. Henning had the opportunity to spend one full ten hour day per week with one of the servicemen or service managers. He also visited the central office four times in order to observe and interview the secretary-dispatcher and the store refrigeration manager. At the central office he made video recordings for in-depth studies of the routines and interactions that took place. Along with these recordings, Henning reviewed relevant documents and other artifacts for analysis, which included:

…memos, technical specifications, manuals for the computer temperature control systems, hand written marks and messages made on plywood in compressor rooms and back rooms of the stores, screen messages from the computer temperature control systems, annual reports of the company telephone lists, advertisements and technical literature available in the supply houses at the counters, messages on the pagers, the markings on electrical panel boards that indicated circuits, formal engineering diagrams, etc. (p. 64).

Henning reasoned that this foundation facilitated learning in the following three ways: through (a) “the use of the sense impressions that are available from the operating equipment to produce a sense of intersubjectivity between machine and technician” (p. 115), (b) through discourse modeled around the nature and use of technical objects, and (c) through social relationships founded on informal learning/teaching exchanges between the servicemen and all other parties involved in their service responsibilities.
The latter of these three provided the link that defined “…the resolution of the serviceman’s status ambivalence by the development of a family type of relations within the small refrigeration and store service department” (p. 116). This family type relationship is what Wenger (2006) identified as a community in which “…collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations” (p. 45).

*Public Defenders Office*

Hara and Schwen (2006) investigated communities of practice through their research into the learning structures of a public defenders office. The research site and researcher reports were selected:

…based on the five attributes that were derived from the definition of a CoP [Community of Practice]: (1) a group of practitioners, (2) the development of a shared meaning, (3) informal social networks, (4) supportive culture-trust, and (5) engagement in knowledge building (para. 25).

Hara and Schwen defined: “…communities of practice as informal social networks that support a group of practitioners to develop a shared meaning and engage in knowledge building among the members” (para. 37). They made observations to collect data regarding the daily practices of the public defenders office, involving (a) individual attorneys, (b) jury trials, (c) jail visits, and (d) various social events.

The public defenders office presented as an ideal study for communities of practice based on society’s lack of respect for public defenders, seeing them as “‘non-attorneys’ because they don’t have to pay for their services” (para. 35). This social view
has created a shared meaning within the office which, for the same reason, had been
dramatically under-staffed and under-funded. This situation has led the public defenders to
rely heavily on one another for professional support and knowledge building through a
system of informal social networks founded on a culture of trust. Hara and Schwen
(2006) reported that: “In the community of public defenders, the attorneys we studied
shared the same vision, which is to help their clients. To accomplish this goal, they try to
improve their own practice through interactions with their colleagues” (para. 76). This
type of informal support and knowledge building can also be formally built into
professional systems as represented by Mwanza (2001) through her development of
computer systems.

**Computer Systems Design**

Mwanza (2001) collaborated with an organization that develops and maintains
industrial computing systems in the development of a computer system. Customer
support is a primary function in the maintenance of the products they sell. To this end the
organization draws on workers’ knowledge and experiences in resolving customer
problems and sought a tool to aid in the coordination of these identified work practices.
The tool desired in this instance was a computer system that would in essence apply a
formal structure to the organization’s informal learning resources by facilitating the
understanding of the organization’s work practices.

Mwanza likened computer system design to any other creative activity through
the guiding criteria of product type and available resources. Activity theory unites these
guiding criteria and the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of the computer user in
the “requirements capture stage of the design process” (para. 17). Through her work
Mwanza (2001) represented one method in which Activity Theory, using Engestrom’s (1978) model can be adapted to guide the design of computer systems. Her method called for the development of probing questions from the various components of Engstrom’s model. Mwanza instructs the researcher to identify the:

1. Activity of interest
   - What sort of activity am I interested in?

2. Object of Objective of activity
   - Why is this activity taking place?

3. Subjects in this activity
   - Who is involved in carrying out this activity?

4. Tools for mediating the activity
   - By what means are the subjects carrying out this activity?

5. Rules and regulations mediating the activity
   - Are there any cultural norms, rules or regulations governing the performance of this activity?

6. Division of labor mediating the activity
   - Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity and how are the roles organized?

7. Community in which activity is conducted
   - What is the environment in which this activity is carried out?

8. What is the desired Outcome from carrying out this activity? (para. 22)

Following this, she instructs the use of this eight-step-model as a structure for the acquisition of basic situational knowledge.
Global Training

Marken (2006) applied the work of Engestrom (1987) in conjunction with Mwanza (2001) to investigate global sales and marketing training for a U.S.-based Fortune 500 multinational corporation. Employing a descriptive case study, Marken concentrated his efforts on the senior sales managers of the company’s Japan affiliate. Working for three months he used activity theory to frame the workings of the sales and marketing training department with the objective of improving the “efficiency and efficacy of the preparation process for the Japan training retreat” (p. 28).

By applying Mwanza’s (2001) questions to the workings of the department Marken (2006) identified each aspect of the activities triangle as representative of his project:

1. What sort of activity am I interested in? – the Japan training program.

2. Is this activity taking place? – to increase the coaching skills of the regional sales managers and alignment of critical business initiatives supports.

3. Who is involved in carrying out this activity? – trainers, managers, and the director from Japan.

4. By what means are the subjects carrying out this activity? – the selling process workshop and the district focus week.

5. Are there any cultural norms, rules or regulations governing the performance of this activity? – these include hierarchy in age and
rank, company initiatives, don’t speak first, defer to the bosses, share you experiences, and training must be realistic and relevant.

6. Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity and how are the roles organized? – the individuals involved in the training,

7. What is the environment in which this activity is carried out? – the company, Japan, various company divisions, and the company’s Japanese peers.

8. What is the desired outcome from carrying out this activity? – enhanced sales performance, increased sales. (pp. 38-39)

Marken found that he was unable, due to individual schedules, to gather all participants in one place at one time. He conducted individual interviews and analyzed the resulting data toward consensus in order to determine the answers to the activities’ questions.

Marken (2006) intended, through his research, to determine if activity theory can have practical applications for the workplace. He found that activity theory did in fact lead to insights that would have otherwise been overlooked. Mwanza’s (2001) questions were the deciding element that allowed team members to identify important contradictions within the data. Most importantly, these questions, adapted from activity theory, supplied a framework for deeper understanding of work systems that constitute the daily functions of a work site.
Non-Technical Skills

Investigating the learning process for non-technical skills in the workplace is a broad task; however, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration (2007) reported that the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) accomplished the first step by “…defining the workplace competencies and foundational skills required for effective job performance today and tomorrow” (correspondence to The Honorable Lynn Martin, Secretary of Labor, para. 2). SCANS consisted of five workplace competencies and three foundational skill sets that are common for the workforce overall, regardless of the job or profession.

Workplace Competencies: - Effective workers can productively use:

- **Resources** - They know how to allocate time, money, materials, space, and staff.
- **Interpersonal skills** - They can work on teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- **Information** - They can acquire and evaluate data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate, and use computers to process information.
- **Systems** - They understand social, organizational, and technological systems; they can monitor and correct performance; and they can design or improve systems.
Technology - They can select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, and maintain and troubleshoot equipment.

Foundational Skills: Competent workers in the high-performance workplace need:

- Basic Skills - reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening.
- Thinking Skills - the ability to learn, to reason, to think creatively, to make decisions, and to solve problems.
- Personal Qualities - individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability, and integrity (p. 11).

Having these competencies and skills identified, the SCANS group went on to identify how to best teach them to the workforce through secondary and post-secondary educational programs. The importance of these competencies and skills has been developed through empirical literature which groups them under the term “non-technical skills” (Brand, 2005; Dench, 1998; Kayyali & Contillo, 2006; Roberts, 1996; Totten, 2000).

**Non-Technical Skills in Practice**

As identified by the SCANS commission, non-technical skills are important no matter what has occupied a person’s work life. There are occupational skills that have been uniquely related to technical expertise in the accomplishment of occupation-specific tasks, in relation to which, non-technical skills have been seen as superfluous. However, when interaction with coworkers, clients, and superiors becomes necessary in the course
of team projects, diagnostics, project management, etc., non-technical skills have become an imperative. Examples of industries that have realized the importance of non-technical skills and have been attempting to bring them to the forefront of their occupation’s introductory and advanced training include (a) engineering, (b) nursing, (c) accounting, (d) criminal justice, (e) agribusiness, and (f) information technology (Brand, 2005; Dench, 1998; Kayyali & Contillo, 2006; Roberts, 1996; Totten, 2000).

Accounting, Electronics, Engineering, & Criminal Justice

For her doctoral dissertation, Roberts (1996) investigated the perceived importance and level of success in teaching non-technical skills to community college students enrolled in associate degree programs in the fields of accounting, electronics engineering, and criminal justice. The population for this study consisted of associate degree program heads in the aforementioned programs, and prospective employers of graduates from these programs. These programs were representative of up to 49 community colleges throughout North Carolina. (The number of community colleges represented varied according to program.) The prospective employers were representative of the service areas of the community colleges.

Roberts used a six-part questionnaire to gain information about (a) demographics, (b) personal and organizational information, (c) perceptions of non-technical skills as broken into groupings, and finally, (d) whether the colleges, the employers, or both should be responsible for non-technical skills training. Of 105 questionnaires mailed, usable surveys were returned by 36 local employers and 48 community college program heads. The study found agreement throughout the population about a high importance for non-technical skills and a low preparedness of program graduates. The population did not
agree, however, about (a) which non-technical skills were of greater and/or lesser importance, (b) the level of preparedness of graduates, or (c) who is responsible for improving the graduate’s non-technical skill performance. These findings varied according to occupational area and position of the respondent. As represented in the SCANS study, occupations varied as to which non-technical skills were of greatest importance. Robert’s study also represented the means by which several secondary, post-secondary, and industry-sponsored groups identified the necessary non-technical skills for a given occupation.

Consistent with Robert’s (1996) findings, through this literature review, this researcher discovered that similar issues and corrective measures had been identified by the IT industry in the UK (Dench, 1998).

**Information Technology**

Dench (1998) investigated the information technology (IT) industries as they concerned development, implementation, and support of IT systems. The impetus for his investigation was presented as the IT industry’s full integration into business processes. The methods for this investigation included a literature search and exploratory interviews with IT industry leaders. This process included (a) an IT skills forum, (b) employer interviews, and (c) a review of the findings with key actors in IT and business. Dench utilized a discussion guide in his contacts with the study populations. This guide set the focus of the investigation and concentrated on (a) company background, (b) IT function within the company, (c) current business/IT challenges, (d) required IT skills and abilities, (e) recruitment tactics, and (f) company-sponsored training and development.

Dench (1998) found that IT staff must continually update their technical skills. In
addition, he concluded that IT staff must also have the ability to (a) maintain a close
client/customer focus, (b) meet expectations while providing clarity for the client about
the realm of possibility, (c) function in a timely and cost efficient manner, (d) maintain
pace with technological and business change, and (e) tailor solutions to customer needs.
In order to meet these demands, the employers who participated in this research required
IT personnel who had consulting, management, problem solving, analytic, and
interpersonal skills.

According to Dench (1998), the message from IT employers and customers was
that IT specialists, no matter how high their technology skill levels, could no longer work
in isolation. “The IT function provides a business service and experts have to engage in a
dialogue about business needs, communicating effectively with clients and internal
customers” (p. xii). This meant that the ideal IT employment recruit demonstrated both
the non-technical skills and the technical skills necessary to meet expectations.

When the available labor force cannot meet the existing need, employer-
sponsored training is mandated. Technical training is expensive and never ending in the
IT Industry. This, coupled with the necessity for non-technical skills training for new and
existing staff, has created grave concerns for the IT industry. Dench reported these
concerns (a) maintaining both a technical and non-technical skills base, (b) forecasting
the quantity and nature of future skill needs, (c) providing effective resource
management, and (d) maintaining a competitive advantage. A specific business interest
facing these challenges both in coordination with IT and as a complex entity in its own
right is the Agribusiness sector.
Agriculture, Forestry, & Consumer Sciences

Agriculture, forestry, and consumer sciences struggle with this issue of non-technical skills development in order to assure career-ready and advancement-ready Agribusiness professionals. Brand (2005) assessed a population of 211 agribusiness employers regarding their experiences, both positive and negative, in recruiting and retaining a competitive workforce. These business participants, from which he received 98 usable responses, represented a 15 state employment base for West Virginia University. The questionnaire addressed (a) recruitment and employment interests in the areas of resume and interview skills, (b) recruit/employee personality traits, (c) communication and business skills, and (d) demographics. In terms of communication skills, which had been rated as important by more than 75% of employer participants, the study showed a general 50/50 split as to preparedness. However, over 80% of the respondents rated business and computer skills to have been adequate.

In his conclusions Brand (2005), reported “Graduates were not prepared in the communication skills of oral communications, expressing ideas and thoughts, effective verbal skills, listening, effective nonverbal skills, presentation skills, written skills, giving instructions, and public speaking” (p. 49). Further inadequacies were noted in the skill areas of (a) needs assessment, (b) time management, (c) decision-making, (d) conflict resolution, (e) leadership, (f) self-evaluation, (g) supervision, and (h) management. Brand recommended creating or extending coursework in these problem areas. His findings also rated poorly on the existing labor force for agribusiness in the representative states. An industry key to the success of the agribusiness industry has been industrial engineering
although these same non-technical skill inadequacies have been reported to plague engineering as well.

*Engineering Professionals*

Totten (2000) took the first steps in identifying what he termed to be non-technical skills that would ensure success and stability for engineering professionals. His research findings were based on 101 useable surveys from a selected population of 300 industrial engineering graduates from The Pennsylvania State University. The respondents represented engineering positions in the following industries: (a) transportation, (b) distribution, (c) service, (d) military, (e) communications, (f) consulting, (g) computer technology, and (h) manufacturing industries.

The 23 non-technical skill areas included in Totten’s survey tool were well representative of the SCANS employability skills. They were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very unprepared) to 5 (very prepared), with 3 as neutral. Of these 23 non-technical skills, 19 were rated as having been important, with the highest importance ratings attributed to (a) verbal communication, (b) people skills, and (c) business knowledge. Unfortunately university graduates were seen as adequately prepared in only 6 of these 23 non-technical skill areas. Of the 101 respondents, 81 reported participation in continuing education opportunities. The majority (56 respondents) had participated in employer-sponsored training, while 13 had taken part in non-university/non-employer opportunities, and 12 reported having returned to the university setting for continuing education. The primary reason cited for continuing education was increased workplace competitiveness. Secondary reasons included non-engineering skills and new
technologies. Totten, as with other researchers herein, recommends curriculum enhancements and continuing education for non-technical skills.

The support studies in this review of the literature have all been, by necessity, representative of business, industry, professional, and educational organizations. Organizations are relatively easy to study and funding tends to follow such entities. However, the social interest for this investigation has been employees of independently owned businesses with 4 to 49 employees. An employee group that is located on the statistical low end of this demographic is cosmetologists. This group is the specific focus of this study.

**Cosmetologists**

The Green Book (2007) reported the number of salons in the United States to be 312,000. Of these, 90% are independently owned businesses. The Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (2006-07) reported 609,600 cosmetologists nationally for the year 2004 with an expected 16% increase by the year 2014, bringing the number for 2014 to 707,500.

