Toward an Understanding of Contemporary Professional Culture
Introduction:

Definition:
• A professional culture is a group that is linked by a common occupation.

Problems:
  i. Loss of “culture shock.”
  ii. Individuals may have multiple occupations.

Research goal:
• To provide a framework for the study of professional cultures and to apply it towards an introduction of the professional culture of shoe repair.
Methods:

In-Shop Participant Observation
Semi-structured interview

Eight stores participated with 17 informants

SSIA Convention - Oklahoma
Semi-structured interview

Twenty interviews were conducted with 28 informants
Framework for Study
Framework modified from Jordan 2002

Culture is found in common:

1. Learning processes
2. Shared and symbolic patterns
3. Adaptations to environment
Chief Characteristics

- 5000 shops remaining
- 2 person shop is average (Dun & Bradstreet, 2001)
- 10% of Americans repair
- Service based skilled labor.
- Traditional knowledge
Learning Processes
Cultures are learned; what is the learning process?

1) Observe
2) Assisting the master
3) Polish
4) Removing and replacing soles & heels
5) Complicated stitching.
Shared Symbolic Patterns

• Common goals
  – “To return the product to its original condition or as close to it as possible.”

• Common assumptions
  – Assumptions about broader society
Shared/Symbolic Patterns

Common values
Shared/Symbolic Patterns

Common behaviors and norms

• Boxes of materials
  – Symbolic

• Betrayal

“In my industry, people help each other... you don’t do that to people!” ~ Isaac, 3rd generation repairman
Shared Symbolic Characteristics

• Artifacts as symbols
  – Jack, cobbler’s hammer, K-stitcher

• Events as symbols
  – Cultural reification

Image from SSIA (http://www.ssia.info/images/silvercup5.jpg)
Adaptation

How do cultures adapt to their common environment?

Traditional Men’s Shoe

Altered from JTAC Inc ©
Conclusion & Future Research

• A connection between Shoe repair and Ecological Anthropology?

• Symbolism in material artifacts
References

- Dun & Bradstreet, (2001) SIC 7251 for Shoe and Boot Repair (Excludes Shoe Shine Parlors)

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Jordan and Dr. Davenport of UNT for their guidance in this project, The McNair Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and my research participants.