The salon service statistics in Green Book 2007 are reported in increments of 3-6, 7-9, 10-12, and 13+ Chairs (number of employees) per salon, placing independently owned salons at the low end of the 4 to 49 employee demographic. This also puts salon employees in the position of being the least likely, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook assumptions, to receive employee-sponsored training.

In explanation of a business model for privately owned salons I will draw on my own background as a salon owner. The vast majority of privately owned salons are called
owner/operator salons. This means that the owner of the salon is also a working designer usually with the largest income clientele in the salon. There are a few non-designer owners, meaning the owner is not a licensed cosmetologist, but these are the exception. The primary reason for owner/operator salons is the tight financial margin on which privately owned salons operate. Employees are paid commission on the revenue that they bring into the salon. If a designer does not generate income there is simply no other resource from which to draw a salary for that person. The greater the income a designer generates for the salon the greater the expected commission on that income. If the designer becomes dissatisfied with the work situation for any reason there is nothing legally preventing the designer from relocating to another salon. If the designer does relocate clientele associated with that designer will follower taking that revenue from the salon. The constant threat of a designer relocating is what keeps the owner working as a designer. No matter how many employees may relocate the owner must still cover the salon overhead. All of this converges to create a very tight cash flow and typically leaves little money to fund training for employees. Further, the fact that the owner is working as a designer plus running the business leaves little time to mentor or train employees.

I have not found any empirical research on cosmetologists beyond that which is accumulated and reported on by Green Book with the exception of employment profile information collected by the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) Online (2006) and other career search organizations. The career search profiles identify all cosmetologists as requiring non-technical skills as a prerequisite to professional success. The Princeton Review (2006), in its career profile for cosmetologist, reported that “…cosmetologists with charm, good communication skills, and the ability to inspire trust
in their clients will be very successful” (para. 1). The Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09Edition*, has instructed career counselees who are looking at the cosmetology field to be aware that “Interpersonal skills, image, and attitude play an important role in career success” (para. 14). Canada concurred with these views of cosmetology success traits through the Canada Career Consortium (CCC) (2006):

You are a detail person with flair and creativity. You need to be tactful and gracious with an ability to communicate. You should enjoy talking to many different types of people and maintain a well-groomed, professional appearance.

You like to stay current on the latest styles and fashion trends in your field. You should have an interest in popular culture and an interest and ability to talk about culture and fashion trends with colleagues and customers. (section 3 – Who’s the right person?)

These career exploration resources have conducted occupational research on the Beauty Industry and have concurred with the educational needs identified by O*NET (2007) and Thomson, Delmar Learning (2004): Non-technical skills are important to the success of a professional cosmetologist.

*Chapter Summary*

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to informal learning using a situated learning orientation, the importance of non-technical skills over a broad range of industries, and an assessment of how this all relates to the Cosmetology salon industry. Chapter 3 covers the methodology employed through the research design for this
investigation. Chapter 4 presents findings of the research. Finally chapter 5 addresses conclusions, implications, and recommendations.
CHAPTER 3

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to describe the types of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers. Specifically, the thesis question asks the following: How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills? The thesis sub-questions are:

Q1. What types of practices do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

Q2. What types of activities do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

Q3. What are the predominant learning interests for undirected workers?

Q4. What are the common beliefs that undirected workers share?

Q5. What types of informal learning artifacts are available to undirected workers?

This chapter discusses the research design for this investigation. The research design includes (a) research approach, (b) interview questions, (c) sample population, (d) data collection, (e) validation strategies, and (f) data analysis.

Research Approach

The approach used to address my research purpose and thesis questions is qualitative, grounded study. I chose this approach because I am interested in new insights into how undirected workers learn non-technical skills. By taking this constructivist approach through grounded methods I am free to, as Charmaz (2006) purported, create an interpretive portrayal of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills rather than try to convey an exact picture of them. This freedom allows
for a fluid generation of theory through comparative analysis of the conceptual properties of social interaction, rather than the assumption of static facts from anecdotal evidence.

I endeavored, through the use of qualitative language, to create a holistic representation of my research sample by creating significant links between them, myself, our individual and combined interpretations, and the research process that brings us together. I collected data for my investigation from (a) representative industry artifacts, (b) audio-taped interviews with the research subjects, (c) notes generated throughout the research process, (d) my own life experiences, and (e) input from several research support persons as well as guidance from my doctoral committee members.

**Sampling**

Given the scope of business types represented by privately owned businesses in the United States with undirected workers and the limited time and resources of a doctoral dissertation, it was beyond the scope of this research to address all possible employment situations. With this in mind I employed, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) title it, theoretical sampling in order to acquire a small representative sample of businesses and individuals that contributed to theory development.

I began by selecting a homogeneous sample of cosmetologists employed by independently owned beauty salons in Pennsylvania. The common size of an independently owned salon in the United States is identified by the statistical reports of the Green Book (2007). This is an annual publication that reports national statistics and business trends for the salon industry. The Green Book identifies 90% of the salons in the U.S. as independently owned and employing from 3 to 13 cosmetologists. This puts the salon industry at the bottom of the scale of number of businesses with undirected
workers. It also puts cosmetologists at the lowest end in expectations for employer-directed training when following the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2006-07) report that the likelihood of employer-directed training diminishes along with the number of employees in a privately owned business.

I then looked for maximum variation in my sample by selecting a wide variety of independently owned salons from various cities and towns in Pennsylvania and recruiting only one cosmetologist per salon as my units of analysis (Creswell, 2007). My sample consisted of one male and ten female cosmetologists, ranging in approximate age from early twenties to mid-fifties. All were successful graduates of basic cosmetology programs and were licensed. Nine completed high school, one held a GED, and one is a non-completer. Two completed some college courses but did not complete a degree program and one held a vocational teaching certification. Their experience working in salons ranged from 5 to 32 years and included work in independently owned salons, chain-salons, and single-chair salons. Table 3.1 lists the characteristics of each unit of analysis.
Table 1

*Characteristics of Each Unit of Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years in industry</th>
<th>Salon work (number of salons worked in)</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid 40’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>At least 15 (all but 1 in New York City and 1 in State College); all independently owned</td>
<td>Beauty school, GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 20’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4 - 3 salons in Florida, 1 chain &amp; 2 independently owned &amp; 1 in State College, PA, independently owned</td>
<td>Beauty school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid 50’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2 - both in State College, PA, 1 chain &amp; 1 independently owned</td>
<td>Beauty school and vocational teaching certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 30’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4 – 2 in Massachusetts, both independently owned, 1 in California, independently owned, now self employed in single operator salon in State College, PA</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 40’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3 – All in State College, PA, 1 independently owned, 1 owner and employees, now self employed in single operator salon</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 30’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2 – 1 chain in State College, PA, 1 independently owned in Bellefonte</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid 40’s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8 – All in Harrisburg, PA &amp; all independently owned</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid 20’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 – All in Mechanicsburg, PA, 1 chain, 2 independently owned</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 30’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 in Harrisburg, PA, independently owned</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school, some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 20’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 – Both in Harrisburg, PA, 1 chain, 1 independently owned</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school, some college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid 40’s</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6 – All in State College, PA, 1 chain, 4 independently owned, now self employed in single operator salon</td>
<td>Beauty school, high school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

Preliminary data collection consisted of published offerings of various industry-sponsored learning resource curricula and beauty show professional development offerings. I collected further data through taped, informal, in-depth interviews with working cosmetologists. The study utilized an informal interview approach, as presented by Charmaz (2006), posing open-ended questions in order to loosely direct the flow of the interview. Requests for elaboration were posed sparingly in order to avoid influencing participants’ perspectives. By following the directives of Strauss & Corbin (1998) in conjunction with the informal interview approach I was able to direct the interview and still remain open to any unplanned direction the subject chose to take if it appeared to be fruitful. If a participant introduced a new direction and it was determined to be of value during the post-interview analysis phase, it became part of following interviews.

Eleven interviews were conducted ranging in length from 19 minutes to 68 minutes with an average length of 37 minutes. Eight of the interviews took place in the participants’ salon settings. All participants were required to sign an informed consent form, as required by The Pennsylvania State University, to assure them of their confidentiality (Appendix B). They were informed that pseudonyms would be used in referencing any of their interview statements. All participants were asked the same set of initial questions along with more specific probing questions when necessary. When applicable, participants’ employers were asked to sign a salon owners’ release form as required by The University in order to ensure that they understood that research was taking place in their establishment and as a record of their agreement (Appendix A).
Interview Questions

In developing informal interview questions (see Appendix D) I followed the lead of Charmaz (2006) in keeping the interview questions broad, open-ended, and non-judgmental. This served to allow for open responses from which unanticipated statements and stories could emerge. Charmaz further instructed that “Neutral questions do not mean a neutral interview. Instead an interview reflects what interviewers and participants bring to the interview, impressions during it, and the relationship constructed through it” (p. 27). In addition, I reviewed research methodology and sought the guidance of cosmetologist acquaintances, graduate and post-graduate colleagues, and advisory committee members.

The interview questions addressed the professional stories of the cosmetologist participants and their personal stories in relation to: (a) the individual’s personal experiences and insights into being a cosmetologist, (b) social and business functions of the salon business, (c) the participant’s progression as a professional, and (d) the participant’s views about their profession (Appendix D).

Interview question group 1 asked about the participant’s personal experiences and insights into being a cosmetologist. These questions were intended to relax the participants and get them talking about themselves. The themes that emerged touched in various ways on all of the sub-questions, Q1 through Q5.

Interview question group 2 sought insights into the social and business functions of the salon business. This question group primarily addressed thesis sub-questions Q1 and Q2.
Interview question group 3 inquired into the participant’s experiences as novice cosmetologist, as referred cosmetologist (successful individual salon businesses are founded on client referrals) and as learners within their chosen profession. This question group gleaned information for all of the thesis sub-questions Q1 thru Q5.

Interview question group 4 queried the participants about their present views on their profession, what they liked, did not like, and what they would change if possible. These were summary questions intended to end the interview. This group afforded insights into thesis sub-questions Q3 thru Q5.

First Approach to Obtaining Research Participants

The initial plan was to approach participants in their work settings. This method required the salon owner to identify and allow access to employees, establishing the owner as gatekeeper to any opportunity for gaining the information needed for this investigation. However, salon owners commonly use employees who work at reception desks as “buffers” from unwanted visitors, such as sales consultants. In this way anyone working at the reception desk became a gatekeeper to the salon owner, putting two obstructions between the participant and myself (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

This approach proved to be problematic and afforded only four participants. In most instances with this approach, of which there were fourteen, I never made it past the person at the reception desk. The salon industry is far removed from academia, which made it very difficult to clearly communicate my situation and intentions. The gatekeepers with whom I spoke seemed to have difficulty trying to discern a reason for conducting research on the beauty industry, and they also seemed intimidated by the
specter of interacting with the university in any way. This made the signing of a release form representative of the university completely out of the question.

In two of the four situations in which my initial approach succeeded, I proceeded as planned. After a detailed explanation of my situation, the research, and what would be expected of the interviewee, I scheduled a date to come back to the salon to conduct the interview. When I returned for the scheduled interview, I revisited the explanation regarding my situation, the research, and what would be expected of the participant. I then gave the participant and the salon owner their respective release forms, explained the forms in detail and requested their signatures. The participant and I then went to the designated location in the salon and proceeded with the interview. In the other two situations in which my initial approach succeeded, the participant chose to have the interview conducted at a location outside of the salon setting. In these two instances I proceeded as explained previously with the exception of requesting the salon owner to sign a release form. This exception was made with the guidance of the Office for Research Protections (ORP), The Pennsylvania State University (PSU).

Examples of the field notes composed while working out the problems of approach are as follows:

Field note:

This situation of trying to find working hairdressers is really proving to be a difficult situation because of a lot of general suspicion in the industry. People don't understand what I’m asking and I tend to intimidate a lot of these folks when I start talking about Penn State, graduate degrees, research, and signing release forms. So my approach
now is to find individuals that look like they have some class and some
good hair and find out who does their hair. I will then ask if they can
introduce me and my ideas to their designer. If so, I can go from there and
call the salon.

Other approaches

Field note:

I am going to talk to some folks at PA*CTEC [Pennsylvania
Career and Technical Education Conference] and see if they can be of
assistance. Maybe I can get in an interview or two at the conference. I'm
not sure about that and we'll just have to see how that works out, maybe I
can get the cosmetology teachers to introduce me to one or two graduates
of their programs that they know are working for about three years. So I
will talk to some folks down there and see what is happening this week.

Field note:

I'm going to get in touch with the state association [Pennsylvania
Barber & Cosmetology Association] and see if I can't make a plea for
interviews while they’re having their educational. I really don't know how
that's going to work. They really don't get me at all but possibly I can get
an interview or two.

Field note:

Bruce I have no idea about I'm not sure that he really likes or
appreciates what I’m doing. He wants me to interview all nine of his
employees but all I would have then is nine versions of Bruce. For some
reason he dislikes the idea of my interviewing only one of his designers. I don't know at this point since he has not responded to me in any way for over a week. My guess is that I'm out of his picture. If he doesn’t come through I will contact Martha down at PA*CTEC and see what is happening as far as getting another interview or possibly using her as an industry resource.

Second Approach to Obtaining Research Participants

After determining that I had been as successful with my original plan as I could reasonably expect, I altered my method and began approaching individual acquaintances. These included individuals I knew from work, from my church, and also family friends. Through this approach I spoke with at least twelve12, possibly as many as 15, individuals. I told them about my research efforts and asked them if they thought their personal hairdressers might be interested in participating. If they thought this was a possibility, I asked them to approach their designers and gain permission for me to make personal contact. This approach resulted in four more participants. All four of these participants were cosmetologists who work alone in salons attached to their home property. All four had achieved extensive backgrounds in the salon industry before moving their businesses into their single-operator salons. Further examples of the field notes composed while working out the problems of approach are as follows:

Field note:

Approaching designer clients has afforded me about as many interviews as I expect it will. I never expected this much difficulty in finding interviews. My next move has to be the Harrisburg area. If I call
Gladys and Bob in Harrisburg they may at least let me explain my situation and recommend one of their employees and suggest to the person that they participate. Henry may still be in business as well and I can call Fred and Jill. If some of them can help I can round out my 12. This can still work in that I never worked with any of their employees.

Third Approach to Obtaining Research Participants

Finally I exhausted my resources in my home area of State College, PA and began calling former co-workers from the early years of my career in the Harrisburg, PA area. I had not been in contact with most of these people for 18 years or more, however, my reception was very warm and supportive.

Field note:

My reception from Harrisburg has been wonderful. Most have agreed to help me and the scheduling of interviews is working. It’s a lot of time traveling but my only alternative. This should give me my 12 participants.

Of the five contacts that I made, I gained four more participants. Three of the individuals I contacted had become salon owners who graciously helped me schedule interviews with one of their respective employees. In these situations I followed the protocol of my original methodology, gaining signatures on release forms from both the salon owner and the participant and conducting the interviews in the salon setting. The fourth Harrisburg area interview was with a former co-worker who has continued to work in salons as an employee and has never been a salon owner.
Two of the four interviews secured using the second approach were conducted by my colleague and afforded several unexpected revelations due to her lack of salon industry background and her significant skills as a qualitative researcher. Field notes about her insights are as follows:

Field note:

Jasmina has become a real asset she's really putting a lot of effort into this. She's a good interviewer and will put a layman’s perspective and more depth to the research. She has picked up on an almost total lack of competitiveness between designers. I’ve been thinking about this because I never noticed it before. My conclusions need to be in the findings in some form. I think this is significant but don’t know what bearing it will have on my conclusions.

I think the primary reason I never noticed this lack of competitiveness between designers is due to my assumption that it was there. I have always been competitive and looked at the salon situation as a competitive situation. In light of this it’s amazing how many conscious competitive strategies I have developed over the years. I still don’t think I was wrong but if in going back over the interviews this is consistent my success in the salon has another dimension.

Field note:

Jasmina has put a whole new spin on the openness of interaction and information exchange between designers. Her observation that she has never experienced this level of openness between co-workers in any of her
job experiences leads to a lot of rethinking. It obviously ties to the lack of competitiveness that she and I discussed. It has to be the impetus for or the by-product of the non-competition. It may be that the lack of competition is a gender role attribute which would be another reason for my not picking up on it in the course of all these years. As an attribute of gender role it is not someplace I want to go in this research but it may have other significance.

Field note:

Jasmina’s coding varied little from mine with the exception of self and industry motivation toward learning technical skills. There is a very high level of interest and support for the learning of technical skills. I can further equate this to the eventual disenchantment with the pursuit of advancing technical skills that most designers experience after a decade or so in the business. Ultimately how many ways are there to cut off hair? Advanced design classes typically draw a young crowd. Once technique has been studied and developed examining a style is sufficient to understanding how it was accomplished.

With the second approach difficulties persisted and my colleague experienced several unresponsive leads that eventually led to our stopping the data collection process after 11 interviews rather than our targeted 12 interviews. Because I was proceeding with the data analysis process and had moved on to the third approach as she was trying to secure a third interview, it finally became necessary to proceed with the eleven interviews in hand. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that “…we realize that there always are
constraints of time, energy, availability of participants, and other conditions that affect
data collection” (p. 292). This did not prove to be a shortcoming in that theoretical
saturation had been reached at some point earlier in the data collection process, with
approximately the sixth or seventh interview. My decision to stop at the point I chose was
further supported by Strauss and Corbin:

For most theory-building researchers, data collection continues “…until
theoretical saturation takes place.” This simply means (within the limits of available time
and money) that the researcher finds that no new data are being unearthed. Any new data
would only add, in a minor way, to the many variations of major patterns (p. 292).
Theoretical saturation had occurred a number of interviews before I stopped the data
collection process. Nonetheless, I believe that I gleaned something unique from every
interview, if not in actual theoretical content, then in the ways to interpret existing
patterns due to a particular subject’s personal idiosyncrasies or life view.

Validation Strategies

Creswell (2007) viewed validation as steps taken to assure, as far as possible, the
accuracy of the research findings. Creswell listed eight validation strategies on which he
tended to focus. However, he explained that other strategies are equally as important. All
strategies toward validation are not applicable to every research project and the
researcher is responsible for identifying those that will apply to a given project at hand.
For this investigation I focused on congruence, transferability, objectivity, and reliability.
Congruence

In order to assure congruence between my understanding of the data and what the subjects intended to convey during the interview, I took several precautionary steps during the data analysis process. When I completed the transcription of the individual interviews I performed a member check in which I wrote a summary of each interview as transcribed from the recording and sent them to the corresponding participants for verification of content accuracy (Appendix E).

Ongoing peer examination also played an important role in my research process. Guidance was obtained from two committee members with qualitative research expertise, from a post-doctoral qualitative researcher, and from a peer graduate student trained and experienced in qualitative research and interpretative methodology.

I also gathered the widest variety of data types that I could in order to support my interview data and the ideas the participants brought to light. The data types include industry artifacts such as programs from trade shows, advanced design schools, and state and national association meetings. Field notes and memos also afforded a concrete memory to support the data collection process. Interviews with volunteer participants were my main source of data and served as the framework for my research findings.

I relied on my industry knowledge throughout the process, especially in navigating the salon industry’s social and business structures in order to gain participants. My industry knowledge also prompted cautions toward researcher bias and led me to employ the aid of a peer graduate student trained and experienced in qualitative research and interpretative methodology to conduct two of the participant interviews for me. The
peer graduate student also collaborated in coding several interviews that I coded in order to determine the reliability of my interpretation of the data.

Transferability

I this study I enhanced transferability through a thick detailed description of the research process and findings. This is to aid future researchers in determining if these findings are transferable to their interests and needs. Further, theoretic and practical connections were made to several unrelated industries in the chapter two review of the literature. In this chapter I made the transference of the research interest to as many industries as practical in the time and space allotted through the framework of a dissertation. These connections were not, however, all that could have been made. Even within the development of my unit of analysis I sought out participants from unrelated work sites in order to produce the broadest transference of the findings within the salon industry.

Objectivity

In addressing objectivity as concerned with my research conforming to accepted standards I followed rigorous research techniques and maintained accurate logistical records. To this end I personally transcribed each interview myself in order to obtain the most accurate interpretation of the participants’ intents. Even after initial transcription was accomplished I found myself revisiting the tapes and transcriptions frequently for verification of facts and ideas. Through this process I came to know the participants and their interviews in a very detailed and familiar way. Field notes aided in the transcription process by bringing back my thoughts at the time of the interviews. Examples of these notes are:
Field note:

The interview went very well. She’s a nice lady and seems to have a great deal of experience and is an American born Latino from New York City. Although not well educated formally she has done fairly well learning what she needs. She seems very unstable in most ways and I wonder why she ended up in State College. She was generally informative although some of her stories seemed to gain embellishment on the run. A number of her ideas about the salon business were not the norm from my experience. However, possibly they do things differently in NYC. Most surprising was her seeming total lack of ownership of her clientele.

Field note:

The interview was not as long as I would have liked. She is a nice person, single mother of two and seems intent on being successful as a hair dresser but lacks direction. She seems to have been looking for a home type situation because she frequently referred to the family atmosphere that she has had to adjust to. She doesn’t seem to fit with the rest of the employees although she may be a good balance to their introversion. She is very bright and seems to want education but again lacks direction and resources. The salon is very homey and rather typical of a small-town salon for the locals.

Field note:

This subject was not fully committed to her espoused views toward her clients and their central position of consideration. Her repeated
assertions of client satisfaction as her primary driving force came off as something she knew should be her focus but wasn’t. She didn’t seem to have buy-in to the client only to her product. Although she obviously understands the importance of repeat business, her client communication cycle apparently ends with her aesthetic and technical decision.

Further objectivity was obtained through records of contacts, interviews, and other research logistics. Each participant is identified for my records by an assigned number which corresponds to participant contact information and an interview tape number. All of these materials are securely stored along with consent forms and member check letters and responses.

Reliability

Throughout the investigation reliability was concerned with the question of the dependability of the research in relation to the stability of the methods used, the consistency of purpose throughout, and the predictability and accuracy of the findings. In order to ensure reliability, theoretic sampling was employed and research protocol that could be replicated was followed so future researchers can either confirm or refute the findings. Further, detailed assumptions and theories constitute the foundation of the research, an accurate audit trail was maintained, and the confidentiality of the sample was maintained. Table 3.2 summarizes the validation strategies utilized in the study.
Table 2

Validation Strategies Utilized in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congruence</td>
<td>• Member checks: a summary of each interview was written and sent to the interviewee for verification of content accuracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Peer examination: ongoing guidance was obtained from two committee members with qualitative research expertise, from a post-doctoral qualitative researcher, and from a peer graduate student trained and experienced in qualitative research and interpretative methodology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Variety of data types: industry artifacts, field notes and memos, interviews, and researcher industry knowledge through professional experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Researcher bias: employment of a co-researcher without salon industry experience and peer examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>• Thick detailed descriptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Theoretic and practical connections made to several unrelated industries in chapter two, Review of the Literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Subjects were all drawn from unrelated work sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>• Verbatim transcription of interviews by the researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Field notes maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accurate records of contacts, interviews, and other logistics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>• Purposeful theoretical sampling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Detailing of assumptions and theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accurate audit trail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Confidentiality maintained.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data Analysis**

I personally transcribed each interview from the audiotapes to digital text format. This allowed me to revisit each interview word for word and begin to rethink what was said and why it was said. As proscribed by Glaser and Strauss (1999), the “…constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis” (p. 102) was utilized. As each interview was completed, I transcribed the data and began the analysis using NVivo 7 as an analytic tool. Data analysis was conducted on an on-going basis throughout the data collection process in order to allow the data to guide the investigation. In this way the number of interviews conducted was also guided by the investigation in that saturation of data was sought along with the variety of subject’s professional experiences.

Each interview was analyzed line-by-line in order to glean all pertinent information and categorize it in the form of free nodes or in vivo codes. Charmaz (2006) explained that “In vivo codes serve as symbolic markers of participants’ speech and meaning” (p. 55). This initial coding process also brings out the fragmented nature of each individual’s speech patterns when they are speaking freely, the way many seem to jump around ideas when excited and slow down and speak more succinctly when relating content having more gravity.

As the initial analysis progressed it was necessary to move back and forth between interviews in an effort to address all areas of interest as they emerged. In vivo relationships developed into focused codes which, as Charmaz (2006) instructed, synthesize and explain larger segments of the interview data. This formed the beginning of the data reformation into the context of this investigation.
After all of the interviews and initial analyses were completed I went back through each interview assessing each focused code as to its actual value in answering the questions posed by my research interest. Some remained as initially identified, others were renamed or redefined as to their purpose. Those that I determined were not relevant were eliminated from the coding scheme. This process began to define topic categories or axial codes. Axial codes provide the early development of major categories that serve to “…sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways…” according to Charmaz (2006, p. 60).

I eventually identified 56 axial codes or categories that related to my research questions. At this point progressing in digital form through NVivo 7 became too restrictive. I printed out NVivo 7 reports that included the number of each interview that had contributed a response. I revisited each interview that was not represented to determine the reason. In some instances I had overlooked data that should have been included, while in other instances the exclusion was due to reasons I had previously determined. In several instances this revisitation afforded insights that I would otherwise have missed.

In the course of revisitation, individual personalities, commonly held views, repetitious insights, expected topics that did not materialize, and other aspects of the data began to congeal into larger patterns. These patterns are labeled and known as theoretical codes. Glasser (1978) identified 18 coding families that aid the researcher at this stage of analysis. These coding families serve as a form of scaffolding for constructing interactions between data and existing theory. This final step in the analysis of interview data must be taken with caution, according to Charmaz (2006): “When your analysis
indicates, use theoretical codes to help you clarify and sharpen your analysis but avoid imposing a forced framework on it with them” (p. 66).

Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the methodology employed through the research design for this investigation. The research design includes the method, interview questions, sample population, research subjects, data collection, validation strategies, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the research findings. Finally chapter 5 addresses conclusions, implications, and recommendations.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the field research for this study. First is a review of the research purpose, thesis question, thesis sub-questions, and methodology. Following this the study findings are presented and coordinated with direct quotes from the research participants. Findings are structured within four question groups with reference to the primary thesis sub-question(s) to which a given group informs upon. Each question within a question group is further broken down into the theme(s) that emerged from that question.

Review of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the types of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers. Specifically, the thesis question poses: How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills? This question required queries into five sub-questions:

Q1. What types of practices do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?
Q2. What types of activities do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?
Q3. What are the predominant learning interests for undirected workers?
Q4. What are the common beliefs that undirected workers share?
Q5. What types of informal learning artifacts are available to undirected workers?
The approach used to address this research purpose and questions is qualitative, grounded study. I chose this approach because I am interested in new insights into how undirected workers learn non-technical skills. Based on Charmaz (2006), by taking this constructivist approach through grounded methods I am free to create an interpretive portrayal of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills rather than try to convey an exact picture of them. This freedom allows for a fluid generation of theory through comparative analysis of the conceptual properties of social interaction, rather than the assumption of static facts from anecdotal evidence.

In pursuit of these data I conducted eleven interviews with professional cosmetologists working in salons in various cities and towns in Pennsylvania. In order to gain as diverse a selection of subjects for my data gathering as possible under my research circumstances, I did not interview more than one subject per salon setting. I also chose an age range and length of time in the industry spanning approximately three decades. Somewhat representative of the industry’s demographics, my participants included ten female subjects and one male subject. The other male cosmetologist’s voice included in this study is mine. I used my knowledge of the salon industry to guide this discussion of the findings as I used it for many other aspects of this study. I did, however, take a cautionary view to researcher bias and incorporated steps to diminish as far as possible any unconstructive bias influences.

I addressed the issue of researcher bias by employing a peer graduate student trained and experienced in qualitative research and interpretative methodology and without salon industry knowledge. This colleague conducted two of my interviews, coded two other interviews during the analysis process and collaborated on the development of
the research themes. In this way she was able to bring an unbiased perspective to the field work and data analysis. I also had several meetings with a post-doctoral qualitative researcher, also without salon industry knowledge, who contributed guidance with the data collection process, interview question development, research theme development, and the overall data collection and analysis process. In the next section I present the research findings with all citations taken verbatim from taped interviews.

Research Findings

Question Group 1

Interview question group 1 asked about the individual’s personal experiences and insights into being a cosmetologist and was intended to relax the participants and get them talking about themselves. The themes that emerged touched in various ways on all of the sub-questions, Q1 thru Q5. The themes that emerged for question group 1 were:

- commonalities among cosmetologists as well as diversity
- an early predetermination to become a cosmetologist and/or an early exposure to the occupation in some way
- the cosmetologist as a technician
- the cosmetologist as social support for clients
- personal satisfaction through the work of a cosmetologist
- expectation of or need for a strong sense of community

To begin this question group, I requested of the participant, “Please tell me about [herself/himself] the cosmetologist.”

QG1-1.

How long have you been a cosmetologist?

The following theme emerged from this question:
commonalities among cosmetologists as well as diversity

**Commonalities and diversity**

Participant’s length of time in the industry ranged from 5 to 32 years, with 5 participants serving between 29 and 32 years, 2 participants serving 15 to 18 years, and 4 participants serving from 5 to 6.5 years. The 5 to 6.5 year minimum length for the participants represent a person who understands the industry and their role in it well enough to at least survive and likely thrive professionally. The five older participants and the two in the middle range of years represent a wealth of information and insight for my data. There were, as will be seen in these findings, relevant commonalities among these participants as well as diversity.

**QG1-2.**

Tell me about your experiences leading to your decision to become a cosmetologist.

The following themes emerged from this question:

- early desire to become a cosmetologist
- early exposure to the industry and work

**Early desire**

Three of the participants expressed an early desire to become a cosmetologist, although they did not accredit that to anything or anyone in particular.

“I knew I wanted to do it when I was a little kid” (Informant 4).

“I just always wanted to be a cosmetologist” (Informant 5).

“Um well it’s something I always wanted to do” (Informant 6).

**Early exposure to the industry and work**
Eight participants identified an early exposure to cosmetology as influencing their choice of occupation.

“One of my aunts said, ‘We’re going to go to beauty school, why don’t you come too?’” (Informant 1).

“My mother knew it was something I liked to do, play with hair. She gave me a book that said learn how to cut hair. I read the thing and started cutting people’s hair” (Informant 4).

“My mom was always doing all the home perms for all the old ladies in the 60’s…” (Informant 5).

“I fooled around with hair as a kid…” (Informant 7).

“My mom is a hairdresser…” (Informant 8).

“…my dad does [hair], too” (Informant 9).

“I always did my sisters’ hair when we were younger…” (Informant 10).

“My third cousin used to live across the street from me as I was growing up and she had a salon in her home and I went over there and just played in her salon all the time” (Informant 11).

Ultimately, participants seemed to share a personal moment/memory/recollection/reminiscence leading to their eventual decision to become a professional cosmetologist.

QG1-3.

How many salons have you worked in?

The following theme emerged from this question:

• commonalities among cosmetologists as well as diversity
Commonalities and diversity

Once we began discussing subjects’ common experiences in the industry, diversity began to surface through their stories. The number of salons in which a participant worked, especially in relation to their time in the industry, varied greatly. Table 3 is organized according to informant number and shows each participant’s number of years in the salon industry in relation to the number of salons in which they had worked.

Table 3

Industry Experience in Relation to Number of Salon Positions Held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant #</th>
<th>Years in Industry</th>
<th>Number of Salons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>At least 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of the four participants who changed salons most frequently qualified their actions as something to be expected or understood while those who represented more stable behavior simply stated their number of positions held as a matter of fact.

“We move around a lot. Hairdressers are like that” (Informant 1).

“Hairdressers just seem to move around a lot. We can’t seem to find our own space” (Informant 2).

“Cause we’re all gypsies. You know we all sort of follow our own path” (Informant 7).
This diversity of answers was followed, in response to the next question, with an apparent unity of thought.

QG1-4.

What do you do as a cosmetologist?

The following themes emerged from this question:

- the cosmetologist as a technician
- the cosmetologist as social support for clients

**Cosmetologist as a technician**

When presented this question, many of my participants ran down a list of services they have offered, such as:

“Um everything, you know, we cut, color, perm…” (Informant 6).

“I cut hair, I color hair, perm, shampoo, style, I try and do everything there is to do with hair” (Informant 7).

“My license enables me to do almost anything um I do hair, nails, pedicures, manicures, um color, perms, all that” (Informant 8).

**Cosmetologist as social support for clients**

Some subjects quickly became philosophical about what they do as a cosmetologist and a social support theme emerged.

“I enjoy making people feel better about themselves” (Informant 4).

“I make people feel good and look good” (Informant 5).

“They become more your friends than your clients” (Informant 6).

“You get to know what’s going on in town that most people don’t know is going on. It’s like you do the left side and the right side. You find out
things that are going to happen to people before they find out that it happened” (Informant 7).

“You know sometimes people don’t realize that a lot of clients look at hairdressers sort of as almost like a therapist. They come to get their hair cut sometimes just to be in a relaxed atmosphere, just to feel better about themselves” (Informant 8).

“I feel that um I feel that translating people’s wants and needs into their outward appearance is what it’s all about” (Informant 9).

This is a common theme within the salon industry and often a source for a feeling of importance for cosmetologists as carried over into the responses to question QG1-5.

**QG1-5.**

Tell me about your daily experience of being a cosmetologist.

The following themes emerged from this question:

- personal satisfaction through the work of a cosmetologist
- expectation of or need for a strong sense of community

**Personal satisfaction and sense of community**

When asked about their daily experience, many participants talked about the diversity of the clients they encounter and the variations in the services and service combinations they offer. However, most consistently they talked about their daily experience of being a cosmetologist as something that they truly enjoy.

“You know this is exciting and that’s exciting for me socially to know that I have a business that people are happy to come to” (Informant 4).
“Well I certainly enjoy the people, I really enjoy the people” (Informant 5).

“Um some days we have are just slow and then the other days when you’re all day runnin’ around… ah I don’t know we have a lot of fun in here so I love my job in here it’s great” (Informant 6).

“You know usually its good but you know it’s like the camaraderie you have with the people you work with, you work on, the people that come in, and even the other stylists’ clients. It’s always something new and different” (Informant 7).

“I’m happy when I’m doing hair” (Informant 8).

“I am so lucky, we just have so much fun” (Informant 9).

“I mean I love the atmosphere” (Informant 10).

**Strong sense of community**

The salon practices that they experienced, ones that drove them to leave salons they had previously worked in were ones that hampered one-on-one communication with their clients and limited their sense of community in the salon situation.

“Ah, stylists can be very outgoing and emotional people. So they can be very difficult to work with. It’s very unnatural for them to have a business mind. They will typically act unprofessional whenever they feel a need to” (Informant 2).

“It’s one of those really fast-paced… one of those in and out… get your clients in and out. I just… I didn’t really care for that. You didn’t get to know your clients as well” (Informant 6).
“I thought I was with family and people I could trust and you know it all went to hell” (Informant 7).

“Ah um yeah I had one particular employer that when he wasn’t in a good mood everyone paid the price. And so you know you’d go in that day and kind of sneak in and try and get a feel for the mood of the day… yeah… and you know just kind of stay away” (Informant 11).

From this set of questions it became apparent that the work of a cosmetologist is highly social and relies on workers with well developed social skills. Not one of these interviewees said anything negative about their work or the salon situation in which they were working at the time. They all seemed to experience a strong positive sense of identity as a cosmetologist. There was also a strong sense of community evident in their stories of salon work and in their stories about identifying themselves as cosmetologists over all.

**QG1 summary**

Interview question group 1 asked about the individual’s personal experiences and insights into being a cosmetologist and was intended to relax the participants and get them talking about themselves.

The following themes emerged for question group 1:

**QG1-1.** How long have you been a cosmetologist?

**QG1-3.** How many salons have you worked in?

- commonalities between cosmetologists as well as diversity

**QG1-2.** Tell me about your experiences leading to your decision to become a cosmetologist.
- an early predetermination to become a cosmetologist and/or an early exposure to the occupation in some way

**QG1-4.** What do you do as a cosmetologist?

- the cosmetologist as a technician
- the cosmetologist as social support for clients

**QG1-5.** Tell me about your daily experience of being a cosmetologist.

- personal satisfaction through the work of a cosmetologist
- expectation of or need for a strong sense of community

**Question Group 2**

Interview question group 2 sought insights into the social and business functions of the salon business. This question group primarily addressed thesis sub-questions:

**Q1:** What types of practices do employees of minor-businesses participate in that lead to worker development?

**Q2:** What types of activities do employees of minor-businesses participate in that lead to worker development?

These two aspects of the salon situation were addressed jointly in that there is no way to separate the social aspects of the salon situation from the business aspects. The practices and activities in which cosmetologists participate are equally interdependent and span both the social and business functions of salon work. In opening this group of questions, I asked the participant to discuss the social and business structures of the salon situation.

**QG2-1.**

Tell me about your experiences interacting with clients.

The following themes emerged from this question:
Learning through building a clientele

Success in the salon industry is dependent on the individual cosmetologist building and sustaining a reputation as talented, trustworthy, and reliable. A reputation representative of these traits will generate a clientele on which the cosmetologist can rely on for repeat business and referrals for more customers who will, hopefully, become regular clients as well.

“It’s got to be rotating, some people are going to be on a 4 week rotating schedule, some on a 6, some on an 8, it depends on what you’re doing for them” (Informant 3).

“Because somebody just said I can do this and uh if somebody comes into you with a head of green hair and you’re thinking oh god why did I get this. But the more of those icky heads you get and can transform into something good the more and they walk out and somebody notices that they look good and tells them that they look good” (Informant 5).

“Like they got something a little extra today and it didn’t cost them anymore an’ you know… You’ve got to keep those clients” (Informant 6).

“You have to be interesting you have to be good at what you do you have to be knowledgeable you have to run on time you have to basically just kiss people’s butts. You know you get this experience if ya stick with it for a while” (Informant 7).
Generating a clientele is slow and difficult even for an experienced cosmetologist who might have relocated away from an established clientele and must start from scratch again. For the inexperienced cosmetologist who is developing a clientele for the first time the difficulties are magnified.

“Oh that’s scary. It is very scary because um most salons pay only on a commission basis. So you really try very hard to get your clientele built up and make money” (Informant 11).

“Its like when I came here you sit around a lot waiting for your walk-ins to come in because if you don’t have a clientele when you start into this you know you actually have to take the walk-ins and get to know them and you really gotta talk to them an really got to get to know them so they want to come back to you” (Informant 6).

“I think it’s a lot of people turning you away. You know. I think it’s that person you cut their hair and you think you did a great job and that person doesn’t come back again. And you think huh aright that person came back, that one didn’t. What did I do for that person that I didn’t do for the other? You know what was going on? What was going on with the dynamics of everything? And you learn” (Informant 3).

“Um between your personality and your abilities and you gotta kind of really pump yourself up there and hope that they refer you to other people” (Informant 11).

There are many ways to approach the development of a clientele and it is a process that is ongoing as long as the cosmetologist desires to stay in business. The
approach is determined by the personality and values of the cosmetologist often even before their actual skill as a designer comes into play.

“And you it’s the rejection that teaches you how to do it. It’s almost like I’ve got $5 and I’ll give you a $5 tip if you treat me the way I want you to. Or I got 10 bucks here’s 20 bucks. It doesn’t matter how much they’re giving, you learn how to do make that behavior so that they’ll be back or so that you get your reward” (Informant 3).

“But till you get to know the person and they trust you and they respect what you think that to me is a whole different thing” (Informant 5).

“The education is what’s bringing them back. If they see you doing [new] things it gets them talking and that’s what you need to do. You need the education to keep them talking” (Informant 8).

“We would go out and just wow people and hand out business cards left and right and you know talk to people socialize I had new people coming in every week and I had a whole clique of people that I would just be in bars and just everybody wanted to talk about hair and fashion” (Informant 9).

“You still you know you talk to people even if they’re not your customers just to get your name out there and still go out and try and get more customers” (Informant 10).

“You know its like I paid my dues but I still do little kids because little kids become teenagers and then they become grownups you know it’s an ongoing thing. So you can still go on because you know your customers
even though you had them for a long time you know they might run into
somebody who might be fresher or you know they go on to somewhere
else. You know customers don’t last forever. Yeah some do but you’re
lucky if you get a good 10 – 15 years out of them recycling customers”
(Informant 7).

Learning through conducting client consultations

The client consultation is an intricate and very personal interchange of questions
and answers, typically between two individuals who have little or no shared history, and
is conducted within a very limited time frame of five to ten minutes.

“When the client would come in I would notice how they were dressed
and ask where they work and all of that to see who this person is”
(Informant 1).

“Because of your life style how late do you like to stay up? Do you
shower in the morning? Do you shower at night? How long do you spend
on your hair daily? Do you like to do it on the weekends? Are you a pull-up
kind of girl? Do you tuck it? You know all those kind of questions.
Then when I come back to it I you know this is probably what you should
do with your hair” (Informant 2).

“Talk ask questions get them to talk ask about family ask about work ask
about lifestyle ask about whatever and all those things give you clues into
what they want you to do with their hair. Smile a lot” (Informant 5).

“You know just being able to talk with people and ask them the right
questions. Um to understand what their life is like so I know how to make
their hair work for them, how to make them look and feel their best”

(Informant 8).

The consultation may bring the cosmetologist and the client into agreement and the process of delivering the mutually agreed upon service begins. However, it is not uncommon for the cosmetologist to realize that there is some degree of disconnect between what the client wants and what is advisable and/or possible for the client to have.

“And they want easy wash and go you know don’t want to spend a lot of time on their hair but want it to look great. They need to get a little realistic too” (Informant 2).

“Bring me a picture of something, you’re kidding me, you have three hairs and you want it to look like you have a head full. Or vice-versa, they bring you a picture of this little finer hair and they’ve got a bushel basket full of hair. Or you know someone is going to come in with a face that’s as round as round can be and it doesn’t matter what hairstyle” (Informant 5).

“You have to be able to understand you know what their sayin’ in different terms than what we are actually taught. You have to be able to you know translate it from one to the other. Um sometimes that can be a struggle to know with what they want” (Informant 8).

“I love it when people bring pictures in for hair cuts but you have to be realistic and you know if someone has natural curly hair and they’re bringing in a straight hair cut…” (Informant 11)

This is where the cosmetologist needs to proceed with caution and tact, realizing that these two individuals may have met no more than two or three minutes before
arriving at this impasse. A cosmetologist might go through many trial and error experiences of this nature before developing any level of expertise at refuting an unrealistic request without causing a rift in the communication.

“And you have to learn to say forget it. Well I mean I could say we need to do this and this and this but if they don’t want that. Well I can’t do the optimum for you but let’s start here and we’ll see where it goes you know. So it’s all in how you learn to say forget it lady you don’t have this kind of hair. You have to be able to communicate you have to be a people person” (Informant 5).

“But I love it when they bring pictures because it gives me an idea even if their hair won’t turn out like that. You can say look we can get similar or no that’s impossible so let’s look at other things” (Informant 6).

“You know as a young kid I would say do you really think you’re ready to change this you know? What’s your wife going to say or you know what’s going to happen? Now ah if they say they’re ready for it then they’ve been thinking about it for a while which means do it because they’ve probably been thinking about it the past two or three times they’ve been in but they haven’t had the guts but now they’re saying it” (Informant 3).

The client consultation is always where the cosmetologist/client relationship begins, and the more adept the cosmetologist becomes at this crucial interaction the greater the likelihood of repeat business. Repeat business from a client means a venture into a unique, often long-term relationship that will often gradually draw in family members, friends, and other acquaintances of the original client. These relationships are
based on interval meetings that can be weekly, monthly, every two months, and so on and are dependent on the client’s ongoing satisfaction with the relationship and the accompanying product.

*Learning through client relationships*

The cosmetologist/client relationship is at its core a business relationship; however, because these relationships can and often do continue for years and even decades, they can be very complex.

“I have met so many stylists who have excellent technical skills and horrible people skills and it ruins them” (Informant 2).

“Cause I’ve had a lot of ah situations through 32 years where you know this friend comes to me and then oh they tell their next friend and pretty soon you’ll have four of five in a circle that are coming to you and you really have to be careful what you say. You know you can’t it’s not like you’re one of the girls… When you’re touching somebody and you’re that close. Who else touches someone who is not family that close that much you know?” (Informant 5).

“Um interacting with your clients it’s like you build up a good friendship but you know basically I listen but usually don’t give advice. And sometimes there are things going on in your life and their life that relate and you learn life” (Informant 7).

“Well um some people who were sent to me don’t even know the person they were sent by. You know it could just be your bank teller that noticed your hair. Here’s my stylist’s card go to see her. And sometimes you know
like I said it is a drama world and you do have you know ex-girl friends and ex-boy friends that are coming in. But you learn to just sort of listen and not really say anything. They’re not always in at the same time you know and you’re doin’ your job an’ you’re tryin’ to make them give them what their payin’ you for. Sometimes it can be a situation” (Informant 8).

All of the participants were very open about their experiences with their clients and showed enjoyment in talking about them. They were all acutely aware, however, that first and foremost it is a business relationship that requires an ongoing effort on the cosmetologist’s part to maintain. The interconnectedness of a clientele can grow very complex over many years of service within a cosmetologist’s business radius and can create a network over which both good news and bad news can travel quickly. An unintended slight to one client can have a domino effect that can negatively impact a cosmetologist’s income. The cosmetologist’s livelihood depends on the development and maintenance of a good reputation. The fundamental importance of cosmetologists’ reputations is characterized through their professional peer interactions.

QG2-2.

Tell me about your experiences interacting with co-workers.

The following themes emerged from this question:

- learning through sharing knowledge among peers
- learning through adapting to the salon persona
- sense of community
**Learning through sharing knowledge among peers**

Throughout the data-collection process for this research, the most frequently reoccurring theme was the significance of sharing knowledge. The free and open sharing of professional knowledge is simply a matter of fact in the daily work lives of cosmetologists. One factor influencing this is the highly visible nature of the typical salon setting. Salons are seldom partitioned off for privacy, leaving individual stylists visible from many or any location within the salon. The product of the cosmetologist is visual in nature and tends to draw visually oriented learners to the profession.

“Because I can do things with my hands and I cannot do things practically you know just by reading the instructions” (Informant 1).

“I’ve learned in the past that I’m a good visual learner” (Informant 4).

“They didn’t say anything like you got to watch and listen but I watched and listened to everything because if you’re not busy what else do you do” (Informant 5).

“I stood beside him and I had to watch everything he did while he explained it to me” (Informant 9).

“I’m not a book smart person like I have a real hard time reading and I’m like more hands-on” (Informant 10).

When this phenomenon was questioned directly, another explanation offered was that it occurs for the open support and protection of stylists’ and salons’ reputations.

“Well ah um if somebody’s hair is walking out that door with your name on it basically so you know word of mouth be it good or bad is going to get out there and put your reputation on the line” (Informant 11).
“If another stylist is having a problem picking out a color or understanding what clients say you know you need to work as a team to help them with their client in order for the success of the whole salon” (Informant 8).

Whatever the reason or reasons for this particular phenomena, the open sharing of professional knowledge is a fact of work life for the cosmetologist. Skills, innovations, new techniques, color formulas, etc. are passed from one cosmetologist to another.

“So they would see how another hairdresser would do it and they would see me do it and we definitely pick up from one another because that’s the only thing to do” (Informant 1).

“But it was basically day-to-day picking up from one another and learning things from other people” (Informant 2).

“Feedback from other stylists, that’s the advantage” (Informant 3).

“I feel that in this business the more you can watch and the more you can listen I mean to whatever it is you’re learning something” (Informant 5).

“Um we’d all share information you know somebody might come up with a different color formula that worked really great or now you try and do color correction, you troubleshoot with one another” (Informant 6).

“I worked in a salon where there were like 6 women which can be stressful but they can be more willing to share” (Informant 11).

Skills, innovations, new techniques, color formulas, etc. are also passed from one generation of cosmetologists to another.

“It’s geared more toward the younger stylists and he’s pushing them more to learn from me” (Informant 3).
“She was always saying something or doing something that wasn’t big but enough that you knew OK there’s something to be learned here” (Informant 5).

“You know she was a very good mentor and even though her and I didn’t get along she was always nagging me and pushing me getting me to do these things” (Informant 8).

“He would show me you know his techniques and his approaches and he really watched me do every single thing” (Informant 9).

**Learning through adapting to the salon persona**

There is a complexity to the salon work situation that likely adds to this common sense of cooperation and knowledge sharing. The salon owner’s largest fixed expense is floor space and for this reason salon design is commonly focused around accommodating the maximum number of cosmetologist work stations in a given space. Therefore an individual cosmetologist is afforded very little privacy in their personal work space. Their work is visually very public throughout the entire process of whatever service they are involved in at any given time. It can be difficult to conduct a reasonably private conversation and cosmetologist and client idiosyncrasies are open to the entire salon population. These factors tend to create a blend that becomes the salon mood or ambience and a cosmetologist must learn to adapt when accepting employment in a salon.

“Yeah you have to be in the salon attitude. You see change but you don’t see everybody change all at once. Some people hold back to see who this stranger is. We don’t know what this person is bringing into the salon” (Informant 1).
“It depends on what salon we are talking about. Everywhere I’ve gone it is completely different” (Informant 2).

“And the different personalities, the totally different personalities that have come through that the dynamics of the salon changes every time he gets someone new” (Informant 3).

“You build up you know a friendship and a camaraderie with your customers and the people you work with” (Informant 7).

“Yes an’ you learn to keep your co-workers as co-workers. You learn to keep that you know work is work and home is home, friends are friends co-workers are co-workers” (Informant 8).

“Co-workers can be fun, they can be very distracting, and they can be kind of miserable depending on the situation” (Informant 11).

Sense of community

The close proximity of co-workers and their clients’ tends to create a sense of community. This is a theme that emerged from every interview in both positive and negative ways. A community, although it can be supportive and nurturing, is not always synonymous with closeness and good feelings.

“So I’m here, I’ll respect you and you respect me and I’m here to do clients and I’m here to make a living like everybody else” (Informant 1).

“With work or non-work, I mean we could be setting out on the bench and someone could come in with a problem, it could be a personal thing or it could be one of our clients, and all of us would talk about it” (Informant 2).
“They just right away they were arms around me and come watch me do this and I you know show me how you do that. And I didn’t ever feel that I wasn’t part of that group” (Informant 3).

“So I’m not your typical hairdresser who um is smokin’ and cocin’ and all that I didn’t go out to bars or anything like that. I still don’t um so that was not something that I did. Um I know that there were the group that did but that was not me” (Informant 5).

“You know we all get along… everybody… its like a I don’t know it’s never quiet in here” (Informant 6).

“Well I’m the oddity because I’m a straight hair dresser. And then I’m working with people who are gay and their life styles and how their life styles are affected say like with alcoholism, sexuality, with the good the bad the ugly, drug addiction and any other addiction out there” (Informant 7).

“So I really learned how you know that you stay as a team with your co-workers in a group you know work ethic atmospheres (Informant 8). I have the two best co-workers in the whole world. I am so lucky, we just have so much fun” (Informant 9).

“I like it. I like call them my family like I told you before” (Informant 10).

“Um some would try and lighten the mood a little and others were kind of just like me and kind of went with the flow and they kept their distance” (Informant 11).
Since most salons are very small business operations the salon employment function is typically very direct and personal between owners or salon managers and their employees. Owners and managers often are working cosmetologists who have little time to devote to lengthy interviews and other formal hiring practices. The decision to hire is usually based on the income the applicant potentially can bring to the salon and the emotional chemistry between the owner and the applicant.

“My first job I went there with a resume and they were like oh we don’t need a resume. It’s like professionalism is… it’s called a profession but there’s no business minded edge to it” (Informant 4).

_QG2-3._

Tell me about your experiences interacting with salon management.

The following theme emerged from this question:

- industry’s employment situation

_Industry’s employment situation_

Ultimately none of the participants had much to say about salon management. What was said was positive in most cases.

“And [the owner/manager] honestly has more patients than anyone I can ever imagine and I’ve learned from that” (Informant 2).

“I quit seven times (laughing) gets my point across… Yeah like she already said it or calm down I’m doing this and I’ll be there or you know I just tell them how to handle him” (Informant 3).

“He was very direct and I appreciated that. Just when you do that I don’t like it so please don’t do it again and I understood that” (Informant 4).
“Management wise I’d say you know in this business it’s hard to manage the likes of all of us” (Informant 7).

“I haven’t worked with very many guys um [the owner/manager] really seems to understand females” (Informant 8).

“She’s like more of a friend and a mom then a boss. She has a rule here and there you know but you have to” (Informant 10).

This lack of input about management may stem from the salon industry’s employment situation. One participant summarized the situation quite well.

“Now salons can be advertising for 2 years and not fill that chair” (Informant 3).

Not only is it difficult to staff salons, once a salon owner does hire a cosmetologist the independent salon owner has no legal hold on that person or her clientele. There are no business contracts or binding agreements of any kind. If a cosmetologist decides to relocate to another salon for whatever reason they just leave and their clientele will typically follow “their designer” to the new location. This is particularly true if the designer has hair color clients, who are high-income clients, because the designer owns the client’s color formula, either in written form or in memory. Designers are very protective of color formulas and when they decide to relocate, they will take their formula records out of the salon before informing the owner/manager of the pending move.

QG2-4.

Tell me about your experiences as a cosmetologist outside of the salon setting.

The following themes emerged from this question:
Opportunities to learn

Still a cosmetologist outside of the salon situation

*Opportunities to learn*

The participants all referred to ways that they learn professionally outside of the salon situation. These included networking situations, organized beauty shows, and small training programs.

“So it was like seeing old friends, mingle, everything together at the same time learning, learning how to use the product, learning how to do the hair cut, ah how to do a style all combined and it was one of the best experiences” (Informant 1).

“Like even today I was out with my daughter and were at the mall and there was this picture of this cute little girl with this haircut and it just gave me a whole bunch of different ideas… So you know to me I get inspired visually very very easily” (Informant 4).

“Oh yeah because it’s a whole networking process too I mean I don’t go to a class anywhere at all that I don’t ask lots of questions” (Informant 5).

“You can learn a lot at hair shows” (Informant 6).

“So I try to stay fresh and go to shows” (Informant 7).

“You know it really does come out, you tend to talk about it when you’re not at work with people” (Informant 8).

“Actually I’d say I learn a lot between within the salon and going to like seminars and classes in [name deleted] and going to hair shows” (Informant 10).
These learning opportunities were accorded a moderate level of importance in the sense of keeping up with overall professional developments. They were not, however, a spontaneous element of the conversation and only came about in response to question QG2-4.

*Still a cosmetologist outside of the salon situation*

Some also referenced a continued connection to their professional identity outside of the salon situation with varying degrees of acceptance. As a cosmetologist develops progressively larger clientele within the salon market area, their identity as cosmetologist becomes an issue that they must address in some way.

“I don’t mind giving some people some help or some advice or whatever but I would really prefer to keep it in the salon” (Informant 6).

“He sometimes its like you tell somebody what you do for a living and they unload on you and they try to suck the life out of you for information for their hair for free” (Informant 7).

“So I hope to get back out and network with more people and bring in more clients that way” (Informant 9).

“I’ll go in [the grocery store] for two things and it’ll take me like an hour 'cause I run into old clients from down there” (Informant 10).

“But you know I go to a lot of places and run into a lot of clients” (Informant 11).

Typically it is a high profile occupation that requires the cosmetologist to accommodate the persona all of the time. This primarily takes the form of always looking one’s best no matter what the situation.
**QG2 summary**

Interview question group 2 sought insights into the social and business functions of the salon business. This question group primarily addressed thesis sub-questions Q1 and Q2. These two aspects of the salon situation were addressed jointly in that there is no way to separate the social aspects of the salon situation from the business aspects.

The following themes emerged from question group 2:

**QG2-1.** Tell me about your experiences interacting with clients.
- learning through building a clientele
- learning through conducting client consultations
- learning through client relationships

**QG2-2.** Tell me about your experiences interacting with co-workers.
- learning through sharing knowledge among peers
- learning through adapting to the salon persona
- sense of community

**QG2-3.** Tell me about your experiences interacting with salon management.
- industry’s employment situation

**QG2-4.** Tell me about your experiences as a cosmetologist outside of the salon setting.
- opportunities to learn
- still a cosmetologist outside of the salon situation
**Question Group 3**

Interview question group 3 inquired into the participant’s experiences as a novice cosmetologist, as a referred cosmetologist (a successful individual salon business is founded on client referrals) and as a learner within their chosen profession. This question group gleaned information for all of the thesis sub-questions Q1 thru Q5. I began this question group by asking if we could now talk about professional progression from the point of the participant’s first salon position until now.

**QG3-1.**

Tell me about your experience as a novice cosmetologist.

The following themes emerged from this question:

- unknown level of competence
- trying hard to learn
- learning as a novice

**Unknown level of competence**

Coming into a salon situation with entry level skills to compete with established professionals can be a daunting experience. Even the few who come in with a modicum of self-confidence report a concern for their level of competence in delivering the services that are expected of them. Further, the individual who is receiving and paying for the service is sitting directly in front of them, watching the entire process in the mirror.

“Of course I think everyone comes out of beauty school not feeling like they know enough about color” (Informant 5).

“I was green, I was so green. I thought I knew it all but I really didn’t. It’s a long process just starting out from scratch” (Informant 7).
“Um it wasn’t as hard on me as it is on some people because I started as an assistant. I got to meet customers that come into the salon that I was working as an assistant in. So when I started doing their hair they felt more comfortable with me knowing I was already there serving” (Informant 8).

“You know when you get out of beauty school you’re not actually prepared to go and actually work in a salon in my opinion. They just taught me the really basic elements” (Informant 9).

“Scary! When I first got out of beauty school I was a nervous wreck. I don’t know why… well you’re workin’ with someone else’s hair and if they don’t like it they’re going to let you know” (Informant 11).

Trying hard to learn

The difficulties facing the novice cosmetologist are not only technical; simply coming to an understanding of exactly what the client is trying to communicate often requires a developed skill. Although cosmetologists tend to learn a great deal from their failures, when one is trying hard and their livelihood is on the line the first few rebuffs can be devastating.

“It’s the rejection that teaches you how to do it” (Informant 3).

“Uh, at work I was so intentional about wanting to be successful that when I got to that point I was somewhat egotistical” (Informant 4).

“I took it quite seriously that they’re here and they want to look good when they leave so I’d better make sure they look good in their eyes when they leave” (Informant 5).
“You know you actually have to take the walk-ins and get to know them and you really gotta talk to them and really got to get to know them so they want to come back to you and that you know first impression if they don’t like you their not comin’ back” (Informant 6).

“Right from the beginning I thought that I couldn’t make it in this business because it’s a hard business to make it in and I struggled through and done well. You know you get this experience if ya stick with it for a while” (Informant 7).

“It took like two years before I really built up enough people” (Informant 9).

“Oh that’s scary. It is very scary because um most salons pay only on a commission basis. So you really try very hard to get your clientele built up and make money” (Informant 11).

*Learning as a novice*

A novice cosmetologist must develop into an obvious worthwhile investment before an independent salon owner is going to invest a great deal of time and money into training. This puts the responsibility on the novice to find a way to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to progress.

“A lot of my skills are picked up from other designers” (Informant 1).

“OK well I can do that and then you make it into your own” (Informant 2).

“You know it’s a mentor sort of thing you watch and learn. Mostly you’re picking up from people who have more experience than you” (Informant 5).
“We did a lot of we practiced a lot on our own hair with color just doin’ different things and we bounced a lot of things off of each other” (Informant 6).

“Somebody could be very good right out of school you know on how to do hair but they might not have any skills on how to interact with people and how to talk to people, how to make yourself interesting and give them something they want to come back to you for” (Informant 7).

“So when I started I basically I had to mirror him with everything” (Informant 9).

As the novice cosmetologist develops the knowledge and skills needed to satisfy the clients’ wants and needs, the clients begin to rebook. A repeat business also means that these satisfied clients will be praising the cosmetologist’s work to their family and friends. This praise leads to referral clients and in pleasing the new referrals the cosmetologist’s reputation is spread over a progressively larger portion of the salon’s market area.

**QG3-2.**

Tell me about your experience of being a referred cosmetologist.

The following theme emerged from this question:

- a level of success

*A level of success*

Becoming a referred designer is the first goal for a cosmetologist working in an independently owned salon. A steady stream of referrals means a steady income. It also means that the cosmetologist is developing a good reputation in the salon’s market area,
both with the prospective clients and with professional peers. There are many other benefits that come along with becoming a referred cosmetologist. Working in a business that pays straight commission for client services equates to the idea that the greater the income to the salon the more independent the cosmetologist becomes. With a large referred clientele a cosmetologist can make her own schedule, refuse walk-ins, generally choose who will become part of her clientele, and change salon locations with the assurance that loyal clientele will follow.

“It’s just great um but it comes with a higher responsibility. At least that’s how I look at it because they’re coming with an expectation that you are going to fix whatever problem they think they have, you know, whether it’s real or imagined. It’s kind of like a high. You know it makes you feel good” (Informant 5).

“That’s nice when people… when people actually call in and ask for me it’ll encourage me and it kind of keeps you goin’ knowin’ that you have people that actually like what you’re doin’ ” (Informant 6).

“It’s security yeah that’s the word for it it’s security” (Informant 7).

“Good, real good. Um it does it feels good to have clients that love their hair so much and that I’ve done such a good job that they actually talk about me and new clients come in to see me. You know it shows me that everything I learned and all the time I took paid off” (Informant 8).

“It’s great you know people call, like yesterday three people called in within five minutes and asked for me” (Informant 10).
Becoming a referred designer is not something that most novice cosmetologists accomplish easily. Time, effort, and patience are required. During this growing period the novice is typically spending her days in a salon watching experienced designers successfully earn a living while subsisting on income from who ever comes in off the street randomly looking for hair service. This can be very disheartening and many aspiring cosmetologists do not have the tenacity to persevere.

QG3-3.

Tell me about your experience of progressing from novice to referred cosmetologist.

The following theme emerged from this question:

- learning by watching, listening, and asking questions

*Learning by watching, listening, and asking questions*

The primary function of the novice cosmetologist is to watch, listen, and ask questions. In this endeavor the novice typically has complete support from the entire salon staff. Although leaving an entry-level employee to fend for herself may seem counter-intuitive on the part of management it serves several purposes. Watching, listening, and asking questions indicates a desire to learn and compete, which will lead to the novice eventually increasing the income of the salon. The objective of management is to draw as much income as possible from every chair (cosmetologist work station) available. Hiring a non-productive cosmetologist eliminates the potential for hiring a cosmetologist with an existing clientele. However, watching, listening, and asking questions are understood in the salon industry as the road to success for a novice, making the use of the chair an educational investment. Further, if the novice does not have what it
takes to succeed as a cosmetologist, leaving her alone to fend for herself is the quickest way to free the invested chair.

“I do, I think the most important is listening. From the time I started until now I’ve become a better listener, before I wasn’t” (Informant 2).

“Oh yeah he makes them, go over there and see what she’s doing now, go ask her questions, and he keeps the girls right there you know listening to what I have to say” (Informant 3).

“I watched and listened to everything because if your not busy what else do you do? Well you learn from somebody else” (Informant 5).

“And there were times that I would ask can I come over and watch you do this” (Informant 6).

“You also stand next to an actual stylist watching them cut hair, watching them color, you know watching their consultations with clients. And that’s where you pick up a lot of your own you know ability” (Informant 8).

“I stood beside him and I had to watch everything he did while he explained it to me” (Informant 9).

Experienced cosmetologists are typically supportive of the novice’s intrusions simply because that is how they learned as well. Along with relating occasions of learning from the more experienced designers in the salon setting as a means to their own success, most participants expressed a willingness to support their less knowledgeable co-workers.

Once patterns develop about how learning takes place for the cosmetologist within the salon setting the question of how cosmetologists perceive themselves as
learners emerges. As the findings show, participants’ views on themselves as learners elicit information about what the industry understands or views as important, representations of common beliefs within the industry, and what learning artifacts are commonly available to assist their learning.

_QG3-4._

Tell me about your experience as a learner in your profession.

The following themes emerged from this question:

- predominant learning areas of interest
- common salon industry beliefs
- learning artifacts of the salon industry

**Predominant learning areas of interest**

Participants consistently referred to technical skills when discussing learning and only ventured to mention non-technical skills in the context of something that is not afforded much interest or as something that you either had coming into the business or you just would not understand. Interestingly, when non-technical skills are mentioned, usually as “soft” or “people” skills, their importance was added most often as an addendum to a statement’s original point.

“But you get more encouragement keeping up with your technical skills. You know, like hair cutting, coloring, perming, up-dos, whatever you’re into, whatever you’re good at. You get more encouragement in that rather than in some of the other skills like maybe learning about computers or sales or people skills” (Informant 2).
“But it was more people skills to the point of working towards your
technical, you know what you did technically not necessarily other things,
and it makes all the difference in the world the people skills” (Informant
6).

“Um they don’t really cover work ethics. They just teach you how to do
hair how to be a cosmetologist. Only that they teach you cosmetology,
they teach you anatomy you know but they don’t teach social skills”
(Informant 8).

Even as an addendum to the importance placed on learning technical
skills, several participants expressed a commonly held but often misinterpreted
industry belief that while non-technical skills are seen as valuable, they are also
viewed as something you either possess or do not possess. Non-technical skills
are not seen as skills that can be learned.

*Common salon industry beliefs*

Ultimately, it emerged that non-technical skills are as important as, or possibly
more important than technical skills in predicting the success of failure for a
cosmetologist.

“So communication is everything, it’s about 90% of it to me, you know, of
the job. If you got that I think the rest is easy” (Informant 1).

“My best friend down in Florida, I’ll tell you what, he messed up my hair
on a regular basis but the women loved him. He was good, he was good
but he sucked and I think your soft skills are more important but it would
be great if you had both though” (Informant 2).
“Ah non-technical ah client connection, client socialization you know that sort of thing that’s non-technical that’s just personality. You know that in this industry if you have a good personality where people are more drawn you’re more willing to you’ll have a larger clientele” (Informant 3).

“Because you can have the best technical person who can cut the most gorgeous cut and have everything look perfect and they’re a nasty person, who wants to go sit through a half hour haircut with a person who’s just nasty” (Informant 5).

“Ah, well you have to be good technically but more than that it’s how you the people skills I think you have how you can tell them what you can do technically and them like what they’re hearing” (Informant 6).

“You’ve got to have people skills you know, being able to talk to people, being able to relate to them, being able to listen to what they tell you and then being able to say back to them, this is what I’m hearing you say. To know what they want you to do technically” (Informant 8).

“They just can’t make a living of it because they don’t know how to treat people” (Informant 10).

“I’ve met stylists with terrible technical abilities but are very successful because of their people skills” (Informant 11).

This mixed message that emerged from the data is supported by the learning artifacts that are represented in the findings and through the participant interviews.
Learning artifacts

Professional Development in the cosmetology industry exists through the marketing programs of professional beauty product and equipment manufacturers and some professional product distributors.

“Whatever products we were using as far as color and retail normally the instructor will come in and teach us a lesson on it” (Informant 1).

“At one place I worked they brought in a different [manufacturer or distributor] rep every week and we would pick things up from them” (Informant 2).

“The first salon that I worked for they would bring people in…” (Informant 5)

These programs are standardized throughout the industry, primarily offering training in advanced hair design (technical training) with some salon business, and occasionally a motivational program.

“I’ve taken color classes, specialty classes, classic up-do classes, cutting classes…” (Informant 2)

The primary venues for delivery are beauty shows and two to five-day training seminars, both offered throughout the United States and many other countries.

“I go every year. I go to the Javits Center in Manhattan and I go there for the International Hair Show” (Informant 1).

“Yeah, I try to get a workshop in at least once every year” (Informant 4).

“You could do something educational in this field every weekend” (Informant 5).
“They have a lot of classes you can learn a lot of different things, ah cuts, hair color, different techniques you know if your using a razor or if you’re usin’ a whatever scissors ah plus they do a lot of shows where you can actually see a lot of the people in action to see how they’re doin’ things” (Informant 6).

“So I try to stay fresh and go to shows” (Informant 7).

Other artifacts that were considered within these data are, training DVD’s, CD’s, and tapes, and salon industry related web sites.

“I had never worked with Matrix back then they gave me some educational videos that I could go home and look at and I could call the representative if I needed to call Matrix if I had any questions” (Informant 1).

“Sometimes manufacturers will give you a deal on a new product and give you a DVD, CD, or manual on how to work with it or how to do all the haircuts in the book” (Informant 2).

“I buy a lot of products and when I get my products they send me these things [instructional materials] for free. They have a web site and I get a Redken newsletter every month telling me about their promotionals and color formulas and how to approach it and just think differently” (Informant 4).

Although there are a few individual instructors offering education to cosmetologists about client consultation and communication, they represent a
significantly small offering in comparison to the importance afforded these topics by the participants of this investigation.

“But it was people skills to the point of working towards your technical you know what you did technically” (Informant 5).

Further, no other non-technical skill topics as represented by this study were found as educational/training topics by this researcher.

**QG3 summary**

Interview question group 3 inquired into the participant’s experiences as a novice cosmetologist, as a referred cosmetologist, and as a learner within their chosen profession. This question group gleaned information for all of the thesis sub-questions Q1 thru Q5. The following themes emerged from question group 3:

**QG3-1. Tell me about your experience as a novice cosmetologist.**

- unknown level of competence
- trying hard
- learning as a novice

**QG3-2. Tell me about your experience of being a referred cosmetologist.**

- a level of success

**QG3-3. Tell me about your experience of progressing from novice to referred cosmetologist.**

- watching, listening, and asking questions

**QG3-4. Tell me about your experience as a learner in your profession.**

- predominant learning areas of interest
- common salon industry beliefs
• learning artifacts of the salon industry

Question Group 4

Interview question group four queried the participants about present views on their profession, what they liked, didn’t like, and what they would change if possible. These are summary questions intended to end the interview. This group afforded insights into thesis sub-questions Q3 thru Q5. The answers to this group of questions were not surprising in light of findings already reviewed in this chapter.

QG4-1

What is it that you enjoy the most?

The responses to this question mirrored participants’ answers to QG1-4 in which they were queried as to what they do as a cosmetologist and QG1-5 that asked about their daily experience of being a cosmetologist. This is generally a happy group of professionals who derive a strong sense of positive satisfaction from their work and their perceived effect on their clients. They have a strong sense of community both within their salon situation and within the industry as a whole and communicate a sincere appreciation for their interactions with co-workers and clients alike.

QG4-2

Is there anything you don’t like?

The following theme emerged from this question:

• communication difficulties

Communication difficulties

The common complaint from participants about their work referred to clients who do not demonstrate an appreciation for what the cosmetologist perceives as their
contribution to the client’s wellbeing. As presented earlier in these findings, cosmetologists perceive their work as a value-added function for their clients and take pride in service to clients. This is further demonstrated in that the typical complaint about what they do stems from an inability to connect with some clients.

“Women or clients that just come in and just don’t really understand what it is that I’m trying to do” (Informant 4).

“Yeah, those few clients that they’re not so much… I don’t want to say they’re rude but they are” (Informant 6).

“Like if you have someone you don’t care for but you like their money” (Informant 7).

QG4-3.

What would you change about the industry if you could and why?

The following theme emerged from this question:

- industry self-image

Industry self-image

Again the participants referred to what they perceived as an inability to communicate, but in this instance their frustration was aimed toward some of their professional peers. Their dissatisfaction stems from a lack of professionalism demonstrated by some cosmetologists.

“I would love to see it [the industry] get more professional. I would like to see hairdressers get this concept of value in what they do” (Informant 4).

“The [negative] perception of hairdressers about other hairdressers” (Informant 5).
“There are too many places that OK you’re in my seat I’m gonna cut your hair and you’re out the door. Then they’re upset the client’s upset you know because they didn’t get what they wanted because they didn’t spend enough time” (Informant 6).

All of these complaints seem to refer back to the sense of community and importance of community affiliation that is represented throughout these findings.

*QG4 summary*

Interview question group four queried participants about present views on their profession, what they like, don’t like, and what they would change if possible. These are summary questions intended to end the interview. This group afforded insights into thesis sub-questions Q3 thru Q5. The answers to this group of questions were not surprising. The following themes emerged from question group 4:

QG4-1. “What is it that you enjoy the most?”

- The responses to this question reflect the participants’ answers to QG1-4 and QG1-5.

QG4-2. Is there anything you don’t like?

- communication difficulties

QG4-3. What would you change about the industry if you could and why?

- industry self-image
Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of this research which addressed the problem of how undirected workers learn non technical skills when employer-directed training is not forthcoming. Specifically the thesis question asked: How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills? Through interviews with a homogeneous sample of eleven cosmetologist participants, I sought the answer to this question and found that undirected workers learn non-technical skills in the same way they learn technical skills. Non-technical skills are learned by informal learning experiences afforded the undirected worker through social practices and activities that are common to workers both inside and outside of the work situation.

Although the findings represent both technical and non-technical skills acquisition occurring through the same informal learning experiences, the participants consciously experience only the development of technical skills. While representing non-technical skills as more important than technical skills, participants see them as something that a person either has or does not have. Further, they do not understand non-technical skills as something that can be learned or developed and seek only further technical training toward career advancement.

This chapter presented the findings of the study. Chapter 5 addresses conclusions, implications, and recommendations.
CHAPTER 5
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the study, summarizes the findings as presented in chapter four, draws conclusions through correlation to the relevant literature presented in chapter two, and offers recommendations for further research into the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers.

Review of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the types of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers. Specifically, the thesis question asks: How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills? This question requires queries into the sub-questions of:

Q1. What types of practices do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

Q2. What types of activities do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

Q3. What are the predominant learning interests for undirected workers?

Q4. What are the common beliefs that undirected workers share?

Q5. What types of informal learning artifacts are available to undirected workers?

The approach used to address this research was qualitative, grounded study. I chose this approach because I am interested in new insights into how undirected workers learn non-technical skills. By taking this constructivist approach through grounded methods I was free to, as Charmaz (2006) asserts, create an interpretive portrayal of
social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills rather than try to convey an exact picture of them. This freedom allowed for a fluid generation of theory through comparative analysis of the conceptual properties of social interaction, rather than the assumption of static facts from anecdotal evidence.

In pursuit of these data I conducted eleven interviews with professional cosmetologists working in salons in various cities and towns in Pennsylvania. Chapter four presented the findings from these interviews with all citations taken verbatim from the taped interviews. The format in chapter four followed the order of the interview guide (Appendix D) which grouped the interview questions into question groups one through four with references to which thesis questions each question group most closely addressed. The format of this chapter will follow the order of the thesis questions and coordinate relevant information from the research findings while drawing support from the relevant literature presented in chapter two.

Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the findings of this study in relation to the research sub-questions.

Thesis sub-question Q1: What types of practices do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

Practices as defined for this study were shared resources, frameworks, and perspectives that are social and historical in nature and in action (Wenger, 2006). Through the findings covered in chapter four, thesis sub-question Q1 was addressed through themes that emerged from question groups one, two, and three:
• QG1-4, the cosmetologist as a technician
• QG2-1, learning through building a clientele, learning through conducting client consultations, and learning through client relationships
• QG2-2, learning through sharing knowledge among peers and learning through adapting to the salon persona
• QG3-3, learning through watching, listening, and asking questions

Participants identified their professional role as rendering technical beauty services for their clients. Predominant services identified were hair cutting, styling, coloring, and permanent waving. This information was addressed in a cursory manner as no more than a statement of fact. However, socially interactive functions of building a clientele, conducting client consultations, and the maintenance of established client relationships were all spoken of at length by all subjects.

Cosmetologist/client relationships were the conceptual framework on which the salon industry functions. Success in the salon industry was dependent on the individual cosmetologist building and sustaining client relationships. Every participant stated directly or indirectly that a cosmetologist’s level of technical skill and expertise in rendering services would not sustain a cosmetologist professionally without the skills needed to establish and maintain viable client relationships.

Learning to generate a clientele is slow and difficult. Cosmetologists must learn how to develop and maintain professional/personal relationships with people who, under any other circumstance, would often be socially estranged. The client consultation is the beginning of this tenuous relationship and is predicated on a very personal interchange centered on the client’s egocentric needs in relation to public appearance, personal
grooming, lifestyle choices, and overall value system. Learning how to come to an agreement on possible services and service variations is difficult even without complications. However, it is not uncommon for the cosmetologist to realize that there is some disconnect between what the client wants and what is advisable and/or possible. Learning how to negotiate this impasse with a person with whom the cosmetologist may have only a few minutes history can be a very sensitive task based on trial and error.

The client consultation is always the point at which the cosmetologist/client relationship begins, and ideally will lead to a long term relationship based on interval meetings that will often gradually draw in family members, friends, and other acquaintances of the original client. These relationships are dependent on the clients’ ongoing satisfaction with the cosmetologist’s relationship skills and the accompanying service outcome. The cosmetologist/client relationship is a business relationship that can and often does continue for years and even decades. The interconnectedness of a clientele can grow very complex over many years of service within a cosmetologist’s business radius and can create a network over which news both good and bad can travel quickly. A clientele is a dynamic entity that requires career-long learning in order to maintain.

Technical expertise also requires career-long learning. Strong client relational skills combined with good technical skills generates a clientele that the cosmetologist can rely on for repeat business and steady income. The development and maintenance of relationship skills as well as technical skills is founded on a social and historical practice intrinsic to the salon industry, learning through sharing knowledge among peers. The free and open sharing of professional knowledge is simply a matter of fact in the daily work lives of cosmetologists.
Technical skills, innovations, new techniques, chemical formulas, as well as methods and strategies for interacting with clientele are passed from one cosmetologist to another moving through generations of salon workers. The cosmetologist’s reputation, both as an artisan and as an understanding and caring professional, is so vital that any and all information is shared by all without restraint. A common wisdom that is cautioned regularly at salon industry educational events is: You are only as good as the last client out the door. The understanding behind this statement is that a satisfied client will, if one is fortunate, tell one or two others about you, but a dissatisfied client will tell everyone.

Much of this sharing of knowledge was facilitated through another practice of the salon industry, learning through watching, listening, and asking questions. The common salon setting is very open, leaving the individual cosmetologist and her work visible from many vantage points within the salon. The typical salon owner is also a working cosmetologist with little time and few discretionary funds available for training new and existing workers. Novice designers were frequently told to hover around the salon’s top producers so they can watch, listen, and ask questions. Even experienced cosmetologists watch, listen to, and ask questions of one another. The overall reputation of the salon and the cosmetologists that are employed by that salon are interdependent. The more salon workers can support the development of their co-workers, the more they elevate the reputation of the salon and their own reputation.

Learning to adapt to the salon persona was still another social and historical practice that lead to worker development. Because of the open nature of the typical salon situation, the personalities and idiosyncrasies of management, workers, and clients all combine to create a persona that is unique to each salon. A new designer coming into an
existing salon situation must quickly learn to adapt to the salon persona or become part of its history. Adapting to the salon persona entailed learning how the other workers interact and share knowledge with one another as well as how the salon clientele expect to be treated and serviced. Learning to adapt in the salon industry is a very dynamic process and as a new cosmetologist learns how to adapt to the salon, the salon learns to adapt to this new cosmetologist with her own personality and idiosyncrasies. Through this process, each time a cosmetologist joins or leaves a salon the persona alters to some degree.

*Thesis sub-question Q2*: What types of activities do undirected workers participate in that lead to worker development?

The practices in which the salon worker participates did in fact require the sharing of resources (both physical and conceptual), were structured on social frameworks involving co-workers as well as clients, and required adaptation to perspectives that are social and historical in nature. The manifestations of these practices are activities or, conversely, the manifestations of activities are practices. It is difficult to determine which comes first. Activities were defined for this study as actions which comprise the life of an individual and/or society (Cole, Engestrom, and Vasquez, 2001). With this in mind it is not surprising that in analyzing the findings, thesis sub-question Q2 was addressed by many of the same themes that attended to Q1. Thesis sub-question Q2 was addressed through themes that emerged from question groups 1, 2, and 3:

- QG1-4, the cosmetologist as a technician, the cosmetologist as social support for clients
• QG2-1, learning through the building a clientele, learning through conducting client consultations, and learning through client relationships
• QG2-2, learning through sharing knowledge among peers and learning through adapting to the salon persona
• QG2-4, opportunities to learn
• QG3-3, learning through watching, listening, and asking questions

There were many interrelated activities that comprised the individual lives of cosmetologists and the society of the salons in which they work as well as the society of the salon industry as a whole. Cosmetologists identified first with the activities that encompass the services they offer to their clientele. Cutting, coloring, and perming hair created the visual manifestations that constitute their professional identity. Cosmetologists took great pride in their skills and abilities as designers but readily agreed that the primary activities that support their service delivery were client interactions: building a clientele, conducting client consultations, and maintaining client relationships.

Activities that underlie successful client relationships were simple in form yet profound in function. These were tactful goal oriented questioning and purposeful analytical listening tempered with a balance of enthusiasm and caution. Cosmetologists learn to probe for the information needed to fulfill an assumed declaration of knowledge, skill, and ability to the satisfaction of all petitioners.

If the initial encounter was successful, the cosmetologist learned how to actively reconnect and continually satisfy the client’s styling requests at intervals of four to six weeks, ideally for the ensuing decades. From this beginning the cosmetologist learned how to manage active relationships of the same sort with many of the initial client’s
friends and relatives as word-of-mouth touted the cosmetologist’s skills and abilities.

Cosmetologists develop enough of these client networks to sustain a full weekly schedule based on an average six week rotation. Success in these activities leads to maintenance activities such as service scheduling, tool maintenance, supply acquisition, and relationship activities with management and co-workers to identify only a few.

Successful cosmetologists were active career-long learners in order to stay current in professional knowledge and skill. This required ongoing self-assessment and actively seeking out learning resources. In the salon setting a reciprocal system of knowledge and skill exchange through watching, listening, and asking questions of co-workers fulfilled many learning needs. Much of this was predicated on adapting to the salon persona in order to be seen as a trusted member of the team or salon family. Outside of the salon situation cosmetologists could participate in learning activities through professional beauty shows with a wide array of programs sponsored by beauty product and tool manufacturers. Cosmetologists could also attend multi-day classes at advanced design centers, or participate in single-day product training classes.

*Thesis sub-question Q3:* What are the predominant learning interests for undirected workers?

All of these opportunities to learn, their common program topics, and the content of the subject interviews congeal to form a good representation for summarizing thesis sub-question Q3. Thesis sub-question Q3 was addressed through themes that emerged from question groups 1, 2, and 3:

- QG1-4, the cosmetologist as a technician
- QG2-2, learning through sharing knowledge among peers
When asked what they do as a cosmetologist, every participant in the study began listing the services rendered for their clients such as hair cuts, hair color, permanent waves, and so on. They continued on to talk about their communications with their clientele and how these communications served them. But the first reference was technical services. Likewise, when the subjects talked about sharing knowledge among peers they spoke primarily about learning hair cutting techniques, hair color formulas, and styling suggestions. Comparatively very little was mentioned about learning beyond acquiring technical knowledge.

The opportunities to learn related by the subjects in QG2-4 followed the same scenario as did the interest areas associated with QG3-3, learning through watching, listening, and asking questions and QG3-4, predominant learning areas of interest. The consistent theme when speaking about learning throughout this research consisted of technical skills in support of services rendered to clients and salon business programming. Through analysis this seems oddly juxtaposed with the high value virtually every participant credited to non-technical skills such as social, communication, and listening skills, empathy, reliability, etc.

Thesis sub-question Q4: What are the common beliefs that undirected workers share?

This juxtaposition becomes less confusing as analysis moves to thesis sub-question Q4 which is addressed by question group:
Throughout the interviews, various participants made reference to cosmetologists being “different” in somewhat negative and/or rebellious ways. One participant talked about cosmetologists moving around and changing work locations frequently and referred to them as simply “being like that.” Another stated that hairdressers have a hard time finding their own space. In another interview cosmetologists were identified as “gypsies” and “all going their own way.” However, reliability, dependability, and consistency were words that popped up in the interviews, especially in reference to building a clientele. Most notably, consistent belief that non-technical skills were more important than technical skills for success in the industry was accompanied by as consistent a belief that non-technical skills are something that cannot be learned. The belief was that one either possesses non-technical skills or does not.

Thesis sub-question Q5: What types of informal learning artifacts are available to undirected workers?

Finally, this counterintuitive dynamic between the importance of non-technical skills and the perceived un-teachable nature of these same skills was borne out in analysis of thesis sub-question Q5. This question was addressed by:

- QG3-4, learning artifacts of the salon industry

Professional development in the cosmetology industry exists through the marketing programs of professional beauty product and equipment manufacturers and some professional product distributors. These programs are standardized throughout the industry, primarily offering training in advanced hair design (technical training) with some salon business, and occasionally a motivational program. The primary venues for
delivery are beauty shows and two to five-day training seminars, with both being offered throughout the United States and many other countries. Other artifacts that were considered within these data are training DVD’s, CD’s, and tapes, and salon industry related web sites. Although there are a few presenters speaking to cosmetologists about client consultation and communication they represent a significantly small offering in comparison to the importance afforded these topics by the participants of this investigation.

Support in Literature

This investigation did not discover research addressing businesses with four to forty-nine employees, those most likely to employ undirected workers. Hence, the supporting literature for this study represents businesses with fifty or more employees, those more likely to direct their workers’ learning needs. Literature represents informal learning experiences in other work situations corresponding to those reported by the participants of this study. Both incidental and tacit learning are reported as key learning experiences for workers with informal learning responsible for up to seventy percent of workplace learning. Action is called for on the part of the organization in which the worker is employed to focus on engaging and motivating employees toward further efforts in pursuit of informal learning experiences. Studies report that informal learning in the workplace is positively or negatively shaped by existing situational structure.

Situational learning is understood through collaboration between the learner, learning activity, and world influences rather than simply an activity taking place in an individual mind. This involves the entire situational community or community of practice and designates what is to be learned as that which will perpetuate the purpose of the
community. The literature represents this community purpose as driving that which is learned informally to, at times, override that which is taught through formal methods. Because work situations can be negative as well as positive, instances were found in the literature where the informal exchange of knowledge and skills was restricted due to situational pressures. Also found were other situational instances in which, like the salon industry, free exchange of knowledge and skills between workers was necessitated due to world influences.

In the majority of the literature supporting this study, individual workers’ attention focused on learning or advancing technical skills, with little or no interest in non-technical skills. However, those in education, research and leadership positions stress the importance of non-technical skills for all American workers in order to better compete in local, state, national, and international business and trade markets. These non-technical skills were found to enhance team interactions, diagnostics, project management, and client satisfaction among other areas of work flow and outcome. Educational institutions are being called upon to create or extend coursework in non-technical skill areas and industry leaders are realizing that technical skills can no longer be carried out in isolation from the client community.

**Contributions to Literature**

This study contributes to the literature through the exploration of undirected workers, a worker demographic not previously investigated. It supplements the literature by adding workers’ views and understandings on the learning of non-technical skills in the workplace. It is a particularly valuable study for drawing out workers’ views on non-technical skills in that few workplaces are as socially focused and transparent as a beauty
salon. The participants’ candor affords perspective on the strength and necessity of strong worker/client relationships that serve as a model for other business concerns.

In particular, the study exposes a disconnection between the high value salon workers place on non-technical skills and their lack of effort to consciously pursue training in non-technical areas of their work. This disconnect offers a negative representation of social influence over tacit learning outcomes. The study also offers a unique view of informal learning dynamics and how they function within a community of practice.

Finally, this investigation lends support to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006) report that the likelihood of employer-directed training diminishes with the number of employees in a given privately owned business. This support creates a connection between directed workers’ and undirected workers’ employment situations. In this regard it is important to understand that undirected workers represent roughly half or more of all workers employed by privately owned business in the United States. This study opens the question of what can be done to secure productivity-increasing training in non-technical skills for this huge segment of the American workforce, or at minimum, make these employers and workers aware of this training shortfall. It also sheds light on how non-technical skills are learned and advanced when employer-directed training is not forthcoming.
Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to describe the kinds of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers. Specifically the thesis question asked: How do undirected workers learn non-technical skills? In answer to this question, undirected workers learn non-technical skills in the same way they learn technical skills. Non-technical skills are learned by informal learning experiences afforded the undirected worker through social practices and activities that are common to the workers both inside and outside of the work situation.

Learning non-technical skills through social practices and activities common to cosmetologists working in privately owned salons was evidenced throughout the data collected. Findings represent a highly interactive and reciprocal learning process taking place between cosmetologists and their clients and cosmetologists and their co-workers with the individual cosmetologists defined as the focal point of their own learning. Cosmetologists also have other learning opportunities available inside and outside of the salon situation. The in-salon opportunities include books, magazines, CDs, DVDs, product technical materials, and manufacturers’ representatives’ product knowledge classes. The out-of-salon opportunities include beauty shows, single or multi-day design classes, and business seminars. Figure 1 exhibits the learning opportunities for cosmetologists’ model resulting from this study.
This research brought to light several significant issues, one of which is unexpected and key for further research. First it is significant that in response to the thesis question (how do undirected workers learn non-technical skills) this study found that undirected workers learn non-technical skills through informal learning experiences afforded them through social practices and activities that are common to the workers both inside and outside of the work situation. However, the acquisition and advancement of non-technical skills at the same time in the same ways is not understood as something that is occurring. Although participants in this study were keenly aware of how they were learning technical skills they did not connect this same process with learning non-technical skills.
Unanimously participants identified non-technical skills as something a cosmetologist either had or did not have, not as something that was being learned or could be learned or developed. Further, when speaking about learning, nine out of eleven participants identified themselves as poor learners while all identified themselves as persons who learned by watching, and listening, and all eleven spoke of freely asking questions of co-workers. All participants also identified themselves as being open to learning but never qualified the learning they felt open to as anything beyond technical skills and in some instances, salon business.

Also significant is the fact that they were learning non-technical skills without the direction of formal learning programs, subject specific training, or human resource professionals. Again, this is not surprising given the importance of non-technical skills to the success of professional cosmetologists. Every participant acknowledged the importance of non-technical skills in pursuit of their livelihood without direct prompting about this issue. Further, most acknowledged non-technical skills as more important to a cosmetologist’s success than technical skills.

Of greatest significance, however, is the idea that because these professionals are learning critical skills in a primarily tacit manner through the principles of informal learning, situated learning, and communities of practice they, as a professional community, have devalued non-technical skills to the point of disavowing them as learnable professional tools. I identify this as of primary significance because the devaluation of these non-technical skills, which are confirmed empirically to be of primary importance to all workers, has occurred in an industry for which they are
recognized as the bedrock of the worker’s success. The juxtaposition of acquisition of non-technical skills for directed and undirected workers is modeled in figure 2 below.

*Figure 2*

Acquisition of Non-Technical Skills
Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to describe the kinds of social engagements that lead to the ongoing development of non-technical skills for undirected workers. Of interest was how business practices and activities and other situational aspects of the work environment function in leading to worker development. This research endeavored to discover new insights into how undirected workers come to learn non-technical skills in the work situation in order to open a new research dialogue around this large and un-researched segment of the American workforce. Based on the study results the following recommendations for further research are offered.

Recommendations for Future Research

As American business and industry continues to struggle with strengthening the non-technical skills for American workers in all levels of business, the findings of this study lay the foundation for further research.

First, this study addressed only one industry within the demographic constraints of undirected workers. Future research may broaden the understanding of non-technical skills development for undirected workers by widening the scope of industries studied. Cosmetologists are keenly aware of the importance of non-technical skills in relation to their professional success. Further study should investigate the implications of these findings for undirected workers in industries that do not acknowledge non-technical skills as foundational for professional success. Future studies may also look at how workers’ understanding of non-technical skills in relation to private lives as well as work lives influences predisposition toward learning.
This study did recognize the efforts of larger business and industry concerns to address the issue of strengthening non-technical skills in their workforce. Future research may benefit from looking at the possible transfer rate of training from directed business concerns to undirected businesses through the movement of workers from one business demographic to the other. Workers coming out of larger enterprises after acquiring training and work related experience in non-technical skills may have a marked effect on their undirected counterparts. Transfer of training or the lack thereof could also have a marked effect when moving an undirected worker into a work situation with directed workers already trained in non-technical skills.

There are other theoretical areas of learning that this study could not adequately address due to the nature of this work. However, a more in-depth look at the nature of the communities of practice formed within these small work situations may advance understanding of this demographic and their choice of this size of enterprise for employment. Activity theory is another theoretic area which was only touched on through this study. A comparative study investigating any differences in mediation of activities that are common between non-directing business enterprises and their directing counterparts could also be of value in determining social ramifications of business outcomes.

Finally, there is a need to look beyond the issue of non-technical skills training in order to gain a broader understanding of this demographic of workers. Undirected workers are competing from a disadvantage in comparison to their directed counterparts. Considering that this demographic of worker represents roughly half or more of the
American workers employed by independently owned businesses, exploring other ways to help boost their productivity would be an aid to the American economy overall.

Summary

The value of non-technical skills has been established and the lack of non-technical skills in workers has prompted academics, the federal government, industry leaders, and the HR field to action. Academics are pursuing research in order to better understand the benefits and application of non-technical skills while government and industry leaders are spearheading movements toward implementing non-technical skills programs, and enlisting the knowledge of human resource professionals to train workers to consciously apply these skills in their everyday interactions with clients and co-workers.

The reality for many privately owned businesses, however, is that there is no academic or government input, and the leader works alongside the employee(s) while also running the everyday operation of a business, with little time and/or discretionary income for training efforts and certainly no HR component. This scenario results in undirected workers who must fend for themselves in acquiring both technical and non-technical skills. This research shows that these workers are in fact learning non-technical skills through informal incidental and tacit learning process stimulated by practices and activities common to all the workers in a given employment situation.

Through this investigation two models have emerged. The first model (Figure 1, p. 124) represents the patterns through which daily salon situational practices and activities transfer non-technical skills between clients and cosmetologists, between cosmetologists, and from one generation of cosmetologists to another. It illustrates the in-
salon artifacts available for learning as well as out of salon learning venues. This model can transfer to other types of businesses by adjusting the interactive patterns accordingly in order to guide research and understand non-technical dynamics. The second model (Figure 2, p. 126) represents the pattern of non-technical skills acquisition for undirected workers juxtaposed with the learning pattern for directed workers. This model shows the additional formal venues and other learning advantages available to directed workers. Although both directed and undirected workers learn non technical skills, the comparative levels of knowledge, skill, rate of training, and transfer of training that accompany these outcomes is not known.

The importance of non-technical skills must be communicated to all workers, not just those who are fortunate enough to work in a situation through which they will receive employer-directed training. New methods to communicate this information are needed as well as new methods for delivery that can accommodate the situation of non-directing businesses. These new methods would positively affect, according to the BLS (2006-07), roughly half or more of the American workforce employed by privately owned businesses, making them more productive, increasing their potential income, and improving their lives and the lives of their families.
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Appendix A:
Salon Owner’s Permission Letter

Research Permission:
**Title of Project:** An Investigation into Situated Learning Activities, Through Which the Outcome is Learned Non-Technical Skills.

**Principal Investigator:** Franklin E. Elliott  
409A Keller Bldg.  
University Park, PA 16802  
Phone: (814)-863-2584  E-mail: fee101@psu.edu

I understand my employee is participating in a research project. The process and procedures have been explained to me by the investigator and I grant permission for this research to be conducted in my place of business.

_____________________________________________  __________________________________________
Business Owner’s Signature                      Date

_____________________________________________  __________________________________________
Person Obtaining Consent                         Date
Appendix B:
Cosmetologist Informed Consent Letter

This is an information and consent letter for participants of an educational research project. The principal investigator for this research is:

Franklin E. Elliott
409A Keller Bldg.
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: (814)-863-2584
E-mail: fee101@psu.edu

The principal advisor for this research is:

Judith A. Kolb, PhD.
301A Keller Bldg.
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: (814) 865-1876
E-mail: jak18@psu.edu

The title of the research is:

*An Investigation into Situated Learning Activities, Through Which the Outcome is Learned Non-Technical Skills.*

This research is being conducted in affiliation with The Pennsylvania State University. The purpose of this study is to generate new theories about how employees of micro-businesses (privately owned businesses with 49 or less employees) learn non-technical skills. Participants are asked to take part in an interview with the principal investigator, Franklin E. Elliott. The interview will be digitally recorded for the purpose analysis and comparison with other participant interviews. During the analysis process the participant’s name will be changed. No further reference to a participant’s actual identity will be made throughout the research. No one will ever have access to the interview recordings except the principal investigator. When the research is completed
the interview recordings will be destroyed. The only possible exception to access of the interview recordings is:

"The Office of Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Office for Research Protections at Penn State and the Social Science Institutional Review Board may review records related to this project."

If a participant has any questions about this study: "You can ask questions about this research. Contact Franklin E. Elliott at (814) 863-2584 with questions. You can also call this number if you have complaints or concerns about this research." Also, "If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have concerns or general questions about the research, contact Penn State University's Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else."

Investigator:
Franklin E. Elliott
409A Keller Bldg.
University Park, PA  16802

Phone: (814) 863-2584
E-mail: fee101@psu.edu
Appendix C:  
Recruitment Scripts

Salon script seeking the salon owner’s permission

Hello, my name is Frank Elliott. I am a licensed cosmetologist in Pennsylvania and a graduate student at The Pennsylvania State University. As a final phase of my college work I am required to conduct research in my area of study. I am studying how employees of businesses with a staff of 49 or less learn non-technical skills? I am interested in conducting taped interviews with cosmetologists employed in independently owned salons with a staff of 49 or less.

The interview will take from 1 – 3 hours and will involve nothing more than your opinions and experiences. This is a confidential research project requiring both the interviewer’s and the interviewee’s signatures on an informed consent form. The interview can be conducted at any public or semi-public location the participant chooses, taking possible background noise into consideration.

Your employee [employee’s name] was recommended by [name of referee] as a possible research subject. In respect to you as the salon owner I will not ask for [employee’s name] participation as a research subject without your permission. If you agree, would you please sign a letter of agreement as required by Penn State’s Office for Research Protections.
Script seeking the cosmetologist’s participation

Hello, my name is Frank Elliott. I am a licensed cosmetologist in Pennsylvania and a graduate student at The Pennsylvania State University. As a final phase of my college work I am required to conduct research in my area of study. I am studying how employees of businesses with a staff of 49 or less learn non-technical skills? I am interested in conducting taped interviews with you.

The interview will take from 1 – 3 hours and will involve nothing more than your opinions and experiences. This is a confidential research project requiring both the interviewer’s and the interviewee’s signatures on an informed consent form. The interview can be conducted at any public or semi-public location the participant chooses, taking possible background noise into consideration.

I have obtained written consent from your employer to request your participation. This does not mean that you are in any way obligate to participate. Only that your employer understands what will transpire if you do consent to be interviewed. It also indicates that your employer understands that the only persons to have access to the information obtained from your interview will be my advisory committee and myself.

Are you interested in participating?
Appendix D:
Interview Guide

Question Group 1
Tell me about ___(insert name)___ the cosmetologist.
1. How long have you been a cosmetologist?
2. Tell me about your experiences leading to your decision to become a cosmetologist.
3. How many salons have you worked in?
4. What do you do as a cosmetologist?
5. Tell me about your daily experience of being a cosmetologist.

Question Group 2
How does the salon social/business structure work?
1. Tell me about your experiences interacting with clients.
2. Tell me about your experiences interacting with co-workers.
3. Tell me about your experiences interacting with salon management.
4. Tell me about your experiences as a cosmetologist outside of the salon setting.

Question Group 3
Tell me about your professional progression.
1. Tell me about your experience as a novice cosmetologist.
2. Tell me about your experience of being a referred cosmetologist.
3. Tell me about your experience of progressing from novice to referred cosmetologist.
4. Tell me about your experience as a learner in your profession.

Question Group 4
How do you feel about being a cosmetologist?
1. What is it that you enjoy the most?
2. Is there anything you don’t like?
3. What would you change about the industry if you could and why?
Appendix E:  
Interview Summary Review Letter

Dear ,

This is a summary of your interview on --/--/2007 in support of research by Franklin E. Elliott. Please review this summary for accuracy.

If the summary is accurate, please sign and date it on the line at the bottom and return to me using the envelope supplied.

If you do not agree with the summary, please either write in the corrections and return to me along with the unsigned summary using the envelope provided or contact me by phone at (814) 863-2584 or by e-mail at fee101@psu.edu. I will make the corrections and forward them to you for review.

Thank you so much for your time and effort.

Franklin E. Elliott
## Coding Summary Report

**Project:** Learning in Micro-Businesses  
**Generated:** 3/26/2008 8:05 PM  

### Interview number 07

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## Node Summary Report

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Learning in Micro-Businesses

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#### being referred
What is the experience of being referred as a professional?

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#### building a reputation
How does a professional reputation that will generate referrals come to pass?

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Appendix H:
Tree Node Development Example

Co-worker Interactions

- **A community of knowledge** – 1
  How is knowledge shared within the functions of the salon setting?
- **Carrying on the mentoring relationship** – 5
  Is the mentoring experience passed on as a designer progresses in her/his career?
- **Mentoring relationship** – 32
  This node explores the mentoring experience of some of the subjects.
- **Salon camaraderie** – 41
  This is an important aspect of the cosmetologists every day situation.

Designer and Client Relationship

- **Accommodations for trust building** – 2
  Are there accommodations that need to be realized in the effort to build client trust?
- **Being referred** – 3
  What is the experience of being referred as a professional?
- **Building a reputation** – 4
  How does a professional reputation that will generate referrals come to pass?
- **Trust building** – 48
  What are the various roles trust plays in the salon setting and how do they come to into being?

Non-Technical Skills Evaluation

- **Communication is everything** – 7
  What is the value of communication skills for the professional designer?
- **Defining people skills** – 9
  What are people skills as defined in the work setting?
- **Need to know** – 34
  This node explores the information seen as indispensable knowledge in order to succeed.
- **Talent without tact** – 44
  What is the outcome for cosmetologists who have talent but lack non-technical skills?
- **Value of non-technical skills** – 51
  What is the value of non-technical skills as seen by the interviewees?
- **Non-technical translates to technical** – 36
  How do the non-technical skills relate to technical skills?
Cosmetologist Snapshot

- **Professional self-identification** – 40
  This node addresses how the interviews see themselves as professionals.

- **Salon industry identification** – 42
  How do the subjects view their profession?

- **Self-directing career focus** – 43
  What conscious efforts do the interviewees make in directing their career?

- **The grand picture** – 45
  What is the over-riding big professional picture for the subjects? What do they seem to value above all else or attribute all else too?

- **Value of education** – 50
  What value does the individual subject place on education overall?

- **Competition** – 8
  How does competition play out in the salon setting?

In Salon Growth

- **Getting started in the industry** – 15
  Talk about the novice experience for the subjects.

- **Growing on the job** – 18
  What is the experience of developing professionally and personally in the salon atmosphere?

- **Learning from experience** – 23
  Identifies the ways in which experience engenders learning in the salon setting.

- **On the job training** – 38
  This node identifies those learning experiences that can constitute on the job training.

- **Watch and listen** – 52
  What are the situations in which the cosmetologist's professional education is reliant on this passive form of learning and what value does it have in the salon setting?

- **Whatever it is you’re learning something** – 53
  How prevalent is this attitude in the salon experience?

- **Getting outside of your comfort zone** – 14
  What stimulates growth as a professional?

Salon Relationships

- **Getting to know the client** – 16
  How does this come about and to what advantage?

- **Give and take** – 17
  What are the various interactive nuances that take place in the salon?

- **Negotiating boundaries** – 35
All relationships have boundaries and this node explores how these boundaries are determined.

- **One-on-one contact** – 39
  This is the most common communication situation that the cosmetologist encounters.

**Learning**

- **Learning focus** – 22
  What is the primary focus for learning efforts and resources in the salon industry?

- **Learning on the street** – 25
  The cosmetologist's professional learning carries over to life outside of the salon.

- **Learning opportunities** – 26
  These are the opportunities that cosmetologists identify as available to them through professional experiences of all sorts.

- **Learning resources** – 27
  This node explores the learning resources available to cosmetologists throughout their professional experiences.

- **Learning situation** – 28
  These are the learning situations that cosmetologists experience through their professional experiences.

- **Main source of learning** – 31
  These are the individual main sources of learning identified by the interviewees.

- **Learning from the clients** – 24
  What is to be learned from the client/designer relationship?

- **Learning a little at a time** – 21
  Identifies the pace of learning professionally.
Vita

Education

Doctor of Philosophy (2008)
Department of Learning and Performance Systems, Pennsylvania State University, Workforce Education and Development

Master of Science (2001)
Department of Learning and Performance Systems, Pennsylvania State University, Workforce Education and Development

Bachelor of Arts (1997)
College of Liberal Arts, Pennsylvania State University, Speech Communication

Experience

1998-2008 Instructor
Department of Learning and Performance Systems, Pennsylvania State University, Workforce Education and Development

1975-2008 Cosmetology Teacher
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of State, Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs

1986-1989 Trainer/Technician
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